

Much Ado About Clothing

A comedy loosely based on "The Emperor's New Clothes"

By

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MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

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MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

*For Jada, Cole, and Cesar who would not leave
me alone until I finished writing this play*

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Much Ado About Clothing was originally produced in February 2019 under the title *All's Well That Fits Well* at the Winter Springs Performing Arts Center by the TGS Merely players featuring the following cast:

Iris.....Chloe Wallace
Jasper.....Cesar White
Guard 1.....Gabriel Philippe-Fisher
Guard 2.....Jack Graham
Guard 3.....Madeline Turnbull
Accountant.....Charles White
Wizard.....Hayden Peters
Chef.....Josue Torres
Ruby.....Evie Limber
Garnet.....Kristin Hamil
Jezebeth.....Macy Noll
Emperor.....Cole Foreman
Thistle.....Anjolie Francois
Thorn.....Josiah Swain
Princess Primrose.....Olivia Mendoza
Phoebe.....Tabitha Petrak
Old Lady.....Lily Tevebaugh
Courtiers.....Aubrey Clark, Catherine Collins, Lily Frazer, Thy Phan, Ansley Phillips, and Jeanie Zhang

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Much Ado About Clothing received its 2nd production in February of 2023 at The Geneva School Black Box Theatre by the TGS Merely Players featuring the following cast:

Iris.....Lydia Faith
Jasper.....Joshua Cox
Guard 1.....Allison Forney
Guard 2.....Jed Flood
Guard 3.....Liv Liguori
Accountant.....Ricky Walters
Wizard.....Reese Peters
Chef.....Oliver Clark
Ruby.....Eloise Johnston
Garnet.....Selah Frakes
Jezebeth.....Brie Duplechain
Emperor.....Bishop Martin
Thistle.....Allie Coplin
Thorn.....Gracie Coplin
Princess Primrose.....Lourdes Starr
Phoebe.....Arianna Flood
Old Lady.....Anjolie Francois
Courtier 1.....Margaret Sutton
Courtier 2.....Amanda Daniels,
Courtier 3.....Oola Wilson
Courtier 4.....Maja Turkanik
Tax Guards.....Joshua Hou, Joshua Craichy, Charley Young,
Madison Goranson, Audrey Solis, Eliana Koestner, Sabrina Koestner,
Amelia Gabriel, Greer Eliason, Noah Wilson, and Rori Flores

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CAST: 3 Men, 7 Women, 11 either gender

IRIS Female; Con artist, Jasper's sister and the brains of the operation

JASPER Male; Con artist, Iris' brother and the heart of the operation

GUARD 1 Captain of the guard

GUARD 2 Not the brightest

GUARD 3 Not much brighter

ACCOUNTANT An advisor to the Emperor

WIZARD An advisor to the Emperor

CHEF An advisor to the Emperor

RUBY Female; Emperor's fashion announcer and assistant

GARNET Female; Emperor's fashion announcer and assistant

JEZEBETH Female; Emperor's evil sister

EMPEROR Male; completely mad about fashion, behaves like a child

THISTLE An evil minion to Jezebeth

THORN An evil minion to Jezebeth's

PRINCESS PRIMROSE Female; the Emperor's daughter

PHOEBE Female; Princess' friend and confidante

OLD LADY Female; She is very mysterious and wise

COURTIERS (4, more courtiers may be added as desired) Court gossips

TAX GUARDS (7) Collect and guard the royal treasury

TIME: Long ago.

PLACE: A fashionable palace in a far-off empire.

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Production Notes from the Playwright

1. Keep it moving! The set changes should be simple enough so that one scene can flow into the next.
2. The set could be a castle window room on a turntable to go from scene to scene, or just a window where set pieces are taken on and off. Our door was a free-standing door on wheels that could be moved on and off. At times the guards just swiveled the door around to hide behind it then swiveled it back to play a scene “outside the door.”
3. There are a lot of Shakespeare Easter eggs in this show. Have fun hunting for them.
4. Raven Cloak’s fight scene should be epic and fun. We ended up doing a slow-motion sequence with music and it was a crowd-pleaser.
5. We rang a gong every time someone said “Pan-flip, the ancient art of spatula fighting.” Feel free to do the same or come up with your own sound.
6. I wrote Guard 2 in a dialect. My first Guard 2 gave him a southern accent, and the Guard 2 in the second performance gave him a cockney accent. As long as he is a self-unaware idiot, feel free to play with the dialect.
7. You may change the lines about Thorn and Thistle’s marriage if necessary for your performance.
8. The gender of the characters may not be changed where noted.
9. The chase scene: be creative! We used it to showcase every character in the show.
10. Don’t take it seriously! Have fun!

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ACT I
SCENE 1

Scene opens in a palace throne room. There is a large window up center. Alarum. JASPER and IRIS run in wearing beards and wizard robes, hats etc. Begin to run off but stop because they see something in the exit, they run back in the other direction. GUARDS run on, look around and run off the other way. Jasper and Iris run back on.

IRIS. What do we do? The guards are everywhere! We need a plan.

JASPER. I would say, don't get arrested! But it is a little late for that.

IRIS. Oh, that again. Can't you just let bygones be bygones?

JASPER. It was five minutes ago!

IRIS. Fifteen! We have been running around this maze of a castle for at least ten minutes. And how is it my fault we got arrested anyway?

JASPER. Well, let's see. I said, I think we got enough loot, let's pack up and get out of here before those guards come to see what's going on and you said, No. I bet those guards have a lot of money on them from collecting taxes.

IRIS. That is NOT what got us arrested. *(They hear guards and run off the other direction. Guards run on.)*

GUARD 1. How did they get away from you?

GUARD 2. The little wizard said that they could pull a bunny out of me helmet and you know how I love little creatures like the bunnies on account of they are so fuzzy and they have the long ears. Long ears is so cute. I had a cousin who had really long ears an' we called him Long-ears on account because his ears was so long and we even had a song about it—

GUARD 1. Enough about your cousin! How did they get away?

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GUARD 2. Well, I says, I would very much like you to pull a bunny out of me helmet because I love the bunnies so. And the wizard, the little one says, well, you have to untie us first because we need our hands to make the magic.

GUARD 1. So, you untied them!?!? Why on earth would you do that!?

GUARD 3. So, they could make the magic. His narrative is really easy to follow. Go on with your story.

GUARD 2. So I untied them and I was so excited because of the bunny that was coming and I was thinking that Calvin might be a good name for the bunny but then I remembered that me sister was being courted by this man and that they might get married and they might have a baby and that baby might be a boy and me sister might want to name the boy Calvin, it being such a good name and all so I thought that maybe Calvin wasn't the best name for the bunny because it would be weird if me sister and I was both yelling for Calvin and the bunny and the boy got all confused about who was calling them so I thought maybe a better name would be Paco—

GUARD 3. What if the bunny was a girl bunny?

GUARD 2. Well, I guess I never considered that. I was just thinking it would be a boy.

GUARD 3. Did the wizards say it would be a boy bunny? Did they use masculine pronouns?

GUARD 2. (*Thoughtfully.*) Why, no. I don't believe they did.

GUARD 3. So, the bunny could be either gender.

GUARD 2. I guess it could just as easily be a girl bunny. In that case I would name the bunny Clementine.

GUARD 3. Good name.

GUARD 2. Yep. It's me sister's name.

GUARD 3. Aren't you worried that could cause confusion?

GUARD 2. Well, now that you mention it....

GUARD 1. (*Exploding.*) ENOUGH WITH THE NAMES! WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE WIZARDS!!!!

GUARD 2. No need to shout. So, after I untied them and gave them me helmet. They said, now close your eyes really tight and no peeking and count to one hundred and twenty-five. So I started to counting and I got pretty high, like around twenty nine, but then I couldn't remember what

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came next because I have never been so good at math nor English, nor history, nor really any of the subjects which is why when I failed third grade the *(Carefully counts out four fingers and holds them up.)* third time, me pappy said to me “Son, you ain’t too bright. You should get a job in government” so I signed right up and here I am.

GUARD 3. What an inspiration!

GUARD 1. FINISH THE STORY!

GUARD 2. So, I said what comes after twenty-nine because twenty ten just didn’t sound right but no one answered so I opened one eye and they were gone and me helmet was on the floor without a bunny in it and I started to thinking that maybe they tricked me! *(A crash is heard off stage.)*

GUARD 1. That’s them! Let’s go!

GUARD 3. *(As they all run off.)* I would love to hear that song about your long-eared cousin. *(After they run off Jasper and Iris sneak on.)*

IRIS. I still don’t see how you can pin the arrest on me.

JASPER. Hey guards, I can make your money disappear.

IRIS. And I did! *(Holds up bag of money proudly.)*

JASPER. And you don’t see how that got us arrested!

IRIS. Correlation does not necessarily imply causation!

JASPER. Except the guard said, I am arresting you two on account of you made me money disappear.

