Rumpelstiltskin
A Fairytale (from Germany)

There once lived a miller and his daughter. When the miller was at work all day turning grain into flour, he loved to think up tall tales to amaze people.

One day the king came to town. He heard that the miller was telling people that his daughter was the most amazing young woman in all the land.

The king found the miller and asked him, “What is so amazing about your daughter?”

The miller bowed then said, “Your Majesty, my daughter can spin straw into gold!”

“Spin straw into gold?” exclaimed the King. “That is amazing! Please send her to my palace. I will put her to the test!”

The miller immediately wished he had not told the king such a thing! But now it was too late.

So the miller’s daughter had to go to the king’s palace at once. The king took her to a room piled with straw from floor to ceiling. He pointed to the spinning wheel in the middle of the room and said, “Now get to work! If by morning you have not spun this straw into gold, you will die!”

The king left the room. The door closed behind him, and the young woman could hear the door being locked. Now she was all alone.

She did not know what to do. She had no idea how to spin straw into gold!

Just then, an odd little man appeared standing before her.

The young woman was shocked. “Where did you come from!?” she asked him.

“Never mind that!” said the little man. “What matters is I can save your life. For a price, of course.”

“What price?” she asked.

“How about the necklace you are wearing?” he replied.

“Very well. If you can turn the straw in this room into gold by morning, this necklace is yours.”

The little man got to work. He worked all night long – whirr, whirr, whirr. By the time the sun came up, not one piece of straw was left. All of it had been turned into rolls of pure gold thread!

The young woman had been sleeping on the floor. Now she opened her eyes, jumped to her feet, and exclaimed, “You did it!”

“Of course I did!” snapped the little man. “Now hand over the necklace!”

“A deal is a deal,” said the young woman. She took off her necklace and gave it to him. And he was gone.

When the king stepped into the room, he was very pleased with what he saw.

“Now if you please, sir, I’d like to go home now” said the young woman.

“Not so fast!” said the king. “I will have my servants bring you to a room larger than this one, filled with much more straw. You will stay there tonight. By morning all the straw must be spun into gold – if you value your life!”

“But I already –!” protested the young woman.

The king raised his hand to motion for her to stop talking. “My servants will give you some food and take you to the larger room. I’ll see you tomorrow morning.” And with that he left. Soon the young woman found herself in the larger room – again with the door locked.

The young woman said to herself, “That little man better appear again. If he doesn’t, I am lost.”

“Here I am” said a voice. The young woman turned to see who had spoken these words. There before her was the odd little man!

“I will do this job for you,” said the little man, “But you must give me the ring on your finger.”
“I always loved that ring!” thought the young woman to herself. “But after all, it is just a ring.” “All right” she said to the little man. “It’s a deal.”

So the little man spun the straw all night.

By morning, rolls of spun gold thread were neatly piled on the floor. The young woman gave the ring to the little man. She looked away from him for a moment, and when she looked back at him, he was nowhere to be seen.

The young woman felt sure that the king would be so happy now, he would let her go home. But alas! If two rooms of gold look good to a king, three rooms of gold look even better. The king took the young woman to the biggest room yet. He had already had it filled with straw. He told her that the straw must be turned into gold by the following morning, or she would lose her life.

This time, however, the king said his son was coming back from a long journey that very night. In the morning he would send his son to the room to see if the work was done. If it was, she was to marry the prince.

The king left. The door was closed and locked.

The young woman softly called out to the little man, “Please come and help me again!”

The little man appeared.

“I need your help again. But I no longer have anything to pay you.”

“We will find a good price,” said the little man.

And he went to work, spinning the straw into gold.

By morning, the job was done. “There!” said the little man. “All done. Now I will tell you my price. If you marry the prince, I want your first-born child.”

“I won’t, I can’t give you my child!” exclaimed the young woman.

“Oh, yes you can. The child is mine. The straw is spun into gold, and so the deal is made!” said the little man. And he was gone.

A few moments later, the young woman heard the door being unlocked, and she saw the door opening. A young man stepped into the room. “Miss, are you all right?” asked the prince.

