The Emperor’s New Clothes

Story by
Hans Christian Andersen

Adapted for the Stage by
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The Emperor’s New Clothes was first presented by the Children’s Theatre Company in the 1979-80 season.

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Characters
FLO
ROSCOE
BOY
EWEFOR
MINISTER OF STATE
MISTRESS OF THE WARDROBE
MINISTER OF WAR

Ensemble includes: GUARDS (2), DANCERS (8), TOWNSPEOPLE
Act One, Scene One

Act Curtain. Two IMPERIAL GUARDS enter from either wing and raise trumpets to their lips. Fanfare. They exit.

Rogue’s music. Enter FLO, from SL. She stops C, looks at Act Curtain, then begins to pick feathers off her clothing and out of her hair.

FLO (Shouting off SL.) Roscoe? (Rogue’s music out.) You coming, love? (To herself.) Filthy feathers . . . (Shouting.) Roscoe! (To herself.) Feathers! Why does it always have to be feathers? I'm beginning to feel like a fowl. (Shouting.) Ros-coe! Don't dawdle, darling!

Enter ROSCOE, his face blackened and covered with feathers. He walks slowly and with as much dignity as he can muster under the circumstances.

FLO I'll tell you one thing, Roscoe. No matter how many times I get tarred and feathered, I'll never get used to it. Ever. It's not pleasant. All that tar . . . all those feathers . . . not my idea of a party, I'll tell you that much. You look awful, Roscoe.

ROSCOE Oh, woman – how long . . .

FLO (Taking a rag from her knapsack and wiping ROSCOE’S face with it.) Every town we visit it’s the same story. You get one of your ideas for making money, everything goes along fine for a while, and then -before you know it - they're dressing you and me in tar and feathers. It's monotonous.

ROSCOE Can't you be still, woman?

FLO I don't like to be covered in feathers. This morning I met a chicken in the road and it made eyes at me.

ROSCOE (A long-suffering groan.) Ohhhh...

FLO You saw that chicken, didn't you? Followed me for miles. Cluck, cluck, scratch, scratch - it's boring!
ROSCOE: And who, dear Florence, gave away the game in that last city? Who, my darling Flo, always manages to give away the game?

FLO: I don’t mean to, Roscoe . . .

ROSCOE: Here we were, posing as deaf-mutes, and you have to burst into song!

FLO: I felt happy, Roscoe . . .

ROSCOE: Face it, Flo - you’re slow.

FLO: I know, Roscoe - but I am fun, ain’t I?

ROSCOE: Of course you are, my dear. In a curious sort of way. Never mind. Perhaps we’ll have better luck in the next town.

FLO: Which town? Which country?

ROSCOE: (Indicating the Act Curtain.) This one looks as good as any.

FLO: Oh, wonderful! We’ve traveled so far, I don’t think I could walk another mile. And which game will it be, Roscoe? Will we be deaf-mutes again?

ROSCOE: I don’t . . . think so.

FLO: Miracle healers!

ROSCOE: No . . .

FLO: A duke and duchess in exile? I like that one!

ROSCOE: Mmmm - no.

FLO: Rat catchers?

ROSCOE: It’s been done.

FLO: Well, what’ll we be, then?
ROSCOE We'll . . . play it by ear. We'll watch carefully . . . we'll spot our chance . . . and we'll grab it! Agreed, Florence?

FLO (Adoringly.) Agreed, Roscoe. (She turns and bends over the orchestra pit.) Maestro? If you please - we'll play it by ear. (The orchestra begins the Rogue's music. Act Curtain slowly rises.) Thank you. (Running to catch up with ROSCOE, who is heading US into the city.) Roscoe, wait - my feet are killing me!

The capital city of the tiny empire is deserted. There are many wooden shop-signboards, each depicting the goods sold: cobblers, hatters, glovers, wiggers, etc. It is evident that the entire commerce of the town is based on items of apparel. ROSCOE and FLO dart about the stage, "casing" the place.

ROSCOE Hats . . . gloves . . .