IRIS. I don’t recall that. *(We hear guards off.)*

IRIS. Enough with the dredging up of the past. We need a diversion to stop this chase. Quick. Take off your robes, hat, and beard. *(They both do. Iris arranges them in two neat piles on the floor, as if the wizards melted away leaving the clothes and beards behind.)* Now, hide! *(Jasper hides behind throne. Iris chooses another hiding place. Guards enter.)*

GUARD 2. *(Singing.)* Do your ears hang low, do they wobble to and fro can you—

GUARD 1. Stop that! *(Sees wizard robes.)* Would you look at that!

GUARD 3. It’s the wizards!

GUARD 2. *(Points sword at clothing.)* In the name of the Emperor, I am placing you two under arrest!

GUARD 3. Now, come quietly or we are going to have to stab you.

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GUARD 1. Um...guys...

GUARD 2. You heard him! Let's move.

GUARD 3. Well, you had your chance. *(The two begin stabbing the clothing vigorously.)*

GUARD 1. Stop that, you imbeciles! They aren't there! *(Picks up the clothing and demonstrates its inherent emptiness to the guards.)*

GUARD 2. Well would you look at that!

GUARD 3. Where did they go?

GUARD 1. Isn't it obvious! They are wizards. They disappeared and left behind their clothing and beards. Now we will never find them!

GUARD 2. *(Sadly.)* And I will never get that bunny.

GUARD 1. Come on. We need to report to Jezebeth.

GUARD 3. Cheer up! *(Starts singing.)* Do your ears hang low... *(Guard 2 joins in, they are singing raucously as they exit until—)*

GUARD 1. *(Off.)* STOP THAT! *(Jasper and Iris begin to come out of hiding. The WIZARD, the CHEF and the ACCOUNTANT enter as Jasper and Iris return to hiding.)*

ACCOUNTANT. The emperor isn't here yet.

WIZARD. Of course not. He must make his appalling entrance.

CHEF. Well, I hope he gets here soon. I must get back to planning the food for his Royal Birthday.

WIZARD. How much planning does dry meatloaf and over-seasoned soup take? *(Accountant and Wizard laugh.)*

CHEF. Shouldn't you be pulling scarves out of your hat at a child's birthday party?

WIZARD. Very funny, Chef Boyardee! You be quiet or I'll...

CHEF. What? Make me disappear? Turn me into a rabbit?

ACCOUNTANT. More likely, he will bore you to death with a bad card trick!

WIZARD. Silence, you calculator, you abacus, you—

CHEF. Abacus! Ha!

ACCOUNTANT. What are you laughing at? Don't you have something burning in the oven? Oh yeah, I forgot, that's what you call cooking!

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CHEF. Why you! *(Takes a swing at Accountant, misses and hits Wizard instead. Quickly devolves into an all-out brawl. GARNET and RUBY enter.)*

GARNET. May I have your attention, please? *(Advisors stop their tussle and straighten up.)*

RUBY. It is my pleasure to announce that this room is about to be graced with that Governor of Glam.

GARNET. That Superintendent of Style.

RUBY. He puts the hot in haute couture.

GARNET. His Majesty, the Emperor *(Runway music starts. The EMPEROR enters doing typical fashion runway moves.)*

RUBY. Today the Emperor is sporting a gold and white ensemble with cape. *(Descriptions of the Emperor may be changed to describe whatever he is wearing.)*

GARNET. He sparkles in his golden pantaloons.

RUBY. He is so bright, I am going to need shades, Garnet.

GARNET. Tell me about it, Ruby! I am going to have to up my spf to 100! *(Emperor spins, ends with a flourish, then sits on the throne signaling for music to stop. All applaud.)*

EMPEROR. Oh, thank you! You are too kind! Welcome. Welcome everyone to the royal meeting. What is on the agenda for today?

RUBY. Your birthday party, your chicness.

EMPEROR. *(Claps hands.)* Oh huzzah! I love parties! What are you planning?

WIZARD. Your Majesty, I am preparing some spectacular fireworks.

EMPEROR. Oh goody! I love fireworks!

CHEF. And I shall be preparing a huge feast with the biggest, most beautiful cake you have ever seen!

EMPEROR. Ooo! I love cake!

ACCOUNTANT. I have raised taxes, once again, so that we might afford to throw the biggest party the Empire has ever seen!

EMPEROR. Now where is Sissy? She should be here! How can I plan my party without my darling Sissy. She is always looking out for me so well! *(JEZEBETH enters flanked by her minions THORN and THISTLE, guards following.)*

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GUARD 1. So, you see, they disappeared and—

JEZEBETH. You imbeciles! I am sure those wizards were a part of Raven Cloak's gang who has been taking our taxes and returning it to the citizens! I was planning to torture them so we could find out who Raven Cloak is!!!!

EMPEROR. SISSY!!! You are here! *(Runs to hug her.)*

JEZEBETH. Oh, my darling brother, how delightful to see you. No—no hugs, I would just hate to wrinkle that stunning outfit of yours.

EMPEROR. You are always so considerate, Sissy dear!

JEZEBETH. Excuse me a moment, darling brother, while I scream at the guards.

EMPEROR. Of course! *(Retreating to throne.)* Sorry to interrupt.

JEZEBETH. Thank you, darling. *(Turns to guards.)* NOW YOU LISTEN HERE YOU MORONS! FIND THOSE WIZARDS or I will have all of you torn into little, tiny pieces!

GUARDS. Yes, your Majesty *(All run into each other then, after some awkward confusion, off.)*

EMPEROR. You are so good at that! Huzzah! *(Claps and indicates to the rest who also clap.)*

JEZEBETH. Thank you. It's just this awful Raven Cloak! *(Tearfully, Thorn produces a box of tissue. Thistle pulls one out and hands it to Jezebeth.)* If she keeps stealing back the taxes we are collecting, we won't be able to pay for your birthday party, or my salon, personal chef, my trainer, my manicurist, the spa treatments for my cat...But don't you worry your pretty little head about that, Brother.

EMPEROR. Oh, I won't! Worrying makes wrinkles.

JEZEBETH. Wrinkles?

EMPEROR. But they suit you, Sissy! Don't they, everyone?

WIZARD. Yes, they give you gravitas.

ACCOUNTANT. *(Smiles at others.)* Lots of gravitas.

CHEF. So *much* gravitas. *(They all snicker.)*

EMPEROR. Now, that must make you feel better! I am so glad you are here. We were meeting about my royal birthday which is just around the corner!

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JEZEBETH. (*Sardonically.*) And let me guess, you have no idea what to wear?

EMPEROR. Exactly! I am planning a big party and I want to show off the bestest, most fabulous outfit of all but I don't know what to wear.

Everything is so boring. I want something unusual! Unconventional! And very, very expensive!

JEZEBETH. Don't you have better things to spend your money on?

EMPEROR. You sound like my daughter, Princess Primrose. I told her about my plan, and she was all like "But Daddy, there are so many poor people in the kingdom. Wouldn't it be better to spend money on them!"

JEZEBETH. I would NEVER suggest anything so ridiculous!

EMPEROR. I know because you are so wise, Sissy!

JEZEBETH. Yes, I know.

ACCOUNTANT. (*Nodding.*) It comes with age.

WIZARD. That is why she has SO much wisdom.

CHEF. Probably more than anyone in the kingdom... (*Jezebeth glares at advisors.*)

EMPEROR. So, I am giving you the best job EVER!

JEZEBETH. You are stepping down and making me Empress?

EMPEROR. (*Laughing.*) You have such a delightful sense of humor, Sissy! I can always come to you for a laugh! No! I want you to make sure that I have the bestest, most fabulous outfit that was ever created for my Birthday party! Isn't that wonderful! (*Jezebeth gives the Emperor a death glare. She is stunned with rage.*)

CHEF. So delighted, she can't even speak!

WIZARD. (*Clapping.*) Wonderful choice, your Majesty. Who better to pick out your clothing?

ACCOUNTANT. Such an important job.

EMPEROR. Oh, Sissy, I know that you will be able to find the best tailors in the kingdom to design something wonderful! Okay. Well, ta-ta! (*He and entourage begin to exit. He stops.*) Oh! I almost forgot. I have an announcement for all of you. (*Motions to Garnet and Ruby, who pull out kazoos and play a fancy fanfare. The Emperor is overcome with delight.*)

GARNET. Silence in the throne room!

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RUBY. His vagueness, our esteemed and always superbly accessorized Emperor—

GARNET. is issuing a royal decree! *(They play another fanfare but get a bit carried away. The Emperor is so delighted by their musical offering that he dances along, completely forgetting his decree. The other advisors begin to join in, until Jezebeth has had enough.)*

JEZEBETH. Stop! Enough already! *(Everyone stops and looks at Jezebeth.)* Your decree, dear brother?

EMPEROR. Oh yes! I am so sorry. I was so carried away by that entrancing music that I nearly forgot! As you know, the loss of my precious wife, the Empress, has left me bereft and despondent. *(Garnet and Ruby begin to play a mournful tune softly in the background.)*

CHEF. Yes, your Majesty. Such a tragic loss.

