

The Original Story of Rumpelstiltskin

Once there was a miller who was poor, but who had a beautiful daughter. Now it happened that he had to spin straw into gold.

The king said to the miller, "That is an art which pleases me well, if your daughter could do it."

And when the girl was brought to him he took her into a room which was quite full of straw and said, "Spin this gold during the night, you must die."

Thereupon he himself locked up the room, and left her in it alone. So there sat the girl and more frightened, until at last she began to weep.

But all at once the door opened, and in came a little man, and said, "Good evening."

"Alas," answered the girl, "I have to spin straw into gold, and I do not know how to do it."

"What will you give me," said the manikin, "if I do it for you?"

"My necklace," said the girl.

The little man took the necklace, seated himself in front of the wheel, and whirled it so fast that it went on until the morning, when all the straw was spun, and all the reels were full of gold.

By daybreak the king was already there, and when he saw the gold he was astonished and larger, and commanded her to spin that also in one night if she valued her life. The girl said, "Spin that straw into gold for you?"

"The ring on my finger," answered the girl.

The little man took the ring, again began to turn the wheel, and by morning had spun all the straw into gold.

The king rejoiced beyond measure at the sight, but still he had not gold enough, so he said, "Succeed, you shall be my wife."

Even if she be a miller's daughter, thought he, I could not find a richer wife in the kingdom.

When the girl was alone the manikin came again for the third time, and said, "What will you give me if I spin the straw for you this time also?"

"I have nothing left that I could give," answered the girl.

"Then promise me, if you should become queen, to give me your first child."

Who knows whether that will ever happen, thought the miller's daughter, and, not knowing how else to help herself in this strait, she promised the manikin what he wanted, and for that he once more spun the straw into gold.

And when the king came in the morning, and found all as he had wished, he took her in marriage, and the pretty miller's daughter became a queen.

A year after, she brought a beautiful child into the world, and she never gave a thought to the manikin. But suddenly he came into her room, and said, "Now give me what you promised."

The queen was horror-struck, and offered the manikin all the riches of the kingdom if he would leave her the child. But the manikin said, "No, something alive is dearer to me than all the treasures in the world."

Then the queen began to lament and cry, so that the manikin pitied her.

"I will give you three days, time," said he, "if by that time you find out my name, then shall you keep your child."

The queen thought and thought, but could not find out the name of the manikin.

On the first day she asked the king, but he would not tell her.

On the second day she asked the queen, but she would not tell her.

On the third day she asked the manikin, but he would not tell her.

On the fourth day she asked the king, but he would not tell her.

On the fifth day she asked the queen, but she would not tell her.

On the sixth day she asked the manikin, but he would not tell her.

On the seventh day she asked the king, but he would not tell her.

On the eighth day she asked the queen, but she would not tell her.

On the ninth day she asked the manikin, but he would not tell her.

On the tenth day she asked the king, but he would not tell her.

On the eleventh day she asked the queen, but she would not tell her.

On the twelfth day she asked the manikin, but he would not tell her.

On the thirteenth day she asked the king, but he would not tell her.

On the fourteenth day she asked the queen, but she would not tell her.

On the fifteenth day she asked the manikin, but he would not tell her.

So the queen thought the whole night of all the names that she had ever heard, and

she sent a messenger over the country to inquire, far and wide, for any other names that there might be. When the manikin came the next day, she began with Caspar, Mead, and after another, but to every one the little man said, "That is not my name."

On the second day she had inquiries made in the neighborhood as to the names of the people there, and she repeated to the manikin the most uncommon and curious. Per Laceleg, but he always answered, "That is not my name."

On the third day the messenger came back again, and said, "I have not been able to find a single new name, but as I came to a high mountain at the end of the forest, where I saw a little house, and before the house a fire was burning, and round about the fire quite a ridiculous little man was jumping, he hopped upon one leg, and shouted -

'To-day I bake, to-morrow brew,

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the next I'll have the young queen's child.

Ha, glad am I that no one knew

that Rumpelstiltskin I am styled.'"

You may imagine how glad the queen was when she heard the name. And when soon afterwards the little man came in, and asked, "Now, mistress queen, what is my name?"

At first she said, "Is your name Conrad?"

"No."

"Is your name Harry?"

"No."

"Perhaps your name is Rumpelstiltskin?"

"The devil has told you that! The devil has told you that," cried the little man, and in his anger he plunged his right foot so deep into the earth that his whole leg went in, and with his hands that he tore himself in two.