

**Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales**

Translated and Adapted by

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EXTRACT

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*This is a storytelling show, for a minimum of four actors. The original productions were staged using everyday 'found' objects removed from trunks and repurposed. However, there are no stage directions, with the intention of allowing you to discover your way of telling these stories as a company, playing to the strengths of the actors you have.*

*Where a **song** is indicated, its functions are to both provide the opportunity to lift the energy of the piece in between stories, and to allow for any changes of set and props you may require. In the original productions Danish nursery rhymes were used, but feel free to use whatever suits your own production choices.*

## **SONG**

1 - Once upon a time, many years ago, there lived an Emperor; who thought that clothes were so important that he spent all his money buying new ones.

2 - All he cared about was being dressed in the latest fashions. He didn't care about his soldiers,

3 - He didn't care about his horses,

4 - And he didn't even care about going to the theatre!

3 - The only thing, in fact, he cared about at all was to go out and show off a new suit of clothes. He had a jacket for every hour of the day; and just as we might say of a King

4 - "Oh! He is with his Generals,"

3 - So the Courtiers would say of the Emperor

4 - "Ah! He is with his Clothes."

3 - The Emperor lived in the most wonderful city; it was so wonderful that every day many strangers from all parts of the globe arrived.

1 - One day, two swindlers came to the city.

2 - They pretended that they were weavers, and declared that they knew how to weave the finest cloth that could be imagined.

**1** - Not only were the colours and the patterns exceptionally beautiful, they said, but the clothes made of this material had the magical quality of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for their job, or who was completely stupid.

**3** - That must be wonderful cloth,

**1** - Thought the Emperor.

**3** - If I were to wear a suit made of that cloth, I should be able to find out who in my Empire were unfit for their jobs, and I could distinguish the clever from the stupid. I must have this cloth woven for me immediately.

**2** - And he gave a large sum of money to the swindlers -

**1** - In advance! -

**2** - So that they could set to work without delay.

**1** - They set up two looms, and they pretended to be very hard at work, but there was no material on them at all!

**2** - They asked for supplies of the finest silk and the most magnificent gold thread, and everything they were given they tucked away into their own bags. Then they sat and worked at the empty looms till late at night.

**3** - I should very much like to know how they are getting on with the cloth.

**4** - Thought the Emperor, but he actually felt rather uneasy when he remembered that he might unknowingly send someone who was unfit for their job, or was stupid, and who wouldn't be able to see it.

**3** - Personally, he was of the opinion that he had nothing to fear, but still, he thought it might be a good idea to send somebody else first, just to see how matters stood.

**4** - Everybody in the town knew what a remarkable quality the cloth possessed, and everybody was anxious to see how bad at their jobs or stupid their neighbours were.

**3** - I shall send my honest old Minister to the weavers.

4 - Thought the Emperor.

3 - He can judge best how the cloth looks, because he is definitely intelligent, and nobody understands their job better than he does.

1 - The good old Minister went into the room where the swindlers sat before the empty looms.

4 – My, oh my!

2 - He thought, as his eyes opened wide,

4 - I can't see anything at all.

1 - But he didn't say so.

2 - Both swindlers requested him to come closer, and asked him if he liked the beautiful pattern and the lovely colours, pointing to the empty looms.

1 - The poor old Minister tried his very best, but he couldn't see anything, for there was nothing to be seen.

4 – *(aside)* Oh dear, could I be stupid? I have never thought so, and nobody must think so! Is it possible that I am not fit for my job, then? No. No, I can't possibly say that I'm not able to see the cloth.

2 - You're not saying anything about the cloth.

1 - Said one of the swindlers, while he pretended to be busily weaving.

4 - Oh, it's lovely. Most exceptional! *(Looking through his glasses)* What a beautiful pattern, what brilliant colours! I shall tell the Emperor that I like the cloth very much indeed.

1 - We are pleased to hear that.

2 - Said one of the weavers, and described the colours to him and explained the curious pattern. The old Minister listened attentively, so that he could say exactly the same things to the Emperor; and that's exactly what he did.

1 - Then the swindlers asked for more money, more silk, and more gold

thread, which they said that they required for weaving.

2 - Of course, they kept it all for themselves - not a thread of it went towards making any cloth; and so they carried on, just as before, working at the empty looms.

4 - Soon afterwards the Emperor sent another honest Courtier to the weavers to see how they were getting on, and if the cloth was nearly finished.

1 - Like the old Minister he looked, and he looked, and he looked; but he couldn't see a thing, of course, as there was nothing to be seen.

2 - Is it not a beautiful piece of cloth?

1 - Asked the other swindler, showing and explaining the magnificent pattern, which, of course, did not exist.

4 – *(Aside)* I know I'm not stupid. Is it possible that I'm not fit for my job, then? I mustn't let any one know it!

2 - And he praised the cloth, which he couldn't see, and expressed his joy at the beautiful colours and the fine pattern, and went away and said to the Emperor

4 - It is most excellent.

3 - Everybody in the whole town was talking about the precious cloth.

2 - At last, the Emperor wished to see it for himself, while it was still on the loom. With one of the Courtiers who had already been there, he came to the two clever swindlers

1 - Who were now working as hard as they could, but without using any thread.

4 - Is it not...*magnifique*?

1 - Said the Courtier who had been there before.

4 - Admire, your Majesty, the colours and the pattern.