ACCOUNTANT. Eaten by a bear.

WIZARD. Oh, the calamity!

EMPEROR. Yes, I shall never forget that fateful night. I had just finished flossing my royal teeth when I heard a growl, then a scream! I ran into the room to find a large bear climbing out the window with this *(Holds up piece of cloth.)* hanging from its mouth: the hem of my darling wife's dress! I leaped to the window and grabbed the end of the dress. I tugged and tugged—but alas! The bear got away, and I was only left with this. *(Begins to sob into the cloth.)*

CHEF. Tragic!

ACCOUNTANT. Horrible!

WIZARD. Calamity!

EMPEROR. Ever since that night, I have been unable to attend to the boring work of governing the kingdom. So—

JEZEBETH. You are stepping down and making me Empress!

EMPEROR. Oh, Sissy. You are such a delight! No matter how sad I am you can always make me laugh! *(The other advisors join in the laughter.)*

JEZEBETH. Then what?

EMPEROR. Well, I have decided that I want to focus on the fashion and the parties so I will be choosing someone in the kingdom to take care of all the other things, like the governing and the lawmaking.

JEZEBETH. And who are you choosing?

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EMPEROR. Well, I don't know yet. It will need to be the smartest person in the empire, so I just need to come up with a way to figure that out. Okay! I need to change clothes. I have been wearing this outfit forEVER!
(Exits with entourage and advisors.)

JEZEBETH. *(To her minions.)* Did you hear that?

THISTLE. That sounds like a job for you, your awfulness!

THORN. You are by far the smartest person in the kingdom.

JEZEBETH. Finally! Now, I have the perfect opportunity to take over the kingdom—after that blunder!

THISTLE. Stupid bear.

THORN. Eating the Empress and not the Emperor.

THISTLE. We should have starved it first.

JEZEBETH. Enough with the past. Now, I just have to come up with a way to make sure he knows I am the smartest person in the kingdom.

THORN. Should we do this before or after you find him the bestest outfit?

JEZEBETH. *(Enraged.)* How dare he? How dare he make me, the second most powerful person in the Empire, his errand girl???? I am supposed to find him an outfit? For his stupid party?

THORN. You are too good for this, your Craftiness!

THISTLE. Oh, yes! You shouldn't have to spend your time finding the Emperor a birthday suit! Oops. I meant suit for his birthday.

THORN. Hee hee! That would be funny! The Emperor parading around his party in his birthday suit!

THISTLE. Hee hee! Today, his Majesty is sporting a suit of flesh tone.

THORN. Look how breathable that fabric is, Ruby!

THISTLE. Oh Garnet, I haven't opened my eyes since he entered the room! *(They laugh, Jasper laughs.)*

JEZEBETH. Shut up! Did you hear that?

THISTLE. What?

JEZEBETH. I heard a noise—behind the throne. *(They discover Jasper behind the throne and drag him out.)*

JEZEBETH. How long have you been there!

THISTLE. He heard all your plotting! *(Thistle and Thorn begin to bind and gag him.)*

THORN. And about the bear!

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JEZEBETH. I guess we will have to dispose of you to keep our secrets! *(Thorn pulls out a small chest of weapons. The three begin trying to choose the perfect one. Meanwhile, Iris ventures out of hiding, out of sight of the others, walks to the exit, then turns around pretending to enter the room. She makes a loud noise as she “enters” alarming the others who begin hiding their weapons and looking “natural.”)*

IRIS. Jasper! Oh, my goodness! There you are! *(She is doing hand motions to match what she is saying to Jasper.)* I have been looking everywhere for you. *(Before the others can respond.)* Thank you so much for finding my brother. *(To Jasper)* Were you lost, sweetie? *(Grabs Jasper by the face before he can answer and makes him nod his head.)*

JEZEBETH. We were just questioning your brother.

IRIS. Oh, I am so sorry, but he can't answer you. He lost his tongue in a spindle wheel. *(She begins taking off the gag.)*

JEZEBETH. What a shame. *(She shoots a smile at Thorn and Thistle.)*

IRIS. *(To Jasper.)* Come this way, brother. We must go to the employment office. *(They begin to exit, but Thorn and Thistle cut them off.)*

THORN. Oh, you are going to have to leave him with us.

THISTLE. Yes, we need to question him about a few things he may have heard.

IRIS. Oh, Jasper didn't hear *anything*. He lost his hearing in a freak accident with a magical loom.

JEZEBETH. Oh! So, he can't hear or speak?

THORN. How lucky!

THISTLE. UNlucky.

THORN. Yes, I mean unlucky.

IRIS. Yes. It has made things difficult. *(To Jasper, signing.)* Come brother, we must see if anyone here is in need of magical tailors who can make fantastic, but enormously expensive outfits. *(Jasper signs back complete nonsense.)* Are you asking me if we will be able to make the suit that only the smartest people can see? I don't know if they are going to want to spend that kind of money here. *(Jasper was not, but now he gets it. He signs to Iris who translates.)* Maybe they want to know who the smartest people in the palace are? Why would they need to know that?

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Now, come on, we need to see if there are any openings for tailors here.
(Begins to exit.)

JEZEBETH. Wait! Did you say you were tailors?

IRIS. Oh yes! Our specialty is magical clothing, but we can make you a new dress if you would like.

JEZEBETH. Did you say something about a suit that only smart people can see?

IRIS. Ah yes madam. But you wouldn't want that. It's very expensive. Requires precious gems and gold to make. And it can only be seen by the smartest people, so it isn't really practical to wear everywhere, if you know what I mean.

JEZEBETH. I will have you make such an outfit!

IRIS. Of course! *(Signs to Jasper who immediately pulls out measuring tape and begins measuring Jezebeth.)*

JEZEBETH. No! Not for me, *(Waves him away. He begins measuring Thorn.)* For the Emperor, for his royal birthday!

IRIS. We will need a place to stay in the palace, so we can work.

JEZEBETH. Done!

IRIS. And money for supplies.

JEZEBETH. Yes, yes.

JASPER. *(Points at mouth.)*

IRIS. And a personal dentist.

JASPER. *(Pantomimes chewing.)*

IRIS. An alligator.

JASPER. *(Rubs belly.)*

IRIS. A baby.

Jasper *(Seriously???)*

JEZEBETH. *(Not really listening.)* Yes, yes. My assistants will take care of all the details. Thistle, Thorn, find our guests suitable quarters. *(Thistle, Thorn, Jasper, Iris exit.)* This is perfect! With this magic suit I shall expose these morons and prove that I am the most brilliant in the kingdom! And once I am in control, I will rid myself of this idiot brother of mine. *(PRINCESS PRIMROSE enters with PHOEBE. It is obvious through the exchange that the Princess and Jezebeth cannot stand each other. Their lines are delivered in obnoxiously fake sweetness.)*

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PRINCESS. Oh, I am sorry Auntie. I didn't mean to interrupt your evil plotting.

JEZEBETH. Oh, my delightful little niece, you are so funny and clever. What a delightful little joke. I was just thinking about the elaborate outfit that I am having made for your father and his birthday celebration.

PRINCESS. He put you in charge of his wardrobe? Phoebe, did you hear that Jezebeth is taking care of the Emperor's wardrobe? Are you sure you can handle the pressure?

JEZEBETH. For your information, it is a very complicated responsibility.

PHOEBE. There's socks, there's underwear...

PRINCESS. Oh, and accessories!

PHOEBE. Gloves or no gloves?

JEZEBETH. (*Fakes laugh.*) Oh, your teasing is so very enjoyable! It is so surprising that you are both still single. For your information, I have commissioned a very special, magical outfit that is very unique and expensive. So, there are taxes to raise and—

PRINCESS. More taxes! You are already overburdening the poor with these taxes! You can't keep raising them for frivolous things like parties and outfits.

JEZEBETH. Oh, my silly little niece! You obviously have no head for politics! Extravagant parties remind the peasants that we are royal and important.

PRINCESS. But many of them will starve.

JEZEBETH. Yes. And while they are starving, they will be too weak to cause trouble.

PHOEBE. Trouble like Raven Cloak?

PRINCESS. Oh, yes. I heard about Raven Cloak. Apparently, she returned the money to an entire village.

PHOEBE. Yes, the peasants love Raven Cloak.

PRINCESS. You know, I heard that she is a master of Pan-flip.

PHOEBE. Pan-flip?

PRINCESS. Yes, the ancient art of spatula fighting.

PHOEBE. So cool!

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

JEZEBETH. Raven Cloak's days are numbered. That is going to be my birthday present to the Emperor. Now, run along, I have important matters to attend to.

PHOEBE. Like boxers or briefs! *(Princess and Phoebe move to the other side of the stage.)*

PRINCESS. This is awful. Raising more taxes!

PHOEBE. *(Cheerfully.)* Cheer up, Princess. So, your mother was eaten by a bear and your father has decided that he only cares about clothing and your aunt is evil and plotting to take over the kingdom. It could be worse. *(Princess nods in agreement. Phoebe exits.)*

PRINCESS. *(A beat.)* How? *(Princess exits as Thistle and Thorn enter)*

THISTLE. We found a room for the tailors.

