

Rumpel Stiltskin

A Play in One Act

By David Barrett

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Dramatis Personae

5 Narrators

Albert Pride, the miller

Prudence, the miller's wife

Melinda, the miller's daughter

Jack, the miller's son

Villagers:

Herbert, Alfred, Ethel, Harold, Mabel

At the Court:

The Lord Chancellor

Jezz the Jester

Julian the Jailor

Aerial Persilia

The Four Musketeers; Pierre, Gaston, Claude and Jean

The King's Messenger

The Goblins:

Ozone, the goblin king

Rumpelstiltskin, Grumble-Grimkin, Horble-Wimpkin,

Bulbous-Blobkin, Bluebelle-Slimthing

Figit and Migit, the pixies

Chorus of Villagers, Chorus of Courtiers, Chorus of Pixies

Chorus of Toys in the Nursery

Rumpel Stiltskin by David Barrett

SCENE 1, The Village Green

Song 1

All freeze after the dance.

NARR 1 Hello, everybody and welcome to our little village of Sodwick in the Kingdom of Sublimia. Allow me to introduce you to some of the important players in this little story. Here we have Percy and Melinda, two sweethearts who are not allowed to marry. Melinda is the Miller's daughter. Albert Pride, the Miller is detested by the villagers for his arrogance and boasting. He will not allow Melinda to marry anyone but a rich man. However, as you will soon see, his boasting will be his downfall and will cause much pain for his family and for young Percy. But enough. I shall not give away the plot. Listen for yourselves and all will be revealed.

PERCY I say Melinda! What fun these new fangled dances are, don't you think?

MELINDA Oh, Percy, you are such a hoot. You're so old-fashioned, but I do love you.

PERCY Then marry me, Melinda, and we shall run away to a secluded kingdom on some distant shore and raise a family.

MELINDA But Percy you know my father would never allow it. We cannot marry without his permission. *(Other villagers begin to crowd around)*

PERCY And now who's being old-fashioned? Why can't we make our own minds up? We're not children. Besides, I **have** asked your father for your hand in marriage and he has not actually refused has he?

JACK Give up your dreaming, Percy. Father wishes Melinda to marry a rich man! You're just a poor wheelwright.

PERCY Always the over-protective brother, Jack. And Melinda is just a Miller's daughter. What rich man would wish to marry her.

HERBERT She is the prettiest girl in Sublimia. That must count for something.

ALFRED I would certainly marry Melinda if she would allow me....

HAROLD And I

ETHEL Stop it! Just face the facts, all of you. The Miller is too proud to let any of you marry Melinda. She is destined to die a spinster. After all the Miller would wish to boast of her riches. He could never allow her to marry a poor man.

MABEL Why not marry me, Percy? I'm available! *(She gives a coy smile and a curtsy. Laughter from the villagers)*

MELINDA Why, oh why did I ever have to have such an arrogant, boastful man for a father. My life is ruined. I'm so miserable. *(She sobs)*

HAROLD There, there, Melinda, cheer up. We can't choose our fathers can we now.

MABEL Anyone with a name like Albert Pride has got to have a problem, don't you think? *(Enter the Miller with wife, Prudence in hot pursuit)*

MILLER Steady now, Prudence. One day you'll crack my skull with that thing.

PRUDENCE And not a day too soon, I say!

MILLER Just a moment. Hold, hold. *(Jack grabs the rolling pin and restrains Prudence just as she is about to bring it crashing down on Albert's head)*. Before you act as judge, jury and executioner, you could at least tell me what my crime is.

VILLAGERS *Murmuring and remarks of approval.*

PRUDENCE *(Breaking free from Jack's grasp and menacing the crowd)* Just you mind your own business all of you.

MABEL If you want us to mind our own business, you should bash him at home, not on the village green.

VILLAGERS *(Shouts of approval. She is about to bash Mabel but thinks better of it)*

PRUDENCE All right, all right...I'll tell you what this lazy good for nothing so-called Miller did yesterday. It was market day and he was supposed to load fourteen sacks of flower on the cart to sell at market. He was gone all day and half the night too. *(Laughter throughout from villagers)* And do you know where he was all day? Certainly not at market.

HAROLD I saw him, Mistress, he was in the Nag's Head all day. *(Miller glares at Harold)*

MILLER Why you....you...

PRUDENCE You're too right he was. Boasting, showing off and telling tall stories, he was. *(She bonks him once for each word..)* Boasting, showing off and telling stories.

JACK He put the sacks behind the mill, Ma. I saw them there this morning.

PRUDENCE And now the chickens have pecked the sacks and the flour has spilled out all over the floor ...and YOU are going to scrape it all up with this. *(She produces a spoon)* Starting NOW, NOW! *(Hits him again. Miller falls over cowering and covering his face with his hands. She freezes over him glowering at him)*

HERBERT I've heard it said that if you want to know what a girl will be like in twenty years you should look at her mother.

PERCY *(Aside)* I think I could be persuaded **not** to marry Melinda. *(A trumpet blast fills the air)*

ALFRED Hark! A messenger.

ETHEL How do you know that?

ALFRED Come on! You've been in pantomimes before haven't you? *(Enter the messenger with trumpet, handbell and handkerchief. He weeps loudly)*

JACK Why, what on earth is the matter, my good man? Is the King dead?

