

*“Come now,” I urged. “Make your final guess for today. Fear not, for if you get it wrong you will have three more chances again tomorrow.”*

*“Tobias?”*

*I laughed again and, through the cackle, I disappeared, leaving the maiden far behind.*

All night, thoughts and images of victory raced through my mind. She thinks she has power because she is the queen but she will never guess my name! Then I will take the king’s first child. I will be victorious. The child will be mine.

Victory was in sight. I could feel it, I could smell it. Soon victory would be mine. Unable to contain my excitement, I jumped, twisted and danced around the fire, singing, “It’s Rumpelstiltskin’s time to shine, soon all victory will be mine.” The fire danced with me, crackling like sparklers and the logs glowed like my victory soon would. Tomorrow would be the day I would remember for years to come.

The next day, when the queen arrived, my eyes were glowing with excitement. Surprisingly, the queen looked calm. She was dressed in a long velvet robe which gave her an air of elegance. The longer I stared into her eyes, the more nervous I began to feel.

Before I could speak, she began with her first guess. “Mathew?” she asked. My smile started to widen as I saw a glimmer of my victory once again. I shook my head.

Her eyes glanced up as she thought carefully about what her next guess would be.

“You only have two guesses left,” I reminded her, wishing she would hurry up.

“John?” she enquired. “Is your name John?”

My smile had now grown – it beamed from ear to ear. I could no longer control myself. I glanced at the baby, who lay peacefully wrapped in a soft, knitted white blanket. In just moments he would be mine.

“Take one last look at your dear son, before your last guess,” I confidently sniggered.

I was surprised her eyes were not welling up at this point but was far too excited to think much about it.

A smile began to creep across her face as she queried, “Is it Rumplestiltskin?”

There was a short pause. It couldn’t possibly be. She can’t possibly have known. Had I heard her correctly?

“Rumplestiltskin, Rumplestiltskin! Just as you sang last night”

My jaw dropped. My fists were clenched. My skin began to heat up as anger flared up inside me like a vicious fire.

“I have won and I am no longer under your spell!” she gloated.

“You cheater!” I shouted in rage as I stomped my feet. “The boy is mine!”

“I won the bargain, fair and square” she replied firmly, taking the boy into her arms and holding him tightly. “I guessed your name. You will not take my son – he is mine!”