THORN. We sent for all the supplies they asked for and put two guards on the door.

JEZEBETH. Excellent! That magic suit will help me be rid of these advisors. It's nearly time for the Emperor's council to meet. Let's go set this plan into action. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE 2

COURTIERS change the scene, bringing on bolts of cloth, chests of jewels, sewing equipment, etc. Jasper and Iris enter, followed by Guards 2 and 3. Iris and Jasper begin directing the courtiers where to put things, then shoo them out. The Guards stay behind.

IRIS. You must leave! We can only work in complete secrecy.

GUARD 3. But we are supposed to stay here and keep an eye on you.

GUARD 2. Two eyes.

GUARD 3. Yes—

GUARD 2. Actually, that would be four eyes, because you got two eyes *(He indicates to Guard 3.)* and I got two eyes, and two plus two makes *(slows down to check this with his fingers.)* three? No four. I am sure it is four eyes. We are supposed to keep four eyes on you.

GUARD 3. Right. Four.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

IRIS. I see, but we can't have anyone watching our work. (*Jasper mimes agreement.*) It is very special magic that can't be witnessed by regular people.

GUARD 3. But orders.

GUARD 2. I suppose if we each closed an eye, it would be two eyes... (*Iris looks at Jasper for assistance. Jasper pantomimes watching something then a very dramatic death. All look at him in wonder as he lies there dead for a moment.*)

GUARD 3. Is he okay? (*Jasper jumps up and looks at Iris expectantly.*)

IRIS. I am not sure— (*Jasper pretends to sew, runs over to the other side of the room and mimes watching with binoculars, then dies another dramatic and more terrible death. He lies there a moment, then jumps up and looks at Iris like "get it?"*) Oh, oh! Yes! If anyone watches us while we create the magic cloth, they will die a horrible death. We are only concerned for your safety.

GUARD 2. Horrible death?

GUARD 3. That doesn't sound pleasant.

GUARD 2. I had an uncle once who was magicked very badly by a traveling magician that he made fun of. See me uncle, he likes making fun of bald people and you see, the magician, well he was bald so me uncle is making fun of the magician and we weren't surprised because well that's me uncle and he was saying things like "Hey you, you don't got hair!" and "Hey, bald guy, you're bald!"

IRIS. Clever man, your uncle.

GUARD 2. Aye! Smartest in me village.

IRIS. I don't doubt it.

GUARD 2. Anyway, that magician turned around and magicked me uncle and from then on he thought he was a chicken.

GUARD 3. That's terrible!

GUARD 2. Oh, yes! He was always walking round like this (*Demonstrates.*) and clucking and such like. Another magician came one time and said that he could fix him, but me aunt and me ma said no way and chased him off with brooms.

GUARD 3. Why wouldn't they let him fix your uncle?

GUARD 2. We needed the eggs.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

IRIS. Great story, but you see, our magic is even worse because it can cause terrible death (*Jasper pantomimes terrible.*)

GUARD 3. Well, I guess we can just guard them from the outside, keep an eye on the door.

GUARD 2. We can keep four eyes on the door!

IRIS. Thank you, thank you so much (*As she ushers guards out of the room. Once they are gone.*)

JASPER. This not speaking thing is really getting on my nerves.

IRIS. Well, it's a lot better than being dead! How about a thank you?

JASPER. Why do all of your brilliant plans to help me end up making me miserable?

IRIS. It's more fun. Okay, let's see if we can figure out a way out of here. (*Looks around.*) Check that window. Can we climb down?

JASPER. (*Looks out window and down.*) Only if we want to fall to certain death.

IRIS. (*Pulls out some fabric.*) Maybe we can tie some of the fabric together and make a rope to climb down. (*They begin taking stock in the fabric. Lights lower on the tailors and come up on the guards.*)

GUARD 2. I tell ya, I miss 'im. I'd come home and he would run over to me and start pecking at me shoes.

GUARD 3. Family is like that.

GUARD 2. It's why I always keep birdseed in me pocket (*Demonstrates, then sniffles.*)

GUARD 3. There, there. (*Pats him on the back and hands him a handkerchief. An OLD LADY using a walking stick wanders in, looking confused. Sees guards.*)

OLD LADY. Oh, excuse me, gentlemen. (*Guards suddenly stand at attention and try to look menacing or guardly.*)

GUARD 3. Halt! Who goes there?

OLD LADY. Oh, dearie me! You are frightening me out of my wits! I am just a frail old lady who has lost her way in this big old castle.

GUARD 2. Oh! We didn't mean to scare you. We are guarding this door, see.

GUARD 3. Supposed to keep an eye on it.

GUARD 2. (*Holding up three fingers.*) Four eyes!

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

OLD LADY. Well, you don't seem to be looking at it now.

GUARD 3. *(Genuinely shaken. To Guard 2.)* She's right!

GUARD 2. Oh no! *(Both jump and spin around to stare intently at the door. Old Lady picks up walking stick and brandishes it like a baseball bat. She begins sneaking up behind the guards with way too nimble movement for an old lady. Just as she is about to take them out, Iris opens the door and the Old Lady freezes.)*

IRIS. *(To guards.)* Excuse me, but we are going to need more cloth—
WHAT THE?!? *(She and Old Lady lock eyes. They obviously know each other. They freeze as:)*

GUARD 2. *(Pulling out notepad and pencil.)* How do you spell cloth? Is it with a k or a w?

GUARD 3. *(With certainty.)* K. *(Then waffles.)* Wait, no. W. No, a K.

IRIS. *(Silently communicating.)* Put that away!

OLD LADY. *(Silently communicating.)* I will just take them out and we'll go!

IRIS. *(Out loud.)* NOOOO!

GUARD 2. She's right. It doesn't look right.

GUARD 3. *(Looks closely at notepad.)* That's because you spelled it with a cat.

OLD LADY. *(Bringing down stick, silently communicating.)* What then?

IRIS. *(Silently communicating.)* I don't know!

GUARD 2. No, that's a k.

GUARD 3. It's a cat. It's got a tail and whiskers. A K ain't got a tail and whiskers.

GUARD 2. Are you sure?

GUARD 3. Pretty sure.

GUARD 2. But a k's got pointy ears though, right?

OLD LADY. *(Silently, brandishing stick again)* Yeah, I am taking them out.

GUARD 3. Oh sure.

IRIS. NOOOO!!!! *(Guards look up at her. Recovering)* MY GOODNESS!

Grandma! How ever did you find us? *(Guards turn to look back at "Grandma" who has recovered her Old Lady pose.)* Look, Jasper, it's Grandma! *(Jasper comes to door.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

OLD LADY. Oh, I am so delighted that I finally found you two! Come give your grammy a hug! Oh, and there is my darling Jasper! What have you got to say for yourself, young man? Aren't you going to say hello to your Grammy?

IRIS. Oh Grandma! You are such a kidder. (*Pointedly.*) You know how Jasper injured his tongue on a spindle wheel and lost his hearing in a freak accident with a magical loom and now he can't hear or speak!

JASPER. (*Mimes ha ha ha, you're funny grandma.*)

OLD LADY. Silly me! You know how forgetful I am because I am an old lady!

IRIS. (*Pulling Old Lady into room.*) Come in grandma! We have so much to catch up on and you can help us with our magic sewing. (*Closes door on Guards. Guards stand there a moment; they go back to notepad.*)

GUARD 2. It still doesn't look right.

GUARD 3. You forgot the hat.

GUARD 2. Oh. (*Draws hat.*) That's it. (*Lights down on guards, up on tailors.*)

OLD LADY. (*Pulls off old lady disguise to reveal that she is not an old lady at all but some kind of renaissance ninja woman.*) Sorry it took so long. I thought you would be in the dungeon.

IRIS. Raven Cloak, we were just about to escape out the window.

JASPER. (*Holds up sad little tied together cloth belt.*) but we needed more cloth.

OLD LADY. Get rid of that! (*Pulls out a coil of rope.*) Let's get out of here.

IRIS. Jasper, you climb down first, and we'll lower the jewels and gold to you.

OLD LADY. (*Tossing one end of the rope out the window.*) Jewels and gold? How did you end up in a room full of jewels and gold instead of the dungeon?

IRIS. We got hired as tailors to the King. (*She begins packing together the loot.*)

JASPER. (*Helping.*) Iris convinced Jezebeth we could make a magical suit that only intelligent people could see.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

IRIS. For the Emperor's birthday. And we told them we needed all this fancy cloth and jewels to make it. Great plan, huh?

JASPER. It was all very brilliant except for the part where Iris made me a deaf mute.

OLD LADY. Deaf mute?

IRIS. We overheard Jezebeth plotting to take over the empire.

JASPER. And they found me hiding behind the throne. *(Takes rope and begins to climb out window.)*

IRIS. So, I pretended to run in looking for him and claimed that he was deaf and mute so that they wouldn't kill him and got us hired as tailors making a suit for the Emperor's birthday!

