

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

by

L. Lewis Stout

Contact the author at:

lewisstout@earthlink.net

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

By L. Lewis Stout

The Characters in order of appearance

RINGLET - a wild wolf child

GENUIANA - a young teenage huntress

KUBLER - a magician and swindler

TOWNSMAN - can be one or multiple performers

TOWNSWOMAN - can be one or multiple performers

JENGIA - a young peasant girl

CHANCELLOR - an aristocratic old man with a long beard

FRONJIA - Jengia's mother and a lost princess

SYNTHETIA - A beautiful princess and sister of the Emperor

EMPEROR - A middle aged, vain ruler

The Setting

The forest, town and rooms in the Emperor's palace

By L. Lewis Stout All rights reserved

Address inquires to the author at:

E-mail: lewisstout@earthlink.net

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

By L. Lewis Stout

PRE-SHOW

Townspeople bring on the ladders and drapes of the set and arrange them while the audience takes their seats. As a final gesture of completion, the Townspeople unfurl the drapes that reveal a forest.

ACT ONE - SCENE ONE

The lights come up on a sun-dappled forest.

A piercing scream echoes and RINGLET tears through the audience and onto the stage, around, up and over ladders fleeing from a pursuer. Ringlet, a wolf child of incredible energy alternating with immobile lethargy, is wearing patchwork old clothes and hat with ears that gives the appearance of a wolf cub.

RINGLET

(howling like a wolf cub)

How-howou. How-how-howou, How-how-howou

(repeating her howl all through the chase)

Close behind her is GENUIANA, a young teenage huntress. She is dressed in tall black boots, leather vest and a short bow and quiver of arrows is strapped to her back. She is chasing Ringlet with a flashing short sword.

GENUIANA

(her hunting cry echoes repeatedly through the forest as she chases the wolf child)

Waa-hee-ahhh! Waa-hee-ahhh! Waa-hee-ahhh!

RINGLET

How-howou. How-how-howou, How-how-howou

Screams and whoops shake the trees as Genuiana chases Ringlet. KUBLER THE SWINDLER, dressed in a hodgepodge of colors, enters dragging an enormous bag. It is worn and patched with colored fabric. The bag is large enough to swallow a person whole.

KUBLER

Stand clear. Out of the way. Dangerous load coming through. I've got a big bag of trouble right here. Coming into town.

(stops center stage, confused, looks around)

Coming into the middle of...

(MORE)

KUBLER (cont'd)

(hears the offstage whoops and howls)
 ...a haunted forest?

Screams and whoops shake the trees as Genuiana chases Ringlet. Ringlet, running a half loop around the forest ahead of Genuiana, sees Kubler's bag and dives in headfirst. Kubler does not appear to see her enter his bag.

GENUIANA

The wolf, creature, with the ears and fur, whatever it was, where'd it go?

KUBLER

Never saw a creature, except that squirrel in the spruce tree up there.

GENUIANA

That wasn't a squirrel, it was as big as me and it had pointy ears and wolf fur. *(sees the bag move and instantly has her sword over the opening)* It's in the bag.

KUBLER

(goes to a tree and climbs to the top) Nah, I'd have seen it go in.

GENUIANA

It's not a squirrel.

KUBLER

And it's not in my bag.

(Genuiana cautiously peers inside, poking with her sword.)

KUBLER (cont'd)

I wouldn't do that. Good way to lose your sword, maybe even your arm.

(Suddenly her sword is yanked into the bag and thrown out at her feet.)

GENUIANA

What's in that bag?

KUBLER

Trouble. Magic trouble. Big magic trouble. Want another look?

GENUIANA

No! *(picks up sword to leave, but stops)* Are you trying to trick me?

KUBLER

I'm a magician. I trick everybody. Catch my act in the town square, high noon.

GENUIANA

That's not all I'm going to catch.

She cuts the air with her sword and exits upstage.

KUBLER

The town, which way is it? Ah nuts, I've got to talk faster. If that's possible.

The bag shakes and Ringlet pokes her head out.

RINGLET

See smoke. Tall chimneys. (she points) Go there. Nap now. (yawns, slips into the bag)

KUBLER

Oh sure, take a nap. Just like a baby sister. Alright, I'll do the work for the whole family... as usual. (scanning from the treetop) There it is! Kadja-kuloban, the greatest little empire between the kingdom back there, where we got chased out of town by an angry butcher, baker and candlestick maker, and the kingdom of over there, where we got run out by pretty much everybody. (descending) But we've never been run out of Kadja-kuloban, yet. (Kubler pulls a scenic drop revealing the town and proclaims...) We're here. Downtown Kadja-kuloban. I know it doesn't look like much of a town, but just watch me now. (A tambourine shoots up from the bag into Kubler's hand and he begins to beat and shake it as he proclaims at the top of his voice...) Lend an ear, Kubler is here. See the greatest magic act since sun caught fire and the moon turned blue with envy. Witness the flight of dragons. See a thousand elephants stampede on streets of gold. Gather 'round, Gather near. Lend an ear. Kubler is here. (to the bag) That ought to get 'em.

When Kubler starts his spiel the bag erupts with bubbles. Two townspeople unfurl more drapes to reveal a village. A TOWNSMAN tries to look into the bag, being brave in front of the TOWNSWOMAN. Kubler gives him a secretive push and the Townsman's bravado vanishes when he starts to fall into the open bag.

TOWNSMAN

Ahhh!

Kubler grabs him, holding the man back, as if saving him from danger.

KUBLER

Great demons man, that bag has been known to eat people. (ominously) And it hasn't eaten in twenty-seven days and twelve nights.

TOWNSMAN

Twenty-seven days and twelve nights? Why that don't make no sense.

KUBLER

That's just what the last victim said as he was slowly swallowed, "this don't make no sense". Never saw him again.

TOWNSWOMAN

Never ever?

KUBLER

No, never.

A young girl, JENGIA, charges on stage left, weaving her way through Kubler and the townspeople. She is carrying a bundle of bright red fabric that trails behind her. She is chased by the CHANCELLOR, an aristocratic, lanky, old man with a stringy long beard that dangles to his kneecaps. As Jengia dodges the Chancellor and the staff he swings at her, she stumbles into the bag and nearly falls in. Kubler and the townspeople react in fear as she teeters on the brink of falling in.

CHANCELLOR

(voice bumbling and crackling) Give that back. It belongs to the Emperor.

JENGIA

He threw it away. It's mine.

KUBLER

Watch out. The bag,

TOWNSPEOPLE

(variously ad-libbing) Watch out. It'll get you. Don't fall in the bag!

CHANCELLOR

It's brand new. He's never even worn it.

JENGIA

He's got a palace full of clothes. He won't miss this one.

CHANCELLOR

The Emperor will have us both by the ears for this.

JENGIA

My mother can make five dresses to sell from this cloth.

FRONJIA

(loudly from offstage) Jengia! (appearing at a window.) Jengia. Give the Chancellor his cloth. It's not ours.

JENGIA

Mother, you could make dresses and eat for a year on the money we'd earn.

CHANCELLOR

So, the dead tailor's widow has a thief for a daughter, has she?

FRONJIA

Jengia. We may be poor but we must honor the memory of your father.

JENGIA

(dejected) Yes, mother.

She reaches over the bag and starts to give the cloth to the Chancellor. Suddenly she throws the fabric into the bag. The Chancellor lunges and manages to catch a tailing end as the rest is pulled rapidly into the bag. He tugs on the free end.

CHANCELLOR

Help save the emperor's scarf. That's an order!

People grab the cloth and pull. They begin a tug-o-war, sometimes winning, sometimes losing with the Chancellor more into the bag than out. Kubler politely takes the far end and makes the barest show of pretending to help while Jengia and her mother, Fronjia, laugh at the sight of the Chancellor's legs kicking out of the bag. Suddenly, all freeze in ludicrous poses, motionless, except for their looks, which turn to see a fine looking young lady. SYNTHETIA, stroll on stage left and past the bag and down the row of people frozen in gestures of pulling on the cloth. Calmly observing the situation, she stops at Kubler.