MESSENGER *(Aside)* I wish he jolly well were. *(To the crowd)* You recognise me, don't you? I'm the town crier! *(All groan at the poor joke)*

Look at my poor feet. (*Gasps of horror as he shows worn out shoes*)
Sunday in London, Monday in York, Tuesday in Winchester and here I
am on Wednesday in (*name of town*). Who would want to be the royal
messenger? I would give it up tomorrow if I could get a pension.
(*Ethel sobs in sympathy. All turn to see who is weeping*)
Hey! That's pretty good. If you ever want a job as town crier I could
give you a reference.

ETHEL I'm sorry. It was just the sight of your poor sore feet.... What
you need is a wife who would look after you and mend your shoes.

MESSENGER I'm always happy to negotiate. (*He starts to lead her away*)

JACK Hey, wait a minute! What about the message?

MESSENGER Have you a message for me, how exciting.

JACK No. surely you have a message for us or why else did you come here?

MESSENGER Why, of course. How silly of me. The King is out hunting and he is
coming this way. He may require refreshment.

MILLER (*Still on the floor, looking dazed*) The....King....is....coming.

PRUDENCE The King is coming.....here?

MESSENGER Yes....HERE!

(*The following lines crescendo and increase in pace as they rush
around tidying and cleaning*)

HAROLD The King is coming....

MABEL The King is coming.....

HERBERT The King is coming

Song 2 Long Live the King

(*During the song Albert finally gets up off the floor but is pursued
around the stage by Prudence with rolling pin. Ethel and the
Messenger become preoccupied with one another and eventually exit,
pausing only to leave a message for the King on the front of the stage.
The King enters just at the end of the song when the cast are frozen.*)

JULIAN (*Strutting around the stage*) Bow, bow all of you miserable peasants.
Bow to the King. Bow, bow. (*They bow and remain prostrate*)

KING Good morrow loyal subjects of Sublimia. (*Silence*)

JULIAN The King says 'good morrow'. You may return his greeting.

VILLAGERS Good morrow Your Majesty.

MABEL What does it mean good morrow?

HERBERT It means hello in old English you fool.

JULIAN Stop that whispering. How dare you whisper in the presence of the
King! (*Hovers over them threateningly*)

HERBERT Sor-ry, mate!

KING I wish for some refreshment!

JULIAN The King wishes for some refreshment, do you hear!

KING Oh do shut up, Julian! Of course they can hear me.

JULIAN Then why do they not move, your majesty.
KING Because you told them to bow. O.K. everyone, you can stop bowing now. *(Pandemonium as they all rush to provide food and drink. The King takes an ale jug and drinks deeply. All hold breath as he looks uncertain then a sigh of relief as he smiles. He walks around the green inspecting buildings etc and villagers back away from him whenever he approaches. Julian follows him, smiling at everything he smiles at and frowning disapproval whenever the King does so.)*
Villagers. I would compliment you on the tidiness and homeliness of your village... and your ale is most excellent. And now I shall continue the hunt.

MILLER Your majesty, we thank you most humbly for your generous compliments. I am the Miller and the spokesman for this village. *(Murmurs of disagreement)*. The ale you tasted is brewed from my own hops.

PRUDENCE Shut up, Albert!

MILLER And my daughter is the fairest maid in all the land....

JACK Shut up, Father!

KING Good day to you, Miller. *(The word Miller spoken with contempt as he begins to exit)*

MILLER *(In desperation)* She is so clever....she can...can....even spin straw into gold. *(All gasp at this ridiculous boast. The King freezes as he exits. He turns.)*

MELINDA Father, no!

KING Come here, little girl! *(She approaches him gingerly)*
Why, certainly she is pretty...*(takes her hands)* ...and she has fair hands. But are they clever enough hands to spin straw into gold? *(Briskly now)* We shall see. Bring her with us Julian...and if she really can spin gold....then I shall marry her. *(Gasps of horror from villagers)*

MILLER But, but my Lord! I...I...

KING Good day, subjects..... *(King exits. Silence reigns)*

JULIAN Say 'good day' to the King.

VILLAGERS *(Dejected)* Good day, Your Majesty. *(Julian drags Melinda off, struggling)*

PRUDENCE *(Slowly at first, rising in volume and pitch)*
You...stupid...stupid...old...man. I cannot believe I married such a complete fool.

VILLAGERS *(Calling insults at Miller)*

MILLER But, Prudence, our daughter could become Queen.

PRUDENCE She can only become Queen if she spins straw into gold... and how do you suppose she will do that you old fool. *(She approaches him with the rolling pin and he backs away)*. When I have finished with you no-one will recognise you. *(She chases him off)* Take that! And that! *(Villagers are sullen and silent)*

HERBERT Oh woe!

ALFRED Oh horror!
JACK Melinda is doomed to a life in the King's dungeon.
ALFRED Even if she could spin gold, we have lost her....
HERBERT For ever!
PERCY Not if I can help it, she isn't! I'm not giving up that easily. I'm off to the palace to see if I can rescue her. *(Sees the note from the messenger)*
Just a minute; what's this? *(Unrolling the scroll)* Dear King, I've had enough of being treated like a scivvy. Get yourself another messenger - I resign. Yours truly, The Former Royal Messenger. Aha! I'll take this note to the King, in disguise.
MABEL Ooh, Percy. You're so brave.
ALFRED Or perhaps foolhardy.
PERCY Fear not, dear Melinda. You shall not become a slave to the King. Not as long as I live. *(Exits. All freeze)*

NARR 1 Well, there it is folks. Not such a happy and contented bunch of yokels after all. This story just shows what a lot of trouble can be caused by arrogance and boastfulness. Now what is poor Melinda going to do. Just stay there and don't go away. All will be revealed in the next few scenes.

