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RUMPELSTILTSKIN

A Play in One Act

by

Eileen Moushey

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

NOTE: RUMPELSTILTSKIN may be performed by adults or young actors or a combination of both. Ages are not important except in relationship to each other. Costumes are typical fairy tale/fantasy type.

KING HENRY - "HARRY" to his family. A very nice and kind man. His biggest problem is that sometimes he's a bit too nice. He doesn't have to be particularly young or handsome, keeping relationships etc., in mind.

PRINCESS GERTRUDE - "TRUDY" to the family. She's HARRY'S aunt. Eminently practical and down to earth, she tackles problems head-on.

MITCHELL - the Prime Minister - "MITCH" to the family. A real worry-wart. Nervous. Probably has ulcers. Can be any age, though preferably mature.

TOM, THE MILLER - Mr. Personality. Charming, glib, a real operator. But also very good-hearted and generous. He means no harm at all.

CLAUDIA, THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER - A very nice young lady. She is principled without being priggish.

* **PRINCESSES FRIEDA AND LULU** - They are twin sisters, vying for HARRY'S hand. Though richly dressed they are not an attractive pair (make-up, y'know.). Do not resemble each other at all. Outrageous hats (featuring stuffed fish, if possible) complete their ensemble.

***JOANN AND SUSAN** - Towns women.

***SIR GAVIN AND SIR BRIAN** - Knights.

***GEORGE AND MARTIN** - Towns men.

ALANNA - A wood sprite. The narrator of the play. Can be played by an actress of any age, but should be pixie-like in appearance.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN - An evil, ugly, wicked little gnome with no redeeming qualities whatsoever.

* These roles can be double, and even triple cast.

The action of RUMPELSTILTSKIN takes place in three locales:

1. A room in King Harry's castle.
2. The Town Square
3. The forest where Rumpelstiltskin dwells.

It is not necessary to use a complete stage setting for RUMPELSTILTSKIN, although this is of course possible. The descriptions in the script are the ones we used in the original production. Since this is a fairy tale, a lot can be suggested by set dressing and props, rather than walls and flats.

You will find within the script many references to lighting specials and sound effects. While you may adapt for your production, the use of these greatly enhances the play. Likewise, the use of music as underscoring for some scenes and scene changes is strongly recommended.

Prior to the show, using reservations or by circulating with the audience, several names of children are collected. These will be used in Scene Ten.

PROLOGUE

SETTING: In front of a curtain. As the pre-show music fades, all is in darkness. A pin spot appears and moves around the stage, accompanied by a tinkling sound. The spot opens up to reveal the seated figure of ALANNA.

ALANNA: Hello. Hello. Did you come for the story?? Oh, it's a good one, it is. One thing I'll say for human beings, they do tell a good story. But besides that, they really are very silly creatures, aren't they? People, I mean. What?? Oh, no, you can't be!! Well, I'm sorry, but I thought you were elves. You're people??? Ah, but you know what?? You're LITTLE people! And that's very close to being an elf or sprite. Like me. Here's the real test. Someone's coming. *(TOM enters with JOANN and SUSAN on each arm. They appear to be chatting.)* See. Humans. I can see them. But they can't see me. *(She goes over to them and dances around making faces and funny noises. They are oblivious.)* Isn't that fun. I wonder if they can see you? Try!! Wave to them. *(They do. No response.)* Say "Hey, you!" *(Again, No response.)* I have more fun like that. Oh, and I love playing tricks. Watch. *(She faces them and blows. TOM'S hat flies offstage. He feels his head quizzically.)* Your turn. *(As the children blow, the ladies hats will fly offstage.)* Harder!! More! More! *(As the children blow harder, TOM and the ladies are "blown" offstage. ALANNA Laughs.)* Oh, you are very, very, good. Now remember, fellow sprites, all the people onstage can't see or hear you. But that doesn't mean we can't pull a few pranks of our own - what do you say?? Now, we'd better start the story - it begins, of course, with "Once upon a time," in a very small kingdom far, far away, there lived a very sad king. King Henry. Although, his closest friends called him "Harry."

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE ONE

A ROOM IN KING HARRY'S CASTLE

SETTING: As the lights come to full, the curtain opens to reveal a room in the castle. It is very sparsely furnished. It isn't the opulent chamber of a King. **KING HARRY** is sitting despondently, listening to his Knights. **MITCHELL** is standing by.

SIR GAVIN: So, you see, Your Majesty, as much as Brian and I would love to stay on, well, we've got families to feed. As it is, we owe money to every shopkeeper in town and they won't let us buy any more on credit. . .

SIR BRIAN: You know, sire, if you ever need us, just send word and we'll come to serve and protect you as always. . .

SIR GAVIN: . . .Just not full-time. Me 'n Brian, we've got to find jobs.

SIR BRIAN: Paying jobs.

HARRY: I understand, fellows, really I do. And I don't blame you. You've got responsibilities. No hard feelings. Really. You go with my blessing. *(They bow and exit.)*

MITCH: Ungrateful wretches. After we train them and feed them and give them horses. . .

HARRY: Ah, Mitch, you can't blame the lads. They've got to live.

MITCH: Your Majesty!! Sire!! If you will excuse my presumption, it is exactly that attitude that got us into this predicament!! You are too nice. You believed every sad story that walked in the door. You gave away the kingdom's gold to every liar and crook in the land.

HARRY: Now, Mitch, they weren't all liars and crooks. There were some truly tragic cases where my people needed a few coins. Like that poor little man who couldn't walk. He needed gold so he could buy crutches.

MITCH: Oh, him! I saw him in the square just last week.

HARRY: Begging for a crust of bread, poor man??

MITCH: Dancing. And dressed to the teeth with jewelry and. . .

HARRY: So maybe I shouldn't have believed his story. How about that poor old lady who needed gold so that she wouldn't lose her home?

MITCH: Her home? Or the fine, new carriage I see her driving? My boy, I love you like a father, but you have bankrupted the kingdom with your soft heart. We are broke. There isn't one more gold coin in the treasury. All the servants have quit, we've had to sell the furniture, and you don't even have a crown to give away. We need help, Harry. I'm afraid I have taken matters into my own hands.

