



Lavinia Roberts

Inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale,
"The Emperor's New Clothes"

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING
P.O. Box 1400
TALLEVAST, FL 34270

The Emperor's New Crème Brûlée

COMEDY. Inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale "The Emperor's New Clothes." An English biscuit manufacturer has its sights set on stealing the dessert recipes of the most celebrated Parisian restaurant so that they can develop the desserts into mass-produced snacks sold in gas stations around the world. Two British con artists arrive at Emperor's Restaurant and pretend to be world-renowned French chefs who have discovered the secret to the making of the world's finest crème brûlée while studying with monks in Tibet. They convince the restaurant's owner and staff that their recipe is so divine that only a true connoisseur can taste or see their masterpiece. Delighted to offer such a heavenly dessert on the menu, the restaurant's owner invites only the most prestigious Parisians to sample the dessert. When the patrons arrive, they are proudly presented with empty dessert dishes. The patrons eagerly "taste" the crème brûlée and offer rave reviews. It is only Emile, the restaurant's lowly dishwasher, who realizes something is fishy...and it isn't the bouillabaisse!

Performance Time: Approximately 45 minutes.

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Hans Christian Andersen in 1836
Portrait by Christian Albrecht Jensen

About the Story

Danish writer and poet Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) published "The Emperor's New Clothes" in Copenhagen, Denmark, as part of a collection of fairy tales entitled *Tales, Told for Children* (1835). Andersen has become one of the greatest children's writers of all time and his stories have been translated into more than 150 languages. Some of his most famous tales include "The Little Mermaid," "Thumbelina," "The Princess and the Pea," and "The Ugly Duckling."

Characters

(3 M, 6 F, 8 flexible)

(Doubling possible.)

DRUSILLA/DRUSUS JAFFA: British con artist who wants to steal Emperor's Restaurant's top secret dessert recipes; British with an optional cockney accent; flexible.

MILLICENT HOBNOB: Drusilla's unscrupulous sidekick; British with an optional cockney accent; female.

FLEUR FRAMBOISE: Paris' most celebrated opera singer and a frequent customer at Emperor's Restaurant; female.

BLANCHE TORTE: Most famous stage actress in all of Paris and a frequent customer at Emperor's Restaurant; overly dramatic; female.

CELESTE GATEAUX: Food critic for "Le Parisien," Paris' most respected newspaper; female.

LEONCE MOUTON: Owner of Emperor's Restaurant who is obsessed with French cuisine and creating the ultimate dessert; male.

PIERRE LE FROMAGE: Head waiter, can be caustic or charming depending on who he is talking to; male.

BEBE CAMAMBERT: Waitress; female.

MARGUERITE BRIE: Waitress; female.

EMILE: Dishwasher who is smart and has common sense; flexible.

BAPTISTE RENAULT: Valet at Emperor's Restaurant who is a real ladies' man; male.

JOSEPHINE/JOSEPH PIOREAU: Head cook; flexible.

LOUISA/LOUIE CHAMPIGNON: Vegetable cook; flexible.

JEANETTE/JACQUES TOMATE: Soup cook; flexible.

AMIA/ARMOND ÉCLAIR: Pastry chef who specializes in crème brûlée; flexible.

GARANCE/GUSTOV LE PEZ: Entrée cook; flexible.

EMMELINE/EUGENE OIGNON: Sauce and sauté cook; flexible.

Setting

Paris, France. Emperor's Restaurant, a fancy French restaurant.

Set

Interior of Emperor's Restaurant. There are two tables with chairs.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Emperor's Restaurant.

Scene 2: Emperor's Restaurant, a short time later.

Props

Tray

White cloth or small towel

2 Coats, for Fleur and Blanche

Check

Purse, for Blanche

2 Identical little black books

Money for tip

Trays of empty dessert dishes
for crème brûlée

Spoons

Sound Effect

French accordion music

“Something smells
fishy around here,
and it isn’t
a bouillabaisse.”

