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Cast of Characters

NARRATOR

KING CHALAZION

NIP, a tailor

TUCK, a tailor

QUEEN MYOPEA

NAYASEEYIT, a trickster

NAYADONT, a trickster

GOTCHA, a trickster

BORIS, a peasant

MAURICE, a peasant

DORIS, a mother

SIBYL, her child

MAUREEN, a citizen

WHIMPLE, a guard

DIMPLE, a guard

PIMPLE, a captain

BOUNCE, the Secretary of State

FLOUNCE, the Attorney General

DOREEN, a citizen

BOREEN, a citizen

Background characters as available: COURTIERS, GUARDS,
CITIZENS, PEASANTS

Notes on Pronunciation and Names

What the names mean:

Chalazion (*“Khu-LAZ-ee-on”*) is an eye disease: a swelling on the eyelid.

Myopia (*“Mi-y-O-pee-ya”*) is also an eye condition.

Sibyl (*“SI-bul”*) is the name for a woman who sees more than regular folk: a “seer” (via Old French and Latin, orig. Greek—“divinely wise”).

The pet names used by the king and queen for each other are a “running joke.” He calls her something beginning with “P” and she always calls him something beginning with “D.” You can simplify this if necessary, by using only one pet name each, throughout the play. For more complexity, you can make up your own, even improvising “P” or “D” words, to amuse yourself and your fellow actors.

“Maurice” should be pronounced “Morris,” to rhyme with Boris and Doris, not as in French “Maw-reese.”

Production Notes

2005 is Hans Christian Andersen’s bicentennial year, and this play is intended for anyone looking for a large-cast stage version of his famous story, sometimes translated as “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” The play is meant to amuse, but also to stimulate discussion about “pretending” in order to fit in with a clique, and about other social issues like hierarchies and prejudice.

It is intended as a play for performance to a family audience, by professional or amateur companies, or as a Theater-in-Education piece. It is written in the British tradition of “Pantomime” broad comedy, where the audience already knows the story well, including the ending. Their enjoyment comes from the re-telling (often with a “twist”), heckling the actors (and being heckled back), and the jokes (good and “bad”) woven in and around the main plot.

It was originally written for students to perform, giving about twenty elementary school students a fair and roughly equal chance

to “bat,” with roles which could be expanded (or reduced) to fit the actors’ abilities and enthusiasm. I used Andersen’s classic tale as a basis, wove in new characters and new scenes, expanded the scope of the story, but strove to keep the spirit and theme intact. Because I had a group where girls outnumbered boys, I began by adding female roles: a “Lady Macbeth”-like queen, a girl child, and a mother.

The child who calls out the truth and breaks the pretence, is essential to the *plot*. But he/she only appears in the final moments of the original story—as do the child’s father (mother in my version) and the ordinary people. So I introduced them earlier in the play, to develop their *characters* more fully. Most roles are written to be gender non-specific, including the guards, tricksters, tailors and politicians.

As the play grew, a secondary theme began to emerge: hierarchy. Whether you call it class, rank or “pecking order,” people go to great lengths to climb or keep their place in it. I decided that ALL the characters (not just the king) should be trying to “keep up appearances” in some way. As well as providing comic potential, this provides the perfect context for the great invisible clothes “sting,” which depends on willing, collective pretence, and delusion.

To increase the number of roles available, I added a third trickster. Andersen’s original story refers to a “pair” of scoundrels. But a threesome served two more purposes. Novice actors can feel more confident in threes, with a diluted focus on them. And there is something about threesomes which strikes our collective mind as innately funny. (Think of the Three Amigos, the Three Stooges, etc.) Before long, I had written in three guards, three citizens and three peasants. One of the guards, the captain, also formed part of another threesome, with the two court officials.

I “fleshed out” the guards, gave them some funny business, and showed in more detail where they sat in the “pecking order.” I also wrote in extra roles which could be “doubled” by the same actors. For instance, the parts of Nip and Tuck, the two (real) tailors, were written to be doubled up by the actors playing Doreen and Boreen, the citizens in Scene 10. The tricksters of course, since their roles are over once the great “sting” is achieved, can double as “citizens” or “peasants” in the crowd at the end.

I decided to include a Narrator role. Commonly, there are students who prefer public speaking to acting, and this role is for them. In my initial version, I split it into two because I had two such students. The narration could be further split, if needed. The narrators interact with the players, further developing the “Pantomime” comedic style. The narration could also be read by a teacher, or an older student.

About Hans Christian Andersen

2005 is the 200th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen’s birth. Those who know him only by his fairy tales, or by the big screen clowning of American actor/dancer Danny Kaye, may be surprised by the scope of Andersen’s artistry. The esteem in which the non-English speaking world holds him is also revealing. In China, for instance, Hans Christian Andersen is thought of as the most important western philosopher since Jesus!