FLO Wigs . . . breeches . . . belts . . .

ROSCOE Shoes . .

FLO I could use some shoes . . .

ROSCOE Garters . . . What manner of place is this?

FLO Psst! Roscoe - shhh! (FLO motions toward a small BOY who is emerging from the hat shop, carrying a hat box. )

ROSCOE Quick - in here. (They step into a niche from which they can observe the activity.)

HATTER (Entering, to the BOY.) Bring that straight to the palace, boy - and don't stop for anything.

BOY Yes, sir.

HATTER Be careful, now. That's the Emperor's five o' clock hat!

BOY I will, sir.
HATTER And if you come right back, you can pick up his six o’clock hat!

BOY Yes, sir.

FLO His six o’clock hat?!

ROSCOE Hush!

WIGGIST *(Entering with a large box.)* Boy!

BOY Going to the palace, lady.

WIGGIST Good. *(Placing the box on top of the other.)* The Emperor’s afternoon wig.

BOY Yes, lady. *(WIGGIST exits and returns immediately with another box. )* 

WIGGIST And his after-dinner wig.

BOY Thank you, lady.

GLOVER *(Entering from his shop, adding to BOY’S stack.)* Boy! The Emperor’s new gloves!

COBBLER *(Appearing with three boxes.)* Shoes, boy! One, two, three pair today!

FABRIC LADY *(Calling from across the square.)* Young man! Linens for the Emperor!

BOY Right away, mam.

*BOY crosses toward her, but two small children run in front of him. They nearly collide, and there is a moment of frantic wobbling before BOY regains his balance. The children exit, and BOY reaches FABRIC LADY.*

FABRIC LADY *(Placing yet another box on the pile. )* There’s a good boy.

ROSCOE *(Wiggling from the niche.)* Florence? Number twenty-four. *(With admiration.)* The old routine, eh, Roscoe? Another game’s begun.

ROSCOE Just do it, woman.
FABRIC LADY  (To BOY.) Off you go, then.

FABRIC LADY exits; the stage is clear except for BOY, ROSCOE, and FLO. FLO positions herself behind BOY's back as ROSCOE calls him.

ROSCOE Young man? I say - young man! (Taking a monocle out of her eye and deliberately dropping it.) Goodness me! I dropped my monocle! (She gets down on all fours behind BOY as ROSCOE approaches him.)

ROSCOE Just a moment, young man!

BOY (Turning to go US toward palace.) Sorry, mister - I'm late already... (He trips over FLO's back; BOY and boxes tumble in a heap upon FLO.)

FLO (From bottom of the heap.) Found it! (Confidentially, to BOY.) My monocle. (FLO puts the monocle back into her eye.)

ROSCOE Young man . . .

BOY (From the ground.) Mister?

ROSCOE Terribly sorry . . .

BOY I'm all right.

ROSCOE That's a fair-sized bundle of boxes you've got there, boy.

FLO I wonder what's in 'em? As the cat said when she saw therow o' mouse holes in the wall.

BOY I beg your pardon?

ROSCOE The boxes--what's in them?

BOY New clothes.

FLO Who for?

TOWNSPEOPLE 1, 2, 3 & 4 The Emperor!
FLO  (Aside, to Roscoe.) Townspeople speak with single tongue!

ROSCOE  (To the Townspeople.) I see, I see. And today is a special day, that the Emperor should need so many new clothes? A state affair, perhaps. A royal wedding? A coronation? What is it?

TOWNSPEOPLE  It's Tuesday.

ROSCOE  I see.

FLO  Well I don’t. Pardon me, but I’m new to all this as the infants said to the midwife.

MAESTRO  It’s really very simple. Once upon a time. . .

TOWN #1  In a country far away. . .

TOWN #3  There lived a certain Emperor. . .

TOWN #2  Who wore a different suit of clothes for every hour of the day.

ROSCOE  He wears a different suit of clothes. . ?

MAESTRO  Every hour of the day.

FLO  But why?

BOY  He likes to dress up.

TOWN #1  He’s grand.

