

The Brothers Grimm

Opera in One Act

Music and Libretto
Dean Burry

(With the first note of music, the ensemble enters. Jacob and Wilhelm sit next to each other on their stools. Their faces are hidden by large leather-bound books which they are holding up. Three remaining players enter and form a line across the front of the stage.)

DORT, VIEH, KRAUSE: Once upon a time there were two brothers....

DORTCHEN: Wilhelm, the younger brother, loved his work, but also liked to have fun.

WILHELM: (looking up) Brother...how do you spell...NINCONPOOP?

VIEHMANN: Jacob, the older brother, also loved his work, but he was much more serious.

JACOB: Oh, grow up, Wilhem.

KRAUSE: The Brothers Grimm wrote books: Exciting, thrilling books like...Encyclopedias!

DORT. & VIEH: Huh?

KRAUSE: And dictionaries!

DORT. & VIEH.: Ugh!(Viehmänn yawns, Dortchen makes gagging motions.)

DORT, VIEH, KRAUSE: The brothers wanted their books to be read in every corner of the world...

But they were starting to believe that no one would ever care.

(They exit and the brothers become frustrated.)

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Oh, why do we bother, brother?
Why do we even try?

All day long we write and write
to write the books that tell the truth.
To tell the truth that writes the books,

But no one seems to care.

JACOB: It's such a bother, brother.
Why do we even try?
All day long we think and think
to think the thoughts that change the world,
to change the world that thinks the thoughts,

But no one seems to care.

WILHELM: This book shows one how to spell correctly.

JACOB: This book teaches of wonderful words.

BOTH: But no one seems to care.

WILHELM: Written in such lovely language.

JACOB: A table of contents...A to Z.

BOTH: But no one seems to care.

A preface,
cross-referenced,
a forward that shines.
The name of the dear Brothers Grimm
on the spines.
With foot-notes and end-notes,
listings of all quotes,
look at this bibliographical style!

But what does it matter, brother,
how hard we try?
No one will learn.
No one will work.
Nobody but nobody wants to be correct.

No one, but no one, but nobody
seems to care

about the Brothers Grimm.

(a bell rings off-stage)

Come in.

(Brentano enters)

BRENTANO: Good morning, Brothers Grimm.
My name is Brentano,
I'm sure you've heard of my work.
I'm a poet and a scholar,
Quite the greatest in the land
And ,rest assured, the pleasure,
Is yours.

JACOB: Herr Brentano, please sit down.

BRENTANO: Oh, very well.
When your thoughts are as weighty as mine,
it's important to rest now and then.

(he sits)

My brothers, dear,
I have a quest,
a trifle really,
a small request.

BROTHERS: You need a book of grammar and style?

BRENTANO: No.
I want to publish a book of tales,
Magical, mystic, fantastical tales.
Common stories from common folk,
common folk from common places.

The stories that people tell by the fire
are being forgotten like smouldering embers
ready to darken and cool
and never again will these stories be told.

Collect these stories
and write them all down.
in a book
by the Brothers Grimm.

JACOB: *(not convinced)* A silly little book of stories?

WILHELM: Nothing of spelling or grammar or style?

BRENTANO: The name of Grimm will be honoured!

BROTHERS: Ooh.

BRENTANO: By scholars all over the world!

BROTHERS: Ah.

BRENTANO: And riches two brothers could hardly imagine.
Write all the books that your hearts could desire...
with a reasonable sum for me.

BROTHERS: What?

BRENTANO: My name on the front
in gold leaf...

BROTHERS: But...

BRENTANO: Take it, or leave it, dear brothers,
I'd say,
you've got nothing better
to do today.

BROTHERS: Yes, we agree.
We'll begin right away.

BRENTANO: Then soon I'll return for my book!

ALL: Riches to hardly imagine.
Fame that will carpet the world,
And finally, someone will care very much
for the book
by the Brothers Grimm!

(Brentano begins to exit. Dortchen enters carrying a basket and bumps into Brentano. He admires her and tweaks her on the chin before exiting.)

JACOB: Good morning, Dortchen.

