

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

Long ago and far away, there lived a Miller who was too poor to pay taxes. For this reason, the King ordered the Miller to prison. Desperate to avoid jail, the Miller offered his beautiful daughter as payment, tricking the King by telling him that she could spin straw into gold.

“Very well,” said the King. “Bring her to me and you will be spared.”

The Miller was ashamed of what he’d done, but it was too late. He brought his daughter to the King, who locked her in a room filled with straw and a spinning wheel.

“Spin all of this straw into gold by morning,” the King commanded, “or I’ll send you and your father to prison.”

The girl knew she couldn’t spin straw into gold. But she tried anyway, and when she failed, she wept uncontrollably. Her cries were heard far from the castle. Soon the locked door opened, and an odd little man appeared.

“What’s wrong?” the little man asked, tilting his crooked head to one side. The Miller’s daughter told her sad tale. “Well, I can spin the straw into gold,” the little man responded with a glint in his eye, “but what will you give me?”

The Miller’s daughter offered her necklace and the little man snatched it up. Then, he sat down at the spinning wheel and began to spin the straw. The next morning, the King arrived to find the room full of glittering gold! He was thrilled, but he also became greedy. So, he took the girl to a larger room filled with more straw and ordered her to repeat the deed tonight. Again, the girl began to wail inconsolably.

Luckily, the little man came to the daughter’s rescue but again, he demanded something in return. This time, she gave him her ring, a treasured gift from her mother.

The next morning the King arrived to find the room filled with even more gold. He was overjoyed but his greed grew still. So, he locked the Miller’s daughter away in the castle tower filled with more straw than ever before. “If you can spin all of this straw into gold just once more,” he promised, “I will marry you and make you Queen of our kingdom.”

Again, the Miller’s daughter wept loudly and again the little man returned. This time, she had nothing more to offer him. But she told him of the King’s offer to marry her.

The little man considered the situation. “Then give me your firstborn after you are married,” he bargained.

The girl agreed, for she was frantic, but never planned to follow through.

The next morning the King arrived and found the room filled with more gold than ever. He was thrilled and knew he must keep his word. So, they were married, and the Miller's daughter became Queen of the kingdom.

Years passed and eventually the Queen had a child. She was so overcome with joy that she forgot about the little man and their pact. But day when the child was an infant, he appeared and demanded what was due to him. The Queen cried harder than ever and offered all of the riches of the kingdom if he would let her keep her baby. Eventually, the little man was moved by her tears, but only enough to offer her a bargain.

"I'll give you three days," he said. "In that time, if you can tell me my name, I'll forget our deal and let you keep your child."

So, the Queen began to think of every name she had ever heard. She sent messengers all over the countryside to find new names. The next day the little man arrived, and she went through the entire list. "No," he said to each and every one, "none of those are my name."

The following day, she began to make up nonsense names and tried all of them, but the little man shook his head and said again, "No. None of those are my name."

Finally, on the third day, one of the messengers returned to the Queen and told her, "I have travelled far and wide and found no more names, until last night. In the far reaches of the kingdom I saw a little hut. In front of the hut was a fire. A little man danced around the fire on one leg, singing, 'The Queen may try and try again. She'll never guess my name is Rumpelstiltskin!'"

That night, the court gathered 'round and the Queen had some fun with the little man. She guessed many common names again. "Is it John?" she said. "Is it Tim?" The little man laughed with delight until she asked abruptly, "Is it Rumpelstiltskin?"

Suddenly, he flew into a rage and his face grew red. "A witch told you that!" he cried and stomped his foot down so hard he had to pry it out of the floor.

Rumpelstiltskin ran away as fast as he could and everyone laughed, the King, the Queen, the messengers, the nursemaid, and even the baby. And they all lived happily ever after, having found new treasures of love and family, far more precious than gold.

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