



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Book by Kayla Rayanne
-based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

The Narrator introduces the audience to the characters and the Kingdom of Knoll. The Emperor, his two nieces (Gertrude and Annabelle) and nephew (Charles) have come to the marketplace to shop. Charles and Annabelle overhear a rumor that the Emperor is going to pick which niece or nephew will become the future ruler of Knoll at the Royal Parade the following weekend. Satchel, a peasant boy, bumps into the Emperor, knocking him down. The audience learns that Satchel is an aspiring seamstress and his family is very poor. Meanwhile, at a park outside the marketplace, three swindlers (Choo, Sue and Zazoo) are developing a plan to swindle someone out of their riches. The Narrator plants the idea that they should trick the Emperor by selling him clothes that are supposed to be invisible to fools. In reality, the swindlers do not plan to make any clothes. The Narrator heads to a gypsy camp in the nearby forest and asks their help in tricking the Emperor. (The gypsy scene is optional.) The audience learns the Narrator is a gypsy and the gypsies were forced to leave the Kingdom of Knoll years ago because the Emperor thought they were stealing. The Narrator states she has a plan to help the Emperor rule more wisely. While the Emperor is on his way back to the palace he meets the swindlers. The swindlers tell him a magic story and he decides to make them his seamstresses.

ACT TWO

The Emperor sits in the Royal Throne Room. He asks Choo to show him sketches of the new clothes. After Choo leaves, the guards enter with an intruder (the Narrator). The Narrator claims to be a noble woman and asks the Emperor if the rumor from Act One is true. The Emperor decides to pick the future ruler at the upcoming parade. He then realizes the Narrator started the rumor and demands she be kicked out of the Kingdom, but she escapes. The Emperor confides in Choo that he does not know which niece or nephew to pick. Choo suggests the niece or nephew who can best see the clothes beauty is surely the wisest and should be made Emperor. The Emperor sends his messengers to the village to find more seamstresses. The messengers have trouble locating the people on the Emperor's list. Satchel offers to help in exchange for being added to the list and the messengers oblige. The Emperor decides to have his Royal Courtier and Minister check on the clothes. They visit the sewing room and cannot see the clothes but pretend they can so as not to appear fools. Satchel decides Choo's plan is dishonest and leaves. On his way out he runs into Annabelle. The two go to the park where they paint with mud. Satchel gives Annabelle a homemade paint robe so she does not get her dress dirty. Satchel tells Annabelle Choo's plan and they rush to the parade to stop it. The parade begins. Charles tells the Emperor he can't see the clothes and Gertrude lies and declares their beauty. Satchel and Annabelle arrive just as a child shouts that the Emperor is in his underpants. Annabelle lets the Emperor wear the paint robe she has on. The Emperor loves it and asks Satchel and his family to be the new royal seamstresses. Charles is named future Emperor since he was honest. The Narrator enters with the gypsies who caught the Swindlers trying to sneak through the woods. The Emperor invites the gypsies back to the Kingdom.

SCENE BREAK DOWN

Full Running Time: 90 minutes (pending scene changes)
Alternate Running Time: 70 minutes (pending scene changes)

SCENE 1: The Marketplace.

SCENE 2: The Marketplace - closed for the evening.

SCENE 3: A Park.

SCENE 4 (Optional): A Gypsy camp, deep in the forest.

SCENE 5: The Park.

SCENE 5 ALTERNATE OPTION (If Scene 4 is not used): The Park.

INTERMISSION

SCENE 6: The Royal Throne Room.

SCENE 7: The Marketplace.

SCENE 8: The Royal Throne Room.

SCENE 9: The Royal Sewing Chamber.

SCENE 10: The Royal Throne Room.

SCENE 11: The Park.

SCENE 12: The Marketplace.

SCENE 12 ALTERNATE ENDING (If Scene 4 is not used): The Marketplace.

