

THE STORY OF RUMPELSTILTSKIN

Long ago and far away, there lived a Miller who was too poor to pay taxes. A wiry man with rough, wind-cracked hands and a bristled gray beard, he carried himself with a stubborn pride. He had a tendency to boast far beyond what his modest life could justify. The King—an ambitious ruler known more for his hunger for riches than his heart—ordered the Miller to prison for not paying his taxes. The King had grown up in a time of war and instability, watching his father lose half the kingdom’s treasury in battle. Since then, he had become convinced that wealth was the only path to safety, loyalty, and lasting power.

Desperate to avoid jail, the Miller offered his beautiful daughter as payment, tricking the King by claiming she could spin straw into gold. She was modest, dutiful, and kind, bearing her father's antics with quiet endurance. The King’s eyes gleamed at the very thought.

“Very well,” he said, “Bring her to me and you will be spared.” The Miller, suddenly feeling ashamed that he had lied to the King, reluctantly brought his daughter to the castle. When she arrived, the King led her through cold, echoing halls to a small stone chamber filled with straw and a spinning wheel.

“Spin all of this straw into gold by morning,” the King demanded, “or you and your father will rot in prison.” The girl knew she couldn’t do it—she was practical and realistic, unlike her father—but tried anyway. Failing, she wept uncontrollably. Her cries echoed through the stone walls until, suddenly, the locked door creaked open, and a strange little man appeared.

“What’s wrong, my dear?” the little man asked, tilting his crooked head. The girl explained, and the little man offered help—for a price. The girl unclasped the delicate necklace around her slender neck—a keepsake that had been her mother’s. The little man snatched it up eagerly, then sat at the spinning wheel. Before her astonished eyes, he began to spin. The wheel turned, and one by one, the piles of straw shimmered into gold.

When the King saw the gold in the morning, he didn’t smile with joy. Instead, his expression turned calculating. “More,” he whispered.

He took the girl to a larger chamber packed with even more straw. “Do it again,” he said, the veins in his temple pulsing. The King didn’t just *want* gold—he *needed* it.

The girl cried again. The little man returned and asked for her ring—her mother’s last gift. She gave it to him, and again, he spun the straw into gold.

The next morning, the King ran his hands through the golden spools, whispering to himself. “With this, I can raise armies, build walls, silence enemies...” He locked the girl in the tallest tower of the palace, now filled with mountains of straw.

“If you can do this one last time,” he promised, “I will marry you and make you Queen.” But deep inside, he didn’t love her—he loved the gold she brought him. She had nothing left to give, and her heart ached



with hopelessness. But the little man appeared once more. “What now?” he asked, tapping his toe. She told him of the King’s promise to marry her. She told him that she had nothing left to give him as payment for his work. The man’s eyes narrowed, then softened. “Then give me your firstborn child,” he said. The girl hesitated. “Yes,” she whispered, though she never intended to keep such a promise.

When the King returned and saw the glittering room, he smiled in triumph. True to his word, the King married her. The Miller’s daughter—now Queen—stood tall in her wedding gown. Years passed. The girl became Queen and bore a child—a beautiful baby who brought real joy into her life. She had almost forgotten the old bargain when one evening the little man returned to collect.

Throughout her years as Queen, the Miller’s daughter had learned to be thorough and strategic. She was no longer the frightened girl who could only weep. “Take all the riches of the kingdom,” she pleaded. “Just let me keep my child.”

The little man hesitated, his sharp features softening. “I’ll give you three days,” he said. “If you can tell me my name in that time, you may keep the child.”

The Queen sent messengers far and wide. For two days, she guessed every name she knew—real and imagined—but none were right.

On the third day, a messenger returned. “Far in the woods, I saw a strange little man dancing around a fire. He sang, ‘The Queen may try and try again. She’ll never guess my name is Rumpelstiltskin!’”

That night, in front of the court, the Queen smiled and sat calmly with her baby in her arms.

“Is it Frederico?” she asked.

“Is it Gregorio?” she teased.

The little man laughed.

Then she leaned forward, her amber eyes fixed on him. “Is it Rumpelstiltskin?”

The little man’s face turned red. “A witch told you that!” he screamed, stomping so hard he split the stone floor. He yanked his foot free and ran into the night.

Reference:

OpenAI. (2025). ChatGPT. Rumpelstiltskin. from Children’s and household tales. Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm. Kassel, Germany. 1825.