HARRY: You mean??

MITCH: Yes, I have written to your aunt. The Princess Gertrude arrives at any moment. If she can't find a way out of this dilemma, no one can.

HARRY: Aunt Trudy!! Oh, I can hear the lectures now!

GERTRUDE: *(From offstage.)* That's not all your going to hear! Someone come and help me down from this horse!! *(MITCH and HARRY look at each other.)*

HARRY: I'm still the king. *(He points to the door. MITCH exits. HARRY calls after him.)* Remember who wrote to her. *(We hear the sound of a horse whinny, shouts, and a loud thud. MITCH howls in pain. Both enter, GERTRUDE supporting a limping MITCH.)*

GERTRUDE: Oddsbodkins, man, didn't you ever hear you've got to watch your feet around a horse. *(To HARRY)* 'Fraid Dobbins just trampled on your Prime Minister. *(Slaps MITCH on the back.)* He'll be fine in a bit. Walk around, get the blood flowing, man.

MITCH: I think that animal broke my toe. . .

GERTRUDE: Nonsense! Bruised it a bit, that's all!! Go on, walk around on it. Will do it good. WALK. *(MITCH limps around the room.)* Now, what I want to know is why your Prime Minister is helping visitors down from horses? Where are the stableboys, and the grooms, and your knights????

HARRY: They've all quit.

GERTRUDE: Than what Mitchell wrote to me is correct? The treasury is empty? No gold?

HARRY: Not a coin left. And it's all my fault. I believed everyone's sad story and gave them money. And now it's gone, we don't have an army anymore and we'll probably be invaded by the Carpalians. They have gold enough to buy us six times over. How could I be so stupid?

GERTRUDE: I don't know. I suppose it's because you have a trusting nature and believe everything you're told. . .

MITCH: I tried telling him. I said, "Your Majesty, these people are just trying to . . ."

GERTRUDE: Keep walking, Mitchell. So, Harry, what are you going to do?.

HARRY: Get a job of some sort, I suppose. Although being a king is the only thing I've ever done. And I've botched that.

GERTRUDE: Well, now, sitting here feeling sorry for yourself isn't going to work, my boy!! Snap out of it!! Get a grip!! There is a way out.

MITCH and HARRY: There is??

GERTRUDE: You must do two very important things. First, you must pass a Tell the Truth law. Mitchell here can write it up. Something like "Henceforth, whomsoever shall tell a falsehood to the King, shall be punished severely. . . .and so forth." That will keep the crooks and swindlers away.

MITCH: Excellent idea, your Majesty.

HARRY: Now why didn't I think of that? Write it up, Mitchell, and we'll proclaim it throughout the kingdom. But Aunt Trudy, what's the other thing? How am I going to keep from going bankrupt??

GERTRUDE: By simply honoring a time-honored tradition - marry for money.

HARRY: Marry. . .for money? That sounds so. . .cold. I've always dreamt that one day I'd meet the perfect girl, and fall in love, and maybe become engaged and. . .

GERTRUDE: My dear nephew, can you afford that now?

HARRY: I suppose not. . .

GERTRUDE: And who knows? Many times these sort of arrangements work out very well. Perhaps you will grow to love each other.

MITCH: Do you have anybody in mind, Princess?

GERTRUDE: Naturally. Actually, there are two perfect candidates. The king of Carpalia. . .

HARRY: CARPALIA! But Aunt Trudy, everyone who lives there wears funny hats and they all smell like fish. . .old fish!

GERTRUDE: Now, Harry. The hats are part of traditional Carpalian dress, and as for the fish smell. . .Well, I'm talking about princesses. . .surely they won't. . . Anyway, the King of Carpalia has twin daughters of marriageable age. And I understand that he's promised a huge dowry to whoever marries them.

HARRY: I don't think I've ever met them.

GERTRUDE: They are the Princesses Frieda and Lulu. I will arrange for them to visit so you may take your pick. (*She starts to exit.*) Really, Harry, it's the only way. (*She exits.*)

HARRY: I don't know. Frieda and Lulu. What do you think, Mitch? Have you ever seen them? Or even heard of them?

MITCH: I saw the Princess Frieda once.

HARRY: Well???

MITCH: Maybe they're not identical twins. . .

SCENE TWO

THE TOWN SQUARE

SETTING: The town square. The townspeople are milling about. **TOM THE MILLER** enters and is immediately accosted by **SUSAN**.

TOM: Susan. Ahh, Susan, my love. My darling. My own little turtle dove. I have counted the hours since we last met.

SUSAN: Tom, my brother is certain he saw you walking in the wood with another girl.

TOM: Me!! With another girl!! It's not true!!.

SUSAN: My father saw you too.

TOM: He's an old man. His eyesight is failing.

SUSAN: My mother saw you. And my cousin, the wrestler. (*Meaningfully*) The one who would do anything for me.

TOM: Umm. . .in the woods with another girl, hm??? Oh, THAT girl!! Now I know what you're talking about. There was a girl. Or rather, a woman. An ugly, wrinkled old woman. I was walking in the woods. I was. . .composing a love poem to you, and I met this old woman who'd lost her way. What could I do but the gentlemanly thing? I escorted her home.

SUSAN: Oh, Tom, what a sweet, darling man you are!! Will you recite it to me???

TOM: Recite what?

SUSAN: The love poem you wrote to me.

TOM: (*Thinking quickly.*) Oh, that. . .
Of all the women on the earth,
There's one I'd love to claim.
She walks in beauty like the night,
And Susan is her name.

SUSAN: Oh, Tom, that's so beautiful!!! You're going to make me cry! I'm sorry I was jealous and suspi. . .

GEORGE: Look. It's the Prime Minister!! (*MITCH enters and reads from scroll.*)

MITCH: Hear ye! Hear ye! Let all now present listen and take heed!! His Majesty, King Henry, declares the following proclamation to henceforth be the law of the land!! "From this day forward, any persons speaking to the king with intent to deceive shall be banished forever." (*He exits.*)

JOANN: (*To MARTIN*) What does it mean??