—Josephine

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Paris, France. Interior of Emperor's Restaurant, a five-star French restaurant. French accordion music is playing. Music fades as lights come up. Fleur and Blanche are seated at a table. Celeste is seated at the other table. Pierre is holding a tray and has a cloth draped over one arm.)

PIERRE: (To Fleur and Blanche.) May I have the pleasure of getting the mademoiselles anything else? Coffee, perhaps?

FLEUR: No, no, Pierre, you've done enough! Give our compliments to the chefs and bring the check, please! Merci beaucoup!

PIERRE: (To Fleur and Blanche, sweetly.) Obi, obi, mademoiselles. As you wish.

(Babe and Marguerite enter. Pierre turns around and spots them.)

BEBE: (To Pierre.) You never call us "mademoiselles," and we are ladies.

PIERRE: Babe and Marguerite! You are nothing but incompetent, good for nothing...when I think of what I am given for my wait staff! Useless monkeys! No other head waiter in Paris suffers as I! You are a disgrace to our restaurant. Get into the kitchen, you two. (Sweetly to Fleur and Blanche.) I will only be a moment, mademoiselles. Excusez-moi. (To Bebe and Marguerite, venomously.) Well? Why are you two standing there gulping like two flounders! I will give you to the entrée chef, and he will fry both of you up for a fish special! Sacré bleu! You two will be the death of me! Is there no longer good hired help in Paris? Away with you! Into the kitchen!

BEBE: (To Marguerite, stage whisper.) Someday he will fall over dead, you know, with his ranting.

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MARGUERITE: (*To Bebe, stage whisper.*) I do not think so. His ghost would probably rise up and immediately start a tirade about how disgracefully we shined the silver.

PIERRE: What! Standing around chattering away like schoolgirls? Oh là là! I am not a head waiter, but a mother with toddlers. Into the kitchen, both of you! We do not pay you to philosophize all day! You are a waitress, not Voltaire! No one cares for your thoughts but only how fast you can bring them their soup course. What to do with you! Sell you to the circus, perhaps! Come, come!

(*Pierre ushers Fleur and Marguerite offstage. Leonce enters, carrying two coats.*)

FLEUR: (*To Leonce.*) Why, Monsieur Mouton, how charming! What's this? Our coats? Really, you shouldn't have! Bearing coats is a job for the coatroom attendant! You are the restaurant owner, after all.

LEONCE: No, no, mademoiselle, please do not deprive me the great pleasure of being of any service to you in any little way I can. After all, our little establishment is graced by the presence of Fleur Framboise, Paris' most celebrated opera singer, and Blanche Torte, the most famous stage actress in all of Paris!

FLEUR: Little restaurant! Indeed! Emperor's Restaurant is the most celebrated restaurant in Paris. No, more like the world! That dinner was scrumptious! Please allow me to take the time to praise that duck! And the sauce as well! Magnifique! What is your secret?

LEONCE: Ah, Mademoiselle Framboise, I loathe depriving you of any request, but I am not at liberty to reveal any of our recipes, no matter how lovely the inquirer is. The recipes served here at Emperor's have been passed down for generations. They are top secret. Only I and a few of my trusted cooking staff are allowed access to them. Did you enjoy your dinner, Mademoiselle Torte?

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BLANCHE: Oh, Leonce, I am overcome, simply overcome! Straight from the table of the gods! As my fellow thespian Camus says, "You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life." He was very much mistaken, for I have found happiness and meaning to my life! Your soufflé must have been sent down by angels!

CELESTE: *(To Leonce.)* I, too, must interject. The dinner was beyond words.

LEONCE: Hopefully, not beyond words for you, Celeste Gâteaux. You are the food critic for "Le Parisien," Paris' most respected newspaper, if I may be allowed to say so.

CELESTE: Do not fear, Leonce. I will endeavor, no matter how Herculean the challenge, to describe how delicious your soufflé is in my article. Another five-star rating for Emperor's Restaurant, Leonce. The entire dinner was excellent, simply excellent.