Blackout

Scene 2: The Great Hall in the Castle

The remains of the banquet are all around and folk are becoming merry from the drink. Melinda is seated one side with Aerial. The curtain opens on a frozen tableau from which the narrator steps out to speak.

NARR 2 And so, here we are in the King's great hall. The feast is over and the King's attention is on the entertainment. Good old Jezz the Jester must come up with some good tricks or his head will be on the block. However, nothing can cheer up poor Melinda who is really down in the doldrums. Even the King's washer-woman, Aerial Persilia cannot cheer her up.

CHANCEL Come on, Jezz we can't wait all night; on with the entertainment.
ALL Hooray for Jezz. *(Cheers as Jezz comes forward)*
(Jezz picks up a tray with glasses and begins a routine of putting the tray on his head and passing it between his legs and under his arms behind his back without spilling any. This is accompanied by a drum roll. At the end of the trick people applaud. When Jezz bows it becomes obvious that the glasses are not really full and are glued to the tray. Some laugh. Other tricks or acts could be put in here)

JULIAN Bring on the dancers!
ALL Yes, the dancers *(and other shouts of approval)*
Enter the dancers to wild cheers and applause then hushed expectation as the lighting changes.

Dance 1 Techno-Baroque

(After the dance, much applause and cheering. Then a trumpet blast)

CHANCEL *(Has a marked limp and drags one leg as he walks. Looks into wings.)*
My lord, the royal messenger approaches. *(Enter Percy, barely disguised as a messenger. Melinda gasps in surprise)*

MELINDA Percy!

PERCY My Liege, please pardon this intrusion.

JULIAN This is not the messenger. This is an impostor!

CHANCEL Reveal yourself, impostor.

PERCY I couldn't possibly. This is a family show.

KING State the nature of your business, you peasant.

PERCY Just a minute, there's no need to be insulting. *(He is surrounded by courtiers with daggers drawn and held to his throat)*

I think I'll just state the nature of my business, shall I?

PIERRE *(Bad French accent)* Get on with it, man.

PERCY I - am a simple country man.

GASTON *(Also French)* We can tell that, pea-brain.

PERCY I am the harbinger of news, the herald of adverse tidings.
 CLAUDE *(French)* They speak a strange language in the country.
 PERCY Your messenger, Sire, has defected. He is disenchanting, disenfranchised and disinterested. In short - he has resigned. *(Gasps of horror and dismay)*

JULIAN Then he shall be disowned, disembowelled, and disinfected.
 CHANCEL No-one resigns from the Kings service without leave.
 JULIAN *(Aside)* They usually leave without their head.
 KING Enough! The messenger shall be brought to trial, found guilty and punished. And you, boy - you have a way with words - you shall have his job.

PERCY Sire, only the most foolish would work for a pompous, self-righteous megalomaniac such as you.

KING Why, thank you boy for those kind words.
 JEAN I don't think it was kindness he intended, My Lord.
 KING Well there it is - thirty groats a week, in-house pension scheme and BUPA insurance. *(All gasp)* The job is yours.
 And my four musketeers shall track down the former messenger so that justice may be done. Step forward trusted protectors of the royal self.

PIERRE *(Always in a terrible French accent)* At your service, My Liege. Pierre.
 GASTON Gaston.
 JEAN Jean.
 CLAUDE And Claude.
 PERCY **Four** musketeers, my Lord?
 CHANCEL Yes, Claude was to have been an understudy for one of the three musketeers but he wanted some lines.

PIERRE So we had to make it four.
 KING Well? Don't just stand there. Get on with it.
 GASTON **It**, My Lord?
 KING The search, you fools.
 JEAN We're gone, Sire. *(They make a mess of their grand exit. Two go one way and bump into the other two who go the other way)*

MUSKET This way *(Each pair points in opposite directions. Each pair now exits in opposite directions. Eventually two run off after the other two. All this is watched with incredulity by all, who shake their heads in disbelief)*

KING *(To Julian)* Bring the girl forward.
 JULIAN Bring the girl forward.
 CHANCEL He means you, you idiot. You're supposed to be the Jailer, aren't you?
 JULIAN Yes, sorry, Sire. *(He crosses in a rather camp fashion to the seated Melinda, takes her hand and pulls her up and towards the King. Treading on her toe)*

MELINDA Ouch!
 JULIAN Sorry, Miss!

CHANCEL Stop apologising, you fool. You are supposed to be aggressive.
(Julian turns to the audience and snarls, pawing the air with his claws in feline fashion). That's better!

KING You, servant!

NARR 2 Yes, Sire.

KING Take that sack of straw to the tower.

NARR 2 Certainly, Sire. *(Crosses and picks up the sack)*

KING And you, Melissa....

MELINDA *(Aggressively)* Melinda!

KING You have one night in which to demonstrate this...peculiar talent of yours. If you succeed you shall become queen.

JULIAN And if she fails, My Lord?

KING She shall join the rats in the deepest dungeon. Now take her to the tower, Jailer!

MELINDA *(As she is dragged to one side)* You horrible old man. I hate you and I don't want to be your queen.

KING Then you shall never see your family again.
SFX: Dramatic musical chord and all freeze.

NARR 2 *(Crossing the stage to gesture towards the characters as he mentions their names. He puts down the straw sack)*
 Poor Melinda is in a seemingly impossible situation. Despite Percy's good intentions he can do nothing to help. She is in the power of the despicable Jailer, Julian.
 A boastful Miller and now a greedy King ...How bad can things get?
 Let's go and see what happens when Melinda is locked up in the tower...

