THE EMPEROR´S NEW CLOTHES

Story by Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time, there was an emperor who loved beautiful clothes more than anything else in the world. He spent all his money on new suits, coats, and hats. His soldiers? He didn't care about them. The theater? Boring! For him, only one thing mattered: looking good. He had a different outfit for every hour of the day. Instead of saying, "The emperor is in council," the people would say, "The emperor is in his dressing room!"

One day, two clever tricksters came to town. They pretended to be magic weavers and claimed they could make the most magnificent and extraordinary cloth in the world: a fabric that would be invisible to anyone who was stupid or unfit for their job. The emperor was thrilled. "How brilliant!" he cried. "With this cloth, I'll be able to tell who's clever and who's just pretending! Start weaving at once!" He gave the two swindlers gold, silk, and jewels, which they secretly slipped into their pockets. Their looms, however, stayed completely empty, though they pretended to work busily day and night.

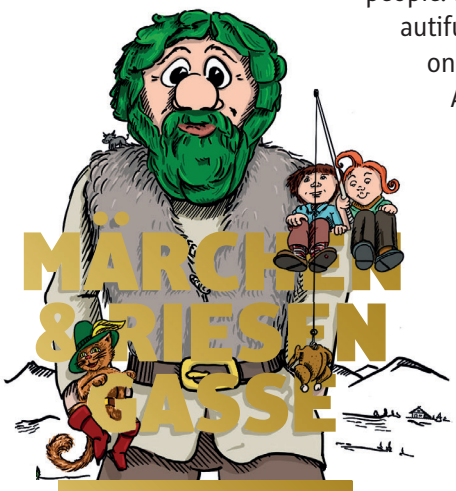
After a while, the emperor grew curious. But he didn't dare go himself. What if he couldn't see the cloth? That would mean he was either a fool or unfit to rule! So he sent his old minister to inspect it. The minister entered, looked at the loom... and saw nothing at all! "Oh dear," he thought in alarm. "Am I stupid? Or not fit for my office?" He didn't dare admit the truth, so he praised the "cloth" loudly.

The tricksters asked for more gold and silk, and the emperor sent another official. He too saw nothing, but, not wanting to appear foolish, he also admired the "beautiful colors and patterns." At last, the emperor wanted to see the magical cloth himself. With his courtiers, he went to the "weavers." They all stared at the empty looms. Not a single thread was there, but everyone pretended to admire the marvelous design.

The emperor's knees went weak. "I don't see a thing!" he thought. "Am I not a good emperor after all?" But aloud he said, "Magnificent! I am delighted!" Then the swindlers announced that the clothes were finished. They pretended to cut and sew the invisible fabric, snipping the air and stitching with imaginary needles. Finally, they said, "Your Majesty, please undress. We'll help you into your new garments." And so the emperor stood there — stark naked — while the tricksters pretended to dress him in splendid robes. "How well they fit!" the courtiers exclaimed, though of course they saw nothing. The emperor nodded proudly. "Yes, quite wonderful!"

Then the grand parade began. The emperor wanted to show his new clothes to all the people. Proudly, he walked through the streets, and everyone cheered, "Oh, how beautiful the emperor's new clothes are!" No one dared to say they saw nothing. No one except a small child. "But he isn't wearing anything at all!" the child shouted. A whisper ran through the crowd, until everyone cried out, "The emperor has no clothes!"

The emperor blushed red as a tomato. But he thought, "I mustn't let it show." So he held his head high and marched on bravely — without a single stitch of clothing on his body



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