SYNTHETIA

You're doing very little to save the Chancellor from falling into that bag.

KUBLER

(flicks the cloth end to cool himself) I suppose you're right. But it's my bag.

SYNTHETIA

Does that mean that you would like to have the Chancellor in your bag?

KUBLER

Depends on what a Chancellor is.

SYNTHETIA

A Chancellor is like a lawyer and a politician.

KUBLER

That's two things I certainly don't want in my bag. I'll pull harder.

He takes a handful of cloth and gives a hefty yank and the townspeople and the Chancellor come flying back, landing in a heap at Synthetia's feet.

CHANCELLOR

Oh dear. It's wrinkled. The Emperor is going to make me clean out his horse stables for a year when he sees this. (exiting stage left)

SYNTHETIA

(following him) Chancellor, my brother has more cloth and more clothes, shelves of shirts, racks of shoes and boxes of silly buttons than...

KUBLER

(finishing her thought) Peacocks have feathers?

SYNTHETIA

Than gold fish have scales.

KUBLER

Your brother must be a very wealthy man.

SYNTHETIA

He's the Emperor. He has all the wealth of the kingdom.

TOWNSMAN

And he keeps every bit of it in his palace.

TOWNSWOMAN

Hanging on golden hooks in his five hundred closets.

SYNTHETIA

That's a myth. The actual number is six hundred.

KUBLER

Your Emperor must be something to see.

TOWNSWOMAN

As if we never get a chance to see that.

TOWNSMAN

Yeah, like maybe only two or three times... a day.

JENGIA

Before my father died, he was the Emperor's tailor. He made all the Emperor's clothes.

FRONJIA

Worked himself to death. Jengia, come in and share our last potato for lunch.

(she closes the window and is gone)

KUBLER

When can I meet the wealthy Emperor?

SYNTHETIA

Stand right and wait five minutes and you will see him. I must go.

KUBLER

When will I see you again?

SYNTHETIA

In five minutes. (she exits stage left)

(The Townspeople and Jengia exit into doors and offstage. Kubler stops Jengia.)

KUBLER

Why is everybody leaving? The Emperor is coming.

JENGIA

They're going to get their sticks. I'll bring one for you too. It's the law.

(She exits into her house. Ringlet momentarily peeks out from the bag)

KUBLER

Sticks? The law? I don't know what's this is all about, Ringlet, but I tell you this, I smell lots of gold. And it's coming our way.

(The Chancellor is heard to call, from the back of the audience, and Kubler turns to look. The Chancellor is heard to pound his long staff of office and then he calls...)

CHANCELLOR

Make way for our grand and glorious emperor. Glamorosis the Fourth, our excellent Emperor of Kadja-Kuloban. Make way, make way. All hail the Emperor.

Jengia returns with a sign on a stick for Kubler that reads, "You're the best". Jengia's sign reads, "Great looking shoes". FRONJIA and other townspeople come out carrying one or more signs that single out and praise the Emperor's clothing. They wear shirts and hats with praise sayings. One has a cart loaded with praise saying signs and bumper stickers. The Chancellor keeps repeating his call.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Make way for our grand and glorious emperor. Glamorosis the Fourth, our excellent Emperor of Kadja-Kuloban. Make way, make way. All hail the Emperor.

The townspeople cheer, ad-lib, and praise the Emperor, but their lack of sincerity is fully evident as the Emperor enters from the back of the audience. He is a spectacle to behold, in his foot and a half tall platform shoes that give him towering stature, his jeweled and sequined pants, coat and robes of gold, his gloved hands with two foot finger extensions, his head topped with a impossibly high purple wig of curled hair and ribbons. Above all that, a two foot high crown floats above him, held aloft by a curving rod that comes up from the back of his coat. Behind him trails a twenty foot long swallowed tailed train. One tip of the train is held aloft on a long golden staff by his elegant sister, Synthetia. The other tip is similarly held aloft by his younger, teenage and huntress dressed sister, Genuiana. She still carries a quiver of arrows and bow strapped across her back. The Chancellor leads the Emperor onto the stage where his majesty circles, strikes a pose and is given loud applause and great ad-lib praise. Then the Emperor raises a hand and all fall silent.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Silence. Our Emperor speaks.

EMPEROR

People of Kadja-kuloban, I am here. (all cheer) I grant you the pleasure of admiring your emperor. (all cheer) Of praising your emperor, (all cheer) Let us all celebrate the glory of Kadja-kuloban, which of course is me, your Emperor. (all cheer) You may cheer. (all cheer)

With a flourish of his hand as the crowd manages a feeble cheer, the Emperor turns and circles again. But he has entwined himself in his train and catches his feet. He teeters and falls. All fall silent. No one moves, not even the Chancellor. Kubler, seizes the moment and rushes to stand before the Emperor and applaud, alone. Everyone is astounded. The Chancellor points his staff. Genuiana takes bow and arrow and stands ready to draw. Kubler continues to applaud.

KUBLER

Emperor, that was the best dance I have ever seen. My lord, you are an artist. Three cheers for the Emperor. Hip hip, hooray. (Slowly everyone joins in) Hip hip hooray. Hip hip hooray. Please, your exalted highness, allow me the honor of taking your hand.

Kubler reaches out and jerks the Emperor to his feet. Again the crowd cheers. Genuiana lowers her bow. The Chancellor tries to come between Kubler and the Emperor, but Kubler quickly reaches into his pocket and brings out a business card and holds it in front of the Chancellor's face, stopping him.

KUBLER (cont'd)

My card, your highness. It is not often that I get a chance to talk with someone who has your highly developed artistic sensibilities. (to Genuiana) Oh, and you with the bow and arrow, watch my bag. Shall we be off?

(Without losing a beat, Kubler escorts the Emperor offstage left while Synthetia gathers the swallowtail train and follows.)

SYNTHETIA

Like the man says, Sis, watch the bag.
(she exits.)

GENUIANA

(fiery to the Chancellor)Chancellor. That man, that magician, just walked off with my brother. What in low praise are you going to do about it? (drawing her bow and aiming it offstage left) Answer while he's still in range.

CHANCELLOR

(bumbling and crackling) Ahh, well, uhmm, Genuiana, watch the bag.

(He dashes off. Genuiana, throws angry looks at everyone and they all flee.)

GENUIANA

Watch the bag. Watch the bag. Rats. I hate being the little sister. Genuiana do this. No, Genuiana, you can't do that, you're too young. You're too little. Little Genuiana. Genuiana the pest. Rats. I'm Genuiana the best. Watch the bag.

Genuiana's eyes turn toward the bag. She goes to it and leans down, way down, closer and closer when suddenly, Jengia, on a ladder looking down, screams. Genuiana is given a real fright as she unsheathes a dagger from her belt and turns in panicked circles before seeing Jengia above her.

GENUIANA (cont'd)

Oh, it just a little girl kid.

JENGIA

Well, you're a girl too, you know and not much older than me.

GENUIANA

I'm a teenager.

JENGIA

I'm almost a teenager, going on even older. (she climbs down) And if you get closer to that bag, I'm going to be sixteen before you.

GENUIANA

Oh, yeah, I'm years older than you are, so how's that gonna happen?

JENGIA

Because that bag's gonna eat you and you're never going to be sixteen. Not ever.

GENUIANA

Not ever?

JENGIA

No, never. You wanna see?

GENUIANA

Ah... no. Do you?

JENGIA

Ah... yeah.

GENUIANA

Yeah, me too. How about I hold your feet and lower you into the bag?

JENGIA

Get real. How about we poke it with your bow and arrow? (grabs Genuiana's bow and arrow) I'll go first.

GENUIANA

Hey, you little pest.

JENGIA

I'm not a pest and I'm not little. Take that back.

GENUIANA

(remembering her own lament) Sure. You're not a pest. Hey, you want to watch the bag with me... together?

JENGIA

Sure. Together.

GENUIANA

Make sure nothing falls in.