Blackout

SCENE 3: The Tower

Gloomy music plays as Melinda paces up and down the tower room. The sacks of straw stand to one side, a spinning wheel just off centre and a bed in the corner.

- MELINDA Oh woe is me. Why did I have to be cursed with the most boastful father in Sublimia ? If father had not been so proud I could be betrothed to dear Percy by now. How happy I would be! Why, oh why did father have to make that ridiculous boast.? No one can spin straw into gold. The King knows that. *(Rumpel appears in puff of smoke).*
- RUMPEL I can!
- MELINDA Oh, my goodness! You gave me an awful fright. Who, who are youand how did you get in here? *(Looking around for a way in)*
- RUMPEL Never mind who I am. You said no-one could spin straw into gold but it's not true. I can.
- MELINDA *(Becoming more cheerful)* You can? But how? Will you show me?
- RUMPEL It would spell doom for my folk if humans came to know the ancient secrets. No human shall ever know the trick.
- MELINDA Then will you do it for me. Just this small pile of straw, then you can go.
- RUMPEL *(Echoing her words)* Just this small pile of straw. Hmmm! *(Suddenly shouting)* I'll do it!
- MELINDA Hurray! Thank you.
- RUMPEL But not for nothing.
- MELINDA But I am a poor Miller's daughter. I have no riches.
- RUMPEL How much do you want me to do this thing?
- MELINDA Oh with my whole heart. More than anything else in the world. *(Sobs uncontrollably)*
- RUMPEL *(Thinks for a while)* Then you shall give me your first born child.
- MELINDA No! No, that's not fair, little man. Besides, what would you want with a child.
- RUMPEL That's the bargain. Your child for the spun gold. Take it or leave it.
- MELINDA *(Aside)* Woe is me to attract such a fine dilemma. If I refuse, I am condemned to a life of misery as a slave to the King, living in his dungeons. And yet, if I agree and later find true happiness, that happiness will be broken if I have to deliver my own baby to this ugly creature. But there again, I may have no children. And who's to say that this little man would ever remember my promise.
- RUMPEL *(To Rumpel)* All right, It's a bargain.
- RUMPEL *(Rubbing his hands with glee)* Then I'll get started right away. *(Aside)* How strange that humans place riches above the life of a child! *(Chuckles)*
- MELINDA I feel so weary. *(Mops her brow)* I must lie down.

Song 3 The Spinning Song
Incidental Dream Sequence
Music

A group of pixies appear and help Rumpel with the spinning as they dance. In the dream sequence a line of mothers with babies are filing past a group of goblins and giving the babies up to the goblins, who pass the babies along the line. The last mother is dressed like Melinda. Both mother and baby are wearing crowns. Just before the end of the dream Rumpel finishes the work and vanishes.

MELINDA *(Waking up with a start and a cry)* Stop! Stop, little man, do stop!
(Looking around she sees that he is gone)

Oh, no! What have I done? What **have** I done?

(There is a gentle rap on the door and we hear a fumbling of keys)

Take me away! Kill me! Do what you will! My life is worth nothing now.

PERCY Melinda!

MELINDA Percy! *(They embrace)* But how did you get in here? The key....?

PERCY Never mind that....it's a long story.

MELINDA Oh, Percy! I've done such a terrible thing.

PERCY *(Noticing the gold)* Wow! Not so terrible. Pretty fantastic actually.
How did you do it, Melinda?

MELINDA But Percy, that's just it. I didn't do it. *(She sobs)* this strange little man appeared, from nowhere and offered to spin the straw into gold for me.

PERCY That's wonderful!

MELINDA But I had to make him a promise. I promised to give him my first born child in return.

PERCY Oh, Melinda. This little man. What did he look like?

MELINDA Well, he was about this big *(demonstrates)*, and he had long fingers and pointed ears and bulging eyes ...and ...

PERCY Just as I feared! He sounds like one of those vile creatures from Odium, the **Goblin** Kingdom.

MELINDA You mean he was a Goblin. Ooo yuk!

PERCY They have magical powers but they only ever use them for ill means never for good. I have heard though that Goblins powers are useless if you can guess their names. They never disclose their names to humans, you see! We must break the spell but we can do nothing until he returns.

MELINDA If he ever returns.

PERCY He will return, Melinda. He surely will.

(Noises off of King approaching)

And now I fear I must depart quickly as your host approaches. Adieu fair maiden, adieu.

MELINDA Percy, the window...quickly! Goodbye Percy. And don't ever forget me, whatever happens. *(The door bursts open and the King enters with Julian and the Chancellor)*

KING Who are you talking to wench?
MELINDA No-one your majesty. Just singing to myself.
KING Locked up in the tower and still in high spirits. That's what I like to see. *(Notices the pile of gold)*
My, you have been busy!
CHANCEL Your Majesty, this is impossible. The girl really does have the power to spin straw into gold. It's, it's fantastic!
JULIAN It's more than fantastic, my Lord Chancellor, it's magic and very convenient for us.
KING I must admit I thought your objectionable father was merely being boastful but I can see I was quite wrong. I shall therefore keep my bargain and we shall be married next week. *(Struts off)*
JULIAN Hooray. *(Exits)*
CHANCEL Congratulations, my Liege. *(Exits. Door slams and key turns in lock)*
MELINDA Oh, horror. Now what have I done. Things can get no worse now. I might as well be dead. This is an absolute tragedy. *(Withdraws)*

Dance 2 Dance of Comedy and Tragedy

Blackout

SCENE 4: The Wedding

The villagers are dressed in their drab country clothes and this provides a great contrast with the royal household in their finery.