MARTIN: It means that if you tell a lie to the King, you will be sent out of the kingdom and not allowed to return. (*GEORGE and MARTIN exit, "discussing", and JOANN remains onstage, facing away from TOM and SUSAN.*)

SUSAN: Tom, my dear. I must go and tell my brother. He tells an occasional fib and he might accidentally tell one to the king. I will see you later, my darling. (*She exits.*)

TOM: Farewell, my (*sees JOANN*) dear Aunt. JoAnn, oh my little JoAnn. How wonderful to see you!!

JOANN: Tom, darling!! Is that the cruel Aunt who keeps us apart? She looks very young to be your aunt.

TOM: Umm, she's an aunt by marriage. But let's not waste our precious stolen moments talking about her!! Let me recite a love poem that I wrote for you after our walk in the forest.
Of all the women on the earth,
There's one I'd love to claim.
She walks in beauty like the night
And JoAnn is her name.

(*CLAUDIA enters.*)

CLAUDIA: Papa! I must talk to you.

TOM: I'll be with you in a second, Claudia. (*To JOANN*) I have to go now. My daughter, the most beautiful girl in the kingdom - next to you - needs to speak to me. Probably something to do with the family estate.

CLAUDIA: Papa, you've got to fix the handle on the pump. How can I do the laundry if I can't get any water??

TOM: She's very fussy about the clothes. All those servants and she insists on doing the wash. . .

CLAUDIA: Papa. . .

TOM: I'll see you later, my darling JoAnn.

JOANN: The usual place??

TOM: Yes, of course - the usual place! The usual place? Uh, refresh my memory.

JOANN: Under the bridge?

TOM: Yes, yes, of course. Under the bridge. Until later, my love.
(*JOANN exits.*)

CLAUDIA: Papa. Really. The family estate. Servants. Why do you tell those big fat lies, Papa?

TOM: I don't know. I open my mouth to tell the truth and instead a lie just jumps out.

CLAUDIA: Well, I want you to be very careful, Papa. I heard the new declaration from the king. Suppose one of your lies slips out when the king is around. You'd be banished!!

TOM: (*Laughing.*) As if I'm ever going to meet the king, much less speak to him!! Come on, little girl, let's go home and I'll fix the pump handle and tell you the story of when I was a famous champion horse back rider.

CLAUDIA: Oh, Papa!

SCENE THREE

A ROOM IN KING HARRY'S CASTLE

SETTING: The same room as before. HARRY and MITCH are onstage.

HARRY: What do you suppose is taking her so long?? Carpalia is only a two hour ride. Do you think maybe they don't want to come?? How do I look??

MITCH: Your Majesty, calm yourself. They should be here any minute, especially considering how fast your aunt rides. I'm not surprised she's outlived two husbands. Probably wears them out. Sir, will you please quit pacing around the room?

HARRY: I can't help it, man. I'm meeting my future wife!

MITCH: I hear horses. They're here. (*He exits*)

HARRY: (*To himself*) Please, oh, please. Let me fall in love with one of them. (*From offstage is heard horse's whinny and a cry of pain from MITCH. He enters, supported by GERTRUDE and limping on the*

other foot.)

GERTRUDE: Your Prime Minister does not have a lot of luck with horses.

MITCH: That animal. . .

GERTRUDE: Oh, for heaven's sake, Mitchell! Dobbins is as gentle as a lamb.

HARRY: Well?? Well??

GERTRUDE: They're waiting outside to meet you.

HARRY: Bring them in!

GERTRUDE: Now, Harry, I think you should meet them one at a time. And, dear boy, remember. . .you are doing this for your country. This is your only chance to save your kingdom!! Mitchell, bring in one of the princesses, please.

MITCH: Which one?

GERTRUDE: It doesn't matter.

(MITCH exits. He returns almost immediately and formally announces.)

MITCH: Her Royal Highness, Princess Lulu of Carpalia! *(The princess sweeps into the room. She is dressed grandly with a funny hat. As she passes each character, they react to the distinct fish odor which accompanies her.)*

LULU: Out of my way, you little creep. Well, are you Henry?? Turn around, turn around! Let me get a look at you. Not bad, not bad. You'll do. King Henry, eh. Let's get something straight right now. If I decide to give you the incredible honor of becoming your wife, a few things are going to change around here. First, the old guy by the door. He's history. Get rid of him. And after the wedding, the aunt is invited maybe every ten years or so. Oh, and the Carpalian national hat will be worn by every citizen. And regarding children. Do you like them?

HARRY: Why yes, I love child. . .

LULU: Too bad. I hate them. We're not having any. Messy, nasty

little things. . .always wrinkling their little noses at me. *(Everyone immediately un-wrinkles their noses.)* And another thing. I have a very special diet, which I expect you to follow as well.

HARRY: Diet?

LULU: Yes, I eat only certain foods. Mostly fish. Mostly smelts. Lots and lots of smelts.

HARRY: Smelts?

LULU: It's a fish. Very good. I eat them three times a day. You'll love them. Well, I know you want to take a gander at Frieda. But as far as I'm concerned, if you want to get hooked up, I'm game.

HARRY: Well, it's been nice meeting you. . .*(She exits. MITCH follows.)* Oh, Aunt Trudy. Is her twin anything like. . .

GERTRUDE: She's completely different.

(MITCH returns and announces.)

MITCH: Her Royal Highness, Princess Frieda of Carpalia. *(FRIEDA comes shyly into the room. She too is grandly dressed and wearing the hat. At first glimpse she seems a welcome relief from her sister. Until she opens her mouth. She whines.)*

HARRY: How do you do, Princess?

FRIEDA: Oh, I'm not well at all. I think I'm getting a boil on my back. And the ride was so-o-o long. We should have taken the carriage. Is this the nicest room in your castle? But it's so cold. My throat is sore. Do you see any white spots? *(She opens her mouth wide for him to look.)*

HARRY: I don't think so. . .