DORTCHEN: Good morning, Jacob. *(flirtatious)* Hi, Wilhelm.

WILHELM: Good day, Dortchen, it is so lovely to see you.

JACOB: Yes, but we are rather busy today, so...

DORTCHEN: Wilhelm, my mother says “hello”. She told me to bring you this cake and wine for she knows how busy you are. You can have some too, Jacob.

(she gives Wilhelm the basket and her smiles)

What are you doing? Something exciting?

JACOB: *(leading her out)* Nothing at all, now, thank your mother for us and...

(she evades him)

WILHELM: We are collecting a book of tales.

DORTCHEN: Ooh, how thrilling, a book of adventure, mystery...and love.

(Jacob shakes his head)

WILHELM: Yes, the very thing, a book of ...love.

(they stare into each other's eyes. Jacob pulls her away.)

JACOB: Yes, thrilling indeed. I'm glad you approve but we need to find some people to tell us their tales.

DORTCHEN: Well, I'm people, uh,
I mean...a person.

WILHELM: *(following her lead, with excitement)* Yes, that's right, definitely a person - Two arms, two legs, head. There you go. *(encouraging Dortchen)* Do you have a tale to tell?

DORTCHEN: As a matter of fact, I do.

(Wilhelm brings the two stools downstage and sets them C with his stool slightly behind Dortchen's. Wilhelm sits, notating in a new book, while Jacob stands thoughtfully behind.)

This is a tale of love.

(she waves at Wilhelm who waves back with the feather. Jacob slaps him on the side of the head.)

There was a girl, um...
who had long hair, um...
She was held in a tower, um...
by an ogre, no,
a witch!
For her parents had done, um..
something very wrong,
I can't remember what.

WILHELM: Jacob, how do you spell "um"?

JACOB: Shhh...

DORTCHEN: Then a handsome prince
came strolling by...

BROTHERS: Yes, yes, yes...

DORTCHEN: And he saved her. The end.

JACOB: *(unenthusiastic)* Oh.

DORTCHEN: Isn't it delightful?

(She beams. Jacob is obviously not impressed with this "tale". Wilhelm sits, totally absorbed, re-reading the material)

JACOB: Thank you, Dortchen, a lovely tale indeed.

DORTCHEN: Wait, don't throw me out! I haven't had much practise spinning tales, but I know of a wizened old woman, who knows every story from here to China. She sells fruit in the market and I will bring her here.

(she begins to run off)

JACOB: You have helped enough. *(she exits. Jacob turns, frustrated, to his brother)*

WILHELM: This is magnificent!

JACOB: What?

WILHELM: The tale.

JACOB: That trite little jumble of words,
no beginning,
no ending,
no conflict development!

WILHELM: Ah, dear brother,
it is but a seed,
lifeless and dry,
'til you give it a chance.

(he thinks for a moment, then begins to write while he sings.)

Rapunzel.

There once was a man and a woman
who longed, in vain,
to have a dear child for their very own.

(Brentano and Viehmann appear as the man and woman.)

But the years did pass
as the years always do,
and sadly, the couple remained alone,
so alone, their loneliness grew.

(Jacob sees what Wilhelm is doing and urges him to keep writing.)

JACOB: Now close to their hovel
was a beautiful garden,
cabbage and radish, delicious rapunzel.
Almost too tasty
to be ignored.
And thus,
the woman did beg of her husband
to fetch some rapunzel
or else she would die.

(she exits and becomes the witch)

WILHELM: What could he do,
but go to the garden.
Slowly, he crept,
like a thief in the night,

collecting the food
to make his wife happy.
He wished so much,
For her happiness.

(the man kneels and begins pulling up the rapunzel. The witch enters slowly and creeps up behind him)

But the garden was owned
by an evil enchantress
who didn't think kindly
of beggars and thieves.

(the man cowers in horror as the witch begins to cast a spell. She stops, getting an idea.)

She spared his life,
gave him all her rapunzel,
but in return,
their first child would be hers.

(the man moans in horror as he realises the bargain he has made. He staggers off L, while the witch, cackling, oozes off R.)