JENGIA

I'm not worried about things falling in. I'm worried about things coming out.

GENUIANA

Coming out? I've got the bow and arrow. You want to hold my dagger?

JENGIA

Your dagger? Sure it's alright?

GENUIANA

Sure, you're big enough. And a girl. That makes it doubly alright.

JENGIA

Alright!

Suddenly the bag stretches up and moves around and the two girls jump back. Inside the bag, Ringlet stands up without showing herself and quickly walks the bag toward offstage right. The two girls recover from shock and follow in curiosity.

GENUIANA

Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

JENGIA

I'm not seeing anything. No legs, no head.

GENUIANA

So how can I watch something I can't see?

JENGIA

I don't know, but let's watch it in the woods, 'cuz that's where it's going.

The two girls run after the bag with Ringlet inside. Two Townspeople, donning royal surplices, pull the stage left drapes to reveal the Emperor's throne room.

SCENE TWO

The Emperor is undressing with Kubler's help as the Chancellor tries to assist.

CHANCELLOR

This is wrong. I should be taking off the Emperor's clothes.

KUBLER

If you want to take off the Emperor's clothes you'll have to wear them first, and frankly, Chancellor, they're too big for you. And the wrong color for this time of year.

EMPEROR

The wrong color?

KUBLER

For this time of year. But you already knew that and were just making a fashion statement weren't you?

EMPEROR

Yes. I knew that and was being...

KUBLER

Being innovative. Very trend setting, if you pull it off.

CHANCELLOR

The Emperor pulls off anything he likes. Or I can pull it off for him.

EMPEROR

Yes, innovative, trend setting. Yes, I suppose I was. But I'm being modest. I'm good at being modest. But then again, (makes a grand gesture) I'm good at everything.

KUBLER

Hold it! Don't move muscle. Just be. Be!

CHANCELLOR

A bee? A bee?

EMPEROR

On... me? A bee?

KUBLER

(circling rapidly around the Emperor, gesticulating wildly.)
I see! I see!

EMPEROR

A bee?

CHANCELLOR

(pounding on the frozen Emperor as if to kill a pest) A bee on he?

KUBLER

Let it be. (plops to the floor, reclining on one arm) Let it be.

EMPEROR

(frozen with fear) Is... it... . still on ...me?

KUBLER

What in high praise are you doing to the Emperor?

CHANCELLOR

I'm killing the bee. (slapping all over the Emperor as if to put out a fire)

KUBLER

Have you gone looney falooney? There's no bee on the Emperor.

CHANCELLOR

Then what's wrong with him?

KUBLER

Can't you see? The Emperor's not wearing any clothes.

The Chancellor looks at the cowering Emperor. The Emperor peeks through his fingers. The Chancellor pries the Emperor's hands from his face and manipulates his highness into a more relaxed stance and covers him with a dressing robe.

EMPEROR

That will be enough. (a growing shout) In fact, that would be too much!

KUBLER

Don't blame the Chancellor for his foolish actions. Blame me... for being inspired by your perfect body, ideal for a regal ensemble of fine clothing. But forget it

He turns to go and strides to exit, but is stopped mid step by the Emperor.

EMPEROR

A regal ensemble of fine clothing? Tell me more.

CHANCELLOR

But my Emperor...

KUBLER

(nearly motionless except for the smallest pointing of his finger) Him or me?

EMPEROR

(considering the choice as the Chancellor squirms, he looks at the Chancellor) Coffee. Black.

CHANCELLOR

(very meekly) Sugar?

EMPEROR

Two lumps. Be back in five.

The Chancellor scuttles off and the Emperor approaches Kubler

EMPEROR (cont'd)

Describe this regal clothing.

KUBLER

It is indescribable, unless you are worthy to see.

EMPEROR

Unless what?

KUBLER

It is for exalted eyes. Superior minds. In short, Emperor, it is only for you.

EMPEROR

My goodness. Really so... so fine?

KUBLER

Finer by far.

EMPEROR

But what does it look like? What are its colors?

KUBLER

That is what's so unique. The cut and the colors are in the eye of the beholder.

EMPEROR

In the eye of the beholder?

KUBLER

Only those who are worthy will see your splendid attire. The unworthy, the unfit for office, will see nothing at all.

EMPEROR

The worthy see the wardrobe, and the unworthy see nothing? Why, it is a test. By what they see, I shall know them for what they are.

KUBLER

You are brilliant ruler, Emperor. And wise in the ways of power.

EMPEROR

And money too. What will be the cost?

KUBLER

Its cost is so very great I cannot speak of it but in a whisper. (he leans in and whispers in the Emperor's ear)

EMPEROR

Oh my!

KUBLER

That's why it is a garment meant only for someone who is... you.

Synthetia briskly slides back a curtain and enters the room.

KUBLER (cont'd)

Princess Synthetia.

SYNTHETIA

Magician.

KUBLER

Actually, I'm only a tailor.

EMPEROR

A tailor who is a magician with cloth.

SYNTHETIA

Does that mean it's very expensive?

KUBLER

Only at first. Then it's all in the labor. All hand made... by these two hands.

SYNTHETIA

(takes his hand) You have smooth hands for a tailor. Not a sign of work.

KUBLER

My sister, Ringlet, helps. We're a team. I design. She weaves. I cut. She sews.

SYNTHETIA

You talk and we pay.

EMPEROR

And weave and cut you must, today. Sister, take him to Mistress FRONJIA's house. (to Kubler) She is the tailor's widow and a very beautiful lady. She will give you her weaver's loom and everything a fine tailor needs.

KUBLER

And three meals a day?

EMPEROR

And two more at night, because you will work night and day. I want my clothes the day after tomorrow. (Calling loudly) Chancellor!

The Chancellor rushes in with a cup and a pot of coffee, trying to pour as he goes. He sticks the cup in the Emperor's hand, takes a pitcher of cream from his pocket, pours and then reaches into his hat for two lumps of sugar and drops them into the cup and stands proudly before his Emperor.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

I said tea. I want you to plan a special parade the day after tomorrow.

(MORE)

EMPEROR (cont'd)

Nothing too elaborate, just a hundred knights in shining armor on horseback followed by fifty drummers. No, make that thirty. Drummers are such a wild lot.

CHANCELLOR

And the occasion is?

EMPEROR

I'm going to be wearing a new outfit. Now you two hurry to the tailor's widow and the Chancellor will follow with the gold.

CHANCELLOR

Gold? Gold? What gold? How much gold?

SYNTHETIA

Well done. But you caught him in a weak moment.

KUBLER

Does he have any other kind?

(Kubler offers his arm, Synthetia takes it and they exit together)

CHANCELLOR

You promised that swindler gold coins?

EMPEROR

(He moves upstage behind a curtain) No. He didn't want gold coins.

CHANCELLOR

Whew! That a relief. Wait. If not coins, what are you giving him?

EMPEROR

Dust.

CHANCELLOR

Dust? Plain old common palace dust?

EMPEROR

Of course not. You think I'm going to wear clothes made of common dust? Gold dust, Chancellor. Four buckets of gold dust. Get it now, and take it to him... now!

The Townspeople begin to slowly change the curtains into the forest. The Chancellor tries to follow but is barred by the Townspeople.

CHANCELLOR

Four buckets of gold dust?

EMPEROR

Now! (he is gone, behind a forest.)

CHANCELLOR

That Emperor, that... nincompoop. He'll drive the whole country into bankruptcy and we'll all be living in the woods with the wolves.

The Chancellor realizes that the curtain has cut him off from the Emperor. He is alone in the a dark forest. A wolf howl is heard from far off.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Wolves? Woods? Wolves. Oh my.

(The wolf-like Ringlet bounds in behind him. The Chancellor sees her and rushes offstage. Ringlet rolls on the ground in hysterical and wolf-like laughter. But behind her, Genuiana and Jengia are creeping up on her with a large net spread between them. They pounce and after a struggle have her secured in the net.)

GENUIANA

Now what are you going to do, wolf girl?