NOTE: If Scene 4 is taken out of the production, than Scene 5 (Alternate Option) and Scene 12 (Alternate Ending) should be used. The alternate scenes are located at the end of the script.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Flexible cast of 33 to 64 (5M, 10F, +16 to 49 that can be either).
Many of the roles can be combined, doubled or split into two roles for even more characters.

LEAD and SUPPORTING ROLES

NARRATOR (F).....Has a majestic air that is slightly conniving. Playful.

EMPEROR (M).....Loves clothes and fashion. More spastic/looney than mean.

GERTRUDE (F).....Loves clothes and fashion. Snobby and conceited.

ANNABELLE (F).....Kind-hearted. Seeks adventure outside the palace.

CHARLES (M).....Wisest of the Royal Children. Has a noble air about him.

MOTHER (F).....Satchel's mother. Worried about making ends meet.

GRANDMOTHER (F).....Satchel's grandmother. Hopeful.

SACHEL (M).....Kind-hearted peasant. Honest. Hardworking.

CHOO (E).....Sly and cunning. Speaks words that melt like butter.

SUE (E).....Assistant to Choo. Second in command.

ZAZOO (E).....Assistant to Choo. The not-so-smart one. Comedic.

ROYAL MINISTER (E).....Advises Emperor. Afraid to look foolish.

ROYAL COURTIER (E).....Advises Emperor. Afraid to look foolish.

ROYAL ASSISTANT 1 (E).....Assistant to the Emperor.

ROYAL ASSISTANT 2 (E).....Assistant to the Emperor.

GUARD 1.....The strong silent type. Comedic.

GUARD 2.....The strong silent type. Comedic.

ROYAL MESSENGER 1.....Unsure assistant to the Emperor. Seeks Satchel's help.

ROYAL MESSENGER 2.....Unsure assistant to the Emperor. Seeks Satchel's help.

NOTE for Smaller Cast Sizes:

The role of ROYAL MINISTER can be combined with the role of ROYAL ASSISTANT 1.
The role of ROYAL COURTIER can be combined with the role of ROYAL ASSISTANT 2.
If this direction is taken, the character names should be ROYAL MINISTER and ROYAL COURTIER.

The role of GUARD 1 can be combined with the role of ROYAL MESSENGER 1.
The role of GUARD 2 can be combined with the role of ROYAL MESSENGER 2.
If this direction is taken, the character names should be GUARD 1 and GUARD 2.

ENSEMBLE ROLES

NOTE: Almost all ensemble roles may be played by either males or females with some minor name changes.
Ensemble roles may be combined, doubled or split to fit the needs of your cast size.

FOOD VENDOR (E).....Sales-person. A bit brutish. Speaks with broken English.

JEWELRY VENDOR (E).....Sales-person. Dainty.

BASKET VENDOR (E).....Sales-person.

FISH VENDOR 1 (E).....Sales-person. Rough around the edges.

FISH VENDOR 2 (E).....Sales-person. Rough around the edges.
 CLOTHES VENDOR 1 (E).....Sales-person.
 CLOTHES VENDOR 2 (E).....Sales-person.
 CLOTHES VENDOR 3 (E).....Sales-person.

NANNY (F).....Villager. Baby-sitter to three young children.
 LIZABETH (F).....Villager. Whinny.
 KYLE/KYLIE (E).....Villager. Adventurous.
 SISSY (F).....Villager - young. Declares that Emperor is in underpants.
 VILLAGER 1 - 4 (E).....Additional villagers at the Market Place and Parade.

MADAME CLARICE FEATHER-BOTTOM (F).....Leader of the Gypsy tribe. Narrator's cousin.
 CLEARWATER (F).....Young Gypsy. Helps act out Choo's story.
 WOLF (M).....Young Gypsy. Helps act out Choo's story.
 GYPSY 1 - GYPSY 10 (E).....Additional Gypsies that live in the forest.

ROYAL SEAMSTRESS (F).....Emperor's blind, ex-seamstress. Humorous.