FRIEDA: I hope I'm not getting the flu. I hate that. Last time I had the flu I threw up sixteen times in one night.

HARRY: How terrible for you. . .

FRIEDA: All over the bed. It was awful. I get sick a lot. About the only food I can keep down is smelts. Do you have smelts here?

HARRY: I'm not sure. . .I can look. . .

FRIEDA: Never mind. I think it's too late. Excuse me. *(She runs from the room, hand over mouth.)*

GERTRUDE: Now, Harry, remember. It's for the good of your country. You've got to pick one.

HARRY: Oh, Aunt Trudy, must I?

GERTRUDE: To save the kingdom, yes, you must.

HARRY: Well, I can't choose now. Give me an hour or so. Please. I need to take a walk.

GERTRUDE: Very well, my boy. But sooner or later, you'll have to go through with it.

HARRY: I know, I know. *(He puts on a plain cape and starts to exit.)*

MITCH: Wait and I'll accompany you, Sir.

HARRY: No, Mitch. This is one decision I must make alone. I'll return within the hour with my choice. *(He exits.)*

SCENE FOUR

THE TOWN SQUARE

SETTING: Same as Scene Two. **CLAUDIA** and her father are onstage. She is carrying a basket.

CLAUDIA: And then I heard that you were telling stories about your lion-hunting days!! Papa, Papa, you've simply got to stop making up these stories!! It will get you into big trouble.

TOM: I know, Claudia, I know.

CLAUDIA: Good.

TOM: Like the time I was in Borneo and met the King of the Cannibals and. . .

CLAUDIA: You're hopeless, Papa!!

TOM: I am not! See, I'm hereby giving up telling fibs, tall tales, fictional stories, and big fat whopper lies. So there!

CLAUDIA: I'll believe it when I hear it. Or rather, when I don't hear it. Now, Papa, I'm going to pick cherries for a pie. Can you stay out of trouble for that long?

TOM: Daughter!! You wound me!! On your way, Claudia. I am perfectly capable of staying out of trouble! *(She exits up one aisle of the house just as HARRY enters down another and sits despondently onstage. TOM notices him and goes over to make his acquaintance.)* Hello, there. I don't believe we've met. Name's Tom. They call me Tom the Miller. Not from around here, are you?

HARRY: Um, yes, actually. I live. . .over there. I was just out walking - needed to think, you know.

TOM: Well, say, I certainly do. Like the time I was working for Merlin the Mag. . . *(looks off, remembering)* um. . .I mean, well I'm a miller and once we were having problems down at the mill and I had to be alone to think it over. Would you like me to leave?

HARRY: No, don't go. Maybe if I talked about it. . . See, I've got to get married. . .

TOM: And you're looking for a girl, right? Well, today is your lucky day! You've come to the right place. Have I got a girl for you, young man. My daughter, Claudia, is the sweetest, most beauti. . .

HARRY: No, no, you don't understand. . .

TOM: And smart!! Why, she can add, and subtract, and do square roots. . .

HARRY: Sir, you see, my problem isn't. . .

TOM: *(Excitedly)* And she can bake a cherry pie that will make you cry it's so good and she can sing like a bird, dance like a gazelle, and she can, she can, I mean, her real "specialty" is that she can *(he stops here, at a loss.)*

HARRY: She can what?

TOM: *(In a whisper)* She can spin straw into gold.

HARRY: She can spin straw into gold??? Really?

TOM: SSSHHH! Yes, she can spin straw into gold.

HARRY: *(As the implications of this dawns)* Miller, I will now reveal my true identity. I am your King, and I command you to bring this daughter of yours to me. If she can do as you describe, I will marry her and make her my queen.

TOM: You. . .you. . .you're the King?

HARRY: Yes, yes. Go, man, hurry! Bring your daughter.

(Tom exits, shaking his head.)

TOM: Oh, what have I done! *(He exits up the aisle after CLAUDIA as MITCH and GERTRUDE enter down the other.)*

MITCH: There he is!! Your Highness, we've been looking for you!

GERTRUDE: Harry, you've got to decide!

HARRY: Mitch, Auntie!! You'll never guess!

MITCH: Which one, Your Highness? Lulu or Frieda??

GERTRUDE: Your kingdom will thank you for it, dear boy. Which one of those awful creatures are you going to marry?

HARRY: Neither. I'm going to marry the miller's daughter, Claudia!

GERTRUDE and MITCH: WHAT!!!

HARRY: *(Whispering)* The miller said she can spin straw into gold.

GERTRUDE: Of all the ridiculous. . .Harry, you really are soft! *(TOM and CLAUDIA enter up the aisle.)*

TOM: So then he told me he was the king and that he wanted to meet you! He wants to marry you!!

CLAUDIA: Papa, you told me you were going to stop telling these tall tales.

TOM: But it's true, daughter, I swear it is. Look, look, there he is!! *(CLAUDIA and TOM reach the stage. There is a moment when CLAUDIA and HARRY both first see each other. It is the classic love at first sight, accompanied by violin music.)*

CLAUDIA: *(She curtsies.)* Your Majesty.

HARRY: Claudia, that's your name?? *(She nods. HARRY turns to TOM.)* She's everything you said - and more.

CLAUDIA: "Everything he said?". . .Your Highness, would you excuse me a moment to talk to my father. *(She takes TOM aside.)* Papa!! Just exactly what did you tell the King about me? Remember the law!! If you deceived him you will be banished forever.

TOM: I just told him that you were beautiful and sweet and smart and. . . and. . .and. . .

CLAUDIA: And what else??

TOM: And. . . *(spotting her basket of cherries)*. . .and that you could bake a fantastic cherry pie. Which you can.

CLAUDIA: And that's all?? *(TOM nods. CLAUDIA returns to the royal group.)*

GERTRUDE: Now tell me, Miss, if you really can do what your father says. Because if you can't, he will be banished forever for lying to the King.

CLAUDIA: I can do what he says I can.