JACOB: Before too long,
 a child did come,
 A beautiful girl
 that the witch took away
 and kept in a tower...

WILHELM & JACOB: ...a towering tower...

JACOB: ...with no way in
 and no way out.

 And there she stayed,
 and there she grew
 and the name of the girl was
 Rapunzel.

(Rapunzel (Dortchen) appears and sits on a stool, the witch enters. Wilhelm watches her longingly.)

WITCH: Rapunzel,
 Rapunzel,
 Let down your hair.

(Rapunzel throws a braided rope to the witch and she “climbs” up.)

RAPUNZEL: Could we not build
 some steps or a ladder?
 I’m afraid that your climbing is giving me
 a headache.

WITCH: Hold your tongue,
 you impudent child.
 Here is your food for the week.
 I will return
 in seven days.

(the witch climbs down and exits. Wilhelm gives his book to Jacob and becomes the Prince.)

JACOB: What was next? What was next?
 Oh yes, a prince came strolling by.

(still enraptured by Rapunzel Wilhelm gives his book to Jacob and becomes the Prince.)

WILHELM: She said a handsome prince!

JACOB: Brother?

WILHELM: Every week,
 I walk these woods,
 and every week
 that old witch returns
 and cries to the tower
 the name of Rapunzel.
 I wonder who lives in that
 room up above?

 But in the mighty woods
 a prince’s heart turns to all the things that fire the heart;
 Thoughts of fishing and hunting and...love.
 Of fishing and hunting and...love.
 I wonder who lives in that room up above?

RAPUNZEL: Above the world
 looking down,
 looking up,
 somewhere in between.

Where do I belong?

Below the stars
the sun goes down,
the moon comes up.
Somewhere in between.

Gazing down
I see happy children playing.
Glancing up
I see pretty angels dancing.
Somewhere in between.
Where do I belong?
Where do I belong?

WILHELM: Every week I walk these woods
and every week that old witch returns
and cries to the tower
the name of Rapunzel.

RAPUNZEL: Above the world
Alone, no one
will e'er say
the name of Rapunzel.

(Wilhelm's heart is filled with longing.)

WILHELM: Rapunzel,
Rapunzel,
let down your hair.

RAPUNZEL: *(lowering hair)* That is odd,
The witch was to return
in seven days.

(Wilhelm climbs up and Rapunzel is startled to see he is not the witch)

RAPUNZEL: Who are you?
What do you want?

WILHELM: Do not worry, fraulein,
your singing has moved me.
I would like to be your friend.

RAPUNZEL: A friend?

(they gaze at each other, smiling. Wilhelm turns away but Rapunzel remains transfixed.)

WILHELM: *(to Jacob)* Friends they quickly became,
as the prince returned

day after day.

JACOB: And on the seventh day,
 as all the birds were singing,
 they became husband and wife.

(Wilhelm puts a ring on Rapunzel's finger and they kiss. Wilhelm climbs down, waves good-bye and walks over to Jacob. Rapunzel is lost in her happiness as the witch enters.)

WITCH: Rapunzel,
 Rapunzel,

(sees that Rapunzel is not paying attention)

(yelling) Rapunzel!

(Rapunzel snaps back to reality and looks down)

WITCH: *(daintily)* Let down your hair.

(Rapunzel lets her hair down and the witch climbs up)

RAPUNZEL: Dear mother,
 how can it be
 you so much heavier to pull up,
 than my prince?

(Rapunzel covers her mouth as she realises she has said too much. The witch is furious)

WITCH: So, my little bird
 has seen another.
 Betrayed the one who loves you,
 your mother.
 Faithless child,
 you have broken my heart.
 Now begone to live forever alone!

(she grabs a pair of scissors)

For now all ties are cut!

(she cuts Rapunzel's hair and hooks it onto the stool. Rapunzel climbs down the hair and runs off crying. Wilhelm walks back into the scene.)

WILHELM: Every week I walk these woods
 but now I'll take me true love away.
 Away from the tower,
 my darling Rapunzel.

(as he reaches the top, the witch grabs his arm and holds him tight)

WITCH: Hoping to find your blushing bride,
 a friendly face,
 dreams of tomorrow?
 My boy, you must be cautious
 when you fall in love.