TOWN #3  He’s majestic.

TOWN #2  He’s regal!

FLO  He changes clothes a lot.

MAESTRO  Now you’ve got it.
ROSCOE  But that wouldn't leave him time to do much else, would it?

TOWN #1  Not a thing.

FLO  And what do you all do?

TOWN #2  Well, we make the clothes, of course.

TOWN #3  Hats, gaiters and garters . . .

TOWN #1  Belts, breeches, and bows. . .

MAESTRO  Shirts, stockings and sashes...

TOWN #2  And shoes lined up in rows.

FLO  Sounds like a fascinating life. Come on, Roscoe.

ROSCOE  Florence--wait! I smell Opportunity!

FLO  Well what do you expect, Roscoe? I have’t had a bath in days. (Roscoe raps Flo’s head.) Ow!

The Emperor appears behind the gate leading to the palace. He wears only a dressing-gown and a wig-cap.

EMPEROR  You! Boy! Where are my new clothes?

TOWNSPEOPLE  It’s . . .him! (They scatter.)

BOY  Coming, sir! Right away!

EMPEROR  You’d better be--and fast!

The Emperor disappears. The town is transforming into the palace interior.

BOY  Now I’m late . And there’s going to be a court dance in the palace tonight The Emperor will be furious.
ROSCOE  Don't you worry about a thing, little boy. My friend and I will help you, won't we, Flo?

FLO  But my feet are perishing, Roscoe. . .

ROSCOE  You see? She'd be delighted.

FLO  Like the firefly said when she flew into the candle flame: I am delighted-to-no end.

Flo and Roscoe help the Boy pick up the boxes and walk through the changing set.

ROSCOE  (To Boy.) A court dance, you say? Tonight?

Scene Two

The palace is in place. Immediately, MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTER OF WAR, and MISTRESS OF THE WARDROBE enter from USR and cross DSL, conversing.

MINISTER OF STATE  He's impossible! (Begrudgingly.) Long may he live.

MISTRESS OF THE WARDROBE  Long may he live.

MINISTER OF WAR  Long m...m...may he live.

M. STATE  He will not pay attention! He will not listen! He simply doesn't give a fig for the affairs of state!

M. WAR  Not a f...f...f...fig.

WARDROBE  He listens to me . . .
M. STATE  Ah well, of course he does - you’re the Mistress of the Wardrobe. You’re the only one the Emperor will listen to. But if you were the Minister of War, like our courageous colleague here . . .

M. WAR  N...n...n...not a fig! The Emperor hasn’t listened to me since that time fifteen years ago when I told him there was a piece of lint on his vest. He gave me a m...m...m...medal for that.

M. STATE  (*To WARDROBE.*) There - you see?

M. WAR  Other Ministers of War have lots of medals. I only have one. For lint-spotting. And I think I’ve l...l...l...lost it.

WARDROBE  Poor dear, I’ll talk to the Emperor and he’ll get you another. He does anything I say.

M. WAR  Could you get me one for bravery this time? I’d be gr ...gr...gr ... grateful.

M. STATE  And as for me - the Minister of State! The Emperor pays more attention to his barber!

WARDROBE  Well, he is an awfully good barber . . .

M. STATE  The Empire is in a state of collapse and you talk to me about barbers? The Emperor doesn’t deserve to be Emperor! He’s not fit to be Emperor! He’s a rotten Emperor! May he reign forever.

WARDRORE  May he reign forever.

M. WAR  May he reign f...f...f... for a long time.

*Roscoe, Flo and the Boy enter carrying boxes. The Maestro also enters, trying to bar their way.*

MAESTRO  Halt!

M. STATE  Stop!

M. WAR  G...g... go no f u r t h e r!
WARDROBE  You can’t come in here!

BOY  The Emperor’s new clothes, ma’am.

M. STATE  We know you, boy. . .

MAESTRO  But who are these others? (Wardrobe nudges him; he pulls down his collar and repeats.) But who are these others?