JENGIA

Yeah, what now?

RINGLET

Me tired. Sleep now. (Ringlet falls fast asleep in the net)

JENGIA

Hey, you can't go to sleep. We just caught you. (Jengia tries to shake Ringlet awake, but nothing works.) That's not fair.

GENUIANA

Come on, help me drag the creature into town.

JENGIA

Maybe there's a reward.

(While they drag her off the Townspeople change the scene to the town center. Kubler and Synthetia enter stage right and walk toward the widow's house.)

SYNTHETIA

The tailor's widow's house is right up here.

KUBLER

So, does your husband do something important for the Emperor?

SYNTHETIA

Is that a magician's way of asking me if I am married?

KUBLER

Since I am unfamiliar with marriage myself, I was just...

SYNTHETIA

Trying to tell me that you are single and interested in a Princess?

KUBLER

Since you know what I'm doing before I do it, perhaps you can tell me...

SYNTHETIA

Why I allow you to cheat my brother with promises of a suit of clothes?

KUBLER

That would've been my second question. But we're at the widow's house... (knocks) Hello, tailor's widow?

SYNTHETIA

Her name is Princess FRONJIA.

KUBLER

Princess FRONJIA? This town is like a fairy tale, everyone is a Princess. Is she another sister?

SYNTHETIA

No, she's from a land far, far away.

KUBLER

Oh, I've been there. Nice place, but rainy.

SYNTHETIA

Princess FRONJIA fell in love with a brave little tailor and ran away from her father's palace. She said it was worth it, until her husband died from swallowing a fly.

KUBLER

He swallowed a fly?

SYNTHETIA

I don't know why.

(FRONJIA comes out and meets them at the door.)

FRONJIA

I'm sorry, the tailor no longer lives here.

KUBLER

Princess FRONJIA, I am Kubler the Magnificent.

FRONJIA

Oh my. Did my father, the king who lives far, far away, send you?

SYNTHETIA

No. He's not from you father.

KUBLER

But I do know him. We're like that. (crossing two fingers together)

SYNTHETIA

I am Princess Synthetia. My brother the Emperor wants you to give Kubler everything he needs to make royal suit of clothes. Kubler will pay you.

KUBLER

From the Emperor's gold.

FRONJIA

Gold? What a wonderful surprise.

They look up as Genuiana and Jengia drag Ringlet in the net onstage.

SYNTHETIA

Speaking of surprises, my sister Genuiana.

FRONJIA

And my daughter Jengia.

KUBLER

Trouble comes in threes. The creature in their net is my little sister, Ringlet.

FRONJIA

She looks like a wolf cub.

KUBLER

Half and half. Two years ago I found her in the woods, being raised by a pack of fierce wolves. It was winter and I couldn't leave her, so I adopted her as my baby sister.

FRONJIA

Why didn't you adopt her as you daughter?

KUBLER

You have to be a father to a daughter, but anyone can be a brother.

SYNTHETIA

Or a sister. (approaching Genuiana) Well sister Genuiana, I see you've captured a couple of playmates.

JENGIA

Hey, she didn't capture me. We captured that!

GENUIANA

I captured that. Whatever that is.

KUBLER

And my everlasting 'thank you' for bringing my sister home ready to work. (freeing her and tossing her over his shoulder and returning to FRONJIA.) Now show us where we can begin weaving our spell.

SYNTHETIA

You mean clothes don't you.

KUBLER

Half and half. (he carries Ringlet inside.)

SYNTHETIA

Now, you two young ladies, dressed in such appealing fashion of leather, rags, swords and dirt, what shall we do while the Emperor waits for his new clothes?

FRONJIA

Jengia, you need to clean the hearth and gather firewood.

SYNTHETIA

And Genuiana, you have a mound of books your tutors gave you to read for "palace work"?

GENUIANA

Hey, you're not the Emperor. You can't tell me what to do.

CHANCELLOR

But I can, in the name of the Emperor.

The Chancellor enters riding atop a cart of buckets of gold. Two Townspeople push the cart. When the cart abruptly stops, the Chancellor flies forward and is caught by Genuiana and Jengia. He picks himself up, proclaiming.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Here are the mad tailor's buckets of gold dust. This is as far as I take them. Tell him to help himself.

Kubler appears at the top of a ladder near center stage.

KUBLER

And help myself I will. (throwing down two ropes that land on the Chancellor) If these strong folks will lend a hand up here.

Ringlet appears on the other ladder and throws two more ropes that also land on the Chancellor and shouts down.

RINGLET

Come, friends. Grab gold buckets. Tie rope. Then up, up, up, up.

CHANCELLOR

Now, swindler, you have enough rope, and gold, to hang yourself. Bad luck to you all. Except you, Princesses. (storms out, but his foot is still tangled in a rope and he trips and falls, before he is able to exit.)

KUBLER

Up, Up and away. Tie the buckets and come inside.

Once the buckets are tied to the ropes, all but Synthetia hurry inside and are soon up the ladders as Kubler disappears and reappears at the door.

KUBLER (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Princess Synthetia, but I'm fresh out of engraved invitations. Please, come in and witness the 'lightening' of the gold.

SYNTHETIA

How does one 'lighten' gold, Kubler?

KUBLER

Watch and wonder.

Kubler leads Synthetia to the two center curtains and guides her hands as they both open the curtains to reveal an empty loom frame upstage. Our three girls and FRONJIA are on the two ladders each holding a bucket of gold dust.

KUBLER (cont'd)

Now Ringlet, show the others how gold is lightened.

Ringlet reaches into her bucket and starts tossing the gold dust, gold colored confetti, into the air and watches it float down. The other three do the same thing and soon the air between the two ladders is filled with falling gold. Kubler leads Synthetia into the golden snowfall, where they stand in amazement.

SYNTHETIA

Tell me again, Kubler, why you are doing this?

KUBLER

Remember, we are making the Emperor's new clothes out of four buckets of heavy gold. But first we must make the gold lighter so that his coat will float on him like cobwebs on a summer breeze.

SYNTHETIA

I cannot believe what I am seeing is real. Gold, falling like snowflakes all around us.

KUBLER

Enjoy it, Synthetia, because it's the last time you'll ever see such a sight... or see this gold.

SYNTHETIA

Kubler, you are a marvelous magician after all.

KUBLER

Not half as marvelous as you, Princess.

(He kisses her on the cheek. The four keep tossing gold. The lights dim to black.)

END ACT ONE

***** INTERMISSION *****

ACT TWO - SCENE ONE

The lights come up as the two "Royal Townspeople" unfurl drapes that reveal a hall outside the Emperor's chambers. The royal Townsman and Townswoman, both with a tall lance, stand guard as the Chancellor enters. He carries a parchment message, but is barred from going inside to see the Emperor.

CHANCELLOR

I'm the Chancellor, you can't stop me.

TOWNSMAN

The tailor is with the Emperor.

CHANCELLOR

That swindler can see the Emperor and I can't? That's outrageous.

TOWNSWOMAN

Right you are, ducky. But you can call him. He's behind that curtain.

CHANCELLOR

This is so embarrassing. Emperor. Emperor? I brought you a message.

EMPEROR

(offstage) Leave it with the guards.

CHANCELLOR

I hate this. But sir, shouldn't we discuss it?

EMPEROR

Oh, very well, come in.

CHANCELLOR

You heard him, open the curtain.

TOWNSMAN

Low praise, I have to do everything around here.

TOWNSWOMAN

I told you to go into real estate. But no, you wanted to play the palace.

The Royal Townspeople open the curtain. Synthetia and Genuiana hold up a six foot tall, three foot wide childish drawing of the emperor, without a head. Standing nearby is a dress dummy with the Emperor's coat on it.

CHANCELLOR

Princesses Synthetia and Genuiana. Such a lovely drawing.

GENUIANA

Don't pretend nice to me, Chancellor. You big faker.

CHANCELLOR

Very well, Princess. Where is the Emperor?