(she pushes him and he falls, lying motionless. The witch exits.)

JACOB: Has hope been lost?
 Is this the end?

WILHELM: No, the prince cannot be dead!

(Jacob continues to write)

JACOB: The rose bushes growing 'round the tower
 broke his fall.

 But the thorns left him blinded,
 left him to wander in darkness.

WILHELM: What?!?

JACOB: The thorns left him blinded,
 left him to wander in darkness.

*(the prince gets up and puts a bandage over his eyes. Wilhelm stumbles in
desperation as the years pass.)*

JACOB: And the years did pass,
 as the years always do,
 and sadly the prince had to wander alone.

*(Jacob continues to write. Rapunzel begins singing her song from backstage.
Wilhelm hears this and walks with intent towards her. Rapunzel appears and stares at
him in disbelief.)*

RAPUNZEL: My prince,
 could it be you?

WILHELM: Your singing has moved me
to where my heart belongs.

RAPUNZEL: And where my heart belongs.

(they embrace, the prince is bent over from years of travelling)

WIL. & RAP.: Such is the joy
in my heart

RAPUNZEL: let my tears fall down

WIL.&RAP: and kiss broken eyes,

JACOB: so the prince could see again.

*(he rips off the bandages. Jacob is beginning to well up and he dabs at his eyes
with a hanky.)*

BROTHERS: Could see they belonged
together.

JACOB: The End.

(Rapunzel exits. Wilhelm does not want the tale to end but returns to Jacob.)

JACOB: *(crying)* Oh, brother,
That was beautiful...

(Wilhelm looks at him in disbelief and takes the book from him, closing it.)

JACOB: *(pulling himself together)* I mean, well...
Good story,
good story.

*(Wilhelm closes the book, pleased with their work. The bell rings backstage.
Frau Viehmann walks directly on with Dortchen in tow.)*

VIEHMANN: Good afternoon, Brothers Grimm.

DORTCHEN: Frau Viehmann, wait!

VIEHMANN: It is I, the wizened old woman!

DORTCHEN: Frau Viehmann, please...

VIEHMANN: *(looking around)* Heavens! What a mess! What would your mother say? Two brothers may grow up, but two boys they remain.

(the brothers are a little embarrassed and try to clean up and dust)

VIEHMANN: Oh, don't bother.

(she grabs a stool and sits down, quite in control)

Now, the young lady, here,
says you want to hear a tale.

(the brothers nod and Jacob sits next to her with the book to notate. Dortchen stands next to Wilhelm)

Good, I like to talk. *(she smiles devilishly, the brothers look scared.)*

It's the story of a girl
with a lovely grand-mama,
a child named Little Red Cap,
and the wonders that she saw.
Now granny, she grew sick
and it left her feeling low,
so with some treats
into the woods
did Little Red Cap go.

In the woods, she met a wolf,
so very cunning,
"Smell the flowers", he did say
then he went to Grandma's house.

Now you know, you should never
stray from the path.
You should never, never, never...

(begins scolding Jacob)

DORTCHEN: Frau Viehmann!

VIEHMANN: *(composing herself)* Yes. *(takes a big breath)*

So the wolf, he goes to Grandma's
and before you can say "Boo",
made a meal out of Granny
without taking time to chew.
Then he dressed up in a nightgown,
put a bonnet on his head
and when the young girl came a-knockin'
made a dinner out of Red.

(in Dortchen's general direction) And that is what happens to bad girls who talk
to strange men.

(Dortchen takes a step away from Wilhelm)

JACOB: That is it? That's the end?

WILHELM: No redemption? No reward?

VIEHMANN: You will learn, young man, that life is not always about reward.
But I can see you are unimpressed. I know of a strange, old fool
who lives at the edge of the woods: an old retired soldier who
knows every tale told 'round the fire on the eve of epic battle. I
will bring him.

WILHELM: If you please, gentle Frau, you are too kind.

JACOB: And your story might just turn out fine.

(Viehmänn and Dortchen exit with waves from the brothers)

WILHELM: We did it once,
can we do it again.

