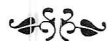




## Rumpelstiltskin



**T**here was once a poor miller who had a very beautiful daughter. One day when the king was hunting nearby, he stopped at the miller's cottage. In order to seem more important, the miller told him that his daughter had the gift of spinning straw into gold.

The king, who had a great love of gold, said, "If your daughter can indeed do as you say, I should like to meet her. Bring her to the castle in the morning, and I will put her to the test."

When the young woman arrived at the castle, the king led her to a large room filled with straw. He gave her a spinning wheel and said, "Get to work, but I warn you, if you haven't spun all this straw into gold by tomorrow morning, you will pay with your life." With that he locked the door, and the woman was left alone.

The miller's daughter didn't know what to do. She didn't have the slightest idea how to spin straw into gold. She thought and thought, and the more she thought, the more frightened she became. Finally she burst into tears.

Suddenly the door flew open, and a strange little man walked in. "Good evening, miller's daughter," he said. "Why are you weeping?"

"Oh," said the miller's daughter, "the king has said I must spin all this straw into gold, and I don't know how. So tomorrow I must die."

"What will you give me if I spin it for you?" asked the little man.

"I will give you the necklace from around my neck," replied the miller's daughter.

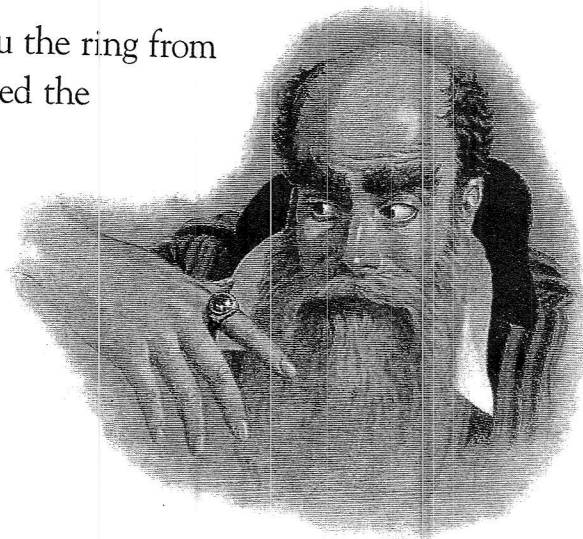
So the little man took the necklace, sat down at the spinning wheel, and started spinning. Around and around whirred the wheel, and soon the bobbin was full of shining golden thread. Then the little man filled another bobbin, and another, until all the straw had been spun into gold.

When the sun rose, the king came and unlocked the door. When he saw the gold he was overjoyed. Yet the sight of so much gold made him greedier still. He led the miller's beautiful daughter to a room that was even larger than the first one and piled to the ceiling with straw. Once again, he gave her a spinning wheel and told her to spin all the straw into gold or she would lose her life.

When the king had gone, the miller's daughter began to cry. Once again the door flew open, and the little man appeared before her.

"What will you give me this time if I spin the straw into gold for you?" he asked.

"I will give you the ring from my finger," answered the miller's daughter.



So the little man set to work as quickly and as nimbly as before. And when the rising sun streaked the sky, all the straw had been spun into glittering gold.

The king was beside himself. Yet he hungered for still more gold. So he led the miller's daughter to a third room—larger by far than the other two and completely stuffed with straw. "You must spin all this straw into gold or lose your life," he said. "But if you succeed, I will make you my queen." He was thinking to himself that although she was a poor miller's daughter, he would never find a woman who could bring him more wealth. Then he locked the door and went away.

Almost as soon as the king had gone, the door flew open a third time and the little man came in.

"What will you give me to spin the straw for you one last time?" the man asked.

The young woman began to cry. "I have nothing left to give you," she sobbed.