HARRY: Isn't this wonderful! The kingdom is saved, I don't have to marry one of the Carpalian twins, and I've met you. All on the same day. That is, if you'll do your little "specialty?"

CLAUDIA: *(Glancing at her father)* If it would please you, sir. But I will need some things.

HARRY: Besides the straw?

CLAUDIA: Straw?? I was thinking more along the lines of cherries..

GERTRUDE: Cherries! I can see needing a spinning wheel but. . .

CLAUDIA: *(Laughing)* A spinning wheel!! What a notion! I don't need one of those.

MITCH: OOOhhh. You're right, your Majesty, she is good.

HARRY: Nevertheless, you shall have the spinning wheel, just in case. And if you want cherries as well, you shall have them! Anything else??

CLAUDIA: *(Starting to get worried)* I'm not sure. . . .

HARRY: Can you start right away?? How much gold do you think you could spin by tomorrow. I'd like to hire the knights. . . .

CLAUDIA: SPIN!! GOLD!! Papa, papa. . . .

GERTRUDE: You can do it, can't you, girl. Your father's future hangs in the balance.

TOM: Wait!! Stop!! There's something you need to know!! She can't spin straw into gold. . . .

GERTRUDE: I knew it!!

TOM: *(Finishing lamely)*. . . more than three times. . . .

CLAUDIA: Oh, Papa. . . .

GERTRUDE: Well, come along then. Let's get busy.

(All exit up the aisle. ALANNA appears and plays tricks as they exit - knocking off hats, etc.)

ALANNA: So poor Claudia is stuck. She is led to a room filled with straw, a spinning wheel, oh, and cherries, and locked in for the night. She is despondent because she knows as morning comes, that her father will be taken from her forever.

SCENE FIVE

A ROOM IN KING HARRY'S CASTLE

SETTING: The same room as before, piled with straw. **CLAUDIA** is sitting despondently at the spinning wheel.

CLAUDIA: Oh, Papa!! *(She attempts to draw the straw through the spinning wheel but, of course, it remains, simply straw. She sits down on the floor and starts to weep. Suddenly, one of the straw piles starts to move. Emerging from it - coming up through a trap, if possible - is an ugly little gnome. You know who.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Don't cry, pretty lady.

CLAUDIA: *(Looking up, startled.)* Who are you??? How did you get

in here?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Now that's my secret, pretty lady. And aren't secrets fun, though?? Aren't secrets special? Like yours, for example.

CLAUDIA: My secret. I don't have. . .

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Ha-ha!! Of course you do!! And I know what it is or my name isn't. . . Well, let's just say I know why you are crying. You are sitting here, trying to spin straw into gold.

CLAUDIA: I. . .I know!! And it's impossible. No one can do that!!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Little dearie! That's not true, don't y'know!! I can spin straw into gold.

CLAUDIA: You can!! Really?? Would you do it?? For me.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Well, maybe not for you. But I'm thinkin' I might do it for the pretty bauble you're wearing.

CLAUDIA: My locket?? Yes, here! Take it. If you can spin straw into gold. . .

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Just watch!! (*Holding up locket.*) Oooh, I love it. I love owning "people" things. Now out of my way, little darling, so I can get started on this straw. Take a nap, have some cherries. I'll be done by morning.

(He begins and CLAUDIA lays down on the straw and goes to sleep. The curtain closes and ALANNA appears.)

ALANNA: The little man worked all night and just as dawn arrived, he was finished. He had turned the entire room full of straw into gold. Then he disappeared as mysteriously as he had appeared and left Claudia to face the King.

The curtain opens and the door is unlocked and opened. HARRY, GERTRUDE, MITCH, TOM enter.)

HARRY: Claudia, you did it!! You are wonderful!!

TOM: (*Astonished*) Daughter, I can't believe you. . .(*Recovering*) Ahem, I mean, your usual good job. Glad to see you haven't lost the old Miller touch.

MITCH: And she even had some cherries left over!

GERTRUDE: Well, young lady, a very creditable job. And tonight, you will oblige us by repeating the feat. Your father said you could do it three times. *(Pause)* Unless he lied to the King.

CLAUDIA: No, no, I. . .I mean. . .

(The curtains close and ALANNA appears.)

ALANNA: And that's just what happened. The King and Claudia spent the day getting acquainted but when dusk came, Claudia once again was locked in a room filled with straw. And once again, just as she had lost all hope, she was visited again by the same little man. *(The curtain opens and CLAUDIA is seated, despairing as RUMPELSTILTSKIN appears.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Now stop your crying, pretty lady. It's meself again. Here to help you out of this terrible, terrible predicament. For a small price, that is.

CLAUDIA: But I don't have anything else.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Now, what is that I see shining on your finger??

CLAUDIA: This? Oh, it's a ring that was left to me by my mother. . .It's the only thing I have of hers. But, I know she'd want me to use it to save Papa. Here, little man, it's yours if you'll do your magic again. *(She gives it to him.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Pretty little thing, isn't it. Well, it will be just as pretty if it's me that's wearin' it!! Now step back, little dearie, and let old. . .the little man go to work. *(He sits at the spinning wheel and begins work. The lights dim and the curtain closes again. ALANNA appears.)*

ALANNA: And he spun the straw into gold. And once again the next morning everyone was amazed and impressed by what they found. They were so impressed that they wanted Claudia to do it one more time. So at the end of the day, she was once more locked in the room with more straw than ever. And as the night wore on, and the little man did not come, she grew more and more desperate. But, finally, shortly before dawn. . .*(The curtain opens, as RUMPELSTILTSKIN makes his entrance. CLAUDIA has been sitting, weeping on the floor.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Every time I see you, m'darlin', you're crying!!

Dry your tears.

CLAUDIA: Where have you been!! It's almost dawn! Please, please, hurry. There's more straw to do than ever before!!!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: I don't know. I don't know that I'm in the mood to spin tonight. Maybe I'll just find me a seat to watch when they take your dear Papa away.

CLAUDIA: Don't say that!! Why won't you help me again?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: And now, why should I?? Before you were willing to pay me.