Hans Christian Andersen’s output of novels, poems, drawings, diaries and paper cutouts, as well as fairy stories and fables was prolific. (Yes, paper cutouts indeed! More than a century before Terry Gilliam’s “Monty Python” cut-out cartoons.) If he were alive today, I am tempted to think that Andersen would be pushing the boundaries of art, entertainment and social satire along with the best animators, novelists, playwrights, and screenwriters.

For most of us, the greatness of this most famous of Danes lives on through his stories. With simple but profound imagery, they help us to see our human nature and its foibles.

“Keiserens nye Klæder” (The Emperor’s New Clothes) particularly, is a fabulous exposition of how we willingly delude ourselves in order to join or stay “in” a group. It illustrates how we get ourselves caught up in fads, fashions, crazes, cliques, religious revivals, quackery, cultural snobbery, and dangerous cults. It’s intriguing to notice that the words “culture” and “cult” share the same root.

Andersen gave us a parable of pack mentality. It is such an elegant exposé of collective cultural conspiracy, that it has been translated, interpreted—and appropriated—many times to fit the purposes of later commentators. It frequently seems to parallel contemporary

events and attitudes with uncanny accuracy, and this is a sign of how universal its theme of shared human delusion is.

Don't assume Andersen's allegory is about stupid rulers. (Rulers are many things which deserve satirical comment, but stupid isn't one of them. They like you to think they are stupid.) As long as you think "Keiserens nye Klæder" applies to "them" over there, you are missing the point. Whether it is an emperor or a king who has new clothes (or a "new suit"), the point is this: it applies to *us*.

Have you ever pretended to like something, because your friend said she (or he) liked it? Have you ever gone along with what's "cool" (or "proper"), because you didn't want to look stupid (or rude)? Have you ever pretended to agree, because disagreement meant you might lose your job? Have you ever pretended not to see or hear something, because you didn't want to embarrass yourself (or someone else)?

Have you ever lied in order to impress (or keep) a boyfriend or girlfriend? Have you ever pretended to believe in an idea—or even a god—because you were too scared to leave the party, the cult or the church? Have you ever agreed that something is great piece of art (or music), without bothering to stop and really look at (or listen to) it? Have you ever pretended to understand what's going on, because no one else is letting on that they're as baffled as you are?

If so, then you are human, and Hans Christian Andersen's tale is about you.

Acknowledgments

The King's New Clothes was originally produced in 2005 by Oak Grove School in Ojai, California. The cast was as follows:

NARRATOR 1 Kristen Taylor-Ladd
NARRATOR 2 April Ocone
KING CHALAZION..... Lukas Huberman
NIP Madison McClurkin
TUCK Kaelyn Ivers
QUEEN MYOPEA..... Julia Berkovitz
NAYASEEYIT..... Jasper Simms
NAYADONT Shravan Rajasekaran
GOTCHA..... Finnian Shaw
BORIS Sophia Smith-Grunder
MAURICE Taylor Godfrey
SIBYL Meagan Hoyt
DORIS Hannah Glodell
MAUREEN..... Melina Varela
WHIMPLE.....Kylie Rosenbloom
DIMPLE Zachary Breen
PIMPLE..... Isaac Arquilevich
BOUNCEDrew Swanner
FLOUNCE..... Ashley Wachtell
DOREEN Kaelyn Ivers
BOREEN Madison McClurkin
CITIZENS, PEASANTS The company

THE KING'S NEW CLOTHES

by Kaefan Shaw

based on Hans Christian Andersen's
"Keiserens nye Klæder"

Scene 1

(Inside a castle.)

NARRATOR. The King's New Clothes.

Adapted from "Keiserens nye Klæder" by Hans Christian Andersen.

Once upon a time there lived a wealthy monarch named King Chalazion, whose obsession was fashionable clothes. He did not want to be thought boring, so the nation's tailors were always busy.

(Enter KING CHALAZION and two TAILORS. The KING poses. The TAILORS adjust his outfit and discuss one part of it.)

NIP. I like this bit, don't you, Tuck?

TUCK. It's all right, Nip.

NIP. You don't like it?

TUCK. Well maybe, it's not that bad.

NIP. Actually, it's not really that good.

TUCK. It could be better.

NIP. I hate this bit, don't you? *(It's still the same part.)*

NARRATOR. Each day, the king was in the habit of appearing before his people in luxurious and exclusive clothes.

(The KING motions to the TAILORS, and they exit.)

(Enter QUEEN MYOPEA.)

KING. Is it time yet, Poppet?

QUEEN. *(Sighs, checks the time.)* Yes, Dormouse.

NARRATOR. His companion, Queen Myopia...

QUEEN. *(Coughs:)* Ahem. That's Myo-PE-a.

NARRATOR. ...Queen Myo-PE-a, sought to reassure him.

KING. I'm worried, Pancake.

QUEEN. Doughnut, don't. You look fine...Elegant.

KING. *(After a pause:)* Do I really look good in this? You're not just saying that?

(The QUEEN doesn't react, so he adds...)

Puddleduck?

QUEEN. The people will love you. In that. Dimplechin.