OLD LADY. Plotting to take over the empire?

IRIS. Yes. And she said that she sent the bear that ate the late empress.

OLD LADY. *(Lets go of the end of the rope she has been holding. We hear Jasper shouting and see the rope rushing out the window. Iris runs to the rope and throws herself on the sill so that half her body is hanging out the window. With a great effort she pulls on the end of the rope she has barely caught in time.)* She sent the bear?

IRIS. *(Struggling with the rope.)* A little help here.

OLD LADY. And you are sure it was Jezebeth who said she sent the bear?

IRIS. *(Still trying to help Jasper.)* Grab on to something! Yeah. That's what Jezebeth said. *(She has Jasper's hand and is pulling him up.)*

OLD LADY. We're not leaving.

IRIS. WHAT?! *(Drops Jasper's hand and crosses to Old Lady. Jasper's hand disappears. Perhaps, we hear a yelp.)* You're joking, right?

OLD LADY. No. You promised to sew an invisible suit and that is what you are going to do! *(We see one hand grab the top of the window ledge, then the other. Jasper begins to slowly pull himself up.)*

IRIS. But—

OLD LADY. You keep getting them to bring you more gold and jewels and fancy cloths and you pretend to sew that suit.

JASPER. *(Gasping has he finally pulls his body onto the ledge.)* That's okay. I got it. I don't need any help.

IRIS. But what if one of the advisors exposes us?

JASPER. Seriously, don't anyone worry about me.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

OLD LADY. No one is going to admit they can't see that cloth! And when the birthday celebration comes, this brilliant plan of yours is going to make everyone rich!

IRIS. I like the sound of that. *(Blackout)*

SCENE 3

In the darkness we hear the sound of a large door sliding open.

TAX GUARD 1. Close the super-secret entrance! *(We hear the sounds of a large door sliding shut. Lights up on night in the palace. Eleven TAX GUARDS enter each holding bags. Feel free to add or reduce the number of tax guards.)*

TAX GUARD 2. Alright, let's get these taxes to the safe.

TAX GUARD 3. I can't believe we made it all the way here with the taxes without being attacked by Raven Cloak.

TAX GUARD 1. Let's just get these bags of gold in the safe so we can get outta here. This place gives me the creeps. *(He takes his bags offstage. The other guards start to follow but are stopped by the sound of a loud slap. Then, Tax Guard 1 comes flying out of the entrance as if knocked by a big force and lands in a crumpled heap onstage. Everyone stops to look at the fallen guard, then toward the exit. They drop their bags, draw weapons and slowly begin creeping in a line toward the exit. A figure in black, RAVEN CLOAK, enters from other direction and taps the last one, Tax Guard 11 on the shoulder. He turns around and she takes him out with a spatula. He makes a groan as he crumples to the ground. Tax Guard 10 turns with his finger to his lips, to motion to the other to be quiet when he sees him lying on the ground. Meanwhile Raven Cloak has slipped away.)*

TAX GUARD 6. Hey guys! *(They turn to see their fallen comrade. Now they are nervous. They form a kind of circle center with their backs to one another and their weapons out, looking for their attacker. Suddenly, we see Raven Cloak, standing on the ledge, framed in the window.)*

RAVEN CLOAK. Looking for someone? *(The guards whirl around, facing the window.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

TAX GUARD 4. It's Raven Cloak!

TAX GUARD 5. And she has spatulas!

TAX GUARD 6. Come down from there, Raven Cloak! You are under arrest!

RAVEN CLOAK. Why don't you come and get me? *(The Guards move to the window, terrified. They form a U as they close in on the window. Raven Cloak leaps down into the middle and they move to her, creating a kind of huddle and begin obviously beating someone in the middle. We had a curtain opening under the window that Raven Cloak rolled through, unseen by the audience so that she could enter from another area.)*

TAX GUARD. We've got you. *(Raven enters from up right entrance.)*

RAVEN CLOAK. Are you sure about that?

TAX GUARD. Yeah! *(The guards produce one of their own who is nearly unconscious. They quickly realize their mistake. The unfortunate guard is tossed aside and an epic slow-motion battle begins. Have fun with it. However you do the battle, it ends with Raven Cloak standing in a fighting stance with her spatulas surrounded by guard bodies, then picking up all the bags of money. Blackout)*

SCENE 4

Courtiers change the scene to Throne room as they speak.

COURTIER 1. Spatulas? You're saying she took out five guards with just spatulas?

COURTIER 2. Eleven guards.

COURTIER 1. With spatulas?

COURTIER 3. She's a master of Pan-flip, the ancient art of spatula-fighting!

COURTIER 4. *(Entering.)* Are you talking about Raven Cloak attacking the guards?

COURTIER 2. I am pretty sure everyone's talking about that.

COURTIER 1. Where did it happen?

COURTIER 3. No one knows, somewhere in the palace, I think.

COURTIER 1. Did she take anything?

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

COURTIER 2. She took EVERYTHING!

COURTIER 3. I heard that Jezebeth was raging... (*Thorn and Thistle enter, startling them.*)

THORN. What did you hear about Jezebeth, servant?

COURTIER 3. That that sh-sh-she's—

COURTIER 4. So enGAGING!

THISTLE. Really?

COURTIER 3. Yes, we were all talking about how delightful she is. (*All nod.*)

THORN. I would be careful, if I were you. Someone might have thought you were gossiping about her

THISTLE. And that could be very, very dangerous.

COURTIER 2. We would never!

THORN. I should hope not.

THISTLE. Now, hurry up and get out of here. Jezebeth does not like the smell of common folk! (*Courtiers hurry out of room. Jezebeth enters the throne room. She wrinkles her nose. Looks at Thorn and Thistle.*)

THORN. Commoners.

THISTLE. I'll take care of it. (*Sprays deodorizer. Jezebeth nods and takes a seat on the throne. Accountant, Wizard and Chef enter.*)

ACCOUNTANT. Jezebeth! Did you hear the guards were, once again, robbed by Raven Cloak!

JEZEBETH. There go your budgets for the royal party.

WIZARD. Then how are we going to pay for all the royal birthday supplies?

CHEF. Jezebeth is the royal treasury empty?

JEZEBETH. Don't be ridiculous! It isn't empty. I just don't want to share. (*Advisors complain. Princess and Phoebe enter.*)

PRINCESS. Oh! Did you hear about Raven Cloak? She took all the taxes and returned them to the people!

ACCOUNTANT. We heard! It's horrible!

WIZARD. A calamity!

CHEF. How did this even happen?

PRINCESS. Well, the guards were coming into the castle through the super-secret entrance—

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

JEZEBETH. The super-secret entrance that only a few know about?

PRINCESS. Yes! They were using it to avoid being robbed by Raven Cloak, but she was already there! Waiting for them!

PHOEBE. With her spatulas!

PRINCESS. Oh! I wish I could have seen it!

WIZARD. She was already waiting for them in the super-secret entrance?
(Princess and Phoebe nod.)

ACCOUNTANT. But how?

CHEF. That entrance is super-secret!

THISTLE. Oh! That's why they call it that!

THORN. I thought it was named after a war general or something.

WIZARD. But only a few people know about the super-secret entrance.

ACCOUNTANT. Just the tax-collectors and a few people in the court!

JEZEBETH. That means that Raven Cloak must be someone in the court!
(Everyone looks at each other suspiciously. Music starts.)

RUBY. Your attention please!

GARNET. You are about to be graced by the magnificent presence of your Emperor. *(The Emperor makes a fabulous entrance.)*

RUBY. Today, the Emperor is sporting a fabulous fur-trimmed vest.

GARNET. Just look at that fabulous strut!

RUBY. This outfit was designed by none other than—

PRINCESS. *(Gestures to stop music.)* Father! Must you?

EMPEROR. Why do you have to spoil my fun! So, what do you think of my latest outfit?

PRINCESS. It looks expensive.

EMPEROR. Oh, it is! But this is nothing compared to what I plan to wear at my Royal Birthday Party! Your Auntie is going to find me something even more spectacular than anything I have ever owned!

PRINCESS. Father, I have an idea to make your birthday party the best ever!

EMPEROR. Well, I'd love to hear your idea, little Primmy!

PRINCESS. Well, what if instead of spending all that money on your party and your clothes, you invited all the poor in the kingdom to a feast and then told them you were going to lower taxes as your birthday gift to them? Wouldn't that be wonderful, Father?

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

EMPEROR. Instead of spending money on my party?

PRINCESS. Yes, Father. And on clothes.

EMPEROR. (*Pats Primrose on the head.*) Oh, my dear. You shouldn't try to worry your little head about political matters! It is so adorable when you try though!

JEZEBETH. Yes. Isn't she darling? Now you and your little friend run along. The big people have important things to talk about.

EMPEROR. Sissy! You're in my chair again!

JEZEBETH. Oh, look at that! I am. How silly of me. (*Gets up.*) I can't believe I keep doing that!

ACCOUNTANT. No one can.

JEZEBETH. Brother dear, I have a surprise for you!