Song 4 The Wedding Song

(After the song all freeze except Narrator 3, dressed in fine clothes)

NARR 3 Well, things certainly seem to be looking up for Melinda, don't they. I know she didn't want to be queen but it must be quite exciting being the centre of attraction at a royal wedding. And look! All her family are here. Albert, the boastful old miller and his wife, Prudence. Jack, their son and all the other villagers. Percy still has his job as the royal herald, although he is none too happy to see Melinda wed. Just a minute, I can hear the King coming now.

(Enter the King and all unfreeze on his first line)

KING How now, loyal subjects, your monarch has arrived. We have had a once-in-a-life-time royal wedding this morning and now, this afternoon, we will have a once-in-a-life-time royal banquet. Let there be laughter and singing and dancing.

(Dance music is heard in the background and people begin the feasting),

MILLER Well this is quite a feast but it does not compare with the banquet I threw when Prudence and I were betrothed. Does it Prudence? Prudence?

JACK Do stop your boasting, father. Haven't you caused enough trouble already?

JEZZ Hey, Miller! I must say I do like your fancy dress. Let me guess who you are pretending to be; a poor tailor or perhaps Rip Van Winkle.
(He laughs loudly)

MILLER Well, actually these are my work clothes, you see. I do have some fine clothes, some very fine clothes indeed, but I did not have time to change. One day you'll see me well-dressed and I'll put you all to shame.

PRUDENCE Oh do shut up, Albert.
(The scene is punctuated by a trumpet blast. Enter the musketeers and the former messenger, now dressed poorly)

CLAUDE Your majesty, I pray forgiveness for the intrusion but we have managed to track down our quarry. *(The messenger is pushed roughly forwards)*

KING Oh goody, goody. Off with his head.

JEAN But Sire, surely on your wedding day.....?

KING No. you're absolutely correct, Jean. I'll do it tomorrow.
(He turns away)

GASTON Or perhaps your majesty would wish to invoke the royal prerogative.

MILLER The royal prerogative. What on earth is that?

ALL Shut up, Miller!

PIERRE I believe he means the royal pardon, Sire.

KING I beg your pardon?

MESSENGER Oh Sire, how can I ever thank you for sparing my life.

KING I did?

CLAUDE Yes Sire, you just did.

KING Then so be it. On with the festivities!

JEZZ Oi you, Chancellor. Come 'ere!

CHANCEL *(Limping across, dragging his bad leg)*
How dare you address me in that manner?

JEZZ Address you? What are you, an envelope? *(Laughs to himself)*
Here, have a stamp *(Stamps on his toe)*

CHANCEL Ouch!

JEZZ I want to have a little fun ... with the Miller. Will you help.

CHANCEL What, you mean tease him, humiliate him?

JEZZ Something like that, yes.

CHANCEL Ooh yes, count me in.....

JEZZ Right then. Here's what we'll do..... *(cross to one side whispering then Jezz is seen to exit, tapping his nose in a gesture of secrecy)*

CHANCEL Hey, Miller, how about some sport? To show that we noblemen wish to welcome you 'bottom of the heap' peasants today! I'm sorry, I mean, to show you are welcome, I would like to challenge you to a game of..... skittles!

ALL Yes skittles. Bring out the skittles etc.

CHANCEL Jezz, if you please. *(Jezz enters with the skittles)*

MILLER I feel I should warn you, Chancellor, that I am something of an expert at skittles. There are not many people in this kingdom who can beat me, you know. *(Jezz places the skittle board on the floor)*

ALL Shut up, Miller!

MILLER You'd better go first. I'd like to give you a bit of a chance.

CHANCEL As you wish!
The Jester has prepared two boards for the skittles. The first one, for the Chancellor, has threads attached to the top of the skittles to pull them over in case he misses. The second board, for the Miller, has the skittles glued into place so that they cannot be knocked over. These two characters may improvise extra dialogue if necessary. There needs to be much reaction from the crowd during this episode. The Chancellor bowls into the audience, missing the pins by miles but they still fall.

ALL Bravo Chancellor etc.

MILLER Goodness, Chancellor, you are certainly good. *(He takes his turn)*
(There is much laughter as the Miller hits the pins but none fall. The Miller looks ashamed as he turns away. He does not see Jezz lift up

*the board and turn it upside down to show the skittles are glued on.
More laughter from the crowd)*

PERCY *(Ringing a hand-bell to attract attention)*
Oyez, Oyez, harken well unto my speech, all ye subjects of Sublimia.

JACK
MILLER What language is he speaking, father.
I do believe it's old English, my boy. He's doing his town crier bit.

PERCY *(Still in a town crier's voice throughout this speech)*
The time is ripe, good friends, for the betrothal dances.
(Much hubbub)
For those who do not know the rules, they are as follows: all married ladies and gentlemen, womanfolk and menfolk do dance the first dance with their spouses. All those unmarried do dance the second one with those to whom they wish to be betrothed. When the music stops each man may kiss his partner once only.

CHANCELLOR Come on! Let's get on with it. Musicians, if you please.

Dance 3 The King's Pavan.
Much applause after the dance and cheering.

JACK Here, let's have a country dance. We can't do your posh royal dances.
Shouts of approval from villagers.

