

SIDE 1

ROSCOE We'll . . . play it by ear. We'll watch carefully . . . we'll spot our chance . . . and we'll grab it! Agreed, Florence?

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

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

ROSCOE Hats . . . gloves . . .

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

ROSCOE Shoes. . .

FLO I could use some shoes . . .

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

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

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

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

BOY Yes, sir.

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

BOY I will, sir.

HATTER And if you come right back, you can pick up his six o'clock hat!

BOY Yes, sir.

FLO His six o'clock hat?!

ROSCOE Hush!

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

BOY Going to the palace, lady.

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

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

WIGGIST And his after-dinner wig.

BOY Thank you, lady.

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

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

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

BOY Right away, mam.

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

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

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

ROSCOE Just do it, ~~woman~~.

FLORENCE (Flo)

1 - 4
2 - 8
3 - 5
4 - 3
5 - 2
6 - 4
7 - 5
8 - 0

FABRIC LADY (To BOY.) Off you go, then.

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

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

ROSCOE Just a moment, young man!

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

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

ROSCOE Young man...

BOY (From the ground.) Mister?

ROSCOE Terribly sorry...

BOY I'm all right.

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

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

BOY I beg your pardon?

ROSCOE The boxes--what's in them?

BOY New clothes.

FLO Who for?

TOWNSPEOPLE
1, 2, 3 & 4 The Emperor!