

# **THE EMPERORS' NEW CLOTHES**

## **The Bare Facts**

*Adapted by Vern Adix*

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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

This play is a new twist on the old-fashioned fairy tale. Two emperors from tiny, neighboring kingdoms are good friends but compete in wearing the latest fashions. Because they each continually want new, sumptuous wardrobes, their kingdoms are broke! Even their wives have to resort to doing dirty castle chores because there's no money to pay any staff. Finally an elaborate ruse is planned where both emperors are taught a lesson about vanity and trying to impress others by clothes. If there were flashlights and spotlights in this historic time when men wore beautiful clothing, then something like this might have happened!

An interesting gimmick is used for the nonexistent cloth. Props and costumes are far more important in the telling of this tale than full-stage scenery would be. Full of great, good fun!

Performance time: About an hour.

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(7 m, 7 w)*

*From the Empire of Slakovia*

The Emperor ALBERT

The Empress PENELOPE

Prince ROBERT

Princess EMILY

Prime Ministress ROSAGLINKA (*sister to the Queen*)

Royal Tailor EMILIO

Royal Cook ENRICO

*From the Empire of Perovia*

The Emperor HENRY

The Empress ANTOINETTE

Prince GEORGE

Princess MARY

Prime Minister GASPARD

Royal Seamstress THEOPHINA (*sister to the Queen*)

Royal Cook ERNESTINA

The action of the play takes place in and around the neighboring tiny empires of Perovia and Slakovia.

**SCENE 1**

*(AT RISE: The Palace in Slakovia. ALBERT, the Emperor is being fitted with a gorgeous new robe. It seems that he is always being fitted with a new robe. Somewhere around the room one can see the old robe that has been shed for the fitting of the moment. EMILIO, the Tailor, obviously new at the job, possesses something like five thumbs on each hand and is, needless to say, not very proficient at his profession. In spite of this he has managed to build a beautiful robe for his boss, the Emperor. During the course of the scene the Tailor spends much time doing two things: re-threading a bulky, oversized needle and poking said needle too deeply into the cloth. And of course each time this happens the Emperor reacts in a characteristic manner—with a howl. At the moment that has just taken place.)*

**ALBERT:** Ouch!!!!

**EMILIO:** A million pardons, Your Highness. *(HE drops his needle and stoops down to retrieve it.)*

**ALBERT:** *(Misunderstanding this to be a bow.)* Get up! Get up! I've told you a thousand times, you are my Imperial Tailor, a person of standing in the community. You needn't do all that nose-in-the-dirt business; that went out five hundred years ago. *(Pulls him up.)*

**EMILIO:** *(Getting right back down again.)* But, sire, I'm not bowing, I dropped my needle. *(Finds it.)* Here it is. Sorry I stuck you with it.

**ALBERT:** Try to be more careful. I'm beginning to feel like a pincushion.

**EMILIO:** Yes, sire, I'll try to be more careful. *(In an elaborate gesture HE pulls the thread out the needle.)* Drat, the needle won't stay threaded. *(Elaborate business of rethreading it.)*

**ALBERT:** *(Almost under his breath.)* Not again? *(HE reaches for a mirror.)*

**EMILIO:** Your Majesty, please don't move about so much when I'm trying to stitch.

**ALBERT:** But it always takes you so long to do anything.

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**EMILIO:** Only because Your Highness wants to look his elegant best, sire. *(In a huge gesture HE pulls the thread out again.)* Drat it, there goes the thread again.

**ALBERT:** Could you glue the thread in to the needle so it doesn't fall out so often?

**EMILIO:** I don't think that would work.

**ALBERT:** *(Looking in mirror - in a true masculine sense HE admires self.)* I must admit that I do always look handsome.

**EMILIO:** Oh, yes, sire, you do. *(HE drops a slip of paper that was fastened to costume, then picks it up and looks at it.)* Oh, by the way, I'll need this list of stuff to finish the robe.