SIGH BUTTON (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 LACY RUFFLE (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 MRS. EYELET (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 SUSY EYELET (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 BETTY BEZZEL (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 TED NEEDLE (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 HEM HENDERSON (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 PATTY STITCHES (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.
 MOLLY MEASURE (E).....Seamstress hired to work on the new clothes.

NOTE: Names of the above characters can be changed to fit any gender.

ANGELO (E).....Satchel's art teacher. Kind and wise.
 POT MAKER (E).....Poor art student.
 ARTIST 1 (E).....Poor art student.
 ARTIST 2 (E).....Poor art student.
 POET (E).....Poor art student.
 SEAGRID (E).....Poor art student.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SET PIECES

As much imagination and creative liberty can be taken with the sets for this production as is desired. The original production was done with bare bone set pieces. A full list of set pieces from the first production is listed below.

MARKET PLACE

Vendor Carts: Three vendor carts were made for the original production. Additional tables were used for the other vendor stands. Nearly anything can make a great vendor stand when props are placed atop it. Actors may also hold baskets or place items they are selling on spare chairs or the stage floor. If planning to make some items for set and storage is available, I would suggest making the carts as they can be used in many future productions.

Faux rocks, bushes and signs that switched from “open” to “closed” were used to dress up the stage as needed.

PARK

Bench: Any size or style as long as it can seat the Emperor and Gertrude. Two chairs could be used or they could also sit on the stage.

Bush: Needed for the Narrator to hide behind. Any rock, tree or plant would also work. Easels were borrowed to place paintings on when the park becomes the “art park” in the Second Act.

Faux rocks, bushes and trees were used as stage dressing.

GYPSY CAMP

Cauldron: Any Halloween cauldron will work. Larger is better.

Faux rocks, bushes and trees were used as stage dressing.

ROYAL THROWN ROOM

Table: A card table with a bright tablecloth draped over it was used in the original production.

Table Chairs: Preferably painted gold.

Thrown: A nice touch - but optional. The original production used a large chair with gold fabric draped over it.

Treasure Chests: Can be made from cardboard boxes and painted to look regal.

Banner Holders: Can be made from a few pieces of wood with banners made from felt or paper.

ROYAL SEWING CHAMBER

Empty Weaving Loom: Can be easily made with a flat style frame and brace.

Boxes of various sewing materials (yarn balls, large beads, faux jewels) were used as stage dressing. Large spools of thread were made by the cast using paper tubes and spare cardboard. A local fabric store donated empty fabric tubes that were wrapped with fabric (could also be painted) and used as stage dressing.

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SCENE 1

(The scene opens to reveal a marketplace in the Kingdom of Knoll. VENDORS are positioned around the stage, preparing to sell various types of items; baskets, food, fish, clothes, etc. (The majority of the VENDORS merchandise can be changed to accommodate the props that you have at your disposal.) Some VENDORS have tables set up. Others may stand next to old fashioned carts or merely hold their items in baskets on their arms. The stage is flat except for, perhaps, a small raised platform in the back. The platform can be used to add height to the marketplace and park scenes while giving stature to the throne room. It can be painted black, brick or stone to work in any of the scenes. The set as a whole is colorful and lively. It can be as simple or complex as desired and as imaginative as the mind allows. The NARRATOR stands center. She has a majestic air, with something slightly conniving about her. The lights are on, but dim, and she is in spotlight.)

