



His Name Was Rumpelstiltskin

BY AMOS
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I see fathers and mothers dwelling in complete happiness. I see children laughing, and birds singing, and the entire universe seems to swell with joy and contentment. The only thing that doesn't laugh, or sing, are grandparents. Those poor, wrinkled, nervous individuals are being slowly killed off by diabolical plots instigated by angelic looking grandsons and granddaughters.

I have grandchildren of my own. Robert, Amy Jo, and Jill. And they are the reason I am suffering gout, hardening of the arteries, trenchmouth, diabetes, ringworm, and various social diseases. They have caused my five heart attacks, six strokes, and my stay in seven mental hospitals. They are satonic little devils; perilous, sneaky creatures, and I cringe when someone says, "Amos, what lovely grandchildren you have."

Two weeks ago I awoke to find a hamper in bed with me. I am not all that fond of hampsters. They look like rats, smell like rats, and terrify me with their evil eyes and sharp incisors. Beside my bed, smiling, was my grandson. I leaped out of bed, and screamed, "ROBERT...WHY IN THE HELL DID YOU PUT THAT ANIMAL IN MY BED?"

"Because I love you" replied Robert.

I sat him down at the table and tried to explain the meaning of love. "Robert, it is not love when you put a

hamster in your grandfather's bed. It is also not love when you put a rattlesnake in his lunch box or a scorpion in his jockey shorts."

Robert patted me on the head with such gentleness that I knew he had gotten my message. The very next day I found a dead frog in my soup, and I screamed, "ROBERT, WHY IN THE HELL DID YOU PUT THIS FROG IN MY SOUP?"

The little bugger sneered, "Because I love you."

Amy Jo claims to be six but she is old and clever and crafty and completely demented. Several weeks ago she took a pair of scissors and cut my new suit into little patches. She has painted, with black enamel, my original Rembrandt. She has glued tiny pieces of cotton to my false teeth, and last week, while everyone was sleeping, she amputated my wife's right leg.

I was seriously thinking of doing away with myself but last week something wonderful happened. I was sitting in the pharmacy, drinking a cup of coffee, and looking at a note from the Thomas Finance Company. The notice informed me that if I didn't pay back the three thousand dollars immediately I would lose my car, my house, and everything else of value that I owned. There was no way I could pay the money back and I sat there dejected and sorrowful. I felt someone sit down

on the stool next to me and when I looked over I saw this little dwarf of a man. The dwarf leaned closer and whispered in my ear. "Sir, I see that huge bill in your hand, I know of your troubles, and I will make a bargain with you."

I was appalled at the dwarf's ugliness but, always interested in bargains, I replied, "And what is your bargain?"

The dwarf cackled softly, and said, "I will pay off your bill to the Thomas Finance Company. That bill will never worry you again. In return, I will eat your grandchildren."

"YOU'LL WHAT?," I screamed.

"I'll eat your grandchildren," continued the dwarf, "I will meet you here tomorrow. You bring your grandchildren with you. And to give you a sporting chance I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll pay off your debt and if you can guess my name then I won't even eat your grandchildren."

The proposition intrigued me. Having that bill off my back was a colossal stroke of luck. But was I insensitive enough to let my grandchildren be eaten? Was I that cruel and unfeeling? I answered yes to all these questions and promised to meet the dwarf the next day at the pharmacy.

At the appointed hour I showed up in front of the pharmacy with my three grandchildren. Just as I was about to enter the store an old witch came up to

me, and whispered in my ear, "His name is Rumpelstiltskin."

Now that I knew the dwarf's name it meant that the dwarf couldn't eat my grandchildren. Unless, of course, I used my head.

I went inside the pharmacy and the dwarf joined me in one of the booths.

"All right" he said, "What is my name?"

"John", I said.

The dwarf shook with glee.

"Thelma" I guessed.

The dwarf was deliriously happy.

"Sidney"

The dwarf jumped up and down, laughing hysterically, and cried, "My name is Rumpelstiltskin. And now I will eat your grandchildren."

And I'll be damned if he didn't. A little salt here...a dash of pepper there... and those little monsters of mine vanished completely.

I know that this will sicken many people. Mothers and fathers will want to lynch me. But I also know that grandparents all over this county will want to know how to get in touch with that dwarf. Well...just go past the pharmacy until you get to Mundane Lane, turn right, and it is the first gingerbread house on your left. If you play your cards right the dwarf might eat YOUR grandchildren. Just go up to the door and knock.

Tell him Amos sent you.