BLANCHE: *(To Leonce.)* Yes, yes, I, too, was rendered speechless by the scrumptiousness of it all.

FLEUR: You? You are incapable of being speechless?

CELESTE: *(To Fleur and Blanche.)* Well, what would you two say to an after-dinner stroll in the Tuileries Garden?

FLEUR: That sounds delightful! What do you say, Blanche?

BLANCHE: After the very praiseworthy review in "Le Parisien" of my recent performance in the revival of Voltaire's "Mérope," I would say yes to anything a staff member of "Le Parisien" requested of me!

(Pierre enters with the check. Blanche opens her purse and pays for dinner.)

CELESTE: *(To Fleur.)* Shall we use your driver or mine?

FLEUR: Mine, if you don't mind.

(Baptiste enters.)

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LEONCE: Ah, here is the valet! Baptiste, bring the car around for Mademoiselle Framboise.

FLEUR/ CELESTE/BLANCHE: Bonjour, Baptiste!

BAPTISTE: Bonjour, ladies. Assisting three such lovely ladies, I am the luckiest man in Paris!

(Celeste and Blanche exit, giggling.)

FLEUR: Oh, and, Baptiste, you do have my telephone number, don't you?

BAPTISTE: Of course, mademoiselle. *(Pulls out his black book.)* I carry your number next to my heart. I shall treasure it always.

FLEUR: Do not treasure my number too much. It is meant for calling. *(Exits.)*

PIERRE: *(Enraged.)* What? No tip! Those uncivilized swine! Harpies! These uncultured ingrates! I detest every minute I've spent in their tedious presence, why—

(Blanche enters.)

BLANCHE: Oh, dear, I forgot your tip, Pierre.

(Blanche hands Pierre a tip.)

PIERRE: *(Sweetly.)* Of no matter, mademoiselle. Serving two such exquisite goddesses as yourself and Mademoiselle Framboise is payment enough! But... *(Snaps tip from Blanche.)* ...so generous! Extend my thanks to Mademoiselle Framboise and allow me to wish you an evening as lovely as yourself.

BLANCHE: *(Flirtatiously.)* Baptiste, you won't lose my telephone number, will you?

BAPTISTE: Chérie, I would rather lose my life, Mademoiselle Torte.

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BLANCHE: Then I shall expect to hear from you soon. And good evening, Leonce. Au revoir! I hope to see you at the theatre soon!

LEONCE: Perhaps. Good evening, mademoiselle. Adieu! *(Blanche exits.)* The theatre! Ah, me, you will never see me at the theatre. Actors are a most obnoxious lot! And, Baptiste, do you have half the ladies of Paris' phone numbers in your little black book?

BAPTISTE: No, Monsieur Mouton. Only the beautiful ones. Do excuse me.

(Bebe and Marguerite enter.)

BEBE: Bonjour, Baptiste!

MARGUERITE: *(To Baptiste.)* How are you this evening?

BAPTISTE: Bonjour, ladies. Enchanté.

PIERRE: *(To Bebe and Marguerite.)* Enough, you two! Shirking again! Into the kitchen, both of you!

(Baptiste exits. Pierre ushers Bebe and Marguerite into the kitchen. Leonce sits at a table and sighs. Head chef Josephine enters.)

JOSEPHINE: Why so melancholic? Didn't our patrons like their entrée?

LEONCE: Yes, yes, they did.

JOSEPHINE: And the hors d'oeuvres? Soup course?

LEONCE: Divine.

JOSEPHINE: Cheese course? Dessert?

LEONCE: Yes, yes, everything was wonderful! The best in the world!

JOSEPHINE: Well, why are you so glum? You look like someone served you fish and chips instead of bouillabaisse. You should be pouring champagne! Emperor's Restaurant is the toast of Paris!

LEONCE: I know, I know. Only I wish I had a menu item that was truly divine! Truly celestial!