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, in the Kingdom of Knoll, there lived an Emperor who was wise beyond years and rich beyond want. Unfortunately, he was also vain and conceited, for the Emperor's greatest love was not for his kingdom or garden. It was not for great music or art, or even for his lovely nieces and nephew. His greatest love was for clothes. Our story begins at the break of dawn in the quaint and colorful village of Knoll. The birds have already scoured the dewy grass for their morning brunch, and the village vendors are just beginning to set up shop. In a few minutes, you will see the Emperor appear from a little path in the distance. He will be followed by his two nieces and nephew; Gertrude, Annabelle and Charles. Orphaned at an early age, they were sent to live with their uncle, the Emperor, in the palace. Gertrude is the oldest. She is obsessed with clothes, just like the Emperor. She does not care much for ruling Kingdoms, but dreams of the riches and jewels that go along with the position. Annabelle is Gertrude's sister. She is as shy as Gertrude is outspoken. Annabelle has no interest in ruling the kingdom or being wealthy. Instead, she one day hopes to be an artist, traveling the land and painting portraits of peasants. Charles is the last of the three royal children. He feels he is far too young to take over the Emperor's place in the palace. So instead of voicing his ideas for change and reformation, he stays quiet and appears uninterested. He speaks only when spoken to and even then, not very much at all. Yet, all three children are similar in the kingdom's eye, for they were all born into riches, and in riches they shall remain.

(A scuffling sound is made off-stage. NARRATOR pauses to listen.)

Do you hear that scuffling sound, just off in the distance? That is the Emperor rounding a bend in the pebble path and making his way towards the city. *(With a sense of cunning and knowledge.)* The Emperor usually buys his clothes from far away lands, but this week, for some unknown reason, he will shop in the village. I hope the store vendors are ready.

FOOD VENDOR: 'Eh, get a load 'a 'dis. I just read some real big news in 'da Daily Knoll.'

JEWELRY VENDOR: What is it?

FOOD VENDOR: 'Da weather report.

BASKET VENDOR: The weather report? Sounds Boring.

NARRATOR: *(In a louder voice.)* I said; I hope the store vendors are ready!

FOOD VENDER: But it's not borin'. It says 'ere it's gonna' rain tomorrow.

JEWELRY VENDOR: Who cares about tomorrow, today it's nice and sunny.

BASKET VENDOR: S/he's right. We should enjoy this weather while we have it. We'll worry about rain tomorrow...

NARRATOR: *(Slightly louder still.)* I said; today the Emperor will shop in the village. I hope the store vendors are ready!!

FOOD VENDOR: But 'ya can't worry 'bout it tomarra'.

JEWELRY VENDOR: Why not?

FOOD VENDOR: 'Cause 'da newspaper's from yesterday. 'Dat's what makes it so funny.

(The VENDORS all laugh and slap each other on the back.)

NARRATOR: *(Crossing down-stage. To a different group of VENDORS.)* The Emperor is nearly here. I HOPE THE VENDORS ARE READY!!!

FISH VENDOR 1: *(To FISH VENDOR 2.)* Hey, did hear that?

NARRATOR: *(Relieved.)* Now, we're getting somewhere.

FISH VENDOR 1: *(Joking.)* I think it was the thunder rolling in!

(FISH VENDOR 2 hits FISH VENDOR 1 on the back. All VENDORS begin to laugh again.)

NARRATOR: *(Looks around. To the VENDORS. Extremely annoyed.)* THE EMPEROR IS NEARLY...*(To the audience.)* Oh forget it! *(Crosses to side of stage.)*

(CLOTHES VENDOR 1 enters running. S/he carries a basket of colorful clothes in his/her arm.)

CLOTHES VENDOR 2: Hey, what's your hurry?!

CLOTHES VENDOR 1: I was just on the dirt path that leads to the palace. The Emperor is on his way here!

CLOTHES VENDOR 2: Why didn't somebody tell us sooner! He'll expect everything to be perfect!

FISH VENDOR 1: I've got to get my store in order!

VENDORS: I hope he visits my store. This stand is a mess. If only I'd known sooner.

(There is a general rumble as all the VENDORS begin to bark orders to each other, straighten their carts, dust off their clothes, etc.)