KUBLER

(his head popping up from behind the paper with colored chalk in his hands) Right here, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR

The swindler! Where is the Emperor?

KUBLER

He doesn't believe me, Princesses.

CHANCELLOR

Take that silly drawing for the Emperor? I'd have to be dumb as he is.

KUBLER

(stepping out from behind the drawing) I think it looks just him. Don't you?

CHANCELLOR

You've drawn him with the muscles of a weight lifter. The real Emperor has arms as thin as broomsticks.

KUBLER

Really? What else is wrong?

CHANCELLOR

His bottom. What you've drawn looks normal. The real Emperor's bottom is as big as two fat pigs.

KUBLER

Dumb with arms like broomsticks and a bottom like two fat pigs? (turns to the drawing of the Emperor and asks) Well, Emperor what do you think of that.

The Emperor shows his head above the drawing. The Chancellor almost faints.

EMPEROR

Chancellor. I glad to have your opinion on intelligence, my skinny arms and big bottom. But more important, what do you think of the costume fitting?

CHANCELLOR

That drawing is the fitting?

KUBLER

It's the newest tailoring technique. (tracing final lines of the Emperor's form) Everything else is old fashioned. There. It's finished.

Kubler drops the paper, revealing the coatless Emperor. Kubler rolls the drawing and offers his arms to the Princesses. Synthetia accepts. Genuiana brushes him off.

GENUIANA

I'll find my own playmates, thanks. (she exits)

KUBLER

After I visit with Princess Synthetia in the garden, Chancellor, perhaps you would come to the tailor shop to see the golden cloth being woven, if you... dare.

Kubler and the Princess exit past the Chancellor. The two royal Townspeople drop their lances to form an arch for the couple to pass under on their way out.

TOWNSWOMAN

I think she's falling for him.

TOWNSMAN

She almost fell for me once.

TOWNSWOMAN

Sure she did, ducky. Just keep holding your lance up.

CHANCELLOR

What did that gold stealing fraud mean by, "if you dare"?

EMPEROR

(removing his coat from the dummy and putting it on) Didn't you hear? He's weaving magical cloth that can only be seen by someone worthy to serve me.

CHANCELLOR

Magical? Preposterous! He's a swindler. Anyone can see that.

EMPEROR

Can you?

CHANCELLOR

Of course.

EMPEROR

Then I command you to visit the tailor and tell me what you've seen.

CHANCELLOR

Tell you what I've seen?

EMPEROR

Yes, tell me if my new clothes will make my arms look bigger than a broomstick and my bottom, well, my bottom speaks for itself. (He exits)

CHANCELLOR

Clothes that only the worthy can see? It can't be true. But if it is true, I'm not worried. After all, who is more worthy than me? Even if I did tell the Emperor that his bottom was bigger than two pigs... really big fat pigs. Hee, hee, hee.

While the Chancellor laughs, the Townsfolk move another curtain and the Chancellor is again in the forest. He turns and sees the trees and is fearful.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Oh! Not again. What's that sound. The crunching of bones? Wolves?

(He hides behind a tree as FRONJIA and JENGIA enter the woods carrying small bundles of firewood. The Chancellor listens as they talk and gather more sticks.)

FRONJIA

There's more firewood over there.

JENGIA

Mother, if you're a Princess, why do we have to hunt for firewood instead of buying new clothes like the Emperor wears?

FRONJIA

I gave up being a princess to marry your father.

JENGIA

You shouldn't have.

FRONJIA

Then I wouldn't have you. And I wouldn't trade you for all the new clothes in the Emperor's six hundred closets.

JENGIA

(Jengia sees the Chancellor hiding behind the tree. She gets an idea.) What would you trade for the clothes the tailor is making for the Emperor?

FRONJIA

I don't know. I've never seen them.

JENGIA

I've seen them.

CHANCELLOR

(suddenly very interested) She's seen them?

The Chancellor listens eagerly, moving as close as he can without being seen.

FRONJIA

But the tailor never lets anyone see.

JENGIA

I peeked through a mouse hole in the wall. Oh, mother, the cloth is so pretty. The colors are so colorful. It's covered with flowers, stars and lots and lots of everything.

FRONJIA

Flowers and stars?

CHANCELLOR

And everything?

JENGIA

More, Mother even more.

FRONJIA

That's enough wood. Let's go home and I'll look through the mouse hole too.

JENGIA

It's by the street. You have to get on your hands and knees to look in.

They exit and the Chancellor comes out of hiding.

CHANCELLOR

Saw it through a mouse hole, by the street. I'll have a secret preview.

Townpeople change the curtains to the town. The Chancellor goes to the tailor's.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Where's this mouse hole? (getting down on his hand and knees to look) Drat, I wish that mice were not so short.

The Chancellor wiggles into different positions to look through the mouse hole. Ringlet and Kubler enter overhead on ladders watching the Chancellor. Kubler waves his arms for others in the town to gather around. When FRONJIA, Jengia, Genuiana and the townspeople have gathered, Kubler makes an announcement.

KUBLER

Presenting the Chancellor humbling himself at a mouse hole.

Kubler and everyone applaud as the startled Chancellor leaps to his feet.

KUBLER (cont'd)

Stay Chancellor and see what the Emperor will soon be wearing. (to the crowd) What I am about to reveal will astound you! Stretched across the wooden loom is a fabric of brilliant colors, marvelous designs... and magical powers.

JENGIA

It's got stars all over it and flowers too.

RINGLET

Stars. Flowers! Lots and lots!

TOWNSWOMAN: I heard it has stripes of real gold.

RINGLET (cont'd)

Real gold!

CHANCELLOR

You claim it has magical powers?

TOWNSMAN

Yeah, what about the magic?

RINGLET

Bad people see nothing.

CHANCELLOR

What kind of nonsense is that? .

RINGLET

It magic.

KUBLER

Only people who are worthy to serve the Emperor can see its brilliant colors. Who of you will see it?

RINGLET

Who no see it?

TOWNSWOMAN

I saw it when they left the door open. I like the flowers.

TOWNSMAN

I like the stripes of real gold.

TOWNSWOMAN

Come on tailor. Show us again.

RINGLET

Again. Again.

KUBLER

I'm about to cut out the pieces. You can all watch. Ready Ringlet.

RINGLET

Ready, ready.

Kubler and Ringlet pull the curtain open to reveal a large empty frame. The crowd gasps then fall silent. The Chancellor is the first to speak.

CHANCELLOR

What is this? The Emperor has been robbed! Four buckets of gold dust and all you can show is... is... just... two stripes of gold and a few stars of... of goldish... kind of... well, you all see it. It's too much color. It won't match the Emperor's hair. You, Genuiana. You're the Emperor's sister. What do you have to say?

GENUIANA

Ahh... I wouldn't wear it. But the Emperor wears lots of weird stuff.

TOWNSWOMAN

I think it's gorgeous. Make me a dress from the scraps.

KUBLER

Chancellor, should I start cutting now, or do you want me to wait until you report to the Emperor? Remember, time is money and he wants it for tomorrow.

CHANCELLOR

Cut away, but be careful not to waste a thread. All the gold scraps belong to the Emperor. Get to work, tailor, get to work. All of you get back to work too.

The crowd clears away leaving Kubler, Ringlet, FRONJIA and the Chancellor to watch. Ringlet scurries and opens and hangs up the drawing of the Emperor.

Kubler carefully consults it, and measures with his arm both the pattern and the fabric. Then he takes a giant pair of scissors and starts to cut the empty air.

KUBLER

Fronjua, would you hold the pieces as I cut them?

FRONJIA

I always helped my husband this way.

KUBLER

Be very careful. This cloth is so light that you can't even feel it.

CHANCELLOR

You listen to him, woman, those are the Emperor's clothes you're holding. Be extra special careful.

Kubler, Ringlet and FRONJIA continue working on the clothes, cutting and putting the piece on a nearby dress dummy and sewing them together while the following actions continues. The Chancellor walks stage left while a towns person draws back a curtain to reveal the palace and the Emperor, who is standing before a mirror and applying makeup to his face.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Your Excellency, I have seen the tailor.