JACOB: Who knows, dear brother,
dare we tempt fate?

(Jacob will write this tale)

Little Red Cap.

Once upon a time
there was a little girl,

WILHELM: loved by all.

(Dortchen appears as Little Red Cap and picks up the basket.)

JACOB: Loved no more
than by her granny
who made her a beautiful red cap.
Wear it so much, did she,
that she was called
Little Red Cap.

JACOB: (*speaking as a stern mother*)Granny is sick.

RED: (*facing forward, as if addressing her mother*) Yes, Mama,

JACOB: This cake and wine will lift her spirits.

RED: Yes, Mama.

JACOB: Go straight through the woods
and stay on the path.

RED: Yes, Mama.
Yes, Mama.
Yes, Mama.
(*annoyed*) Mama, I'm a big girl and you're no fun!

(*she exits*)

WILHELM: So, Little Red Cap
set off through the woods,

JACOB: and a lovelier day
had never been seen,

BROTHERS: but lovely days can be deceiving,
the girl was not alone.

(*Red enters L., skipping and humming, she passes directly off R. She does this again. The third time she is followed in by the wolf, Viehmann, wearing a mask, secretly skipping behind her. The wolf taps Red on the shoulder then ducks behind her. Red looks back and is startled when she turns around and sees the wolf.*)

WOLF: How-oo do you do,
little girl?
Or should I say
big girl?
But then,

you are more
a lovely young lady,
are you not?

RED: Why, yes,
thank you for noticing.

WOLF: And where would such a pretty thing,
or should I say “stunning”,
be rushing,
on such a bright and happy morning?

RED: To my Granny’s.
She lives in the glen
at the edge of the woods
'neath the big oak trees.

(the wolf begins to get an idea)

WOLF: *(aside)* Oh yes, I know it well,
the house beneath
the big oak trees.
With any luck
I’ll make a meal
of this fresh little dish
and her well seasoned Granny.

(to Red)

Young lady,
why do you wish your youth away?
Blossoms like you
should take time to smell the roses.
The sun is high,
the day is young.
Look at all the wonders of the forest.

RED: It is true.

WOLF: Of course, it is true.

RED: I never noticed them before.

WOLF: Before you rushed.

RED: I guess I rushed.

BOTH: Your (my) life away.
 And one as wise as you (I)
 must stop and smell the roses,
 look at all the wonders of the forest.

(she starts to wander off through the audience towards the back of the theatre)

RED: Daisies and buttercups,
 Marigolds and honeysuckle,
 Violets and valerian,
 Orchids smell so sweet.

WOLF: Don't forget Forget-me-nots

RED: Foxglove and Monk's hood,
 nose gay for my granny.
 La,la,la,etc.

(she continues humming as she exits at the back. The wolf rubs his hands and dances happily to the left end of the backdrop. He knocks on the door)

BRENTANO: *(backstage, in Granny's voice)* Hello. Who is it?

WOLF: Milkman!

BRENTANO: I don't like milk!

WOLF: *(thinking quickly)* Bread man!

BRENTANO: It gives me gas.

WOLF: *(looking desperate, then getting an idea)* It is your Little Red
Cap.

BRENTANO: Oh, my sweetie pie,
 lift the latch and come in.

WOLF: Why yes,
 I think I will.

(Wolf exits L. There is a flurry from the piano and the backdrop shakes. After a moment, the wolf enters wearing a nightgown and holding a bonnet in his mouth. He also carries a quilt. He puts the bonnet on his head and sits on a stool, covering himself with the quilt.)

WOLF: (to audience) Shhhh...

(Red enters from behind the audience and, if possible, on the opposite side. She is still in no particular hurry and holds a bouquet of flowers.)

RED: Daisies and buttercups,
Marigolds and lilacs, etc...

(she goes to L. side of stage and knocks.)

WOLF: (imitating Granny's voice) Hello. Who is it?

RED: It is your Little Red Cap.

WOLF: (trying to contain his excitement)
Oh, my sweetie pie,
lift the latch and come in.

(Red walks forward to the bed. The wolf holds the covers up so only his eyes are visible.)