EMPEROR. This is so exciting! What is it? A puppy?

JEZEBETH. No, I—

EMPEROR. A pony?

JEZEBETH. No, I have—

EMPEROR. Is it a ballet dancing unicorn that plays bagpipes?

Jezebeth NO IT IS NOT A BALLE T DANCING UNICORN THAT PLAYS BAGPIPES! Stop guessing— (*Gathers her control and speaks very sweetly.*) Sweetie darling. (*She does a mental double-take.*) Bagpipes? Why would you even want—? (*Shaking it off.*) Never mind. I have hired two tailors to make you a magical outfit that is invisible to all but the extremely intelligent!

EMPEROR. How charming!

JEZEBETH. Yes. Isn't it? You can use it to find out who the smartest people in your kingdom are.

EMPEROR. What a brilliant idea. I would have never thought of that! (*To Primrose.*) See, darling. Your Auntie really has a head for politics.

PRINCESS. Yes, she has just the kind of brilliant mind you need to pick out the perfect tie—

PHOEBE. The perfect handbag—

PRINCESS. I mean the whole empire would fall into despair if you weren't able to advise the Emperor on fashion!

PHOEBE. We'd have rioting in the streets!

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

EMPEROR. Oh, Huzzah for Jezebeth! It is such a relief she is here
(Begins applauding. The court joins in. Suddenly, he stops and cuts off the court. He pulls Jezebeth aside.) Do you think I need a handbag, Sissy? I mean I never carry anything because I have people for that, but now I'm not sure.

PRINCESS. Oh, please help the Emperor, Jezebeth!

PHOEBE. We must know if he needs a handbag!

PRINCESS. We are all waiting for you to use your gift.

JEZEBETH. Don't you two have somewhere to be? We have important state matters to discuss.

ACCOUNTANT. Like shoes and earrings! *(Wizard and Chef laugh.)*

PRINCESS. We are leaving. Goodbye father.

EMPEROR. Ta ta, darling! *(Princess and Phoebe exit. To Accountant.)*
Earrings? Are you sure? I don't want to over-accessorize!

JEZEBETH. Yes, brother. Can we come back to the invisible cloth that only the intelligent can see? Thank you. I would like to suggest that you should probably make a law that any of your advisors who can't see the outfit should be fired.

CHEF. Yes!

ACCOUNTANT. Wonderful idea!

WIZARD. Absolutely!

EMPEROR. Brilliant! Oh huzzah! *(Claps hands. Stops.)* Why?

JEZEBETH. Well, you want to make sure all your advisors are intelligent, your Highness. You don't want any stupid people working for you.

EMPEROR. What a lovely idea. I shall do just that! Now what's all this I hear about Raven Cloak taking all my birthday party money?

JEZEBETH. Well, your Majesty, it seems that Raven Cloak used the super-secret entrance!

EMPEROR. No one knows about the super-secret entrance. It's super-secret. *(Gasps.)* I wonder if that's why it's called that!

THISTLE. I was thinking the very same thing!

GARNET. You have such a clever mind, your Highness!

RUBY. Brilliant! *(Begins applauding him. All join in.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

JEZEBETH. Right! Moving on, no one knows about the super-secret entrance except for the tax collectors and people in this room!

CHEF. She's right!

ACCOUNTANT. Why, I never thought about that!

WIZARD. The only other person who knew was the late Empress.

JEZEBETH. So, you know what that means, your Majesty.

EMPEROR. *(He nods, then thinks about it.)* No, no, I don't.

JEZEBETH. That means that Raven Cloak is someone in this very room!
(Emperor gasps. All eye each other suspiciously.)

THISTLE. But there is one other person who knows about the super-secret entrance who is not in this room!

THORN. You're right, Thistle!

JEZEBETH. What are you saying? Who else knows who is not in this room? *(No one seems to know the answer. Jezebeth signals to Thorn and Thistle. They lean over the three advisors.)*

THORN. Incess-pray.

THISTLE. Imrose-pray. *(No reaction. Then suddenly, they realize it.)*

CHEF. The Princess knows!

ACCOUNTANT. Yes, that's true. The whole royal family knows.

WIZARD. Do you think—

JEZEBETH. *(With feigned outrage.)* I can't believe that you three would even dare suggest that the Princess herself was Raven Cloak! Just because she is always complaining about the tax burden on the peasants, happens to know about the super-secret entrance and is rumored to have been classically trained in Pan-Flip the ancient art of spatula-fighting doesn't mean that she is Raven Cloak. Frankly, I am appalled that you would suggest such a thing! *(The three respond simultaneously.)*

WIZARD. I never!

CHEF. What?

ACCOUNTANT. But I—

THISTLE. Shame on you!

THORN. Shame, shame!

EMPEROR. *(Stands up.)* Oh dear! I have never been so upset in my life!

WIZARD. But your Majesty—

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

EMPEROR. There is a stain on this outfit! *(Garnet and Ruby gasp in horror. Garnet holds out a part of the cloth while Ruby sprays the offending stain with what we may presume is some sort of stain remover, while the Emperor covers his eyes and looks away.)*

JEZEBETH. I will not have you accuse the Princess without evidence! I will launch a criminal investigation!

THISTLE. Brilliant idea!

THORN. It's a wonder no one else thought of it!

THISTLE. But that's probably because you're the smartest in the empire!

EMPEROR. Sissy, you take care of that. I must go tend to my outfit. This is really too much to bear!

GARNET. Hang in there your Highness!

RUBY. Be strong!

EMPEROR. Oh! The humanity! First the love of my life is eaten by a bear and now this! I simply must retire to my chambers and see no one! *(Garnet and Ruby support the Emperor as they exit.)*

GARNET. We will tuck you in and read you a fashion magazine.

RUBY. That should make you feel better, your Majesty.

EMPEROR. Can you read me the article about taffeta again? Taffeta is so soothing...

JEZEBETH. *(As soon as the Emperor is gone.)* You fools! How dare you accuse the Princess of being Raven Cloak!

CHEF. But we didn't.

ACCOUNTANT. I am pretty sure it was the Wizard who accused the Princess.

CHEF. Yes, yes, it was the Wizard.

WIZARD. Oh, right. Let's all gang up on the magical person. How cliché!

CHEF. I'm not cliché! You're cliché!

ACCOUNTANT. Your mom's cliché!

WIZARD. How dare you call my mother cliché! *(Takes a swing at the Accountant. Misses and hits Chef. Devolves into an all-out brawl.)*

JEZEBETH. Enough! Listen, you stooges! I will take care of this investigation and clear the Princess's name after your smear campaign! You three go check on those tailors and let me know how the suit is coming along. I am sure that you will see it very well...

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

WIZARD. Of course, I will see it! I don't know about Counts-on-his-fingers and Tuna Helper here, but I graduated the top of my class!

CHEF. Yeah, but you were home-schooled!

ACCOUNTANT. Oh! You are just like last night's dinner: Burned by the Chef!

JEZEBETH. Go! *(Chef, Accountant, and Wizard exit.)*

JEZEBETH. Good work, you two! We managed to raise the suspicion of the Princess and make it look like I wasn't the one to make the suggestion!

THISTLE. Brilliant as always, your evilness!

THORN. And the investigation?

JEZEBETH. Yes. I will need you to bring me the dumbest guards you can find for that. I will make sure that they incriminate the princess.

THORN. With pleasure, your craftiness!

THISTLE. But do you think the Emperor will actually arrest his own daughter?

JEZEBETH. It won't matter. Once she is a criminal, she is no longer eligible to sit on the throne! And as soon as I am on the throne, I will throw them both into the dungeon! *(All exit laughing.)*

SCENE 5

Courtiers change the scene to the tailors' quarters. The advisors enter.

WIZARD. We are here to see the royal tailors to the Emperor.

GUARD 2. *(Cheerfully.)* Well, hello! We are here to guard the door! *(All stand there awkwardly for a moment.)*

ACCOUNTANT. Well, let us in!

GUARD 3. I don't know if we can do that. We're supposed to keep our eyes on the door.

GUARD 2. We're not sure how many.

CHEF. But we need to see the suit that the tailors are making.

GUARD 3. Well, you can't see it from this side of the door.

GUARD 2. Maybe, if you were on the other side of the door, you could see it. *(Guards nod, sagely.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

GUARD 3. (*Excited.*) Or-or-or--if the suit was on this side of the door, they could see it.

GUARD 2. (*Brilliant!*) You're right! That's two ways you could see the suit!

GUARD 3. (*Excited.*) Or if the door had a window!

ACCOUNTANT. (*Matching their energy.*) Or you could open the door!

GUARD 2. (*Brilliant.*) Yes, you're right! If we opened the door, you could see the suit.

WIZARD. Fantastic. So, open the door.

GUARD 3. Oh, we can't do that.

WIZARD. (*Exasperated.*) Why not?

GUARD 2. We're supposed to be watching it.

CHEF. You *could* watch it *while* it's open.

GUARD 3. Are you sure?