EMPEROR

Tell me. What was it like? Was it magnificent? Was it me?

CHANCELLOR

I don't know how to describe it, sir.

EMPEROR

If you saw it you can describe. You were able to see it weren't you.

CHANCELLOR

Of course, I was able to see it. I saw stripes of gold... and stars.

EMPEROR

Stars? Oh, I love stars, they are so me.

CHANCELLOR

And flowers. Your favorite flowers.

EMPEROR

Daffodils?

CHANCELLOR

Yes, hundreds of daffodils.

EMPEROR

Actually I don't like daffodils.

CHANCELLOR

But they are very, very tiny. I barely noticed them at all. Mostly the flowers were... were... you know the... what's that flower you love so much?

EMPEROR

Roses?

CHANCELLOR

Yes, roses.

EMPEROR

I wish I could see it with my own eyes.

CHANCELLOR

So do I. I mean, yes, you should, secretly. Without me.

EMPEROR

Chancellor, that is a brilliant idea. I'll go secretly, in disguise. I'll go as a... pirate. Who'll suspect a pirate is the Emperor? Yo ho, ho, ho and a bottle of chardonnay. Let's away.

They exit. Kubler is sewing on the invisible clothes. FRONJIA picks up a basket and exits down the street. Stage right, in a room in the palace, Genuiana enters with a bundle of fine dresses. Still wearing her huntress clothing, she holds up one of the dresses in front of her, preening and enjoying the swirl of the fabric as she spins. Jengia enters holding up a frilly dress and pretends to model it.

JENGIA

I don't look good in a pink dress, do I?

GENUIANA

Better than I do. I never look good in any dress.

JENGIA

Try on the yellow one. It's just right for your hair.

GENUIANA

The only thing right for my hair is riding a horse or chasing wild deer through the forest.

JENGIA

That's fun, Genuiana. But sometimes wearing something really sweet is fun too. You can do both, and still be you.

GENUIANA

Maybe I should have that tailor make me a dress I can ride horses and chase deer in. One dress does it all.

JENGIA

(looking at her tattered dress) That's what I wear, because I only own one dress.

GENUIANA

That not true. You own all these dresses, because I'm giving them to you.

JENGIA

You can't give me all this.

GENUIANA

Sure I can, I'm a Princess and, more important, I'm your friend.

JENGIA

Ah, that makes me feel like a sister. But you've got to make me a promise.

GENUIANA

I will and since I'm a princess, I'll keep my promise. What is it?

JENGIA

When I wear one of these dresses, you'll wear a dress too. So I won't feel alone.

GENUIANA

So you won't feel alone? I promise, sister.

JENGIA

Sister.

They hug, gather the dresses and exit. Kubler and Ringlet are still busy working on the clothes. Synthetia enters stage right wearing a hooded cloak. She looks at Kubler working, but slips to one side as two townspeople approach.

TOWNSWOMAN

Pretty stylish get up, wouldn't you say?

TOWNSMAN

More beautiful than I got words for.

TOWNSWOMAN

I sure like them full cut billowy sleeves he's sewing.

TOWNSMAN

Billowy huh? Oh, yeah, I see what you mean, billowy for sure.

The Emperor, in pirate costume with an eye patch and sword, swaggers onstage past the hooded Synthetia. Seeing the townspeople, he swaggers toward them.

EMPEROR

Avast, ye landlubbers, any o'you seein' a magic tailor hereabouts?

TOWNSMAN

If it's a magic tailor you're looking for, you found him. Right in there.

The Emperor looks at Kubler and friends as they mime the making of clothes.

EMPEROR

Right you are, matey. But why be he swatting the air like he's killing flies?

TOWNSWOMAN

Swatting at the air?

TOWNSMAN

Killing flies?

TOWNSWOMAN

He's sewing the Emperor's new clothes. Big billowy sleeves and all.

TOWNSMAN

Course it's only visible to decent people.

TOWNSWOMAN

So how do you like it?

(The Emperor looks, rubs his eyes, changes his eye patch from one eye to the other.)

EMPEROR

Why it's... why it's... like nothing I ever seen. All of them thar tiny daffodils and roses. Makes it shipshape and fit for an Emperor.

TOWNSWOMAN

I never noticed the daffodils before.

TOWNSMAN

Because they were so tiny.

TOWNSWOMAN

Must be a lot of gold dust in each one of them.

TOWNSMAN

The whole town could eat for a year on the gold in them billowy sleeves.

EMPEROR

The whole town, eat on it for a year?

TOWNSWOMAN

Could live for another year on just one of the shoes too.

TOWNSMAN

I wish the Emperor would walk in my shoes, then he might see a better way to spend is gold than just buying fancy clothes.

TOWNSWOMAN

A good Emperor would walk naked through the town instead of having us all go hungry.

EMPEROR

The Emperor walk naked through town?

TOWNSMAN

Now there's a picture you won't be seeing. The silly fool of an Emperor walking naked through the town. Ha, ha.

TOWNSWOMAN

The next parade, I'm gonna pretend the Emperor is as naked as a plucked chicken on a platter with boiled potatoes.

The townspeople move stage right and draw the forest curtain and exit laughing.

(The Emperor rubs his eyes and tries to see the clothes. Frustrated, he draws his sword as if ready to charge at Kubler. Then overcome, he runs into the forest and hides behind a tree. Synthetia looks off toward the forest.

SYNTHETIA

Dear brother, it doesn't do for an Emperor to get too close to the truth.

She exits stage rights as Jengia enters the woods left, carrying her new dresses.

JENGIA

(holding dresses in front of her as she walks) I hope my dress isn't invisible like the clothes they're making for the Emperor. Nobody looks good in invisible clothes.

EMPEROR

(hearing Jengia, he steps from behind the tree, holding his sword before him) What do you mean, "invisible like the clothes for the emperor"?

JENGIA

Ah! A pirate! Please don't take my dresses.

EMPEROR

I won't take your dresses if you tell me about the invisible clothes.

JENGIA

They're very beautiful. But bad people, like me, can't see them, so I pretend.

EMPEROR

Why do you pretend?

JENGIA

If the Emperor finds out I can't see his new clothes I'll never be able to visit the palace or see my friend, the Princess?

EMPEROR

You can come visit me as much as you want.

JENGIA

But you're not the Emperor. You're a pirate.

EMPEROR

A pirate is a lot like an Emperor.

JENGIA

Can a pirate see the Emperor's new clothes?

EMPEROR

I don't know, maybe, if he's a good pirate.

JENGIA

Are you a good pirate?

EMPEROR

I want to be a good pirate.

JENGIA

You can pretend. That's what I'm going to do at the parade tomorrow.

EMPEROR

That's good advice. I'll remember what you said.

FRONJIA enters the opposite side of the woods carrying a basket of greens.

FRONJIA

Jengia. Jengia, come home, it's almost dark.

JENGIA

That's my mother, Pirate. See you at the parade.

EMPEROR

Oh, yes, you'll see me all right. And I don't think you're a bad person.

JENGIA

Even if I have to pretend?

EMPEROR

Sometimes even good people have to pretend..

JENGIA

Even pirates?

EMPEROR

I know a pirate who pretends to be an Emperor.

FRONJIA

(coming to them) Jengia? Ah, a pirate! Please don't hurt my daughter.

JENGIA

Don't worry, Mother, he's a nice pirate.

EMPEROR

Aye, aye, a nice pirate, I am. And pleased to greet a beautiful lady.

He raises his sword over his head as he, behaving like an emperor, offers his hand for her to kiss. After an awkward moment of misunderstanding, he remembers he is dressed like a pirate and bows and takes her hand and kisses it.

FRONJIA

You certainly are a polite pirate.

EMPEROR

You certainly are a beautiful tailor's widow.

FRONJIA

How did you know I am...

EMPEROR

Ah...the towns people... ah... told me of your kindness to the ah... Emperor.