NARRATOR: *(To the audience.)* I tried to warn them. Now, if my estimation is correct, which it usually is, the day will officially begin in exactly...seven, six, five, four, three, two...*(Sound of a rooster crowing)*...sun up...*(The lights go up to full when the NARRATOR gives the cue. Suddenly the stage is quiet for a moment. When the lights reach full, the shops are straightened and a small mass of VILLAGERS enter to shop.)* And let the story begin...*(The NARRATOR puts on a green hat and merges in with the VILLAGERS.)*

LIZABETH: *(Pointing frantically at a store.)* Nanny, Nanny, I want to go to that shop first!

NANNY: Alright Lizabeth, just wait for the rest of us.

KYLE/KYLIE: *(Fussing.)* We always go to Lizabeth's store first. I want to see the toy swords.

SISSY: *(Running towards a cart pulling Lizabeth behind.)* Candy, candy, candy!

NANNY: *(Following the children, clearly beaten.)* Children, wait!

VILLAGER 1: Really?! I can't believe she said that to you.

VILLAGER 2: Me either, this dress is only a week old and my mother picked it out especially for the Duke's Ball. It was specially ordered from Mrs. Tack and her assistant Eyelet!

FISH VENDOR 1: *(Holding up a fish.)* Get your fresh-water fish over here.

FISH VENDOR 2: Straight from the Pool of Pearls.

FISH VENDOR 1: In the far away land of Bubbling Brooks.

FISH VENDOR 2: Believed to have secret powers.

FISH VENDOR 1: For young and old alike!

VILLAGER 3: I'll take seven of those fish.

VILLAGER 2: I'll buy eight.

(The NARRATOR plays a short trumpet call. The EMPEROR enters at a run followed by ANNABELLE, GERTRUDE and CHARLES who enter at a light trot. The EMPEROR is like a child in a candy store. He is more loony than rude. He runs from VENDOR to VENDOR picking up articles of clothing and commenting on them at quick speeds.)

EMPEROR: Ohhhh! Will you look at these, children! *(He moves his way down the cart of clothes as he talks.)* These pants are superb. And look at this coat. Why, the finest tailor in all of France couldn't make a coat like this! I love this green! This purple. THIS GOLD!

CHARLES: Here he goes again.

ANNABELLE: It's only a matter of time before he starts knocking down carts like he did last week in Paris.

GERTRUDE: *(Snobby, stuck-up.)* You two just don't understand fine clothing. You've never had the natural flair for fashion that Uncle and I have.

EMPEROR: Children, come here! Hurry, hurry, hurry! Look at this cape, now this is something. Examine the embroidery, feast your eyes on the feathers, run your finger along the stylish silk stitching!

GERTRUDE: It's so beautiful, Uncle.

CLOTHES VENDOR 2: It's also on sale.

EMPEROR: *(Giddy.)* On sale!

CLOTHES VENDOR 2: Yes, Your Highness. Shall I package it for you?

EMPEROR: *(Enraged.)* Of course not! I don't buy anything on sale. Full price items only! *(Walking to look at the next VENDOR's stand.)* Ohhhhhhhh!

CLOTHES VENDOR 1: It's a cape fit for an Emperor, Sir.

EMPEROR: *(Giddy again.)* Good, 'cause that's exactly what I am. *(Laughs hysterically.)*

CLOTHES VENDOR 1: I'm glad you like it, Your Highness. If you wish I can arrange a private fitting room and...

EMPEROR: *(Interrupting.)* No Time. No Time! Lots of shopping to do. *(Tossing him some gold coins.)* Here, here, *(Shoving the cape at GERTRUDE to hold.)* Here! *(The EMPEROR runs to the next store and talks quietly to the VENDOR exclaiming the beauty of another random garment.)*

GERTRUDE: *(In disgust that she should have to hold the cape.)* Here. *(Handing it to ANNABELLE.)*

CHARLES: What's gotten into you today?

GERTRUDE: Oh nothing, I just want to be at Uncle's side when he needs someone's expert fashion advice. I can't do that if I'm carrying his clothes.

EMPEROR: Annabelle! Annabelle!!!!