Roscoe and Flo do a take to each other. Flo delicately pulls down the Maestro’s collar and peers at the lower half of his face. She carefully replaces the collar and does a take at the audience.

BOY  It’s alright, sir. They’re helping me.

ROSCOE  (Striding boldly to the the MINISTERS and MISTRESS) How d’you do? The name is Roscoe. I’m afraid I haven’t had the pleasure . . .

M. STATE  Who is this man?

WARDROBE  Who are these creatures?

FLO  (Examining MISTRESS up and down with her monocle.) Her figure’s plain, but so’s her features! (This is FLO’s idea of a good joke. She slaps one thigh when she laughs.)

ROSCOE  (Admonishing.) Florence! This is not the time for rhyme.

M. STATE  Nor is it the time for hooligans to barge in off the street. Remove your scruffy selves at once!

WARDROBE  Depart these royal premises promptly!

M. WAR  G...g...g...go away.

FLO and ROSCOE do a brief take to each other. FLO turns to GUARD 1 and pulls down his collar.

FLO  (To GUARD 1.) Wha... wha ... wha...what did he say? (She pull the collar out from his face and lets it snap back.)
M. STATE  Get out! All of you!

BOY  But sir . . . the Emperor's new clothes!

M. STATE  Yes, yes, yes - well, you'll just have to take them into the ante-chamber and wait. Don't you know that the Grand Ball is about to begin?

WARDROBE  The Emperor's Promenade!

M. WAR  A very big who ... who...who...

ROSCOE & FLO  Who?

M. WAR  Whoop-de-do!

DANCERS begin to assemble as MINISTER OF STATE escorts FLO and MINISTER OF WAR escorts ROSCOE toward DSR.

M. STATE  Off! All of you! Now! Get off! (BOY follows; MINISTERS cross back to MISTRESS.)

WARDROBE  Did you see? She had little bits of feathers all over her . . .

FLO  (Having overheard, instantly heads back, growling.) You watch it, you . . .

ROSCOE pulls FLO back and ROSCOE, FLO, and BOY exit DSR. The orchestra begins the suite of dances: Allemande, Courant, Sarabande, and Gigue. MINISTERS and MISTRESS take their place at the base of the staircase SL of C, as the four young couples begin to dance. During each dance, EMPEROR will enter, wearing a different suit of clothes, and promenade among the dancers, eliciting their admiring through various gestures and remarks he makes. Also, throughout the dance, ROSCOE and FLO will poke their heads in to observe.

EMPEROR  (Entering during Allemande with a flourish, to applause.) We are so happy you could come . . . and we know you feel the same. (A bit later. ) Can all of you see us? No one's left out, we hope? Front? Back? Profile? Good! (EMPEROR exits. Second dance: Courant. EMPEROR reappears.) We like to share what we have - this little flair that we have - for fashion. For style. For the very best in dress!
FLO (Mimicking, Modelling her own clothes; unnoticed by all but ROSCOE.) "We like to share what we have - this little flair that we have . . ." How'm I doin', Roscoe?

ROSCOE (Grabbing her, clapping a hand over her mouth, pulling her off.) Shut - up, Florence!

The music changes to Sarabande. This time EMPEROR does not exit, but changes his clothing with the help of ATTENDANTS onstage.

EMPEROR (AS he is changing.) No, no, no - don’t force us to say it . . . oh, all right, we will . . . we are . . . without doubt . . . the very last word . . . in Emperors! (He has finished changing. He approaches MISTRESS OF THE WARDROBE.) Would the lovely lady care to do a round with us?

WARDROBE Oh, your Imperial Majesty is too, too gracious to this, your most humble of servants. (EMPEROR and MISTRESS dance together; ROSCOE and FLO enter.)

FLO "Oh, YOU are too, too, too, too, too gracious, Roscoe . . ."

ROSCOE Then, you will dance with us?

FLO With both of you, darling - I'm enchanted.