FRONJIA

The Emperor is a kind man and friend of my late husband. Pardon us, but we must go and prepare for tomorrow's parade.

EMPEROR

The parade! Oh yes, we must all prepare. (he starts to exit)

JENGIA

Bye, bye, pirate. If I see you, I'll know we're both pretending and that will make me feel better. (she walks away slowly.)

EMPEROR

That'll make me feel better too. (he exits)

JENGIA

I wish that pirate were the Emperor. He's a lot nicer.

FRONJIA

Jengia, the Emperor is very nice, if you get to know him.

JENGIA

So is Princess Genuiana. Look what she's has given me.

FRONJIA

Jengia. We can't accept these.

JENGIA

But I promised and the Princess promised to. We're like sisters, Mother. Sisters give each other presents don't they?

FRONJIA

Sisters do, Jengia. Sisters can do almost anything.

The Townspeople close the town drape over the Fronjia and Jengia. The townspeople turn to watch Kubler make an announcement.

KUBLER

The last touch, a golden rose, to go with all the others. (he makes a flourishing gesture of sewing on nothing and steps back to admire his work.)

RINGLET

All finished.

KUBLER

A masterpiece fit for the Emperor.

TOWNSWOMAN

It's too good for the Emperor.

TOWNSMAN

It's what he deserves.

KUBLER

It's less than he deserves. Pick up the pieces, Ringlet. We're off to see the Emperor.

Ringlet makes a show of picking up invisible scraps. Kubler hoists the undressed dress dummy into the air and together they march toward the palace.

RINGLET

You want see Princess Synthetia too?

KUBLER

(stopped by her question) Yes, Ringlet, I want see Princes Synthetia too.

They exit. The townspeople pull the palace drapes into place.

SCENE TWO

It is the next day, Emperor's parade day. The palace is bustling with activity. The royal Townspeople rush to open the palace drapes as the Chancellor enters.

CHANCELLOR

You, come with me to the royal treasury to get the Emperor's crown and scepter. You, go that way. Do something important. I wish parades were never invented.

The Chancellor rushes out, Genuiana, in hunting attire, walks in and they collide. Genuiana is detached from the bustle. Synthetia enters in an elegant gown.

SYNTHETIA

Aren't you dressing for the parade? It is a formal occasion.

GENUIANA

It may be formal to you, but not to me and my friends.

SYNTHETIA

If you mean the little girl, Jengia, you're wrong. I saw her putting on a very fancy dress. Looked like one I used to wear.

GENUIANA

She's wearing a fancy dress? I should never make promises.

SYNTHETIA

I don't know what promises you made, but the parade starts in ten minutes.

GENUIANA

Ten minutes. Ten minutes, I can't... But I will.

She dashes off, bumping into the Chancellor again as he enters, knocking him down with the crown and scepter he carries. He is very agitated and frazzled.

CHANCELLOR

Ahh! One princess too many. Where is the Emperor's underwear? I haven't all day. Where is it?

SYNTHETIA

It's probably on the Emperor. But I'm not looking, even if he is my brother.

She exits. The Chancellor and the Townsman hurry across stage and throw open a curtain to reveal Kubler and Ringlet, their arms extended as if carrying new clothes. The Emperor pokes his head around a dressing screen.

EMPEROR

Alright, tailor. I hope it's time to get dressed because the morning air is too cold to be just in underwear.

KUBLER

As you see, we're already holding you beautiful new trousers in our hands. If you'll put out a leg, I'll help put them on.

The Emperor shows a bare leg from behind the screen. Kubler helps him into the invisible pants. The Chancellor scurries about trying to be important.

CHANCELLOR

Oh, nice fit. Very becoming around the bottom area, your Excellency.

KUBLER

Now the shirt. Arms up please.

The Emperor raises his arms above the screen and Kubler takes the invisible shirt from the dress dummy and puts it on over the Emperor's head.

CHANCELLOR

A tad tight around the arms, don't you think? His highness must have been exercising since the first fitting.

KUBLER

Nothing to worry about. The billowy sleeves make for a perfect fit.

CHANCELLOR

Oh yes. I see that now. Very nice work, Kubler. If I may call you that?

KUBLER

I prefer "Kubler The Magnificent", if you don't mind.

CHANCELLOR

(swallowing his pride) Yes, "Kubler The Magnificent".

KUBLER

Has a nice ring, particularly when you say, Magnificent. Say it again.

CHANCELLOR

(hating this) Kub-ler-the-mag-nif-I-cent!

KUBLER

Well, Ringlet, our work here is finished. Let's leave and allow the Chancellor to crown the emperor's head. See you all at the parade.

EMPEROR

Aren't you going to walk beside me and hear the crowd praise your creation?

KUBLER

I am too modest, and proud of it. All my joy is in seeing how beautiful my clothes looks on you. Walk with pride, my Emperor. Today, your people will see everything you have, everything you are. Come Ringlet.

Kubler and Ringlet cross downstage, closing the curtains behind them so that the Emperor and the Chancellor are no longer seen. Alone, they laugh with abandon.

KUBLER (cont'd)

Ringlet, we are geniuses, very wealthy geniuses. Let's get our gold and leave.

RINGLET

Leave? Go way?

KUBLER

Make our getaway. Vanish into the mists of day.

RINGLET

Ringlet want stay. Ringlet have friends. Jengia friend. Genuiana friend.

KUBLER

And four bags of gold dust that will be our best friends. Away.

RINGLET

No, stay. Friends better than gold.

KUBLER

We'll watch the parade, but then we go.

RINGLET

Watch parade.

Ringlet exits. Kubler, watches her go, very thoughtful when Synthetia enters.

SYNTHETIA

I had expected to find you next to the Emperor.

KUBLER

In spirit, Princess, as I am with you in spirit and in my heart.

SYNTHETIA

Perhaps we can walk together in the parade and afterward sit in the garden?

KUBLER

A pleasure I would treasure, Princess. But, ah, Ringlet... insists that we, ah...

SYNTHETIA

Be gone?

KUBLER

These wolf children are hard to manage and I must...

SYNTHETIA

Be gone.

She curtsies and he bows and they separate, each turning once to see the other just as they both exit opposite. The townspeople draw the curtains closed to display the entire town. They carry the signs as before, but now they are all more cheerful. Fronjia and Jengia come out of their house. Fronjia looks quite lovely in a simple dress with the addition of a tiara. Jengia is wearing her new dresses.

JENGIA

Mother, you're wearing a crown.

FRONJIA

A tiara, dear. It's the last thing I own from when I was a princess. I thought I would wear it today, before I sell it to buy food. I'm sorry that it won't be yours someday.

TOWNSMAN

Aren't you going to wear your best dress for the parade?

TOWNSWOMAN

This is my best dress. My only dress.

CHANCELLOR

Make way for our grand and glorious emperor, Glamorosis the Fourth, our excellent Emperor of Kadja-Kuloban. Make way, make way. All hail the Emperor and the two royal Princesses, Princess Synthetia and Princess Genuiana.

Synthetia enters first, dressed in finery and wearing a tiara. Everyone applauds and ad-libs comments on her beauty. Next comes Genuiana. She is transformed into a beautiful princess in a flowing gown, tiara and a radiant smile.

JENGIA

Genuiana! Look, it's Princess Genuiana, in a dress.

FRONJIA

And she looks gorgeous.

JENGIA

I've never seen her smile before. I think she's happy. Can I go to her, Mother?

FRONJIA

Of course you can go to her. She's your sister isn't she?

JENGIA

But I'm just a common girl, not a princess. I'll embarrass her.

FRONJIA

Jengia, dear. I am a princess. You are my daughter. That makes you a princess too. (puts her tiara on Jengia) Go, walk with other beautiful young princesses.

Jengia, holding her tiara on her head, runs to Genuiana, they embrace.

JENGIA

You kept your promise.

GENUIANA

That's what sisters do.

The Chancellor stops the parade, walks to behind the Princesses and once again pounds his tall stick of authority on the stage and announces the Emperor.