KING. My people obey me, Primrose. They'll say they like it, but they know nothing. They don't even know their "Rive" from their "Gauche."

(He thinks "rive" means "right," and gestures with his right and left hands. The QUEEN decides not to correct him.)

This outfit cost more than a peasant earns in a lifetime. I just LOVE show-and-tell time. I love to see the look on their faces, Pom-Pom. Oh, how will I KNOW if it's really cool?

QUEEN. Trust me, Dreidel. You look great.

(KING and QUEEN exit.)

Scene 2

(Somewhere in the kingdom.)

NARRATOR. Word of King Chalazion's wealth, and his absurd passion for fashion spread so far, that eventually it reached the ears of three... *(Clearing throat:)* ahem... "traders," named Nayaseeyit, Nayadont and Gotcha.

(Enter three TRICKSTERS, carrying their spoils.)

They skillfully tricked the peasants into trading away what little they had: a penny, a fish, a shirt or a pair of shoes.

(Enter two PEASANTS, at a distance behind them. They shout.)

BORIS. Hey! Stop! Come back here, you swindling dogs!

MAURICE. “Dogs” is too kind a word for you thieves! And it’s an insult to the canine species!

BORIS. What did they swindle you out of?

MAURICE. I caught a fish, and they told me it was big enough to enter a competition, but I had to pay my last penny to enter. Then they went off with both.

BORIS. They told me that if I gave my grandmother’s shoes and shirt, to the first person on this list...

(Holds up a piece of paper.)

...and added my own name to the bottom of the list, then, if no-one broke the chain, I would receive 55,462 shirts and twice as many shoes.

MAURICE. Did you?

BORIS. No. Their own names were on the top of the list. It was a complete scam.

MAURICE. Scoundrels! *(Calls out to the tricksters:)* Why don’t you swindle someone rich, like dear old King Chalazion? He can afford it!

BORIS. Yes! What happened to “Rob the rich and give to the poor,” huh?

NAYASEEYIT. Sorry, that’s a different story.

NAYADONT. Yes, we rob the rich, and rob the poor, too.

GOTCHA. But thanks for the idea, though!

(The TRICKSTERS exit in a hurry.)

(Enter DORIS and her child, SIBYL.)

DORIS. Maurice! What is going on?

MAURICE. Doris! Er...Boris, meet Doris. Doris, this is Boris.

DORIS. Hello Boris.

BORIS. Hello Doris

DORIS. Maurice.

MAURICE. Doris?

DORIS. Where's the fish you caught?

MAURICE. It's er...We met some...There's a competition...We might win. Then I'll buy you a new house!

DORIS. Really?

SIBYL. Mum...

DORIS. Sibyl, shut up. *(To MAURICE, softening:)* You'd do that for me?

MAURICE. You know me. *(Gives DORIS a big, reassuring smile. Pause.)* Come on Boris, let's...

BORIS. *(Waits...thinks...then suggests:)* Go?

MAURICE. Good idea, Boris. Bye, Doris. You're the best.

BORIS. Bye, Doris

DORIS. Bye, Boris. Bye, Maurice.

(BORIS and MAURICE exit.)

SIBYL. Is Maurice your boyfriend, Mum?

DORIS. Sibyl, shut up. They might hear you.

SIBYL. Boris wants to be your boyfriend too.

DORIS. He was just being friendly.

SIBYL. Maurice wasn't really happy was he, mum?

DORIS. Sibyl, that's enough. We don't talk like that about people.

SIBYL. I don't think there really is a competition, mum.

(Enter MAUREEN and WHIMPLE, some distance away. DORIS signals SIBYL to be quiet.)

WHIMPLE. Mum...

MAUREEN. Just take your sandwiches, you might get hungry.

WHIMPLE. But people will see...

MAUREEN. Don't talk to anyone on the way. You're a king's soldier now. That makes us citizens, and we don't mix with the peasants.

WHIMPLE. Bye, mum.

(MAUREEN pointedly ignores DORIS and SIBYL and exits.)

(WHIMPLE crosses towards them.)

DORIS. Hello, Whimple. Don't you look grand.

WHIMPLE. I can't stop, Ms. Flutterbye.

SIBYL. Are you going to guard the palace, Whimple?

WHIMPLE. I can't tell you, young lady. It's classified information: troop movements. If that kind of stuff gets into the hands of a barbarian group...

SIBYL. The palace is over there, and you're going towards it.

DORIS. Sibyl, shut up.

WHIMPLE. Ah, yes, right. *(Thinks.)* But NOW I'm now going this way, see?

(WHIMPLE starts to leave in the opposite direction.)

SIBYL. Whimple's mum has more money than us, now he's in the army, doesn't she, mum?

DORIS. Sibyl, shut up.

(DORIS leads SIBYL Away.)

(When WHIMPLE sees that they have gone, he turns and hurries back in the direction of the palace.)

Scene 3

(Outside a castle.)

NARRATOR. Later that same day, outside the gates of the King Chalazion's palace. Two guards...