They dance, but still unnoticed by EMPEROR. EMPEROR exits, and Gigue begins. The EMPEROR re-enters but, this time, he is wearing the same outfit he wore during the first dance. He does not realize it. ROSCOE and FLO have since abandoned caution and are dancing wholeheartedly with the others, who are puzzled by the peculiar strangers, yet no one moves to have them expelled.

FLO (Leaving ROSCOE and moving to MINISTER OF WAR.) Hello, darlin' .

M. WAR How do you d...d...d...d... (FLO slaps her hand over his mouth and drags him out onto the dance floor.)

FLO Let's dance, gorgeous.
FLO leads and MINISTER OF WAR looks bewildered and slightly terrified. ROSCOE approaches the MISTRESS OF THE WARDROBE.

ROSCOE May I have the pleasure of this dance?
WARDROBE Certainly not!
ROSCOE How kind of you.

He takes her out onto the floor, unwillingly but she doesn’t have much choice. FLO shouts across the floor to ROSCOE.

FLO How’s your humble servant, Roscoe?
ROSCOE Humble! Very humble!

During this, EMPEROR is promenading about in a one-man orgy of narcissism. FLO gets quite caught up in the music, then totally carried away. She lets go her partner and dances in rapture. Others, one by one, stop to observe. Eventually, EMPEROR notices and stands dumbfounded for a moment before he speaks.

EMPEROR Stop! Stop the music! (Orchestra ceases abruptly.) Who is that woman?!
FLO Hello. You’re looking very smart.
EMPEROR Who is she?!
ROSCOE (To himself. ) Oh, no.
FLO Forgive me, O Most Imperial Graciousness, but ain’t them the same clothes you had on before?

EMPEROR (TO himself. ) Oh, no! (A beat.) What?! Wear the same thing twice?! Us? It does not happen! However . . . this fabric . . . it has the feel of . . . familiarity. No, no, no, it couldn’t be. Still . . . this wig . . . could it be that it has adorned our head before? Can it be that we have worn these threads before? I abhor the sort of Emperors who wear the same clothes twice! (Turning to MINISTERS and MISTRESS. ) Believe us, it would be a great shame for anyone who was
responsible for such an error . . . whether it were our Dresser or the Emperor’s Prime Minister! (They tremble; MINISTER OF WAR swoons into the arms of MISTRESS.) It would make us lose our temper, believe you us! Wait a moment... wait a moment... It is! It is! We knew it! This cuff! We’ve worn it before! This cuff, with the single-hemmed double-stitched multi-colored ruff! We’d know it anywhere! (TWO beats, as he gathers his rage.) This . . . does . . . not . . . happen . . . to us! Out! All of you! Get out! (DANCERS scurry out. MINISTERS and MISTRESS try to exit with them.) Not you three! Come here to us at once! (They obey, trembling. BOY dashes onstage and pulls at FLO and ROSCOE.)

BOY     Quickly! You must leave!
FLO     I’m awfully sorry, Roscoe. Have I given away the game again?
ROSCOE  Given away the game? (He kisses her.) My dear, the game has just begun!
FLO     The game’s begun? Oh, Roscoe -which one?
EMPEROR  Who are these people?
ROSCOE  It’s new game, my dear--one we’ve never tried before.
BOY     (To Roscoe and Flo.) Come with me, please--before it’s too late.
FLO     (To Roscoe.) But how’ll I know what to do?
EMPEROR  (Still muted by the dam is about to burst.) Who... are these people?
ROSCOE  (To Flo.) Just go along with everyting I say – you’ll catch on soon enough.
BOY     (Tugging at Flo and Roscoe.) Please!
EMPEROR  WHO ARE THESE JABBERING FOOLS? (Roscoe turns and looks innocently at the Emperor.)
ROSCOE  Could you possibly mean me, fellow?
EMPEROR (A deep nod; a nearly apoplectic whisper.) Who are you?

ROSCOE You don’t recognize us?

EMPEROR We don’t.

ROSCOE Well. My friend and I are weavers, of course.

FLO Well of course we are. My friend an I are... (To Roscoe.) Excuse me - what?

ROSCOE Weavers, of course.