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JOSEPHINE: Well, if perhaps you let us experiment more in the kitchen—

LEONCE: Experiment! Never! Emperor's Restaurant's recipes have been perfected and passed down for centuries!

JOSEPHINE: Very well. I am only the head chef, and you the owner. As you wish, Leonce.

(The dishwasher, Emile enters.)

EMILE: Excusez-moi. Madame Josephine, are there any dishes out here for me to wash? Monsieur Le Fromage says I may go home when I am finished washing all the dishes.

JOSEPHINE: No, no. But I do have some pots for you to scrub. Emmeline burned some of her béarnaise sauce.

EMILE: How terrible!

JOSEPHINE: I know! To burn anything is unpardonable!

EMILE: Oui, oui, of course. *(To audience.)* And terrible to wash. C'est la vie!

JOSEPHINE: I will show you the pans. Leonce, why don't you come back to the kitchen and have some coffee? It will do you some good.

LEONCE: Very well. Although, I do not see how it will bring me any closer to creating a truly divine culinary creation!

(Josephine, Leonce, and Emile exit. Millicent and Drusilla enter.)

MILLICENT: Blimey! I say we take the first flight back to London! This is never going to work.

DRUSILLA: Will you keep your trap shut!

MILLICENT: Oh, so you think there is any blinking way that the restaurant owner of the most famous restaurant in the world is going to sell us his dessert recipes? No blooming way. What are we going to say to him, huh? "Good day to you. You seem like a good sort of bloke. See, we're representatives from Bevensley's Biscuits and we would like to purchase all your dessert recipes to develop them into

mass-produced snack cakes sold in gas stations all over the world." This is the stupidest blinking assignment in the world.

DRUSILLA: Quiet, Millicent!

MILLICENT: How good could his desserts be anyway? I mean, they serve frog legs and snails on their menu!

DRUSILLA: Now, listen up. He's not to know who we really are no matter what. Understand, old chum?

MILLICENT: Oh, so you have a plan, eh?

DRUSILLA: I do. So shut your gob and let me do all the talking, righto? And follow my lead, eh?

MILLICENT: Righto. Look, he's coming in here!

(To Leonce.)

LEONCE: *(To Millicent and Drusilla.)* I'm sorry, but the restaurant is closed for the evening.

DRUSILLA: Pity, pity. Two world-famous chefs such as ourselves had so hoped to see this quaint little restaurant.

LEONCE: Quaint? But this is Emperor's. We are very well thought of here in Paris. Perhaps you are not locals and do not know.

MILLICENT: We're from Cheapside.

LEONCE: Cheapside? I have never heard of such a place.

DRUSILLA: *(To Millicent.)* Keep your gob shut. *(To Leonce, sweetly.)* What my associate, here, means is we are from a little village called Cheapside near Nice—very nice little town, haven't been back in ages. See, we have traveled all over the world studying from the masters the fine and exacting art of cooking.

LEONCE: Oh? What are your names?

DRUSILLA: We are not at liberty to say, sir. You see, we are often sought out by presidents, kings, movie stars, the likes. Really exhausting, really knackers a gal out being famous. We are trying to remain low profile, you see.

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LEONCE: Of course, I understand. What brings two such eminent chefs to Emperor's Restaurant?

DRUSILLA: You see, while we were studying with monks in Tibet, we discovered the secret to the world's finest crème brûlée.

MILLICENT: *(To Drusilla, stage whisper.)* What is crème brûlée?

DRUSILLA: *(To Millicent, stage whisper.)* Haven't the foggiest notion. Saw it on the menu. Now shut your gob.

LEONCE: You are mistaken. We, here, at Emperor's have the finest crème brûlée recipe in the world. I would know. I helped perfect it with my grand-mère while I was still a small boy.

DRUSILLA: Well, you see, our recipe is so divine, so heaven sent, that only a true connoisseur, a truly divine chef, can taste or see our masterpiece.