(Notices that there is only one guard there, DIMPLE.)

Er...a guard...

(Enter WHIMPLE, in a hurry. He stands next to DIMPLE.)

TWO guards are busy doing nothing.

DIMPLE. You were late.

WHIMPLE. I wasn't late. You were early.

DIMPLE. Wasn't.

WHIMPLE. Was.

DIMPLE. Wasn't.

WHIMPLE. Was.

DIMPLE. Was.

WHIMPLE. Wasn't.

DIMPLE. You brought sandwiches?

(The CAPTAIN enters. GUARDS snap to attention.)

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. Whimple! Dimple!

WHIMPLE. Yes, Captain Pimple, SIR!

DIMPLE. Yes, Captain Pimple, SIR!

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. Look lively, you slackers! Was it a waste of time training you? HURRY UP AND WAIT!

WHIMPLE. Yes, Captain Pimple, SIR!

DIMPLE. Yes, Captain Pimple, SIR!

(The GUARDS quickly tidy themselves, mess with their weapons, march around a bit, etc., and take positions.)

(The CAPTAIN exits. The guards relax again, and breathe a sigh of relief.)

(Enter the three TRICKSTERS.)

NAYASEEYIT. Hello.

NAYADONT. Hello.

GOTCHA. Hello.

WHIMPLE. HALT. Who goes there?

DIMPLE. Names please.

NAYASEEYIT. Nayaseeyit.

NAYADONT. Nayadont.

GOTCHA. Gotcha.

WHIMPLE. *(To DIMPLE:)* Strange names.

DIMPLE. *(To WHIMPLE:)* Must be foreign.

NAYASEEYIT. We are three very good tailors.

GOTCHA. Tailors. Very good.

NAYADONT. ...and after many, many, many, MANY years of research...

GOTCHA. ...in tailoring...

NAYASEEYIT. ...we have developed an AMAZING way to weave cloth...

GOTCHA. ...cloth...

NAYADONT. ...so subtle, so fine and delicate, that it looks invisible.

GOTCHA. ...invisible...

NAYASEEYIT. As a matter of fact it is invisible to anyone who is...

GOTCHA. ...too simple...

NAYASEEYIT. ...not perceptive enough to see its quality.

GOTCHA. Quality.

(The TRICKSTERS nod convincingly.)

NARRATOR. The guards did not know what to make of it.

WHIMPLE. Wow!

DIMPLE. Wow!

WHIMPLE. (*Shrugs and turns to DIMPLE:*) Do you know what to make of it?

DIMPLE. (*Shrugs and shakes head:*) Do you know what to make of it?

WHIMPLE. (*Ponders:*) I, er...no. (*To the TRICKSTERS:*) Wait here.

WHIMPLE & DIMPLE. (*Together, they call out:*) **CAPTAIN PIMPLE!**
Do you know what to make of it?

(*CAPTAIN re-enters.*)

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. Of course!! I WOULD know what to make of it...IF it were my JOB to know what to make of it. ...What is it?

WHIMPLE. Cloth. SIR!

DIMPLE. Quality. SIR!

WHIMPLE. Invisible. SIR!

DIMPLE. Unless you're simple. SIR!

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. Did you say I'm simple, Dimple?

DIMPLE. No. SIR!

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. Did he say I'm simple, Whimble?

WHIMPLE. No. SIR!

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. (*Looks back and forth between tricksters and guards:*) I don't know what to make of it. Keep an eye on them. I will call the Secretary of State.

(*GUARDS lead the TRICKSTERS away. CAPTAIN PIMPLE crosses to telephone.*)

NARRATOR. The Captain telephoned Bounce, the Secretary of State.

(*BOUNCE picks up the telephone in his office.*)

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. (*On the telephone:*) Secretary of State Bounce! It's Captain Pimple sir. Cloth, sir, quality, sir, invisible, sir, unless you're simple, sir.

BOUNCE. Did you say I'm simple, Pimple?

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. No, sir. *(Coughs.)* Um. Perhaps the Attorney General should be notified.

BOUNCE. Pimple, it is not your job to tell me what must be done. *(Pause. Thinks.)* I shall notify the Attorney General. *(Pushes some numbers.)*

NARRATOR. The Secretary of State notified Flounce, the Attorney General...

(FLOUNCE picks up the telephone in his/her office.)

FLOUNCE. This is Flounce.

BOUNCE. Flounce, this is Bounce.

FLOUNCE. What is it, Bounce?

BOUNCE. It's cloth, sir, quality, sir, invisible, sir, unless you're simple, Your Excellency.

FLOUNCE. Did you say...?

BOUNCE. Definitely not, Your Excellency. But perhaps you'd better run to King Chalazion and disclose the incredible news.

FLOUNCE. It's not your job to...

NARRATOR. *(Interrupting firmly:)* ...who ran to the king and disclosed the incredible news.

FLOUNCE. Oh, alright, then.

(Puts down the telephone and exits, running.)

Scene 4

(Inside a castle.)