ANNABELLE: Coming, Uncle. *(Hands cape back to GERTRUDE.)*

CHARLES: Looks like he doesn't want your advice, Gert. *(GERTRUDE makes a face at CHARLES.)*

EMPEROR: Hurry! *(When she gets there.)* Now, darling child, what do you think of these?! *(He holds up a pair of gold pants very elegantly.)* Wouldn't this pair of golden bloomers be splendid on me!

ANNABELLE: They might be a little shiny?

GERTRUDE: *(Pushing ANNABELLE out of the way.)* I think what she means, Uncle, is that they would look wonderful on you. That shade of gold brings out the characteristic tone of blonde in your hair!

EMPEROR: Ohhhhh...thank you, Gertrude. Annabelle, why can't you talk more charismatically like your sister Gertrude does?

ANNABELLE: I...

GERTRUDE: *(Cutting her off.)* Annabelle never was the most fashionable in the family. I mean, look at that dress! The color completely clashes with her shoes!

EMPEROR: *(Laughing.)* Right you are, Gertrude, right you are! *(Throwing clothes in the VENDOR's face during his following rant, not paying attention to where it hits him/her.)* Now, lets see, I want this, this, this, this. Not this. Yes, no. Yes, no, yes, yes YES! Got that?

CLOTHES VENDOR 3: To be honest, Your Highness, that was a bit fast...

EMPEROR: *(Not listening.)* Good, good. *(Laughs. Giddy.)* Lots of shopping to do. Come along, children!

(Only GERTRUDE follows him. As the EMPEROR turns to run backward he knocks over a boy (SACHEL) in dingy clothing carrying a pile of what appear to be rags. SACHEL and the EMPEROR fall to the ground. CHARLES and ANNABELLE continue to look at clothes.)

SACHEL: *(Helping the EMPEROR up.)* I'm sorry, Emperor, Your Highness.

EMPEROR: Yes, well, you should pay more attention to where you are walking!

SACHEL: Yes, Emperor, sorry, I...

EMPEROR: *(Shrieking.)* AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

GERTRUDE: What is it, Uncle? What's happened?!

EMPROR: My shirt! Look at my shirt!

GERTRUDE: *(Not seeing anything wrong.)* Yes, it looks just as lovely as usual!

EPEROR: No it doesn't. It's horrific. Look! Look! *(Pointing at a tiny spot.)* There. Right there. A spec of dirt. I can barely stand to look at it. *(He carefully picks up a tiny spec from his shirt and lets it go into the wind. To SACHEL.)* What do you have to say for yourself?

SACHEL: I truly am sorry, Emperor...

EMPEROR: Humph! I must change immediately. *(Over dramatic.)* I can not bare to be seen in public like this.

GERTRUDE: Quit right! Look what the dirty peasant boy did. That spec of sand was on your outfit for at least 5 seconds.

SACHEL: Please, Emperor. *(Holding out one of the shirts from his basket of clothes.)* Let me offer you a shirt from my family's store, free of charge. My mother sews them, I do the artwork and my grandmother adds the buttons.

EMPEROR: *(Grabbing it away.)* Let me see that. Ahh, some stitch work, buttons, a visible hem...

GERTRUDE: You're not really going to wear that ugly thing are you?

EMPEROR: Now, Gertrude, we must recognize the boy's work.

SACHEL: I know it isn't much, Your Highness, but my family can't afford such elegant materials as you usually wear.

EMPEROR: Now, Boy, what's your name.

SACHEL: Satchel, Sir.

EMPEROR: Satchel, what a fine peasant name! *(Fluffing SACHEL's hair.)*

SACHEL: Ummmm...thank you?

EMPEROR: Satchel, I haven't seen a shirt like this since...since...since....last week when I passed an ugly peasant playing in the mud outside the city walls. *(Laughs. GERTRUDE joins in.)*

GERTRUDE: Oh Uncle, you're so funny.