RED: I have brought you
some cake and wine,
to lift your spirits,
and some flowers
to brighten your room.

(she moves closer to the wolf with the flowers)

RED: But, Granny,
what big eyes you have.

WOLF: The better to see you with,
my dear.

RED: But Granny,
what big hands you have.

WOLF: The better to hug you with,
my dear.

RED: (pulling the covers down a little) But, Granny,
what a terrible big mouth you have.

WOLF: The better to eat you with!

(the wolf pounces on Red, throwing the quilt so they are both covered by it. There is a struggle which eventually ends. The wolf appears and sits back on the stool. He has the red cap in his mouth and Red is still under the quilt. The wolf yawns and goes to sleep.)

JACOB: And that is the end.

WILHELM: But we can not stop there! Dortchen.....I mean Little Red!

JACOB: The woman said no more.

WILHELM: Our hero deserves a second chance.

JACOB: Perhaps someone can save her.

(they think)

I know. *(he writes)*
A daring pirate
comes sailing through the woods,

(Brentano enters with a patch over one eye and a pirate hat.)

up to the house.

WILHELM: Wait, wait!
Dear brother,
a pirate in the forest?
Who ever heard of such a thing?

(Brentano stops in his tracks and exits)

How about a professor?

(Brentano enters with a book and wearing glasses and a mortar board)

Learned and charming.

JACOB: What is he going to do,
teach the wolf
how to brush his teeth?

(Brentano exits, somewhat frustrated)

WILHELM: What could it be?

JACOB: Who could it be?

WILHELM: Who could it be?

WILHELM: What could it be?

*(Brentano, frustrated, walks out with a musket and a knife which he hands ,
forcefully, to Wilhelm.)*

BRENTANO: How 'bout a hunter?

JACOB: Excellent idea, Wilhelm.

WILHELM: *(looking a little confused , Wilhelm becomes the hunter.)* Thank
you, brother.

JACOB: A little while later,
a fearless hunter
came upon the house.

*(Wilhelm becomes determined to again save his love. He sniffs the air and kneels
to look at tracks on the ground. He stands in front of the quilt, raises his knife and “cuts
open” the wolf. Red and Granny, Viehmann without the mask, climb out from beneath
the quilt.)*

WILHELM: Come forward now,
to face another day.
Come forward now
to face another day
of life and light.

WILHELM & GRANNY: Though flowers are sweet
and words may charm,
you must beware
the wonders of the forest.

RED: Yes, flowers are sweet
and words do charm.
But I'll beware
the wonders of the forest.

ALL THREE: Come forward now to face another day

of light and life!

JACOB: And Little Red Cap
never strayed from the path again.

(Jacob slams the book shut. Dortchen and Viehmann exit, taking the musket and the knife with them.)

WILHELM: Wonderful, Jacob. Wonderful.
What could possibly be next?

JACOB: Perhaps this book shall be important after all.

(the bell rings backstage. Dortchen and Viehmann enter with Krause, a crusty old soldier with a patch over one eye, a crutch, and perhaps a missing arm.)

DORT AND VIEH: This is Colonel Krause.

JACOB: Good evening, kind sir, do come in. We are thrilled to have you in our home.

WILHELM: Please say you've a tale to tell?

KRAUSE: A tale, eh? I got hundreds...but I was wonderin'...

BROTHERS: Yes?

KRAUSE: Well now, Grimsies, I ain't a demanding fellow, but the nights are getting colder. I don't suppose you got some old clothes you're no longer needin'?

WILHELM: Yes, the very thing.

(Wilhelm goes backstage and retrieves an old coat. It looks very worn, but Krause is thrilled anyway.)

KRAUSE: Ah, my fine fellows, a gift from the heart. *(he puts on the coat and sits down)* I swear to you, you'll not be disappointed. So sit yourselves down...

(Wilhelm sits with the book)

...clean out your ears *(whispered)* and prepare to be... *(yelling)*
AMAZED!

(everyone jumps from fright and he chuckles to himself)

Once there was a miller
with a young daughter...