(The KING is posing. FLOUNCE runs in and whispers to him.)

NARRATOR. The king's curiosity was aroused, along with his passion for fashion...and the compulsive need to be the first in line to see or do anything. He decided to see the makers of this amazing cloth.

KING. I'll see the makers of this amazing cloth.

FLOUNCE. Shall I inform Queen Myopea, Your Majesty?

KING. (*Dismissive:*) For something as minor as this, Flounce...

(The QUEEN enters. The KING changes his tune, though he pretends not to see her at first.)

KING. (*Firmly:*) You had better keep her fully informed at all times. Thank you, Attorney General. Send them in. You may go.

(FLOUNCE exits.)

QUEEN. What is it, Drainpipe?

KING. Something we just HAVE to see, Pumpernickel.

(The TRICKSTERS enter, the KING beckons and they approach the throne, bow and begin gesturing.)

NARRATOR. Nayaseeyit, Nayadont and Gotcha span their story, about weaving cloth SO fine and delicate, so light, that it is actually invisible, except to the wise and competent.

NAYASEEYIT. ...And as a one-time special offer...

NAYADONT. ...this cloth can be woven in unique colors and patterns...

GOTCHA. ...created especially for you!

NAYASEEYIT. The weaving process is a closely guarded secret.

NAYADONT. Passed down from wise wizards in far off lands, since the dawn of time.

GOTCHA. Refined and perfected by the latest scientific research.

NAYASEEYIT. Patented and protected...

NAYADONT. ...but available exclusively

GOTCHA. ...to rare individuals of taste and discernment, like you.

(The KING scratches his head.)

Only simple people can't see it.

(The KING "gets it.")

KING. Aaaaaah! I see. I mean, I SEE it. I mean, I WILL see it. Yes? It's not there yet, is it?

NAYASEEYIT. No, no, Your Majesty is right. We haven't made it yet.

NAYADONT. No, there's nothing here yet.

GOTCHA. You're not stupid, obviously. No offense, Your Majesty.

NAYASEEYIT. Every garment we make is a rare, unique, strictly limited edition. They are so valuable, we couldn't bring one with us to show you.

NAYADONT. Only a select few kings throughout history have owned such a garment. But of course, they kept it very safely locked up.

GOTCHA. They weren't stupid, either. Your Majesty.

NAYASEEYIT. Owning such a vestment says "SUCCESS."

NAYADONT. It tells the world "I have arrived."

GOTCHA. The supreme rulers of ancient days wouldn't leave the palace without one.

NAYASEEYIT. If you can just make out the outline of such a garment, you know you are above average intelligence.

NAYADONT. If you can see the colors and textures, you know you have the perception of a genius.

GOTCHA. If you OWN such a vestment, you know you have the measure of all the world's wisdom.

KING. I want one. Not just ONE. I want a WHOLE OUTFIT!

NAYASEEYIT. We'll need very special ingredients.

NAYADONT. Yes. Special.

GOTCHA. *(Sucks in breath:)* Expensive. Whole outfit...

(The KING holds out a bag of gold coins.)

(The QUEEN holds her breath.)

(Everyone freezes and looks at her for a moment.)

(Then the KING goes ahead and gives the TRICKSTERS the bag.)

KING. Begin working on my clothes immediately. There is twenty times this for you, when you bring the finished clothes. Flounce!

(Enter FLOUNCE.)

Supply them with whatever they need.

FLOUNCE. Bounce!

(Enter BOUNCE.)

Supply them with whatever they need.

BOUNCE. I have been commanded to supply you with whatever you need.

NARRATOR. The three “tailors” asked for a loom,

NAYASEEYIT. A loom.

NARRATOR. ...silk,

NAYADONT. Silk.

NARRATOR. ...gold thread,

GOTCHA. Gold thread.

NARRATOR. ...a large workshop,

NAYASEEYIT. A large workshop.

NARRATOR. ...fine foods to eat,

NAYADONT. Fine foods to eat.

NARRATOR. ...and pretended to begin working.

GOTCHA. And pretended to begin work...

(The other two cover his mouth.)

NAYASEEYIT/ NAYADONT. Shhhh!

(The TRICKSTERS bow and leave the court.)

Scene 5

(Somewhere in the kingdom.)

NARRATOR. The tricksters had spun a good story. But that was all they intended to spin.

(The TRICKSTERS show the silk and gold thread to NIP and TUCK.)

Before the day was over, they were selling the silk and gold thread to the real tailors, Nip and Tuck a long way from the castle.

TUCK. Nice.

NIP. Tuck! Let me deal with this. *(To the TRICKSTERS:)* It's seen better days.

NAYASEEYIT. It's the best.

NIP. It could be better. Oh, alright. Here's fifty, but it's only worth twenty.

TUCK. *(To NIP:)* It's worth two hundred!

NIP. Shhh! I'm doing business.

NAYADONT. You're robbing us.

GOTCHA. Aw, alright then.