“Yes, I’m fine,” she said.

They smiled at each other. This young man seemed very different from his father.

“I want you to know that when I am king, I will not treat people the way he does” he said. “I was told that if the straw were spun into gold by this morning, you were to marry me. But it is your choice. I do not believe in forcing people to do things.”

The two stayed in the room and talked about all sorts of things. Before long, they had fallen in love. Then the prince asked her to marry him. And the young woman said yes.

So the two were married. Soon after the wedding, the king died. The prince became king and the miller’s daughter became queen. In time, the new queen had a baby, a son. Joy filled the palace.

One day, when the queen was alone in her room – all of a sudden, the little man stood before her. “Give me what you promised!” said the little man, pointing at the baby. “Now!”

“I never promised it!” said the Queen. She held her baby tightly. She said, “I will give you gold instead. More gold than you have ever seen.”

“Why do I need gold?” said the little man. “I can make all the gold I want!”

“Then, I will give you a castle,” said the queen.

“I come and go where I want,” said the little man. “I don’t need a castle?”

“Then, I will give you servants to take care of you,” said the queen.

“No one takes care of me!” said the little man. “No one even knows who I am!”

“I will find out who you are,” said the queen.
"Oh, really?" said the little man. For he knew that no one on earth knew his name.

"Very well," he said. "I will give you three days. After three days, if you cannot tell me my name, the baby is mine. But if you guess my name, you can keep that baby. But no one must know about this! If you say one word of this to anyone, the baby will be gone forever."

"Three days will give me a lot of time to come up with many names," thought the queen. And so she agreed.

The queen wrote a long list of every name she could think of. The following afternoon, in the baby's bedroom, the little man appeared before her. "Well?" he said in a loud voice.

The queen read the entire list of names, one by one. "Could your name be Nathan?" she asked. "Lucas? Jacob? Hugo? Felix? Oliver?" And many other names, too.

"Not even close!" laughed the little man. "See you tomorrow." And he was gone.

The queen looked through every book in the royal library. She found names from faraway places. Names she had never heard of.

The following day, the second day of the contest, when the little man appeared, the queen read her list.

"Perhaps your name is Maximilian," she said. "No? How about Gunnar? Alfonso? Poindexter?" And many more.

"No, no, and no. This is boring," said the little man. "But I will not be bored tomorrow. The third day is tomorrow, and that is when the baby will be mine!" He laughed again, and was gone.

The Queen did not know what to do. She wished she could tell her husband her woes, but she dare not. She walked to one side of the room, then back again. Back and forth, over and over. "This does not help a thing!" she said to herself.

It was night now. The queen put on her royal cape and hood, and walked outside the castle.

"If I have peace and quiet, maybe I will think of something," she thought. The queen went into the woods. She followed a brook to a big lake, and went past the lake to the deep forest.

Suddenly, the queen saw the light of a fire far away. And there was a voice that was hard to make out. The voice sounded familiar. Hidden in the darkness, she stepped closer. At last she could see, there in front of a fire, danced a little man. It was he, the very same little man!

As the little man danced, he sang:

Tonight, tonight, the plans I make
Tomorrow, tomorrow, the baby I take.
The queen will never win the game,
For Rumpelstiltskin is my name!

"Rumpelstiltskin! That's it!" the queen thought to herself.

On the afternoon of the following day, when Rumpelstiltskin appeared, the queen went through more names. "Is your name Yusaf? Bobek? How about Salaman?"

"No, a thousand times, no!" said the little man. "You are wasting my time. I will give you one last guess."

"Well, could your name be – Rumpelstiltskin?"

"Rumpelstiltskin?!" yelled the little man. "How could you know?!" He was so furious that he stamped his right foot down very hard. His right foot and leg went down through the floor. Then with both hands he took hold of his left leg and with a mighty yank upward, he fully ripped himself in two. The two halves of Rumpelstiltskin's body were buried soon after. The queen and king and their children ruled wisely and lived happily for many years.