LEONCE: I see. *(Aside.)* Sacré bleu! This is exactly the type of dessert I have so often wished for! Something divinely sent! Something celestial! Something special! *(To Millicent and Drusilla.)* I would very much like to serve this crème brûlée in my restaurant.

DRUSILLA: Sorry, mate. The recipe is not for sale.

LEONCE: But, surely, there must be something I can persuade you with. Money is no matter. Name your price.

DRUSILLA: No, no, no, we don't care about money. Although...

LEONCE: Yes?

DRUSILLA: It's a trifle, really.

LEONCE: Tell me! Tell me!

DRUSILLA: Well, we might like your collection of dessert recipes...just to glance through. Not like there is anything special in there. Merely for curiosities sake.

LEONCE: My recipes? There must be something else.

MILLICENT: Nope.

LEONCE: But those recipes have been passed down for generations! The Moutons have been perfecting culinary

creations since the time of Charlemagne. All our recipes are top secret! (*Pulls a little black book out of a jacket that is identical to Baptiste's.*) You see, I keep all the recipes for Emperor's Restaurant with me all the time. This little book is for the desserts. I have carried it next to my heart since my father died. He gave it to me on his death bed. I remember his last words so clearly: "I love you. Make your macaroons lighter. And take this." This was his final gift to me.

DRUSILLA: No matter, no matter. Well, we really must be going. Thought we might pop into the restaurant across the street. Ta-ta!

MILLICENT: (*To Drusilla, stage whisper.*) What are you doing?

DRUSILLA: (*Stage whisper.*) Quiet. Follow my lead. (*To Leonce.*) Well, jolly good meeting you, Leonce. We'll just be on our way. Cheers!

LEONCE: Wait! Do not go to those heathens across the street. Why, they don't even know the meaning of "sauté" over there. They boil food worse than the English.

MILLICENT: (*To Drusilla, stage whisper.*) What does "sauté" mean?

(*Drusilla elbows Millicent.*)

LEONCE: (*Aside.*) Oh là là! I must get this new crème brûlée recipe!

DRUSILLA: So we have a deal? You give us the Emperor's Restaurant's dessert recipes in exchange for our crème brûlée?

LEONCE: My dearest treasure, you want every dessert recipe?

MILLICENT: That's right. Every blinking one down to the last marmalade pudding and treacle tart recipe!

LEONCE: Marmalade pudding? Treacle tart? What are these strange desserts?

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DRUSILLA: (*To Millicent, severely.*) Quiet, you! (*To Leonce, sweetly.*) Begging your pardon, governor, she means nothing by it. We have traveled to many foreign lands, you see. Lot stored up there in that noggin of hers. So, a deal then?

(*Drusilla and Leonce shake hands.*)

LEONCE: I give you the recipes...only after you make the crème brûlée.

DRUSILLA: Of course. Fair enough.

LEONCE: Well, isn't this exciting? Like the time I made my first Crêpe Suzette! Come, let me introduce you to the staff! (*Shouts.*) Everyone! (*Claps.*) Come! Come, everyone! Josephine! Bring all the chefs! And you, too, Pierre. Bring all the kitchen staff—even the dishwasher, whatever her name is! Baptiste, come, you must meet our illustrious visitors!

(*Chefs, Pierre, Bebe, Marguerite, and Emile enter.*)

AMIA: This better be good. If my soufflé falls or is even slightly overcooked because of this little impromptu meeting, Leonce, you shall be the one to blame. I am an artiste, not a workhorse! You cannot pull me here or there as you wish!

LEONCE: Forget your soufflé, Amia! These two are going to make a desert that makes your soufflé taste like an English fruitcake by comparison!

MILLICENT: Now, see here, mate, my mum makes a spanking good—

DRUSILLA: (*To Millicent, stage whisper.*) You gone bonkers? Shut your gob, you ninny.

PIERRE: I feel your pain, Amia...being pulled away from the kitchen. I finally get these two shiftless shirkers...

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(*Indicating Marguerite and Bebe.*) ...to work and, Leonce, here, calls us to a meeting.