EMPEROR: Now, take your rags and run along. I would rather pay 3000 zingets for a pair of under-shorts than wear this ugly shirt for free!

SATCHEL: (*Distraught.*) Yes, Highness. Good day. Good day, Lady Gertrude.

NARRATOR: (*Approaching Satchel. Helping him pick up the garments that fell out of his basket when the Emperor knocked him over.*) Need a hand?

SATCHEL: Thanks.

NARRATOR: (*Examining a piece of clothes.*) You have a talent for design.

SATCHEL: Thanks, but I don't think the Emperor would agree.

NARRATOR: The Emperor isn't very wise when it comes to beauty that doesn't involve jewels. (*Getting an idea.*) At least not yet.

SATCHEL: What?

NARRATOR: Never mind. Have a good day.

SATCHEL: Thanks, you too.

(*SATCHEL walks away defeated. CHARLES and ANNABELLE approach the EMPEROR.*)

ANNABELLE: Who was that, Uncle! Did you meet a new Vendor?

GERTRUDE: Ha! That dirty peasant boy. Not likely. He isn't good enough to *clean* the royal sewing room, let alone work in it. Come along, Uncle, we have shopping to do.

EMEROR: (*Giddy.*) Right you are! Right, right, right! I must find a suitable change of shirt immediately. (*Giddy again.*) Oh, this is so much fun!

(*EMPEROR and GERTRUDE exit. ANNABELLE and CHARLES stay center.*)

CHARLES: Gosh, I'm so tired of her.

ANNABELLE: You're not the only one. Did you hear how rude she was to that peasant?

CHARLES: Well, he was a little muddy.

ANNABELLE: He was just trying to help, and the artwork on that shirt was pretty fancy, even if it was stitched in straw. Gertrude knows nothing about true art. All she cares about is complementing, Uncle. She's always complementing his clothes, and his shoes and his watch...

CHARLES: And his socks.

ANNABELLE: It's sickening. Why do you think she does it?

CHARLES: Well, isn't it obvious? She wants Uncle to like her the most. That way, when he chooses which one of us is next in line to rule the Kingdom, she'll be most likely to be picked.

ANNABELLE: But that decision is ages away. None of us can rule 'til we're at least 18.

CHARLES: I know, but I overheard a customer at the basket stand say that Uncle is going to announce which one of us is next in line at the Royal Parade this weekend.

ANNABELLE: That doesn't sound like Uncle.

CHARLES: I know, but that's what the woman said. I didn't believe her at first, but something seemed different about her. For some reason, I can't help but think she's right.

ANNABELLE: What did she look like?

CHARLES: Ummm...(*Looking around. Finding her.*) That woman. In the hat, over there. (*He points at the NARRATOR. She turns around and winks at the audience. After a Pause.*) He's going to pick you, Annabelle, everyone knows you're his favorite.

ANNABELLE: Well, I hope he doesn't. A life in the palace seems so boring to me. I'd rather paint with mud on the side of a hut then sit around making decrees all day.

CHARLES: Who do *you* think he'll pick?

ANNABELLE: Probably Gertrude.

CHARLES: (*Disappointed.*) I suppose.

ANNABELLE: After all, she *is* most like him.

CHARLES: Too bad she doesn't have the intelligence to rule wisely. What this Kingdom really needs is a few good people to change it around. Someone to start an art program, someone to fix the holes in these pebble paths.

ANNABELLE: Why don't you suggest that.

CHARLES: Who? Me? He'd never listen. I'm not even sure he knows I exist.

ANNABELLE: (*Poking fun.*) That's probably because....(*Imitating.*)...you have not yet learned to expertly coordinate your pants with your socks.

CHARLES: Socks. Shmocks.

(*CHARLES and ANNABELLE Laugh.*)

CHARLES: (*Sighs.*) Race you to the pond?

ANNABELLE: You're on!

(*ANNABELLE and CHARLES exit running. Lights down.*)

SAMPLE