

# Rumpelstiltskin

*by*  
*Brenda Joyce Dubay*

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## **DEDICATION**

*For WLT, the once, future and present King; MAP, the Empress of the Americas, too; and MMC III, who "learns best by speaking."*

*With thoughts of newly arrived DKH and the changing of the course at Rice.*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

The Miller does not mill. He is too busy dreaming. The Lady Mayor is distraught because there is no flour to make bread for the visiting King William. Does the Miller heed her warnings as to what will happen to him if he does not finish her order? No, instead, he calls out to the King and his procession that his daughter, Mary Ann, can spin straw into gold. King William sets about to test this boast and promises serious consequences should Mary Ann fail.

Rumpelstiltskin, more misunderstood than pernicious, often singing a rhyme about his name, exacts a stiff price for his magical assistance. Throughout her ordeal, Mary Ann keeps a sensible head. She actually wins the King's love as her actions persuade him to abandon his greed and snobbishness in favor of humanity.

Mary Ann and William marry and produce a fine daughter, Frances. Rumpelstiltskin claims his reward, kidnaps the baby, but shows signs of being more soft-hearted than expected when he agrees to return the child if Mary Ann can guess his name. After much excitement, when all hope is lost, Mary Ann remembers a rhyme and a childhood friend. She guesses the name, Frances is returned and Rumpelstiltskin predicts the Miller and the Lady Mayor will marry. As Rumpelstiltskin plans his exit, Mary and William have a special surprise for him.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 m, 2 w, 3 flexible, optional extras.)*

**LADY MAYOR:** A woman in charge. She is in her 50s.

**MILLER:** He is a dreamer. He is a miller who forgets to mill.  
He is in his 50s. Mary Ann's father.

**COBBLER:** *(Flexible)* Seldom dreams and has little patience for those who do. He enjoys making life miserable for the Miller.

**BLACKSMITH:** *(Flexible)* The Cobbler is her best friend and because of this she seldom dreams. She enjoys joining the Cobbler in his derision of the Miller.

**MARY ANN:** Brains and beauty and a strong will.

**WILLIAM:** He is the bachelor King, relaxed, friendly, and confident. He is bewildered when he first falls in love.

**RUMPELSTILTSKIN:** *(Flexible)* He is short and little and doesn't like it much. He is not a dwarf, but more akin to a sprite, an elf; if he were Irish he would be second cousin to the leprechauns. Perhaps he is a distant relative of Puck. He is not of this world and is not human as we know that word to mean, and he likes that just fine.

**EXTRAS:** There is a crowd of townspeople when King William arrives in the Lady Mayor's village, but sounds of this crowd can be recorded.

*Rumpelstiltskin*

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**ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

The world premiere of "Rumpelstiltskin" opened October 5, 1989 at Stages Repertory Theatre, Houston, Texas. Ted Swindley was Artistic Director, with the following cast:

Lady Mayor.....Laura Neff  
Miller.....Patrick Mitchell  
Blacksmith.....Kathy Allison  
Cobbler.....Jack Burns  
Mary Ann.....Paula Buel  
William.....Christopher Berube  
Rumpelstiltskin...Michael Gray  
Lisa Singerman

And the following production staff:

Barbara Sims, Director; Karen Bull, Stage Manager; Tenna Matthews and Harold Hynick, Scenic Designers; Juliana Wathen, Costume Designer; Karen Bull, Lighting Designer; Anders Johansson, Sound Designer.

### **Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: A row of houses on either side of Main Street in a village. LADY MAYOR is confronting the MILLER before the door of the mill. COBBLER and BLACKSMITH are nearby, enjoying the dispute.)*

**LADY MAYOR:** You are lazy! Worthless!

**MILLER:** Oh, please, I beg you Lady Mayor, kind Lady Mayor. I'll finish your order. I know there have been delays.

**LADY MAYOR:** Delays! Do you call two months a delay? I call it a catastrophe! Look at me! Do I look to be the sort of person who likes to do without her bread? What kind of business do you run, my man? You are paid to grind grain into flour, are you not?

**MILLER:** Yes, yes for generations. Members of my family have been millers for generations.

**LADY MAYOR:** I never see you without the white stuff smudged all over your ugly face.

**MILLER:** Oh, not ugly, madam.

**LADY MAYOR:** Ugly!

**MILLER:** Ugly. I agree, yes, madam, ugly, quite ugly.

**LADY MAYOR:** I need my flour. My cooks make bread. Lots of bread so we do not run out of it in the winter. For you see, I like bread. I eat it every day. I like it with jam. I like it with butter. I like it for sopping my gravy. Do you begin to understand?

**MILLER:** Yes, I understand.

**LADY MAYOR:** If I return again and you have not ground the grain I sent you into flour, into the finest flour that will make me the tastiest of breads, I will take each of your fingers, crush them, grind them into powder and throw the powder into the slop for my pigs.

**MILLER:** Oh, no, not my fingers, Lady Mayor. I need them for my work.

**LADY MAYOR:** Your work? If I did not have to prepare for the King's arrival, I'd hold a trial, find you guilty, and hang you.

**MILLER:** I promise. No more delays.

**LADY MAYOR:** No more delays! I will be back. And Miller, remember my warning. Food for my pigs! *(SHE exits.)*

**COBBLER:** Did you see him, Smithie? *(Imitates the Miller.)*  
Oh, no, Lady Mayor, madam, not my fingers!

**BLACKSMITH:** *(Imitates Lady Mayor.)* I've never seen you without that white stuff smudged all over your ugly face.

**COBBLER:** Oh, not ugly, madam.

**BLACKSMITH:** Not ugly, madam!

**MILLER:** Stop your talk or I'll...

**BLACKSMITH:** You'll what?

**MILLER:** I remember, dear Cobbler, the time you made her new boots two sizes too small. You weren't laughing then. And you, Blacksmith, the story goes that the wagon wheel you so ably repaired--the next afternoon when she took her grandchildren for a ride in the country--the wheel fell off.

**BLACKSMITH:** *(Starts for the MILLER.)* That does...

**COBBLER:** *(Stops the BLACKSMITH.)* At least both of us did the work. We don't sit around pretending we're something we're not. You and all your fancy dreams. You act like you think you'll be the Lord Mayor some day or your daughter will marry a rich man.

**BLACKSMITH:** You're nothing but a poor miller. Act like one. Do an honest day's work.

**MILLER:** Look who talks of honesty!

**BLACKSMITH:** Let me at –

*(Goes for the MILLER; COBBLER intervenes.)*

**COBBLER:** Come, Smithie. He's not worth the trouble.  
*(THEY exit imitating the Miller.)* Oh, please, I beg you, Lady Mayor, I'll finish your order.

**BLACKSMITH:** My face is ugly. I agree, yes, madam, ugly, quite ugly.

*(THEY'RE gone.)*

## **End of Freeview**

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