(*distracted*)Ah, I remember being young,
(*to Grimms*) Remember those candies with the chocolate...

JACOB: Who had a young daughter...

KRAUSE: Yes, with a young daughter,
very beautiful,
but very poor.
He told the king
his daughter could spin straw into gold.
The king then locked her up
and told her to spin
straw into gold.

(*Krause stands up, picks up the stool and examines it*)

This stool is very comfortable,
Where was it made? Hanau? Kassel?

JACOB: The story, Colonel Krause.

KRAUSE: Story? Ah yes, the story.
Now, of course,
she could not spin straw into gold,
but a wee little man
spun it for her,
but her first-born child would be his
unless she could guess his name.

(*the Grimms smile as they see some plot development. Krause, in the meantime, has fallen asleep.*)

WILHELM: Yes, this is good.

JACOB: Poignant. Complete.

ALL: And the name of the man was...?

(*Krause lets out a big snore.*)

JACOB: Not a problem.

WILHEM: Not for us!

BOTH: The magical, mystical Brothers Grimm!

(They primp themselves. Wilhelm writes.)

JACOB: There was a miller and his wife,

WILHELM: who had a daughter,

(Dortchen becomes the daughter)

BROTHERS: and they were all
very, very poor.

DORTCHEN: One day the King

VIEHMANN: called on the miller

DORT. & VIEH.: who, of course, wanted to impress.

ALL: So they told the King
their daughter could
spin straw into gold,
could spin straw into gold!

(Krause wakes up suddenly and becomes the miller. Viehmann becomes his wife.)

MILLER : I tell you,

MILLER & WIFE: she can spin straw into gold!

(there is an awkward pause. They all urge Jacob to become the king. Eventually, he relents, beginning to like the idea of being royalty.)

JACOB: Fabulous!
Wonderful!
Such a talent is unique.
I decree she remain
in the palace, with me.
That is all, my subjects,
Good day.

(the miller and his wife do not leave.)

Good day!

(the miller and his wife are confused, but exit, leaving their daughter behind. Jacob takes her forcibly by the arm)

Your father makes quite a claim,
let us prove that it is true.

(he goes backstage and brings out a spinning wheel which she attaches to one of the stools)

You must spin this straw into spools of gold
or face my wrath for lying!

(Jacob walks to Wilhelm at the side and the daughter attempts to exit but finds there is no way out. She sits on the other stool and begins to cry. Rumpelstiltskin, played by Brentano, pokes his head around the backdrop, then disappears. He then pokes his head around the other side of the backdrop. He enters stealthily.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Good even, lady fairest,

(the daughter is startled)

Why you do so cry?

DAUGHTER: Alas, I must spin
 this straw into gold
 or I will be killed.
 It can not be done.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: What give me you will
 if it, for you, I do?

(the daughter thinks for a moment then feels the necklace around her neck.)

DAUGHTER: My necklace,
 I will give you my necklace,
 My beautiful necklace.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: A deal, my lady,
 we have.

(she gives him her necklace and he sits and begins to spin.)

Round and round and round and round,
twist and twirl,
spin till spun,
spin till spun.

(The spinning wheel motive continues. After a moment the daughter looks around.)

WILHELM: Jacob, that's your cue!

(Jacob re-enters and sees the gold which the manikin has spun.)

QUEEN: Fabulous!
 Wonderful!
 You have done a lovely job.
 I was wise to keep you here
 Now please sit down
 and spin this straw
 into spools of gold.
 Or I will be unpleasant.

(Jacob returns to the side and the daughter sits down again. Rumpelstiltskin enters and she gives him her ring. He sits and spins.)

JACOB: And, again, the manikin
 spun the gold,
 and again the King was thrilled.
 But on the third long day,
 the daughter had no more to give.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Spin your gold, will I
 and save your life
 for one final thing.
 If the king you should wed,
 your first-born child I shall gain..

WILHELM: Wait, Jacob.
 First-born child?
 That is the same as Rapunzel,
 we have already done that.

JACOB: Well, Wilhelm,
 you can't beat the classics!