FLO Of course. Of course. Weavers.

ROSCOE Sir, the cloth we weave is known throughout the world, you must have heard of us.

EMPEROR We haven’t

ROSCOE Very strange. Why, just this morning we were in that other empire down the road...

FLO You know the one: around the bend, two rights and then a left at the moat.

ROSCOE We were having breakfast with the Emperor there, and he said, ‘Why don’t you pop over and see my neighbor Emperor What’s-His-Name. And so we did.

FLO (Musical.) Hello!

EMPEROR We know the Emperor of whom you speak. He’s no friend of ours. Did you notice how he dresses? No sense of style whatsoever. The man’s a fool.

ROSCOE Well. Yes. In many respects he is.
FLO In all respects, basically. Total fool. Can’t stand the man, never could.

ROSCOE In face, that’s why he didn’t like the clothes we made for him.

EMPEROR You made a suit of clothes for that... for that..?

ROSCOE Well, he hired us, yes.

FLO Paid a pretty penny, too.

ROSCOE Of course, he’d heard about our magical cloth.

WARDROBE Magical cloth? Nonsense.

M. STATE Obviously a couple of frauds, Your Majesty. Shall I throw them into the dungeon now?

M. WAR Or would you rather I hacked off their h...h...h...heads?

FLO Roscoe--the discourtesy. I'm quite overcome.

ROSCOE You hear that, Emperor? Now you've gone and insulted her. I only hope it doesn't put her off her stitch.

EMPEROR Her stitch?

ROSCOE You're only talking to one of the most famous seamstresses the world has ever known, but evidently that means nothing to you.

EMPEROR Tell me about these clothes you make. Why didn’t that other Emperor like them?

ROSCOE Simple.

FLO Simple.

EMPEROR Yes?

FLO It’s too simple for me, Roscoe, you tell him.
ROSCOE Well. He didn’t like them because...

EMPEROR Yes? Yes?

MINISTERS Yes? (Y. Y. Y. Yes?)

ROSCOE Because he couldn’t see them.

FLO (Aside.) Oh, my goodness.

EMPEROR He couldn’t see them.

ROSCOE It’s really very clear.

FLO (To Roscoe.) It had better be.

ROSCOE He couldn’t see them because the clothes we weave are invisible!

FLO (Aside.) Oh, my goodness.

ROSCOE To fools!

EMPEROR Be so good as to explain.

ROSCOE Well. This ordinary clothing may be fine for ordinary folks. And, I suppose, for ordinary Emperors it’ll do. But. The cloth we weave is endowed with magic powers: it separates wise me from the fools!

BOY How does it do that?

ROSCOE Oh, you’re still here? Isn’t he sweet?

FLO Adorable.

ROSCOE Go away, little boy; your mother’s calling you.

FLO (Dashes to one side, cups her mouth and calls.) Little boy! Come home quick! This is your mother calling you!
ROSCOE  You see?

BOY  That’s just that lady over there. But what good are clothes if you can’t see them?

FLO  Ah. Yes. Roscoe?

ROSCOE  Well... they’re not invisible... to people who are smart. Such as yourself, dear child. Such as your glorious Emperor, long may he dazzle.

EMPEROR  Why, thank you.

ROSCOE  And these wise Ministers, and this clever Mistress of the Wardrobe. They’ll all be able to behold our wondrous clothing for the simple reason that they are not fools. At least, I don’t imagine any of you are fools... or unfit for the high offices you hold... are you?

FLO  (Calling for a show of hands.) Any fools here? Any idiots? Do we have any half-wits among us?

EMPEROR, MINISTERS & MISTRESS  (Raggedly indignant.) Well, of course not! Certainly not! What an idea! Ridiculous!

FLO  Just checking.

EMPEROR  Good sir. . .madam. . .would you make us a suit of clothes like that?

ROSCOE  Well. . .I don’t know. . .

EMPEROR  With clothing like that, I could tell who in my empire is wise... (With a look at his staff.) . . .and who the fools are.