Dance 4 The Miller's Stamping Dance.
As the unmarried folk jostle for partners, Melinda runs in and grabs Percy just as he is about to take Mabel's hand. This is not seen by the King who is deep in conversation with the Chancellor with his back to the audience. At the end of the dance Percy kisses Melinda just as the Chancellor draws the King's attention to them.

KING Stop! Stop this insult. Unhand my queen. How dare you! This is an outrage against the royal person.

CHANCELLOR I knew you should never have trusted a peasant my Lord.

KING Seize him, Jailer.

JULIAN *(Rather campily)* Right away master.
Percy aims a blow at Julian and sends him sprawling across the stage. he runs off.

MELINDA Run, Percy, run. Don't let them get you.
KING *(To the musketeers)* After him you fools. Quickly, he is getting away.
(They run after him, clumsily. Julian picks himself up, holding his sore jaw. This to Julian:)
Escort the queen to her chambers and see that she stays there.
(Julian grabs Melinda and exits with her struggling)

All freeze. Narrator 3 steps out of the action.

NARR 3

Oh dear! Here we go again. Just when things seemed to be going better. Percy is a fugitive and Melinda a prisoner in her own castle. The Miller is as boastful as ever and the King as greedy and cruel. Life could not be worse for Melinda. Or could it? Lets travel forward in time two years and enter the queen's chamber where she is still a prisoner. She now has a little baby girl, just two weeks old.

Blackout

SCENE 5: The Nursery in the Queen's Chambers

The scene is a peaceful one. The queen sits in a rocking chair lulling her baby to sleep while a lullaby is heard (sung) off-stage. Mistress Persilia sits by the queen, sewing. Around the room are various toys. These are in fact immobile actors who will come to life when the queen and Aerial exit. There are toy soldiers some ballerinas, some rag dolls or puppets, soldiers and clowns. Perhaps two or three of each.

Song 5

Lullaby

Incidental: Lullaby Reprise

Music continues softly under the following dialogue.

MELINDA

Oh, Aerial how long must I remain a prisoner in my own home. Will the King never see sense. *(She puts the baby in the cradle)*

AERIAL

The King is an old man, my dear. He only sees that younger men have eyes for you. He is consumed by jealousy.

MELINDA

He is a cruel and selfish man and I wish I had never married him.

AERIAL

You didn't exactly have any choice in the matter.

MELINDA

What good are all my fine clothes and riches if I cannot find true happiness. Oh how I wish Percy were here.

AERIAL

Look on the bright side. You have a lovely healthy daughter.

(SFX of crying from the cradle. Melinda laughs)

MELINDA

Do you know, Aerial, I think she understands.

AERIAL

Come, my dear! It is late and we must be getting to sleep.

MELINDA

What comfort sleep brings to my troubled soul.

AERIAL

(Looks askance) Yes, quite!

MELINDA

Good night my little princess. Sweet dreams. *(She blows out the candle. Light change. They both exit)*

(Fade music. One of the toys moves ever so slightly. Then again.

Gradually the toys stretch as if after a long sleep and come to life)

Dance 5

Dance of the Toys

(They dance a character dance in turn, graceful steps for the ballerinas, military for the soldiers, jerky for the puppets and limp for the rag dolls. They dance is around the cradle entreating the princess to sleep peacefully. At the end of the dance they return to their immobile state and we hear SFX of footsteps approaching and a door creaking open. Enter the menacing figure of Rumpel Stiltskin. His entrance is accompanied by sinister music as he struts around the cradle, eventually snatching the baby. In his haste to escape he kicks over the cradle with a crash. Enter Melinda and Aerial much alarmed)

AERIAL What on earth is going on. Why, who the devil are you?
MELINDA Oh my goodness! Oh horror! You've not come for...for....
RUMPEL That's right, Queen .. for my little princess.
MELINDA No, please no! You can't take my baby. Please...
RUMPEL *(Rhythmically, almost singing)* You made a promise. Promises must be honoured.
AERIAL What is the meaning of this outrage? Who is this little man?
MELINDA *(These words spat out with distaste)* He's a Goblin. Goblins have no names. *(She snatches the baby)*
AERIAL *(Shocked)* A G - G - Goblin.
MELINDA Oh Aerial, I was so foolish. This goblin spun straw into gold in return for a promise.
RUMPEL That's right mistress. Without my help she would never have become queen.
AERIAL You didn't promise him your child. *(Melinda sobs inconsolably)*
RUMPEL *(Singing again)* She did. She promised me the princess. She promised me the princess. The child is mine to keep. She comes with me today!
AERIAL You vile wicked creature! How could you do this to the poor queen.
MELINDA Please, please let me give you something else. You shall have anything you want but the princess.
RUMPEL *(Ponders awhile)* I'll tell you what, lady. I'll give you but one chance to keep the child.
MELINDA Oh please! Anything.
RUMPEL You have three days in which to discover my name. If you are unsuccessful I keep the child *(wild cackles of laughter)*
AERIAL But that's unfair. Goblins names are secret.
RUMPEL *(As he exits)* Your only chance.... your only chance....*(fading into the distance)* Three days only three days

MELINDA Oh woe! Oh double and triple woe....
(Enter the musketeers, rather clumsily. All speak in French accents)
CLAUDE Your Majesty, we heard a commotion. We are at your service.
AERIAL Bit late, aren't you?
MELINDA Oh Claude, thank goodness you're here. I need your help.
AERIAL *(Aside)* I think they'd be more help tucked up in bed.
GASTON For you, Your Highness, no task is too large, no feat too onerous, no challenge....
PIERRE Oh do be quiet, Gaston, and let her speak.
MELINDA I have a task for you. The task of your lives. The princess's life is at stake. If you succeed, you shall all be knighted.
JEAN Well marinade me musket!
(She beckons them to approach and they gather round her as she whispers to them. All freeze. One of the toys steps out of the tableau as Narrator 4)

NARR 4 The plot thickens. The bungling musketeers are duly despatched to the distant chilly north to find Odium, the Goblin Kingdom. They are charged with tracking down the goblin man and finding out his name.