WIZARD. Why don't we try it!

GUARD 2. (*Very unsure.*) Okay. (*Opens door, takes a look, and is surprised to discover:*) You're right! I can watch it just fine!

ACCOUNTANT. Amazing. (*The advisors walk through the door.*)

GUARD 3. Well, you learn something new every day. (*Thorn and Thistle who have been watching around the corner, enter.*)

THORN. You are just the two guards we are looking for!

THISTLE. Come with us.

GUARD 2. But Jezebeth wants us to watch the door.

THORN. Jezebeth changed her mind. Come along.

GUARD 2. Okay, then. (*Guards exit with Thorn and Thistle.*)

WIZARD. Excuse me, but we are here to see the Royal Tailors to the Emperor.

IRIS. Oh?

ACCOUNTANT. Yes, we are the Royal advisors to the Emperor and his sister sent us here to inspect your work and report on how you are getting along.

IRIS. Oh, well then, we are most delighted to meet you. My brother and I are the royal tailors. Do come in and we shall bring in the work we have done so far. (*Very loudly, signaling.*) Oh, grammy! We have visitors!

OLD LADY. (*Entering.*) Oh, dearie me!

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

IRIS. This is our grandmother. She is also skilled in the art of magical weaving.

OLD LADY. Can I get you some tea or anything? *(Chef, etc. indicate no.)*

IRIS. Jasper, why don't you bring out the cape that's nearly finished. *(Jasper nods and disappears behind screen.)*

IRIS. Now, the cape is a little rough still. We haven't finished trimming it with precious stones... *(Jasper enters holding the invisible cape. The advisors look a little stunned. They can't see the cloth but are afraid that the others can.)*

IRIS. *(As Jasper models the features.)* As you can see, the cape is made of a red silk with a gold thread pattern of a dragon in flight. And see here, the dragon is spewing fire made up of rubies, carnelian, and topaz.

ACCOUNTANT. Ah, yes, I see!

CHEF. Isn't that lovely!

WIZARD. Very clever.

PRINCESS. *(Off-stage.)* And emeralds? I can't wait to see this outfit. *(Princess and Phoebe enter and begin crossing toward Tailor's room.)*

ACCOUNTANT. I think I will have that tea now. *(Wizard and Chef indicate agreement. They are all freaked out by the invisible cloth.)*

OLD LADY. Oh! But we don't have any tea! How very silly of me! Jasper! You must go get some tea. Here, give that to your sister *(She is being very urgent. She takes invisible cape from Jasper and hands it to Iris who takes it and begins to show other features to the advisors. Old Lady ushers Jasper out of the room toward the Princess.)*

OLD LADY. Oh! The Princess! *(She bows very low looking at the floor as she speaks. Jasper and the Princess stare at each other.)* Oh, excuse me Princess, this royal tailor, my grandson needs to find some tea for me...

PRINCESS. *(Focused on Jasper.)* Oh, well tea. Um that's a drink that we have. Yes. Um let me see. What? Where can we find the tea?

PHOEBE. The kitchen, your Highness.

PRINCESS. Yes. The kitchen. Of course. The kitchen. How silly of me! Am I talking loud? I feel like I am really loud?

OLD LADY. Do you think you could give my grandson directions to the kitchen, your Highness.

PRINCESS. Oh! Well, I could just take him there myself.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

OLD LADY. How very kind and benevolent of you, my Lady.

PRINCESS. What is your name, sir?

OLD LADY. His name is Jasper. He can't hear or speak, your Ladyship. He lost his tongue in a spindle and his hearing in a magical loom.

PRINCESS. Oh, how tragic! *(She holds out her hand to Jasper, who takes it and kisses it. She is a bit overcome.)* Oh! Pleased to meet you! I am... is it hot in here? It feels really hot in here.

PHOEBE. Shall we lead him to the kitchen, ma'am? *(She is amused.)*

PRINCESS. Oh, yes! The kitchen! Where is the kitchen?

PHOEBE. This way. *(They all exit. Old Lady returns.)*

CHEF. It is just exquisite, isn't it? The way the emeralds in the dragon's eyes catch the light!

ACCOUNTANT. Oh, yes! And such detail around his nostrils!

WIZARD. Yes, and the movement of the wings across the silk! Just mesmerizing!

OLD LADY. I sent Jasper to get your worships some tea.

CHEF. I have to get back to overseeing the royal baking! I am so sorry, but I must rush off! *(He leaves room. To us:)* How can those two idiots see the cloth when I can't!!! This is terrible! *(He runs off.)*

IRIS. Would you like me to show you the trousers?

ACCOUNTANT. No! I—I just remembered that there is a a a...um pile of money in the royal treasury I forgot to count this morning. I apologize, but I must go! *(He exits room. To us:)* I can't see anything! Not a thread! How can those two imbeciles see it when I can't! How am I going to fool the Emperor? *(Exits.)*

IRIS. Oh, Grammy, we should get the hat!

OLD LADY. Oh, of course! *(Begins to get the hat.)*

WIZARD. I am so sorry but, I must go because... there... is... a—a—a--hat

IRIS. Hat?

OLD LADY. He wants to see the hat?

WIZARD. A hat I need to pull a rabbit out of. It's time for his walk. I must go. *(He leaves room. To us.)* Calamity! I just can't—Calamity! *(He runs off.)*

IRIS. Well, that went well. Why did you send Jasper away for tea?

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

OLD LADY. I couldn't let the Princess come in. She would have exposed us right away. She's too smart. (*Lights down. Exeunt.*)

SCENE 6

Courtiers enter and begin changing the scene to another area of the castle. There is a bench and a table with chairs.

COURTIER 1. I hear that it is covered in jewels!

COURTIER 2. I heard that it was all sewn with gold thread!

COURTIER 3. I heard that it was invisible to all but the very wise.

COURTIER 4. Then I guess the advisors will never see it! (*They laugh.*)

COURTIER 1. Am I the only one who thinks that an outfit that only certain people can see is a bit problematic?

COURTIER 3. Now that you mention it, it doesn't seem like the best design.

COURTIER 4. I prefer my clothes affordable and easy to see!

COURTIER 2. I prefer your clothes that way too! (*They exit. Princess, Phoebe, and Jasper enter.*)

PHOEBE. Why don't you two wait here and I will go get the tea.

PRINCESS. (*Not even looking at her.*) If you insist. (*Phoebe exits.*)

PRINCESS. (*Nervous*) Well, um shall we. Would you like to sit down? (*Jasper looks at her as if hypnotized.*)

PRINCESS. Oh! Right. I forgot. (*She motions to a seat and pantomimes as she speaks.*) Would you like to sit down? (*Jasper still mesmerized. Princess sits and pats the spot next to her. Jasper snaps out of it and happily takes a seat next to the Princess. Pause.*) So, you're a tailor—oh, can you read lips? (*Jasper nods.*) And you're a tailor? (*Jasper nods. Awkward silence.*)

JASPER. (*Silently*) Tell me about yourself.

PRINCESS. What? Oh! You want me to tell you about myself?

JASPER. Oh yes!

PRINCESS. Well, there's not much to tell. I am just an ordinary princess whose father went insane after her mother was eaten by a bear.

JASPER. How sad.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

PRINCESS. Oh, but I shouldn't feel sorry for myself. I am sure other people have it worse. It's just been hard, you know. My father seems to only care about parties and clothes, and I am pretty sure that my auntie is plotting to take over the empire. But I suppose Hamlet had it worse. Do you know Hamlet?

JASPER. *No.*

PRINCESS. It's a play my mother was reading to me before—before the bear ate her. Anyway, his father was murdered by his uncle who married Hamlet's mother, and Hamlet's father visits him as a ghost and tells him to avenge him, so Hamlet acts insane—anyway, everyone dies pretty much. It's my favorite story! Oh, Jasper. You are so easy to talk to.

JASPER. *Aw shucks.*

PRINCESS. I think it's because you're such a good listener. (*Jasper touches his ears. Princess remembers he's deaf.*) Oh! I am so sorry—I mean—I didn't—

JASPER. *It's okay. I don't mind.*

PRINCESS. You are so understanding. I feel like I could tell you anything.

JASPER. *You can!*

PRINCESS. Oh, Jasper!

JASPER. *Yes? (They stare deeply into each other's eyes, moving closer and closer. They are about to kiss, when—Phoebe interrupts.)*

PHOEBE. I found the tea, everyone! (*Seats herself between the Princess and Jasper. There is an awkward silence.*) So, how have you two been?

PRINCESS. Fine. (*Phoebe looks over at Jasper who nods that he's been fine too.*)

PHOEBE. Well, here is your tea. (*Hands tea to Jasper. There is a silence.*) Well! This has been fun! But I think it is time to get back, Princess. (*She stands and walks toward exit, stopping to wait for the Princess.*)

PRINCESS. Oh, yes. Okay. (*She and Jasper are back to the staring.*)

PHOEBE. (*Clears throat.*) Shall we?