CLAUDIA: But I've given you my locket and my ring! I have nothing else to give!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: So I've noticed.

CLAUDIA: Oh, go away then, if you aren't going to help me! If you've come just to watch me suffer. . .

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Oh, darlin' girl, I didn't mean for you to despair! Of course, you're out of pretty things right now, but if I work my magic again, no doubt you'll be Queen before very long. And I can simply collect my payment then!!

CLAUDIA: You'd do that? You'll let me pay you later?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: On one condition. You must promise to pay me. You always keep your promises, don't you, miller's daughter?

CLAUDIA: (*Firmly*) Always.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: I will spin this straw into gold for you if you promise that when I return, one year from today, you will give me WHATEVER I WANT. No matter how dear to your heart.

CLAUDIA: Anything??

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Anything. Do you promise?

CLAUDIA: (*Considering*) I promise.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Good! It's a bargain, then! Out of my way, I don't have much time.

(The curtain closes, and ALANNA appears.)

ALANNA: The little man worked furiously in the short amount of time that was left, and spun faster than he had ever spun before. And this time, as he worked, Claudia watched him. And in her head, his words repeated.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: *(On tape with an echo effect)* You will give me whatever I want. . .NO MATTER HOW DEAR. . .NO MATTER HOW DEAR. . .NO MATTER HOW DEAR. . .

ALANNA: He finished his task and was disappearing the way he'd come, just as the dawn came. . .

(The curtain opens to reveal the room, filled with gold. Rumpelstiltskin is disappearing, saying as he goes.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Remember your promise, little lady.

(The door opens and HARRY, TOM, GERTRUDE, and MITCH enter.)

HARRY: Oh, well done, Claudia, well done!!

MITCH: Incredible! Simply incredible! *(To TOM)* Tell me, what are the cherries for?? They're always still here in the morning.

TOM: I don't. . .Maybe those aren't the same cherries. Maybe they're magic cherries, now.

MITCH: *(Picks one up and looks at it carefully.)* Ooohh.

GERTRUDE: Well, young lady, I must congratulate you. You have done a splendid job. Quite frankly, I was skeptical, thought my nephew had been taken in once again. . .but this is excellent, simply excellent. Not only have you saved your father from banishment, but you have saved your country from bankruptcy.

HARRY: And you saved me from a lifetime of misery. *(To CLAUDIA)* I was going to have to marry one of the Carpalian twins. *(Everyone winces, and holds their noses.)* But now, I can have the knights return, and the rest of the court, and buy some royal clothes and. . .and. . .it's all thanks to you.

MITCH: How can we thank you, young lady?

CLAUDIA: I don't know. . .I mean, I don't expect. . .I can't think of

any--

GERTRUDE: Fiddlesticks!! Don't think we haven't seen how you and Harry have been mooning over each other. C'mon, boy, don't just stand there! Ask her.

HARRY: Oh, Claudia, Claudia. Will you marry me? I do love you so very much. Will you be my wife, and my Queen?

CLAUDIA: Oh, your majesty, I would be so thrilled and happy to be your wife. But I'm not of royal blood and. . .

GERTRUDE: Stuff and nonsense!! You just saved a kingdom and a king! If that doesn't make you royal, nothing can! Come with me, Tom the Miller, we have a wedding to plan!!

TOM: Princess Gertrude, did anyone ever tell you that you have the most beautiful eyes? I may write a poem about them.

SCENE SIX

SETTING: In front of the curtain. ALANNA enters.

ALANNA: It was the most beautiful wedding that ever was. It was almost enough to make me wish that I'd been born a human. Claudia looked exquisite and Harry looked handsome. Tom the Miller spent most of the day dancing with Gertrude - and Mitchell the Prime Minister didn't frown and shake his head once. It was a fairy tale wedding for a fairy tale couple.

Every once in a while Claudia would remember the little man, and wonder when he was coming to extract his payment. But she was Queen now and had many rich and beautiful jewels, so she didn't worry unduly.

And after a year, something happened that made her forget everything else. Something so wonderful and exciting that it drove all thoughts of strange little men and promises made completely from her mind. She had a baby boy.

SCENE SEVEN

A ROOM IN KING HARRY'S CASTLE

SETTING: The castle room, refurbished. **CLAUDIA** and **HARRY** are now dressed in proper royal clothes. **HARRY** is holding the baby.

HARRY: Am I doing this right? He's so tiny!!

CLAUDIA: You're doing just fine. Look, he's smiling at you! He knows he's got a wonderful papa to take care of him.

HARRY: I wish I could just hold on to this moment forever. Life is so perfect. How did I ever think I was happy before you came into my life? *(He notices CLAUDIA's troubled face.)* What's wrong? What have I said?

CLAUDIA: Oh, Harry, I've got to tell you something. Something that's bothered me for a year. I'm not what you think I am. No, don't say anything. Let me finish. I. . .I didn't really spin that straw into gold. Papa made that up and I was afraid he'd be sent away.

HARRY: *(Seriously)* Who really changed the straw into gold?

CLAUDIA: It was this funny, ugly, little man. He would appear and I gave him my locket and ring and I promised to pay him for the third time after I became Queen, and, oh, Harry, please don't look at me like that!

HARRY: Claudia, I've made a terrible mistake. *(Pause)* I should have married a funny, ugly, old man. *(He laughs.)* Oh, love of my life, who cares? I didn't fall in love with your golden straw!

CLAUDIA: You didn't?

HARRY: No. It was your cherry pie. *(They both laugh.)* Now listen, love. Take Harry Jr. here while I meet with Mitchell. *(He starts to exit.)* And if your strange, ugly little man shows up, give him this. *(He gives her his ring.)* He certainly earned it. *(He kisses the baby.)* Good-bye, my tiny boy. *(He kisses CLAUDIA.)* Good-bye, miller's daughter. *(He exits.)*

CLAUDIA: Good-bye, Harry. *(She starts to walk the baby and hum*

a lullaby. RUMPELSTILTSKIN appears, through the trap again, if possible.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Well, little lady, congratulations!!