CHANCELLOR

Make way for our grand and glorious Glamorosis the Fourth, our excellent Emperor of Kadja-Kuloban. Make way, make way. All hail the Emperor.

The parade watchers cheer. Kubler and Ringlet appear at the top of a ladder.

KUBLER

We've seen enough parade, let's get the gold and get out.

RINGLET

Princesses beautiful. You magician, big brother, you make me princess?

KUBLER

That's pretty big magic, little sister.

RINGLET

Make me princess too... Please.

The crowd cheers as the Emperor enters. He walks proudly, carrying his scepter high and his golden crown erect. But that and a pair of silk print boxer shorts, in pink and covered with yellow sunflower, is all he has on. Everyone, princesses and the Chancellor step aside to allow him to pass. The Emperor strains a smile and waves passively as he passes the crowd. The crowd all freezes in cheering positions, all is dead silent as the Emperor returns to center stage and slowly walks in circles for all to see.

RINGLET (cont'd)

The Emperor has no clothes.

KUBLER

Ringlet. No!

All the watchers turn silently towards Ringlet and point at her. She repeats.

RINGLET

The Emperor has no clothes.

KUBLER

Sister, what have you done?

Slowly the crowd turns from Ringlet and moves their look and their pointing fingers to the Emperor with no clothes. The Emperor continues to turn in front of them as they come to life.

TOWNSWOMAN

The little girl's right. The Emperor's not wearing anything.

TOWNSMAN

Except that silly underwear.

FRONJIA

He'll catch his death in this cold.

GENUIANA

Why is our brother walking without any clothes?

SYNTHETIA

Why didn't you say something earlier?

CHANCELLOR

Fools. None of you are worthy to see the Emperor's fine clothes. I see his clothes. The Emperor is beautifully dressed.

TOWNSMAN

Maybe he was robbed.

TOWNSWOMAN

Maybe a thief has stolen his clothes.

CHANCELLOR

It's all a lie. The Emperor is wearing golden robes.

EMPEROR

(raising his hand to silence everyone)

No! What you see is true. I am not wearing any clothes. What you see is... just me. No gold. No silk. No pretending to be anything. Just me. Just me.

(he lowers his head in shame)

Once again the crowd falls silent. FRONJIA comes forward, removes her own cloak and places it on the Emperor's shoulders and leads him into her house.

TOWNSWOMAN

I told you he was naked.

TOWNSMAN

I said it first.

CHANCELLOR

There's the swindler who stole the Emperor's clothes. Grab him.

The Townsman draws back the curtains and Kubler comes down and the Townsman grabs a hold of him. Ringlet rushes into the arms of Genuiana and Jengia. The Chancellor struts up to Kubler.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Now everyone can see that Kubler the "not-so-magnificent" is an ordinary low life swindler. A thief who tricks the weak minded with his slippery tongue and steals their gold. Well, thief, try to use you magic to escape the Emperor's dungeon. I'll give you as long as you like. I'll give you all your life. Take him away. And look, here are the four buckets of gold dust. The gold belong to the Emperor.

EMPEROR

(coming out of the house with FRONJIA) No. That gold isn't mine.

CHANCELLOR

Your Excellency? This is your gold. Who else would it belong to?

EMPEROR

It belongs to everybody. I took it from them, like a pirate, a bad pirate. But now I'm a good Emperor and I'm giving it back.

TOWNSMAN

Hail the Emperor.

SYNTHETIA

(going to hug him) Welcome back, brother, I've missed you.

EMPEROR

Let the tailor go.

CHANCELLOR

But he's a swindler.

EMPEROR

If an Emperor can reform, then maybe a swindler can too. How about it, Kubler? Want a second chance to be good?

KUBLER

Maybe. If you meet my requirements.

CHANCELLOR

(outraged) Your requirements? It's another trick..

KUBLER

This time the trick is on me, Excellency.

EMPEROR

State your requirements, but this time I'll see what I see.

KUBLER

First, allow me and Ringlet to live in Kadja-kuloban.

EMPEROR

Done.

KUBLER

Second, your sister, the beautiful Synthetia, agrees to marry me. But she and I we can talk about that, for hours and hours.

SYNTHETIA

Until the sun sets a thousand times.

EMPEROR

A wedding! We'll have a parade.

KUBLER

And finally, that you, Emperor, rescue a beautiful Princess in distress. Invite Lady FRONJIA and her daughter Jengia to live in your palace.

EMPEROR

Ah ha! That one you lose, Kubler.

CHANCELLOR

Good for you Emperor.

EMPEROR

For I have asked Princess FRONJIA to marry me.

FRONJIA

And I have said yes. Jengia will have a home and a father and I will have a husband that I can take home to my father.
(hugs the Emperor)

EMPEROR

Jengia, with this kiss, (kisses her forehead) I declare you my little Princess.

GENUIANA

(to Jengia) That makes you and me family. Sisters.

JENGIA

I'm a real princess! And, even better, a real sister.

KUBLER

There is just one last thing Emperor.

CHANCELLOR

I know what that will be. Well, I quit. You can have my job. Take it.

The Chancellor tries to give Kubler his staff of office, but Kubler won't have it.

KUBLER

No, Chancellor. I want to spend my time with the Princess Synthetia, not her brother. My last request is that the Emperor grants my little sister her request.

EMPEROR

So are you going to trick me now?

RINGLET

Make me Princess. Please.

EMPEROR

Princess? Hmmm? (looking very serious)

Come closer little girl.

RINGLET

Ringlet.

EMPEROR

Come closer, Ringlet. With this kiss, (kisses her on the forehead) I declare you a Princess. All hail Princess Ringlet.

RINGLET

Me Princess

EVERYONE (TOGETHER)

All hail, Princess Ringlet.

RINGLET

Princess Ringlet. Me princess. Me give commands. I want now play wolf and hunter. Me wolf, you hunters. (she runs around Jengia and Genuiana, grabs Jengia's tiara and puts it on her own head) Catch me. How-how- howoo. How-howoo, How-how-howoo.

GENUIANA & JENGIA

After the wolf. (they chase the wolf child) Waa-hee-ahhh!
Waa-hee-ahhh! Waa-hee-ahhh!

Ringlet runs around them and Genuiana and Jengia give chase.

EMPEROR

Allow me to escort you to the palace. Our Palace. There is a lot to learn since you are going change from a Princess to an Empress.

FRONJIA

I'm sure we'll both have a lot to learn. Don't forget, you are no longer just an Emperor but also a father to Jengia.

EMPEROR

Come along, Chancellor. I'm going to need a lot of new advice... and someone to fetch me coffee.

The three of them exit and the Townspeople too.
Kubler and Synthetia are left alone on the stage.

SYNTHETIA

Kubler The Magnificent seems caught by his own trick.

KUBLER

A tricky situation. This may take a little time.

SYNTHETIA

I will give you the rest of our lives.

KUBLER

I'm going to need more time than that.

SYNTHETIA

How much more time, my love?

KUBLER

(loud with a grand flourishing gesture) Could I talk you into... forever?

SYNTHETIA

Only if your lips can whisper.

KUBLER

My lips can whisper only in a kiss.

SYNTHETIA

Then whisper that you love me.

They kiss and hold it as Princess Ringlet climbs to the top of a ladder and showers them with more golden dust. The lights dim on the kissing couple as the Townsman and the Townswoman enter from opposite sides, each pushing a broom.

TOWNSMAN

There you go. It happened again.

TOWNSWOMAN

Everybody gets a happy ending.

TOWNSMAN

And we clean up the mess.

TOWNSWOMAN

Next time I want to be the princess.

TOWNSMAN

You're my princess.

TOWNSWOMAN

And you my prince charming.

They hold their brooms over their heads like an arch and exchange a little kiss

TOWNSMAN

Know what else you get to be?

TOWNSWOMAN

I sure do ducky. I get to be the first to take a bow at the curtain call.

TOWNSMAN

Look out world, watch us now.

She bows. He bows and the curtain calls begins.

THE END

By L. Lewis Stout
All rights reserved