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THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Once upon a time, there was an emperor who loved elegant clothes very much. He liked new outfits so much that he thought about them all the time. He had clothes of many colors, soft fabrics, shiny capes, and decorated shoes. While other kings worried about their lands or their castles, he only cared about looking well dressed.

—I want the most beautiful outfit of all —he often said—. It must be something no one has ever seen before.

One day, two men arrived at the palace claiming to be great tailors. In truth, they were very tricky men, but they spoke with such confidence that everyone listened to them carefully.

—Your Majesty —they said, bowing—, we can make you a wonderful outfit, more beautiful than any other.

The emperor opened his eyes wide with excitement.

—Really? —he asked—. And what is so special about it?

One of the men replied:

—The cloth is so fine and so extraordinary that only people who are clever and worthy of their position can see it.

The other added:

—Fools, or those who are not fit for their jobs, will not be able to see it at all.

The emperor thought that idea was fascinating.

—Perfect! —he exclaimed—. Then I will have a beautiful outfit, and I will also know who is clever in my kingdom.

So he ordered that they be given a large room, fine thread, expensive cloth, and plenty of gold so they could begin their work. But the false tailors did not really do anything. They pretended to sew, they cut the air with empty scissors, and they moved their hands as if they were working on invisible cloth.

A few days passed, and the emperor wanted to know how the outfit was coming along.

—I will send one of my ministers —he thought—. He can see it and tell me whether it is as beautiful as they say.

So he called a very serious minister and said:

—Go and see how my new outfit is coming along, then return and tell me everything.

The minister went to the room where the supposed tailors were working. They were still moving busily around their empty looms.

—Here you can see the cloth —said one of the men, pointing at nothing.

—Look at these beautiful colors —added the other—. And see how delicate the embroidery is.

The minister opened his eyes wide, but he saw nothing.

—This cannot be —he thought in fear—. I do not see anything at all. Could it be that I am foolish? Or that I am not fit for my position?

He was too embarrassed to tell the truth, so he smiled and replied:

—Yes, of course... it is a beautiful cloth. Very elegant.

The tailors went on describing details that did not exist, and the minister, although he could see nothing, pretended to admire everything. Then he went back to the emperor.

—Your Majesty —he said—, the outfit is wonderful. It has beautiful colors and a very fine design.

The emperor was delighted to hear that.

Soon after, he sent another official to check on the work. But exactly the same thing happened. He also saw nothing, and out of fear of seeming foolish, he returned saying:

—It is a magnificent outfit. It will be the most beautiful in the kingdom.

At last, the emperor himself decided to go and see it. He entered the room accompanied by several important people from the palace. The false tailors bowed deeply and began pointing at the air.

—Here are the sleeves —said one.

—And here is the cape —said the other—. Such light and delicate cloth.

The emperor looked and looked, but he saw nothing. His heart began to beat fast.

—I see nothing —he thought—. Could it be that I am not clever? Could it be that I do not deserve to be emperor?

But he did not want to say that out loud. So he smiled and said:

—It is magnificent. I like it very much.

Everyone who was with him did the same.

—How beautiful!

—What a marvel!

—We have never seen anything like it!

The false tailors continued their trick for several more days. At last, they said the outfit was ready and that the emperor should try it on so he could wear it in a great parade through the city.

—Your Majesty —they said—, remove your clothes and we will dress you in your new outfit.

The emperor obeyed. The tricksters pretended to dress him very carefully. They lifted invisible garments, fastened buttons that did not exist, and arranged an imaginary cape.

—How light it is —said one of them.

—Yes, you can hardly feel it at all —said the other.

The emperor looked at himself in the mirror, even though he was wearing nothing, and tried to convince himself that everything was fine.

—It is... very elegant —he said nervously.

Then the parade began. The emperor walked through the streets with his head held high, while the people looked at him. Everyone had heard about the special outfit, and no one dared to say that they could see nothing.

—What a lovely outfit! —said some.

—What fine cloth! —said others.

—It suits him perfectly! —many commented.

But among the crowd there was a small child who looked at the emperor with surprise. And because children often say exactly what they think, the child spoke without fear.

—But he has nothing on!

For a moment, everything became silent. Then other people began to whisper.

—It is true...

—The child is right...

—He is not wearing any clothes!

Little by little, everyone understood that they had been tricked. The emperor felt deeply embarrassed, because at last he understood that the tailors had deceived him and that everyone had pretended out of fear.

Even so, he kept walking until the end of the parade, trying to remain calm. And from that day on, he learned an important lesson: he should not care so much about appearances, nor believe everything he was told just because it sounded important.

And so, in that kingdom, everyone remembered for a long time the story of the emperor who wanted the most wonderful outfit in the world, but ended up discovering that the truth can come from the smallest and most honest voice.

THE END

