

## RUMPELSTILTSKIN

### Synopsis

Once upon a time there lived an inordinately wealthy and greedy king who loved nothing more than to levy burdensome taxes on his people, ignoring their welfare. His advisor, an ugly imp called Rumpelstiltskin, tried in vain to reform him. One day, in order to expose his master to the plight of the masses, Rumpelstiltskin brings him to a humble inn, where the King mistakenly thinks he hears the innkeeper bragging that his daughter Rapunzel has the magical ability to transform straw into gold. The King determines to put the girl to the test, and resolves to marry her if she succeeds. When Rumpelstiltskin objects to such avarice, the King banishes him from the kingdom. Next day he locks Rapunzel into a room with a spinning wheel and piles of straw. Rapunzel, no alchemist, falls into despair, for the King has threatened to behead her if she fails at her task by morning. That night she is visited by Rumpelstiltskin, who has secretly returned to the palace, and who offers to spin the straw into gold in exchange for her first-born baby. Rapunzel reluctantly agrees. Somehow Rumpelstiltskin succeeds at the transformation and disappears. Next day the King, delighted, marries Rapunzel and in due course she gives birth to a baby. The King comes to dote on the little prince, but ignores his Queen, whose days of gold-producing are over. When Rumpelstiltskin appears to claim his agreed-upon price, Rapunzel is appalled and refuses to turn over her infant. Rumpelstiltskin seizes the baby and vanishes. Responding to his Queen's alarm, the mortified King demands to know the name of the kidnapper so that he can be tracked down; but Rapunzel can't recall it. After some delay the royal family determines that the miscreant was in fact the King's banished adviser, Rumpelstiltskin, who is duly captured and falls to his knees, begging for mercy, explaining that he meant no harm----he merely wanted a child to love and rear. The King, shaken by all these events, is reformed. He forgives Rumpelstiltskin, reconciles with Rapunzel, and becomes a model monarch. They all live happily ever after.