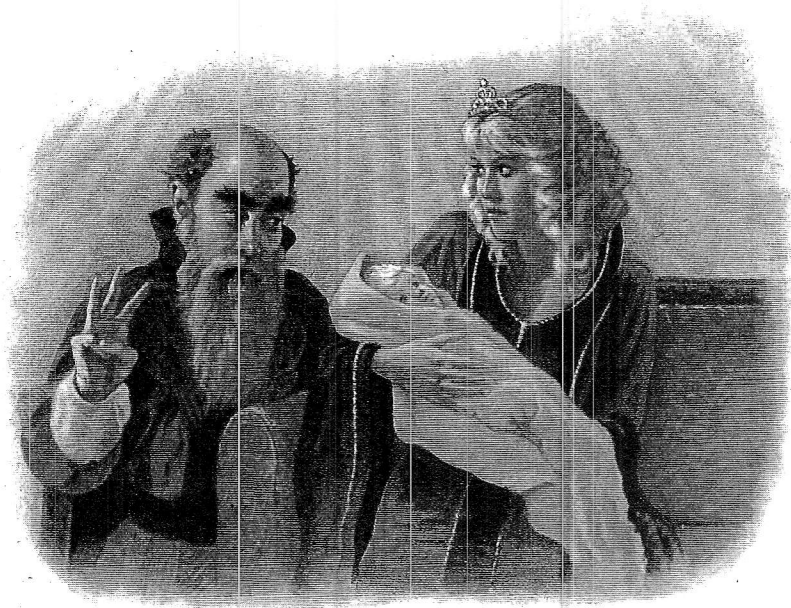
"Never mind that," said the little man. "Only promise me that if you become queen, you will give me your first child."

Because the miller's daughter could think of nothing else, she agreed. When he had her promise, the little man sat down at the spinning wheel and kept it whirring all night long until every bit of straw had been spun into gold.

The next morning, when the king saw all the gleaming gold, he married the miller's beautiful daughter, and so she became a queen.

A year later she gave birth to a child. The queen was very happy and never gave a thought to the little man or her promise. But one day the door flew open once more, and there he was. "I have come to claim what you promised me," he said.

When she heard that, the queen was petrified. She offered the little man all the treasure in the kingdom if he would only let her keep her child.



But all he would say was, "I'd rather have a living child than all the gold and jewels in the world."

When she heard this, the queen began to weep and lament so bitterly that at last the little man took pity on her and said, "Very well, I will give you three days. If you can guess my name in that time you may keep your child."

All night long the queen lay awake and thought of every name she had ever heard.

When the little man came back the next morning, she began by asking him if his name was Casper or Abelard or Melchior or Balthazar. "No," he said to each one. Then she went on to recite all the names she had ever heard—Michalmus and Adolphus and Ezekiel—and more obscure names still. But after each one, the little man replied, "No. That is not my name."

The second day, the queen sent her servants all across the land. They collected all the outlandish and peculiar names they could find. When





the little man arrived, the queen went through them all. "Is your name Mutton-chops?" she asked. "Bootlace? Or Long-nose?" Each time the little man only answered, "No. That is not my name."

On the third day, one of the queen's servants returned to say that, although he had not been able to find any new names anywhere, he had a strange story to tell her. As he was passing through the forest near a high mountain, where even the fox and the hare say good-night to each other, he had come upon a little cottage. "Out in front a fire was burning," he said, "and a funny little man was hopping up and down around it on one leg, singing:

*"I'll feast tomorrow, I'll bake today,  
On the third, I'll take the queen's child away.  
A good thing she knows not who I am.  
For Rumpelstiltskin is my name!"*



When the queen heard this, she burst into tears of joy.

Later that morning, the little man presented himself before her and asked, "Tell me, your majesty, what is my name?"

The queen replied, "Why, is your name Henry?"

"No."

"Is your name Krispen?"

"No."

"Could your name be Rumpelstiltskin?"

At the sound of his name, the little man burst into a rage. His eyes flashed, and he gnashed his teeth and shouted, "The Devil told you that! The Devil told you that!" And he stamped his foot so hard it went right through the floor. Then he grabbed his other foot with both hands to pull himself out. But he was so angry, he tore himself in two!

And that was the last the queen ever saw of Rumpelstiltskin!