PRINCESS. (*Reluctantly stands.*) I am sorry, Jasper. Goodbye. (*She exits with Phoebe.*)

JASPER. (*Forlornly waves goodbye, then exits the other direction.*)

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

SCENE 7

The Wizard, Accountant, and Chef enter with cups and sit at a bar stage right.

ACCOUNTANT. So, what did you think of the suit for the Emperor?

WIZARD. Stunning!

CHEF. Magnificent!

ACCOUNTANT. Yes, yes! Me too. *(They are all silent a moment.)*

ACCOUNTANT. But I wonder...I wonder what was your favorite detail in the outfit?

WIZARD. Well, I um. You go first, Chef. I am trying to decide...

CHEF. The *(He gestures vaguely as he speaks.)* thing where it went...you know with the *(He kind of wiggles his fingers.)*

WIZARD. *(Nods sagely.)* Oh, yes, yes. Me too. Really exquisite with the *(Mimics the gesture.)*

CHEF. And you? What was your favorite, Accountant?

ACCOUNTANT. *(He is suspicious now, but growing sure that they also can't see it.)* You know the silver buttons inlaid with emeralds that the ribbons are fastened to? With the gold fringe?

WIZARD. Oh, yes! The fringe!

CHEF. Love the fringe!

WIZARD. It's so, well, so fringey! *(He and the Chef nod in agreement over the awesomeness of the fringe.)*

ACCOUNTANT. Ah ha! *(He points at them.)* THERE IS NO FRINGE! You can't see the outfit at all!

WIZARD. Yes, I can! How dare you! Chef?

CHEF. *(Starts to lie but breaks down in sobs.)* I can't! I can't see a thing! I am going to get fired!!! What am I going to do? *(Accountant looks at Wizard.)*

WIZARD. I can totally see it. *(Accountant moves in on Wizard, staring him down.)*

ACCOUNTANT. Really?

WIZARD. *(Faltering.)* Yes. Yes, I can.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

ACCOUNTANT. Then tell me, were the suspenders more sage or olive?
(Chef is still sobbing. Accountant and Wizard are in a stare-down.)

WIZARD. I would say sage. *(Accountant says nothing but continues to stare at the Wizard.)*

WIZARD. *(Slowly, carefully.)* But what I would mean, when I said that, is olive. *(Accountant keeps staring.)*

WIZARD. A sagey sort of olive. *(A beat.)* But definitely more sage. *(A beat.)* With a lot of olive.... that has sage in it... You know what! I have never been good with colors! I think I might be color-blind! I—I—fine! I couldn't see it either! *(Begins to sob.)* I am a fraud! Oh! This is calamity!

CHEF. We're both frauds!

ACCOUNTANT. I knew it!

CHEF. *(Sniffing.)* Wait. How did you know?

ACCOUNTANT. I just...did.

WIZARD. Wait a minute! He knows because he can't see it either!

ACCOUNTANT. You don't know that!

CHEF. He can't! He can't see it!

ACCOUNTANT. You're right. I can't see it. *(Now they are all sobbing.)*

WIZARD. I'm going to have to go back to working kids' birthday parties!

CHEF. I don't want to go back to cooking in the school cafeteria!

ACCOUNTANT. I have to go back to being a math teacher! *(All are miserable and sobbing. Then, the Wizard has an idea.)*

WIZARD. Wait! Can't we all just lie and back each other up? *(All immediately stop sobbing.)*

CHEF. That's a good idea!

WIZARD. It could work!

ACCOUNTANT. Have you two forgotten that it took me less than two pages of dialogue to expose you?

CHEF. *(Miserable again.)* Right! Whose idea was this anyway?

WIZARD. Jezebeth's. *(Lights fade on the advisors who are once again sobbing and come up on Jezebeth, Thorn, Thistle, and Guards 2 & 3 stage left.)*

JEZEBETH. I have summoned you here to investigate a crime.

GUARD 2. Like detectives?

JEZEBETH. Sure, like detectives.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

GUARD 2. You know, I had me an uncle that was a detective.

GUARD 3. Is this the same uncle that thought he was a chicken?

GUARD 2. Oh, no, this uncle is on me father's side. You see, he was a detective, but he never solved any crimes.

GUARD 3. That's a shame.

GUARD 2. Yep. He worked so hard at detecting but he never could find himself any clues for anything.

GUARD 3. Why do you think he was so bad at it?

GUARD 2. Well, now, that's another mystery that he never solved. I guess he just didn't have himself the talent.

GUARD 3. Guess not.

GUARD 2. It also probably didn't help that he was blind. *(Jezebeth looks at Thorn and Thistle.)*

THORN. You did ask for the dumbest we could find.

GUARD 2. Yep. Blind as a pancake. Sometimes, he couldn't go out detecting because he would be spending all his time trying to find the door out of his office. I remember watching him running into walls, tripping over chairs. *(Chuckles to himself, remembering.)*

JEZEBETH. You really outdid yourselves. *(Lights fade on Jezebeth, etc. and up on the sobbing Advisors.)*

ACCOUNTANT. Jezebeth is out to get us!

CHEF. She is! And she's going to!

WIZARD. Unless— *(All immediately stop sobbing.)*

ACCOUNTANT. Unless?

CHEF. Unless what?

WIZARD. Unless we take her out first!

ACCOUNTANT. Brilliant!

CHEF. But how?

WIZARD. We could push her out of the tower!

ACCOUNTANT. Throw her in a pit of vipers!

CHEF. Bake her into a pie! *(Accountant and Wizard look at Chef.)* I don't know. I never tried to take anyone out before!

ACCOUNTANT. Except with his cooking! *(Wizard and Accountant laugh.)*

WIZARD. Good one! With his cooking...

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

CHEF. Hey! I thought we were allies now.

ACCOUNTANT. You're right. I am sorry. No more making fun of your terrible cooking! (*Snickers.*)

WIZARD. That's it! That's how we will take her out!

ACCOUNTANT. With his terrible cooking! (*Thinks this is hilarious.*)

WIZARD. No! He will bake her a cookie and we will put poison in it!

CHEF. Great idea!

WIZARD. Then we're all agreed! (*Holds up cup. The other two join him. They touch cups and are about to drink when—*)

ACCOUNTANT. Wait? Where will we get poison?

WIZARD. I have plenty of poisons. (*Wizard drinks. The other two look in their cups and carefully set them on the table.*)

CHEF. Perfect! But how will I get Jezebeth to take a cookie from me? She doesn't trust me. (*The advisors think as the stage right lights fade on them and come up on Jezebeth, etc. stage left.*)

JEZEBETH. (*To guards.*) I need you to go investigate the super-secret entrance for clues to the identity of Raven Cloak.

GUARD 2. But no one knows who Raven Cloak is!

GUARD 3. Her identity is a mystery.

JEZEBETH. Yes, that is why you are looking for clues.

GUARD 2. Clues to what?

JEZEBETH. The identity of Raven Cloak.

GUARD 3. But no one knows who Raven Cloak is!

GUARD 2. Her identity is a mystery.

JEZEBETH. Yes, that is why you are looking for clues.

GUARD 3. Clues to what?

JEZEBETH. The identity— Never mind! Just go! (*Guards exit.*)

JEZEBETH. (*To Thorn and Thistle.*) You two planted the evidence?

THORN. Oh yes!

THISTLE. Even *they* can't miss it.

JEZEBETH. Excellent. They will find the evidence and that will get Princess Primrose locked up and out of my way! Then, the advisors will not be able to see the magic cloth.

THORN. And the emperor will see that you are the smartest one in the kingdom!

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLOTHING

THISTLE. And he will give you the throne!

JEZEBETH. And then, once I am finally on the throne, I will throw him into the dungeon and execute all three of those advisors! Now, we just wait as all my perfect plans have been set in motion.

(Lights fade on them as they wait and come up on the advisors, still thinking. Then the accountant has an idea!)

ACCOUNTANT. I've got it! You flatter Jezebeth. I find that people are more likely to listen to you if you flatter them.

CHEF. That's ridiculous!

ACCOUNTANT. That hat really suits you!

CHEF. Why thank you!

ACCOUNTANT. Yes, it really is a good look for you.

CHEF. Really, you think so?

ACCOUNTANT. Oh yes. I also think that if you flatter Jezebeth, she will be more likely to trust you.

CHEF. You make a really good point.

WIZARD. Great! Let's get to work on that cookie! *(Lights fade on the advisors as they exit and up on Jezebeth, etc. still "waiting." After a beat.)*

JEZEBETH. You know what, I could go freshen up a little while we wait.

THORN. Maybe we could get a snack.

THISTLE. I am a little hungry.

THORN. *(To Thistle.)* You know, thought I saw skittles at the concessions in the lobby.

JEZEBETH. That's it. We need an intermission. *To audience.)* You there. Go to the lobby and buy some snacks and be back in your seats in fifteen minutes!

THISTLE. That's fifteen minutes, people!

THORN. Don't wait until the last minute to use the bathroom! That is too late!

JEZEBETH. What are you waiting for? Go! *(Exeunt.)*

INTERMISSION

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