Blackout

SCENE 6, A Forest in the Goblin Kingdom of Odium

The Goblin hordes are having a feast in a clearing in the forest. They are waited on by captured pixie slaves. Their manners are disgusting and fights are breaking out all the time.

Dance 6 Dance of the Goblins

GRUMBLE Bulbous, how many more of those chickens are you going to eat. You have had four already.

BULBOUS Oh well this had better be my last one then. I want to leave room for a pixie or two. *(He goes to grab one of the pixies serving wine but misses)*

HORBLE Pixie, bring me more wine, at once, before I have you roasted alive.

FIGIT Yes, Master! *(He fidgets, fumbles and hops from one leg to the other as he serves the wine)*

HORBLE And stop fidgeting, figit.

FIGIT Yes master!

HORBLE I'm glad you are learning to treat Goblins with respect at last. You were one of the first pixie servants to be captured and the last to learn respect for your Goblin masters.

FIGIT Well, I really wanted to call you an ugly, slobbering, wart-covered blob, but I knew you'd beat me if I did. *(Horble goes to slap him but is too slow as the pixie darts out of the way)*

MIGIT When will you set us free, Master.

HORBLE When we no longer have need of servants, pixie.

BLUEBELL And that will be never. *(Grotesque laughter from Goblins)*
(SFX The sound of an animal horn)

GRUMBLE Ah, here comes Ozone.

BULBOUS All rise for Ozone, the King of Odium.
(Enter Ozone)

OZONE Greetings my foul, slobbering, ugly snivelling subjects.

GOBLINS Greetings O equally foul and slobbering King.

OZONE *(Looking all around)* And where is that most obnoxious creature Rumpel Stiltskin.

BLUEBELL He is away, Master, in the human kingdom of Sublimia, on business.

OZONE And what crooked business would that be, pretty Bluebell?

BLUEBELL He has bargained for a human child to be our slave. *(Gasps)*

HORBLE A human child, oh goody goody. We haven't got many of those.

GRUMBLE We haven't got ANY of thoseYET!

BLUEBELL And this one is a princess. *(More gasps)*

BULBOUS A princess!

MIGIT Why you horrible creatures! How could you keep a human child as a slave.

BULBOUS Why not? We keep pixies as slaves. And fatten them up ... for roasting.
(He tries to cuff Migit who darts away)

BLUEBELL We Goblins have plenty of gold. Look! Even our plates and cups are made of it. But the one thing we can never possess isBEAUTY.

GRUMBLE Those wretched humans have beauty in abundance but seem to place riches above human life.

MIGIT Is that why you have no mirrors in Odium. Because you can't bear to look at your own ugliness.

GRUMBLE *(Becoming very angry)*
Do not **dare** ever to mention the word **mirror** in Odium. It is forbidden. Mirrors are the only weapons that can be used against us.

GOBLINS *Murmur agreement with this. Enter Rumpel Stiltskin.*

OZONE Ah, Rumpel. There you are. Come and join the feast and tell us your news.

RUMPEL The human child will be ours in three days.

HORBLE Why three days? Why did you not fetch her today?

RUMPEL I gave the mother but one chance to keep the child. She must guess my name or lose her child for ever.

OZONE Rumpel, you fool. Are you getting soft in your old age?

RUMPEL I..I...but..I...I

BULBOUS No matter. She will never guess an ugly name like Rumpel Stiltskin.

BLUEBELL And if she does, you will lose the child and your powers.

OZONE What was that?
(Everyone listens)

RUMPEL A noise in the undergrowth!

BULBOUS Rumpel, you weren't followed were you. *(Gets Rumpel by the throat)*

HORBLE You weren't careless were you?

OZONE Have you betrayed us?

BLUEBELL There it is again. I heard it too.
(They jump up and lunge into the bushes. Four Goblins apprehend the four musketeers and drag them out into the open. The pixies, meanwhile cower in a frightened huddle the other side of the stage.)

OZONE What strange creatures do we have in our midst. Who are you? Speak.

PIERRE M - m- m- musketeers, Your Worship. In the service of the King of Sublimia.

OZONE Ah, so you were followed Rumpel. You are getting very careless.

HORBLE No matter, Master, they will have no tale to tell when they return to their King WITH THEIR TONGUES CUT OUT. *(Gasps of horror from the musketeers)*

OZONE Bring them forward! *(They are thrown to their knees in front of Ozone)*

GASTON No wait! Your Worship.

OZONE Stop calling me that. I'm not the Lord Mayor.

CLAUDE Please be merciful to us and let us go.

OZONE Mercy? MERCY? *(Goblins laugh grotesquely)* We are Goblins.
 Goblins show no mercy.

JEAN But one of you did. He gave our queen a chance, to guess his name.

BLUEBELL Oh that was Rumpel Stiltskin. He's gone soft.

JEAN *(Repeats)* Rumpel Stiltskin! She never would have guessed that.

OZONE You fool, Bluebell. Rumpel will lose his powers if these humans live.

BULBOUS Then they must surely die!

GOBLINS DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!