(The TAILORS pay, take the goods and exit. The TRICKSTERS wait for them to go, then look very pleased.)

NARRATOR. Nayaseeyit, Nayadont and Gotcha were delighted with the gold and the money they had got by their trickery.

NAYASEEYIT. Right. We can get out of here now. There's enough here for three fast horses.

NAYADONT. And months of living the good life.

(Pause.)

GOTCHA. Everyone still "in" then?

(They look around at each other.)

NAYASEEYIT. No one is going to blame anyone for getting out now.

NAYADONT. But the king is falling over himself to give us TWENTY TIMES this amount of gold.

GOTCHA. *(Sucks in breath:)* Twenty times.

ALL THREE TRICKSTERS. *(Together:)* In.

NAYASEEYIT. If anyone gets caught,

NAYADONT. ...we'll deny we ever met each other.

GOTCHA. No one is going to get caught. This is going to work. We're the best.

ALL THREE TRICKSTERS. *(Together:)* We're the best. We're the best. We're the best. We're the best.

(The TRICKSTERS exit.)

Scene 6

(Inside a castle.)

NARRATOR. Back in the palace, King Chalazion was in deep...“discussion” with his wife.

(Enter the KING and QUEEN.)

KING. Well, Plum-bob, I thought it looked like a good deal.

QUEEN. Oh, Dewdrop. What looks good about a deal you can't see?

KING. I'll be able to see it, Popsicle. It's only the stupid people who can't.

QUEEN. Well FINALLY, perhaps we'll find out how stupid your precious Attorney General is, Dodo.

KING. Keep your voice down, Pastrycase. She might hear you. Anyway, Flounce is very wise, she advised my daddy for twenty-five years—and she's got us out of few tricky situations. She will

probably be able to see this new cloth stuff more clearly than you will.

QUEEN. *(Deeply offended, but hiding it:)* You're entitled to your opinion on that, Doohickey. Maybe we ought to find out the truth. Put it to the test.

KING. Very well then, Proboscis. When I put these new clothes on we'll see who's dumb. I'd like to see your ladies in waiting try to make them out, for instance.

QUEEN. There's quite a few of your "royal advisers" I want to show them to, Draft-excluder.

KING. Alright. Alright! We'll see, won't we?

QUEEN. Why wait? Why not send the Attorney General to examine the cloth RIGHT NOW, if she's so clever? She can come back and tell us what it looks like.

NARRATOR. The king realized that this might be a very good idea, in many ways.

KING. Whatever you wish, Potato-chip. *(He calls out:)* ATTORNEY GENERAL!

(FLOUNCE enters.)

Ah, Flounce, go and see how the work is proceeding with this amazing new outfit, and come back to let me know.

FLOUNCE. Yes, Your Majesty.

(FLOUNCE exits.)

(KING and QUEEN stare at each other, then exit.)

Scene 7

(A workshop.)

(The TRICKSTERS have their feet up, resting after a hearty meal.)

NARRATOR. A little later, Flounce knocked on the door of the workshop.

FLOUNCE. (*Calling:*) Hello-oh!

(The TRICKSTERS burst into action, and get into place, pretending to spin, weave and sew invisible cloth.)

ALL THREE TRICKSTERS. (*Calling:*) Come i-in!

FLOUNCE. The king wants to know how the garments are progressing, and he's wondering if I can see them.

GOTCHA. I bet he is!

NAYASEEYIT. He means...I bet he is EXCITED about it, Your Excellency!

GOTCHA. Yes, excited! Understandably. We're almost finished.

NAYADONT. Here, Your Excellency! Admire the colors, feel the softness!

(FLOUNCE looks hard at the loom, trying to see something.)

NAYASEEYIT. We'll need a little more gold thread for this bit.

NAYADONT. A lot more gold thread. The details on the cape will need intricate stitching, too.

FLOUNCE. It's a little tricky in this light, without my glasses, and the room is a bit dark...

GOTCHA. (*Pointing:*) You can go over there and examine the tunic and breeches in the light of the window, if you wish.

(FLOUNCE goes to where she thinks GOTCHA has pointed.)

NARRATOR. The Attorney General looked hard at where the clothes should be, desperately trying not to show her (*his*) confusion.

FLOUNCE. (*Aside:*) I can't see anything...

NARRATOR. ...she thought. If she dared to admit she couldn't see anything, she might lose her job, her comfortable lifestyle, her house, her reputation, her friends, her pet fish...EVERYTHING! She controlled herself and came to a decision.

FLOUNCE. What marvelous fabric. I'll certainly tell the king.

(She begins to leave.)

NAYASEEYIT. More gold thread!

NAYADONT. Don't forget.

GOTCHA. *(Singing:)* We've almost made it!

NAYASEEYIT/ NAYADONT. *(To silence him:)* THE OUTFIT!

GOTCHA. Yes. The OUTFIT! That's what we've almost made!

FLOUNCE. Yes. Right. Send word when it's done.

(She exits. The TRICKSTERS dance off.)