CLAUDIA: *(Whirling around.)* Oh, it's you! How did you get in here? How funny. I was just thinking about you. I was wondering when you'd come for your payment. Here. *(She offers the king's ring.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Very nice. But, y'know, darlin', I'm not nearly as fond of jewelry as I used to be. You do remember our bargain. ANYTHING I WANT.

CLAUDIA: But I just thought. . .Yes, of course, I promised. But if you don't want jewelry, what do you want. . .

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Something warm, I think. Something tiny. Something pink. SOMETHING ALIVE.

CLAUDIA: *(Puzzled.)* But what do you. . .*(Realization dawns)* Oh, no, you can't mean it! Not my baby! You can't mean to take my baby!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Of course I mean to take your baby. I can't have one of me one, so I'll take yours. Hand him over.

CLAUDIA: No, no, no!! You can't have him! *(She clutches the baby to her.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Ah, but you promised me, little queen. Don't you always keep your promises??

CLAUDIA: I know I promised. But please, here, take the ring!! Let me keep my baby!!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: You know, it is a lovely, lovely ring. Here, here, now don't be upsetting yourself. I'll make you a little bargain. If you give me the ring, I'll give you three days. And if, in those three days, you can guess my name, you can keep your baby. Now, I think I'm bein' more than generous, don't you?

CLAUDIA: Guess. . .your name?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Aye. MY NAME. Three days.

(He exits. CLAUDIA collapses, holding the baby and crying. HARRY

enters with MITCH and goes to her. All will keep miming the action as ALANNA enters and describes it.)

ALANNA: And so, Claudia had three days to come up with the name. She told King Harry and Mitch what happened, and they told Tom. (*GERTRUDE enters.*) And of course, they called in Gertrude who always knew what to do. (*ALANNA exits.*)

GERTRUDE: Well, it's quite obvious to me. We've got to discover the little man's name. We must go out and ask everyone for their names, and all the names they've ever heard. We'll bring them back to you, Claudia, so you can prepare a list. Now, everyone, take paper and pen so you can write them down. (*Noticing TOM'S face.*) What's wrong, Tom?

TOM: Well, you see. . .um. . .actually..

GERTRUDE: Spit it out, man.

TOM: I. . .can't write all that well - and I'm not much of a reader. Actually, I. . .I can't read or write at all.

GERTRUDE: You can't read and write? (*TOM shakes his head.*) Well, then, you and I will work together. If you hear a name, come and tell me and I'll write it down. Harry and Mitch, you go into town. Tom and I will work in the forest. We'll all meet here, at twilight, three days from now. Understand? Now, move out.

CLAUDIA: Shouldn't I go too? After all, I was the one. . .

GERTRUDE: Young lady, feeling guilty is not going to change anything. You just kiss your husband good-bye and take care of that baby. Everything is going to be just fine. No twerpie little gnome is going to get the best of me. They don't call me Gertrude the Determined for nothing!

TOM: I do love a woman with spirit!

GERTRUDE: We're wasting time. Let's go. And, Tom the Miller, when this is over, we are going to sit you down and teach you to read and write. Understand?

TOM: Yes, Ma'am! (*They exit. HARRY is the last to go, embracing CLAUDIA and the baby.*)

SCENE EIGHT

THE TOWN SQUARE

SETTING: The town square. The townspeople are milling about. MITCH and HARRY enter. They separate to gather names.

HARRY: . . . And so, you're name is George. What are the names of other people in your family?

GEORGE: Weeeelll, let's see. There's Giorgio, Georgina, Giorgiatta, and my wife. Georgia.

HARRY: (*Writing them down.*) I see, thank you.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, and Gramps. His name is Georgburt.

HARRY: Yes, yes, thank you.

(*Across the stage. . .*)

MITCH: Would you mind telling me your name, Miss?

SUSAN: And who wants to know, buddy?

MITCH: The King, actually.

SUSAN: The King!!! Oh, your Majesty, I didn't recognize you!! You look so different than your coins.

MITCH: No, no, you see, I'm not. . .I'm just trying to find. . .

SUSAN: Forgive my impudence, your majesty. I meant no disrespect, I was just joking. Oh, please, say you'll pardon my rudeness.

MITCH: I'll pardon anything if you will kindly tell me your name.

SUSAN: It's Susan, your Majesty. Loyal subject and good citizen Susan. And may I say, Highness, that you are doing one heck of a good job ruling this kingdom and I consider meeting you to be the single greatest honor that I have received in my entire humble, groveling little insignificant life.

(Mitch has, however, written her name down and moved on. The action shifts to the other side of stage where HARRY is talking to JOANN.)

JOANN: So, is this like a survey?

HARRY: Of a sort. And your name is. . .

JOANN: *(Flirting)* I'll tell you my name if you tell me yours.

HARRY: It's Harry. Just Harry.

JOANN: Oooh, I like that name. Harry, hmmm?? Are you married, Harry?

HARRY: Yes, as a matter of fact, I am. And very happily. I have a lovely wife and a brand new baby.

JOANN: *(Flatly)* How nice. Name's JoAnn. Miss JoAnn. Say, are you working with that cute, little guy over there? *(HARRY nods.)* Hmmm. Is he married, Harry?

HARRY: *(Busy writing)* No, he's not.

JOANN: Well, make sure he gets my name, alright?? *(She waves at MITCH who hesitantly waves back, before turning to talk to MARTIN.)*

MARTIN: So then I told the wife, I says, Lena Marie, *(MITCH starts to write furiously)* what do you care what Mark and Barbara say about your Steak Diane? Just because they work for Oswald and Eric, who make the best Johnnycakes in town . . . Then, who walks in but Larry, Charlie, Natalie, and Barbara Ann, and they start raving about the Eggs Benedict at Nathan's and how Shirley thinks that the Waldorf salad at The Leopold House is to die for. Though personally, I think they overdo the Basil and Rosemary and I usually just stick to the Charlotte Russe or the Crepes Suzette..Now what is it you wanted to ask me?