OZONE Make them stand! They will be made to do..... **the dance of death.**
 They will dance until they drop!

GOBLINS The dance of death! The dance of death!

Dance 7 Dance of Death

The Goblins encircle the prisoners and they are forced to dance. Each time one stops they are poked repeatedly until they continue. If they fall down they are picked up by the Goblins and made to continue. They become more and more weary. Finally enter Percy upstage with a large mirror.

PERCY Cease your amusement you foul fiends ... and take your punishment.
(He produces a large mirror and proceeds to blind the Goblins with their own ugliness. The mirror should catch the stage lights)
 Gaze upon your own ugliness. *(Goblins wince with each flash of the mirror as if stabbed and wounded by blows)*
 Quick, boys make good your escape. And you too pixies. *(The pixies up 'til now have been frozen in terror but they soon begin to run around in circles with excitement and exit FOH. Goblins are now beginning to fall like flies although some grab the mirror from Percy. It is snatched by some remaining pixies who pass it between them so the Goblins do not get it, flashing all the time. The musketeers stagger into the wings and Rumpel is seen sneaking away FOH with a sneer on his face)*

Blackout

Scene 7: The Castle

Entr'acte Gloomy Music

(All the courtiers and villagers are standing or sitting around looking very glum. The King sits silently on his throne, the queen alongside. Nearby is the cradle containing the princess. SFX of baby crying)

NARR 5 And so our play has swiftly reached the final scene and the little princess is not out of danger yet. The Goblin, Rumpel Stiltskin has escaped with his life. The weary musketeers are lost in the foul mists and swamps of Odium. Percy is nowhere to be seen. The three days are up and the Goblin is expected to arrive for his prize.
The narrator takes his place on stage. There is a long pause and silence as everyone looks glum. The Jester taps his foot)

KING Will you stop that infernal tapping. Tap, tap, tap, that's all you've done for the past afternoon.

JESTER I beg your forgiveness, My Lord. I cannot bear this interminable waiting.

KING For no-one is the wait as agonising as for myself and the queen.
(More tapping, waiting and long pause. A sudden loud trumpet blast. Everyone is startled by this. Enter the old messenger)

MELINDA What news messenger? Is it the musketeers? Is it? Have they returned?
MESSENGER I fear not, Your Majesty. The lookout reports sighting a strange little man limping across the drawbridge.

MELINDA Then it is over. The wicked creature has come to claim his prize.

JULIAN But all is not yet lost, Your Highness. We should at least have a go at guessing his name.

CHANCEL It's no use, Jailer. Goblin's names are notoriously obscure and unpronounceable. We have little chance of success.

JULIAN But we must try.
(Rumpel sweeps in. When he sees no sign of the musketeers or Percy a smug look of triumph crosses his face)

RUMPEL *(Bowing deeply in an exaggerated fashion)* Your Majesty! *(this to the King and then to the Queen)* Your Majesty!

KING Don't waste time, you horrible creature. Just get on with it.

RUMPEL *(Enjoying himself)* I have been very considerate and fair in giving you three days to find out my name. Now, the time has run out. What say you? Can you give me a name?

MELINDA *(Sobbing)* You know very well we cannot, you supercilious snake!

RUMPEL Then it is finished!*(He goes to take the princess)*

JULIAN No wait! Archibald. Or is your name Peregrine.... or ...
or....Marmaduke.

RUMPEL *(To each name he replies with a grin)* No, it is not! No!

OTHERS *All call out as many outrageous names as you can.
(Finally, enter Percy)*

PERCY Or is your name RUMPEL STILTSKIN!!
(SILENCE. The goblin winces as if struck by an arrow, slowly turning until his eyes meet Percy's)

RUMPEL You! You interfering peasant. Why could you not mind your own business. You have ruined everything.

PERCY Now go. GO, RUMPELSTILTSKIN! *(Winces again)* You have lost all your powers. Never darken our doors again.

ALL *(Chanting)* RUM - PLE STILT - SKIN! RUM - PLE STILT - SKIN!
(There is a crash of thunder a flash of light and, with a great cry, Rumple sinks to his knees and melts into the ground. Everyone is silent, stunned until)

JULIAN Hooray for Percy! Hooray for Percy!

ALL *(Joining in the mantra)* Hooray for Percy! *(The King tries to speak above the noise)* Hooray for Percy!

CHANCEL SILENCE! The King wishes to speak.

KING Percy, I owe you an apology. I have done you a great injustice. You have saved my daughter, the princess, from a fate worse than death. How can I ever thank you?

PERCY Well, you could start by treating your wife, the queen, a little more decently instead of treating her like another slave. You could spread some of that gold she gave you among your subjects and and and.....

CHANCEL I think that's quite enough, young man. Don't you?
(A disturbance as the musketeers burst in)

PIERRE Stop! Stop! We know your name Goblin. You cannot take the child.
(Laughter from all the cast)

JULIAN Too late again, musketeers. You couldn't catch a cold!

KING You are all dismissed. All four of you. From now on I shall have just the one musketeer. His name PERCY!

PERCY Why, thank you, Sire.

KING And because you have made me see the error of my ways, I give you the hand of MELINDA, formerly my wife but now with the title of the Duchess of Sublimia. *(All gasp)* And you, Percy, shall be the Grand Duke of Sublimia!

ALL *(Cheers of approval. Percy bows regally)*

MILLER *(Stepping forward. To audience)* All that remains is for me to thank you all for coming to my little play here tonight

ALL SHUT UP, MILLER!

Song 6 Trusting Me

The End