Scene 8

(Inside a castle.)

(KING CHALAZION is asleep.)

NARRATOR. The next day, Bounce, the Secretary of State announced to King Chalazion, that the three tailors had come to try on the new clothes and make final adjustments.

(Enter BOUNCE.)

BOUNCE. The three tailors have come to try on the new clothes and make final adjustments.

(KING CHALAZION does not move.)

(Louder:) The three tailors have come to try on the new clothes and make final adjustments.

(KING CHALAZION still does not move.)

(Very loud:) THE THREE TAILORS HAVE COME TO TRY ON THE NEW CLOTHES AND MAKE FINAL ADJUSTMENTS.

(KING CHALAZION bursts into action.)

KING. What? Well don't just stand there, Bounce, send them...

(QUEEN MYOPEA enters. He pretends not to see her.)

...send FOR Her Majesty Queen Myopea without delay. She must see this too.

(Now he pretends to see her for the first time.)

Ah, there you are, Pullet. The new clothes are here.

QUEEN. Are they, Dapplebottom? *(Looking around.)*

KING. Yes.

QUEEN. Where?

BOUNCE. They're not IN here yet. But they are HERE in the castle.

KING. Bounce, assemble the court.

BOUNCE. Immediately, Your Majesty. *(Very loud:)* THE COURT OF KING CHALAZION AND QUEEN MYOPEA WILL NOW ASSEMBLE!

(Enter FLOUNCE, PIMPLE, WHIMPLE and DIMPLE.)

(They stand in a line, in order of rank.)

(FLOUNCE positions her/himself between BOUNCE and the KING, to assert her/his authority.)

KING. Bring them in.

FLOUNCE. Bring them in.

BOUNCE. Bring them in.

PIMPLE. Bring them in.

DIMPLE. Bring them in.

WHIMPLE. Bring...

(There is no-one left to pass the order to. So WHIMPLE beckons to the TRICKSTERS.)

(The three TRICKSTERS "carry" something invisible but delicate past the line of COURTIERS.)

(Everyone cranes their necks and stares hard, trying to see "it.")

(The TRICKSTERS reach the KING and carefully bow.)

NAYASEEYIT. Here they are Your Majesty. Our pride and joy.

NAYADONT. The results of our labor. A technological miracle.

GOTCHA. We have worked night and day. But at last, the most exclusive garments in the world are ready for you alone to try on.

NAYASEEYIT. Look at the colors.

NAYADONT. Feel how fine they are.

GOTCHA. Smell how smelly they are.

(The other two look at him. GOTCHA improvises.)

Sniff the...niceness of the odor...SCENT!

NARRATOR. Of course the king could not see any “colors.” He could not feel anything “fine” between his fingers. He could not “sniff the niceness of the scent.”

(NARRATOR gives a puzzled look to GOTCHA, who shrugs.)

King Chalazion panicked inside. His head swam. He stared at the space where the clothes should be.

(The QUEEN holds her breath and watches him.)

(Pause. KING CHALAZION looks around at everyone.)

(All begin nodding to each other, sagely.)

ALL. *(Randomly:)* Mmm! Nice! Yes! Aaah!

(The KING begins to nod, too.)

(The QUEEN breathes again.)

NAYASEEYIT. Your Highness, you'll have to take off your old clothes.

(Another pause.)

NAYADONT. ...to try on your new outfit.

GOTCHA. We won't look at your underwear.

KING. I, er...

NAYASEEYIT. We can make you some underwear, too.

NAYADONT. To match the tunic.

GOTCHA. It would be very cool.

KING. NO! No, thank you. I prefer my warm old underwear.

(“Respectfully” averting their eyes, the TRICKSTERS drape something invisible on the KING.)

(Then they face him, make some fake “adjustments,” and hold up a mirror.)

(The KING looks around anxiously.)

(Straight faces everywhere. Everyone is pretending everything is normal.)

(The QUEEN smiles at him. He tries to look comfortable.)

KING. Yes, these are beautiful clothes and they look very good on me. You’ve done a fine job. Secretary of State Bounce!

BOUNCE. *(Anxiously:)* Yes, Your Majesty?

KING. Give them the rest of the gold.

BOUNCE. *(Relieved:)* Yes, Your Majesty.

(BOUNCE gives a huge bag of gold to the TRICKSTERS.)

(The TRICKSTERS bow and back away as quickly as they can, without appearing to rush. They exit.)

NARRATOR. The tricksters went off to invent something called “Advertising.”

ALL THREE TRICKSTERS. *(Cheering, out of sight:)* Whoooooo-Hooooo!

KING. What’s that noise?

(Pause.)

FLOUNCE. I...expect it’s the people, Your Majesty. No doubt they have heard of this amazing fabric, which only the clever can see. They must be gathering to see you in your *(Cough.)* new clothes.

BOUNCE. Shall I *(Cough.)* ...announce a grand parade? At the usual time, this afternoon? Show and Tell, Your Majesty?

(The KING looks down at his underwear.)