MITCH: Nothing. *(He is still writing as he meets HARRY.)*

HARRY: How are you doing?

MITCH: I think I've got about two hundred. And you, sir?

HARRY: About that many, too. One of them has got to be the little man's name. I wonder how Auntie and Tom are doing??

SCENE NINE THE FOREST

SETTING: A forest clearing. In the center is a small campsite. RUMPELSTILTSKIN is warming his hands and dancing gleefully around a cauldron.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Tonight I sing, tonight I dance,
Tonight is the pretty queen's very last chance.

Tonight is when it's no longer a maybe.
Tonight I get my very own baby.

Tonight, tonight, is the end of the game.
Or RUMPELSTILTSKIN is not my name.

HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!

Now to prepare a little magic brew to give me extra strength, I'll need my book of magic spells. *(He gets it out, just as ALANNA comes from around a tree.)*

ALANNA: Hmmm? So Rumpelstiltskin is his name. I think it might be time to help a few humans.

(TOM and GERTRUDE enter. They approach RUMPELSTILTSKIN.)

GERTRUDE: Now, Tom, make sure you hang on to that list. *(Notices RUMPELSTILTSKIN)* Tom, look, look! Do you think it might be. . .

TOM: He looks just like my daughter's description. *(He puts the list and pen carefully in his back pocket.)* Now, Princess Gertrude, we must be very clever and trick him into telling us his name..

GERTRUDE: I know that! Do you think I do not know how to be subtle? *(To RUMPELSTILTSKIN)* Hey, you there, funny little man!!! What's your name?

ALANNA: It's Rumpelstiltskin!! *(Of course, they can not hear her, so they do not respond.)*

TOM: Please excuse the prin. . .er, my wife, sir. The fact is - we are judges in a contest to find the most unusual name in the kingdom.

ALANNA: It's Rumpelstiltskin!! RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

GERTRUDE: I am not your wife, Tom the Miller, and if I were. . .

ALANNA: Oh, this is hopeless, they can't hear me! You try. *(The audience will yell the name, but of course all will be oblivious.)* Good try. But, quiet now, so we can hear.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: An unusual name, hmmm? Is there a prize? *(During this, ALANNA gets a "brain storm" She goes behind TOM, removes the list and pen from his pocket and writes down RUMPELSTILTSKIN'S name.)*

ALANNA: I wrote it down!! Now they'll see it. Am I clever or what??

TOM: Yes, yes, there's a very fine prize. Six zillion gold pieces and a hand carved steak knife set, and matching luggage and. . .

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Oh, I'll bet you've collected some very fine names.

TOM: Yes, we have. And we're making a list. See. *(He gets it out.)*

ALANNA: No, no, you stupid man. Put it away.

TOM: *(Looking at it)* Funny. Gertrude, that last one isn't in your writing.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Let me see. Maybe mine is already on it. . *(TOM gives it to him.)* Let's see. You've got Amos, and Jacob - now, that's a fine name - and Marshall, and . . . *(he looks down in horror.)* Who told you??? *(He tears the last name off and holds it aloft.)* I don't know who wrote it down for you, but you'll never get it now!! *(ALANNA goes behind it snatches it from him and gives it back to TOM.)* How'd you do that? Give it back.

TOM: *(Looking at it.)* I can't read, but I can run!! *(He takes off, followed by a furious RUMPELSTILTSKIN.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: You get back here with my name!! Give me my name!!

GERTRUDE: Don't you dare harm a hair on that dear man's head, you little twerp!! *(She exits after them. ALANNA goes over and picks up RUMPELSTILTSKIN's book of magic spells.)*

ALANNA: I've always wanted to take a look at this. *(She exits with the book.)*

What follows is a classic chase scene, with pratfalls, surprised entrances, etc. that occur onstage as well as in the house. At some point, RUMPELSTILTSKIN will get the piece of paper from TOM and run off with it. He will next appear onstage, holding it aloft with a cry of triumph. ALANNA will enter from the opposite side of the stage and urge the children to blow. They will and the paper will be "blown" out of his hand. The chase ends when TOM has the paper, in one corner of the audience and GERTRUDE is at another. In between them is RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

TOM: Trudy, Trudy, I've got it!!

GERTRUDE: Good for you, Tom. Now bring it to me.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: You'll have to get past me, Miller!! And that's no easy task!!

ALANNA: *(Entering behind TOM.)* Children, children, it's our last chance!! Is one of you brave enough to run and take the name to Gertrude? Rumpelstiltskin can't see you, and the rest of you can help by blowing again!! You!

(She snatches the paper out of TOM'S hand and gives it to the volunteer child, who will run it to GERTRUDE. The rest of the children will make "wind" which will affect the characters who will ad-lib about it.)

GERTRUDE: I've got it, Tommy, I've got it!! Quickly, back to the castle. Look, he's already on his way!!

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PROPS/PRODUCTION NOTES

“Wind” effect. To do the hats in the first scene, we attached fishing line to the hats. When the audience “blew”, they were pulled from offstage. The same effect can be used to take the piece of paper with RUMPELSTILTSKIN’S name. Or it can be pulled from above, if possible.

For the “straw into gold” scenes, we used bales of hay, adding one or two more for each “try”. To simulate gold, we draped gold lame cloth over the bales.

For RUMPELSTILTSKIN’S entrances we used a trap that was hidden by the straw. He can be hiding there during the scene changes and simply rise.

If unable to close the curtain, using lighting effects works well. Liberal use of music, as underscoring and during the chase, is strongly recommended.

Basket (CLAUDIA)

Riding crop (GERTRUDE)

Scroll (MITCH)

Magic book (RUMPELSTILTSKIN)

Locket (CLAUDIA)

Ring (CLAUDIA)

Ring (HARRY)

“Baby” (CLAUDIA)

Cauldron (RUMPELSTILTSKIN)

Notebooks/paper/pens (HARRY, MITCH, GERTRUDE)

A long list (CLAUDIA)

Cherries

Spinning wheel

Cradle

Bales of straw, some loose

Any accessories you want for the Knights and Townspeople

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