M. WAR  (Aside.) Oh, my g. .g. .g. .goodness.

EMPEROR  I could quickly learn who in my realm is fit for office... and who is not!
M. STATE Emperor--I'm not certain this is a good plan. . .

WARDROBE I would urge you to think twice, Emperor. . .

FLO (To Mistress. ) Does it make you nervous, love?

WARDROBE Not at all!

M. STATE Certainly not!

M. WAR Wh. .wh. .wh. .what an idea!

EMPEROR Will you do it, then?

ROSCOE I really don’t know... Florence and I receive so many requests...

FLO Hundreds. . . dozens. . . Oh, requests, requests...

ROSCOE And I must tell you--the clothing we weave is very costly.

M. STATE How much does it cost?

FLO How much do you have? (Roscoe jabs Flo in the ribs.)

ROSCOE Payment in gold, primarily. Before, during and after. Silver platinum, and jewels accepted with references.

EMPEROR Done! Now... what do you need to work with?

FLO Ah. Yes. Roscoe?

ROSCOE (He doesn’ t have the slightest idea.) Oh. . . the usual.

EMPEROR Yes?

M. STATE Yes?

ROSCOE Well. . . I suppose . . . to weave these clothes... we’ll need... a loom!

ROSCOE And we need . . . privacy! Yes. Privacy.

FLO Oh, yes – we’ll need one of those, too. Definitely. *(FLO gets another jab from ROSCOE.)*

ROSCOE Yes, just . . . give us a loom and leave us alone . . .

FLO New clothes.

ROSCOE The Emperor's . . . new clothes.

BOY How long will it take to make them?

ROSCOE Two weeks.

FLO *(At the same time as ROSCOE.)* One month. *(Beat.)*

ROSCOE One month.

FLO *(At the same time as ROSCOE.)* Two weeks. *(Beat.)*

ROSCOE As long as you like.

BOY What color will it be?

ROSCOE Red

FLO *(At the same time as ROSCOE.)* Blue. *(Beat.)*

ROSCOE Blue.

FLO *(At the same time as ROSCOE.)* Red. *(Beat.)*

FLO Different colors, dear.
ROSCOE There, that's settled. (To EMPEROR.) You won't be disappointed, I assure you. Now, if we could have the gold, the loom, and the privacy, please . . .

FLO In that order.

EMPEROR Certainly. (He claps his hands.) Gold! (GUARD 1 enters with two bags of gold, exits with boxes. EMPEROR claps.) Loom! (GUARD 2 shifts on "loom flat" from DSR.)

ROSCOE & FLO (Clapping their hands. ) Privacy!

MINISTERS and MISTRESS exit, looking over their shoulders. EMPEROR lingers for a moment. FLO snaps her fingers at him and points to the exit.

EMPEROR Ah - you want us to leave . . .

FLO If you please . . .

EMPEROR Yes, of course. And if there's anything else you need . . .

ROSCOE Oh, there will be; don't worry. (EMPEROR exits.)

BOY Can I watch?

ROSCOE (Sweetly. ) Little boy?

BOY Yes?

ROSCOE (Roaring. ) Get out!

BOY runs off. ROSCOE and FLO alone. They look at loom and at each other.

FLO So this is a loom.

ROSCOE Must be.

FLO You know, it's funny . . .

ROSCOE What is?
FLO    I’ve never wondered what a loom looked like.

ROSCOE   Really.

FLO    And now I know.

ROSCOE   Yes. You do.

FLO    How do you suppose the thing works?

ROSCOE   Well, don’t ask me - - I'm no weaver.

FLO    (Adoring.) Maybe not, Roscoe, but you are such a ruddy great liar.

ROSCOE   Florence--I'm touched.

FLO    Yes, well. I suppose we ought to get to work.

ROSCOE   Oh, absolutely. (They exchange delighted, conspiratorial glances.) I'll send down for some liver pate and a bottle of wine.

FLO    (Taking off her shoes.) Oh, I tell you, Roscoe--my feet have perished and gone on to a better world. . .

*Lights fade on the weaving room.*