Scene 9

(Inside a castle.)

NARRATOR. King Chalazion was thinking about appearing before the people in his underwear. A wave of doubt struck him. But Queen Myopea called an immediate top-level, highest clearance, maximum security royal conference.

QUEEN. Your Majesty!

(She beckons him aside.)

What is going on, Doodle-bug?

KING. But Pretzel, what if all the people are STUPID, or even MOST of the people, and so no-one, or HARDLY anyone, can SEE the new clothes, and so everyone THINKS there aren't REALLY any clothes there, and they think THAT'S true, and, and, and...

QUEEN. Who thinks?

KING. The people think.

QUEEN. Oh, Drainpipe, the people don't think. And they don't look. So even if they DID think, they still wouldn't see.

KING. I see.

QUEEN. Look. You...and I...can see the clothes, right?

KING. Yes?

QUEEN. And that's all that matters. So repeat it. Affirm it. Stick to it.

KING. But...

QUEEN. Be a strong leader. Just keep telling the people, steadfastly, again and again, what's there in front of them, and they'll start seeing them too!

KING. But...

QUEEN. Don't let the tiniest doubt enter your...

KING. But...

QUEEN. ...MIND! When the people can see things clearly, the way we do, that means they'll be cleverer. Dust-bunny, you are actually doing a great service to the homeland, raising the intelligence level.

KING. Possum, you're right. I'll go down in history as a great king. I improved educational standards. I helped my people to see the Truth. I...

QUEEN. Yes, Dingbat. Now straighten your new belt, it's crooked.

(The KING looks down to where a belt should be.)

KING. Oh. Yes, of course...

(He starts to adjust an invisible belt, then decides to leave it as it is.)

Well, actually, Poopsie, I meant it to be at an angle. It's the fashion.

(The KING and QUEEN look at each other for a moment, trying to read each other's thoughts. Then the KING announces to the whole court...)

All right, I will grant the people the privilege of seeing my new suit.

Scene 10

(Outside a castle.)

(The CITIZENS and the PEASANTS begin to enter.)

NARRATOR. A great parade was held, at the king's usual "Show and Tell" time. Crowds gathered in the street, hoping to get a good look.

BORIS. Hello Maurice. Hello Doris.

MAURICE. Hello Boris.

DORIS. Hello Boris.

(MAUREEN enters last. She ignores the peasants as she passes them.)

BORIS. Hello Maureen.

MAURICE. Hello Maureen.

DORIS. Hello Maureen.

(PEASANTS exchange looks with each other.)

(MAUREEN approaches BOREEN and DOREEN, just as they are greeting each other. The CITIZENS are more reserved and formal as they greet.)

BOREEN. Hello Doreen

DOREEN. Hello Boreen.

MAUREEN. Is this where the citizens stand?

BOREEN. *(Polite, but cold, suspicious:)* Who are you?

MAUREEN. Maureen. *(Asking:)* Boreen?

(They shake hands politely, exchanging names.)

BOREEN. *(Confirming:)* Boreen.

DOREEN. Maureen? *(Introducing herself:)* Doreen.

MAUREEN. *(Committing it to memory:)* Doreen.

(The royal parade enters, slowly.)

NARRATOR. The crowd cheered politely as they saw the regal procession.

ALL CROWD. *(Politely:)* Hooray, the regal procession.

NARRATOR. The Attorney General, Secretary of State and the guards walked behind the king, carefully watching the people's reactions.

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. Watch them, Whimple.

WHIMPLE. SIR!

CAPTAIN PIMPLE. You too, Dimple.

DIMPLE. SIR!

NARRATOR. Everyone was watching through the corners of their eyes, to see how stupid his or her neighbor was. As the king passed, the crowd began to call out.

DOREEN. LOOK at the king's new clothes. They're BREATHTAKING!

BOREEN. What MARVELOUS styling!

MAUREEN. Oh, the COLORS...the SHEEN on that BEAUTIFUL fabric! I have never seen anything like it in my life!

BORIS. Sweet!

MAURICE. Cool!

DORIS. Neat!

NARRATOR. They all tried to conceal their disappointment at not being able to see the clothes...

...no one was willing to seem stupid. Everyone behaved exactly as the three tricksters had expected.

Then Sibyl stepped forward. A child, with no job to lose, nor reputation to keep up, she simply blurted out what she saw with her own two eyes.

SIBYL. The king is in his underwear!

NARRATOR. ...she yelled.

(Long pause. The procession continues for a moment in silent disbelief, with fixed grins.)

(DORIS steps forward.)

DORIS. *(Loud whisper:)* Sibyl, shut up!

NARRATOR. ...her mother reprimanded, and brought the child back into line.

DORIS. Don't talk nonsense! You'll get us into trouble.

SIBYL. I can see...

DORIS. If you EVER want to get on in school, or in life, you can NOT go around saying any old thing that you can see. People will think you're stupid.

SIBYL. It's not true.

DORIS. *I'LL* tell you what's true.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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