MARGUERITE: (*To Bebe.*) Maybe if Pierre actually worked instead of spending all his time breathing down our necks, we wouldn't have so much to do.

PIERRE: You say something, Marguerite?

MARGUERITE: No, no, Monsieur Le Fromage.

BEBE: Is Baptiste here yet?

(*Baptiste enters.*)

BAPTISTE: (*Flirtatiously.*) Bonjour, ladies.

BEBE/MARGUERITE: Bonjour, Baptiste!

LEONCE: (*To staff.*) These two world-renowned chefs can make a crème brûlée so delicious, so divine, so delectable, that only true connoisseurs can see or taste it.

JEANETTE: Sacré bleu! How amazing!

LOUISA: Stupendous!

AMIA: Magnifique!

LEONCE: (*To staff.*) All of you will assist these two anyway you can. (*To Drusilla and Millicent.*) Allow me to introduce you to the staff of Emperor's Restaurant. (*To Chefs.*) Introduce yourselves, one at a time.

JOSEPHINE: (*To Drusilla and Millicent.*) I am Josephine Pioreau, and the head cook here at Emperor's Restaurant.

DRUSILLA: Pleasure to make your acquaintance.

LOUISA: (*To Drusilla and Millicent.*) Louisa Champignons, vegetable cook.

DRUSILLA: Real treat, real treat.

JEANETTE: (*To Drusilla and Millicent.*) Jeanette Tomate, soup cook.

AMIA: (*To Drusilla and Millicent.*) I am Amia Éclair, pastry chef. Allow me to assist you anyway I can. Crème brûlée is a specialty of mine

DRUSILLA: That won't be necessary.

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GARANANCE: *(To Drusilla and Millicent.)* Garance Le Pez, entrée cook.

EMMELINE: *(To Drusilla and Millicent.)* Emmeline Oignon, sauce and sauté cook.

DRUSILLA: Righto. Pleasure to meet every one of you! Real treat, real treat.

PIERRE: *(To Drusilla and Millicent.)* I suppose I will introduce you to the wait staff. I am Pierre Le Fromage, head waiter. *(Indicating Bebe and Marguerite.)* And these two useless lumps you see before you are what I must get by with for a wait staff.

BEBE: *(To Drusilla and Millicent.)* I am Bebe Camembert.

MARGUERITE: *(To Drusilla and Millicent.)* Marguerite Brie. Happy to be of assistance, if you should need any.

MILLICENT: *(Flirtatiously, indicating Baptiste.)* Who is that little bit of...all right?

BEBE/MARGUERITE: Baptiste!

MARGUERITE: *(To Millicent.)* He is the valet!

MILLICENT: *(Flirtatiously.)* Hello there, Baptiste.

BAPTISTE: Enchanté chérie.

MILLICENT: *(Confused.)* Who's Sherry?

BEBE: *(To Drusilla and Millicent.)* This is Emile. She is the dishwasher.

EMILE: Excusez-moi, Monsieur Leonce, but why are you letting English chefs cook in our restaurant? I thought you did not like English food. Why, I remember you saying you would chase away even [Jamie Oliver] with a fondue fork if he ever came close to your kitchen. *[Or insert the name of another English chef.]*

JEANETTE: Apologize this instant, Emile, for your terrible slander! Really! Accusing these eminent chefs of being English! Outrageux!

EMMELINE: *(Scoffs.)* English chef! That is an oxymoron!

GARANANCE: As if the English have chefs! Ha! What with their "bangers and mash" and "toad in the hole," I do not

know how the whole country didn't starve to death long ago.

LOUISA: The English boil vegetables to slime!

AMIA: Their pastry! Marmalade puddings and trifling trifles! Repulsive!

LEONCE: Marmalade pudding...hmmm, someone mentioned that to me. Can't remember where...

DRUSILLA: Marmalade pudding, hmmm? Never heard of it.

[END OF FREEVIEW]