



Tonight's Bedtime Story

Fairy Tales for Sleepy Children

presents

Rumpelstilzchen

From "The Fairy Book" by Miss Mulock



here was once a miller who was very poor, but he had a beautiful daughter. Now, it happened that he came to speak to the king, and, to give himself importance, he said to him, "I have a daughter who can spin straw into gold."

The king said to the miller, "That is a talent that pleases me well; if she be as skilful as you say, bring her to-morrow to the palace, and I will put her to the proof."

When the maiden was brought to him, he led her to a room full of straw, gave her a wheel and spindle, and said, "Now set to work, and if by the morrow this straw be not spun into gold, you shall die." He locked the door, and left the maiden alone.

The poor girl sat down disconsolate, and could not for her life think what she was to do; for she knew not—how could she?—the way to spin straw into gold; and her distress increased so much that at last she began to weep. All at once the door opened, and a little man entered, and said, "Good evening, my pretty miller's daughter why are you weeping so bitterly?"

"Ah!" answered the maiden, "I must spin straw into gold, and know not how to do it."

The little man said, "What will you give me if I do it for you?"

"My neckerchief," said the maiden.

He took the kerchief, sat down before the wheel, and grind, grind, grind—three times did he grind—and the spindle was full: then he put another thread on, and grind, grind, grind, the second was full; so he spun on till morning; when all the straw was spun, and all the spindles were full of gold.

The king came at sunrise, and was greatly astonished and overjoyed at the sight; but it only made his heart the more greedy of gold. He put the miller's daughter into another much larger room, full of straw, and ordered her to spin it all in one night, if life were dear to her. The poor helpless maiden began to weep, when once more the door flew open, the little man appeared, and said, "What will you give me if I spin this straw into gold?"

"My ring from my finger," answered the maiden.

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

The king was highly delighted when he saw it, but was not yet satisfied with the quantity of gold; so he put the damsel into a still larger room, full of straw, and said, "Spin this during the night; and if you do it, you shall be my wife." "For," he thought, "if she's only a miller's daughter I shall never find a richer wife in the whole world."

As soon as the damsel was alone, the little man came the third time, and said, "What will you give me if I again spin all this straw for you?"

"I have nothing more to give you," answered the girl.

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

“Who knows how that may be, or how things may turn out between now and then?” thought the girl, but in her perplexity she could not help herself: so she promised the little man what he desired, and he spun all the straw into gold.

When the king came in the morning, and saw that his orders had been obeyed, he married the maiden, and the beautiful miller’s daughter became a queen. After a year had passed she brought a lovely baby into the world, but quite forgot the little man, till he walked suddenly into her chamber, and said, “Give me what you promised me.” The queen was frightened, and offered the dwarf all the riches of the kingdom if he would only leave her her child; but he answered, “No; something living is dearer to me than all the treasures of the world.”

Then the queen began to grieve and to weep so bitterly, that the little man took pity upon her and said, “I will give you three days; if in that time you can find out my name, you shall keep the child.”

All night long the queen thought over every name she had ever heard, and sent a messenger through the kingdom, to inquire what names were usually given to people in that country. When, next day, the little man came again, she began with Caspar, Melchoir, Balthazar, and repeated, each after each, all the names she knew or had heard of; but at each one the little man said, “That is not my name.”

The second day she again sent round about in all directions, to ask how the people were called, and repeated to the little man the strangest names she could hear of or imagine: to each he answered always, “That is not my name.”

The third day the messenger returned and said, “I have not been able to find a single new name; but as I came over a high mountain by a wood, where the fox and the hare bid each other good-night, I saw a little house, and before the house was burning a little fire, and round the fire danced a very funny little man, who hopped upon one leg, and cried out:—

“To-day I brew, to-morrow I bake,

Next day the queen’s child I shall take;

How glad I am that nobody knows;

My name is Rumpelstilzchen!”

You may guess how joyful the queen was at hearing this; and when, soon after, the little man entered and said, “Queen, what is my name?” she asked him mischievously, “Is your name Kunz?”

“No.”

“Is your name Carl?”

“No.”

“Are you not sometimes called Rumpelstilzchen?”

“A witch has told you that—a witch has told you!” shrieked the poor little man, and stamped so furiously with his right foot that it sunk into the earth up to the hip; then he seized his left foot with both hands with such violence, that he tore himself right in two.

To get more stories

Go to www.tonightsbedtimestory.com

License

While the text and the illustrations used in this work are out of copyright, the unique presentation created for those elements is copyrighted. You may use, copy and distribute this work freely but you are not authorized to use this work for commercial purpose and you may not alter, transform, or build upon this work in any way.