**ALBERT:** More? *(Looks at paper.)* I wish you'd plan more carefully.

**EMILIO:** Begging your pardon, sire. It's not my fault.

**ALBERT:** *(Surprised by this statement.)* It's not?

**EMILIO:** *(Busy sewing.)* No, sire, it's yours.

**ALBERT:** My fault.

**EMILIO:** Yes.

**ALBERT:** How my fault?

**EMILIO:** Because you are never satisfied. You always want more frippery.

**ALBERT:** *(Doesn't understand.)* Frippery?

**EMILIO:** *(Very matter-of-fact. Busy sewing but again pulls thread out of needle.)* Yes, sire, you know - gewgaws.

**ALBERT:** Oh, yes, gewgaws.

**EMILIO:** I can't really plan very well. Remember I've only been your tailor for six months. After all, you know I -

**ALBERT:** Well, call Rosaglinka. She can pick this stuff up for you .... Oh, she's going to be angry about this.

**EMILIO:** Right away, sire. *(HE sticks needle in garment - in fact right through the garment into the Emperor behind it.)*

**ALBERT:** *(With a tremendous yell.)* Awooo!

**EMILIO:** *(Pulls needle out, drops it, and starts to pick it up. This places him in just the right position for Albert's boot.)* Sorry! *(ALBERT gives EMILIO a kick and he runs out yelling.)* Rosaglinka ... Rosaglinka ... Rosaglinka.

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**ALBERT:** Incompetent! Clumsy-fingered lout. (*Rubs place where the needle was stuck.*) Oh, to live in a rich kingdom for once where I could afford to hire a competent tailor .... Well, I guess that'll never happen so I'll just have to make the most of it.

**ROSAGLINKA:** (*Enters.*) You called for me, Albert.

(*EMILIO is back and busy with his clumsy needle.*)

**ALBERT:** Yes, Rosaglinka. (*Maybe a bit of flattery will help at the beginning of the conversation.*) You look ravishingly beautiful today, my dear.

**ROSA:** (*Disarmed by this.*) Oh, thank you, Albert. You look beautiful yourself.

**ALBERT:** Here, Rosa, will you take a look at this?

**ROSA:** What is it?

**ALBERT:** A few things Emilio needs to finish my robe.

**ROSA:** (*Blows her top.*) Oh, no! Not more.

**ALBERT:** Now, now, Rosa.

**ROSA:** I thought the last list included everything ....

**EMILIO:** (*Hides behind Emperor as HE sews behind him.*)  
A little mistake, ma'am.

**ROSA:** Can't you estimate your needs any better than this?

**EMILIO:** I've only been a tailor for six months. (*Pulls thread out again - almost cries.*) Oh, no, not again!

**ALBERT:** What is it, Emilio, what happened? (*Sees for himself what happened.*) Oh! (*To Rosa.*) Why did we release Ethelbert, my tailor?

**ROSA:** For the same reason that I've replaced the Prime Minister - money! He quit because we didn't pay him.

**ALBERT:** Oh!

**ROSA:** I don't mean to criticize Your Majesty. I mean, I'm happy to do this job, but if you didn't worry so much about clothes ... . If you didn't always have to dress in the height of fashion we'd -

**ALBERT:** (*Cuts her off and admonishes her.*) Uh-uh-uh-uh -uh. Don't slight the most important thing in the world - looking one's best.

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**ROSA:** But there's a difference between looking one's best and being a clotheshorse.

**ALBERT:** Horse!

*(EMILIO is down sewing on the lower part of the clothing.)*

**ROSA:** What I meant was ...

**ALBERT:** Rosa! *(HE moves violently and EMILIO falls on his face.)* Who is Emperor here - you or me? If you weren't my wife's sister I'd fire you and ... *(He cools off in a hurry.)* well, I don't know who I'd hire, but well, here, take this list.

**ROSA:** *(Resigned to it all.)* Yes, sire. I'll do my best.

*(ALBERT looks in mirror; SHE addresses Emilio.)*

**ROSA:** Are you sure that this is everything?

**EMILIO:** I think so, ma'am.

**ROSA:** Can't you be sure?

**EMILIO:** It depends upon His Majesty, ma'am. *(In gesturing HE unthreads the needle again.)*

**ALBERT:** *(Realizes that this is the end of it.)* We'll make do with the list.

**ROSA:** *(Looks at the list quizzically.)* This will cost money.

**ALBERT:** Oh, I'm sure it will.

**ROSA:** And we really don't have any.

*(ROSA shows him a big purse which she turns upside down and shakes. HE looks in it and then gives it back to her.)*

**ALBERT:** None? Write a check.

**ROSA:** A check? *(Blows her top.)* Your Majesty, there's no money in the bank - in the treasury. This is a bare fact: You can't write a check unless you have some money somewhere.

**ALBERT:** Oh!!!!!! *(Thinks a moment.)* How about taxes? Hmm! Go collect a few.

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