DAUGHTER: I am a poor miller's daughter,

plain and simple.
The king would never be mine.
So yes, I swear,
that if , by some chance,
I become the Queen,
my first-born child shall be yours.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: A smart choice, my lady.

(he spins the last amount of straw then bows to the daughter and exits. Jacob walks to her. He looks around the room, gazing at the piles of gold.)

KING: Fabulous!
 Wonderful!
 You have passed the test, my dear.
 Put impoverished thoughts behind you
 for you shall be my wife.

(the daughter holds ou her arms for a big hug. Jacob is unsure and looks at Wilhelm who laughs and motions for him to continue. They hug. Jacob returns to Wilhelm and the daughter exits R.)

WILHELM: And so her wildest dreams
 indeed did come true.

BROTHERS: The miller's daughter became a queen,

JACOB: and then in time,
 the queen became a mother.

(the daughter enters L. with a bundled baby in her arms. She is beaming and cuddling her baby when Rumpelstiltskin enters R.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: *(casually)* Good even, lady fairest,
 Come I here for my due.

DAUGHTER: What do you mean?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Why, silly be not, fair lady.
 Come I here for my baby.

DAUGHTER: My baby? My baby?
 Surely, you jest.
 Good man,
 that deal was years ago.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: (*trying to contain his anger*) Fairest lady, smart you would
be not to make me mad.
Your gold, spun I,
Your life, I saved.
(*yelling*) Now give to me what I am owed!

DAUGHTER: No!

*(Rumpelstiltskin walks towards her menacingly. He is about to grab the child
when he pulls back.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: You, I assure,
get what I want, I will,
what I want, what I will, I will get!
Keep, then you may, the teensy little babe
if you only but speak my name
My name? My name?
What the devil is my name?

DAUGHTER: Is it Melchior?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: No.

DAUGHTER: Is it Balthazar?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: No.

DAUGHTER: Is it Kaspar?

(Rumpelstiltskin becomes giddy.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: No, no, no.
That's not it.
Too bad, and oh so sad
what a shame, you're to blame
yet do not cry.
(*deadly serious*) Two days, have you.

(he runs off)

DAUGHTER: What could it be?
What could it be?
It is just a name.
A name!

Is it William or Clarence or Alfred or Roy?
Percy or Chessly or Sammy or Art?

(Rumpelstiltskin enters)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: No,no, no, no, no I am sorry,
through lovely they are,
none of those names
is the name that I'm named.
One day have you left!

(Rumpelstiltskin laughs as daughter runs off in tears. He is very pleased with himself)

Today I bake,
tomorrow brew,
the child I'll have and feel no shame.
Glad I am that no one knew
that Rumpelstiltskin is my name.
My name, my name...is Rumpelstiltskin!

(he dances off. The daughter enters, depressed.)

DAUGHTER: What shall I to do?
How can I save my baby?

(to audience)

Does anyone out there know his name?

(she waits for the audience response, quieting them)

Ripple Ice-cream?

(she encourages them again)

Pimple Zit-skin?

(she encourages them again. If no audience member yells out the name, she may solicit responses from the front row.)

Oh, Rumpelstiltskin? Rumpelstiltskin?!?
What kind of a silly name is that?
Are you trying to trick me?

(Rumpelstiltskin enters)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Well, dearest queen,
here we are,
and might say I,
Most patient I've been.
What will it be?

DAUGHTER: Is your name Tom?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Ho!

DAUGHTER: Is your name Dick?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Ha!

DAUGHTER: Harry?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Give up, you can win never.

DAUGHTER: Could it be...Rumpelstiltskin!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: What?!?
How could you?
Fair not, fair not!

(he moves to edge of backdrop)

Nobody, nobody knows my name.
Argh, argh, argh, argh!

JACOB: So the little imp was furious
and stomped his foot
into the earth.
And grabbing his arm,
and grabbing his arm,
he pulled himself in two!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN: Nobody knows my name!

(Rumpelstiltskin rips the coat, actually two pieces joined by velcro, in two, throwing one side out as he disappears backstage. The daughter kisses her baby, smiles, and runs off.)

BROTHERS: Dear brother,
I think that we have what it takes.
These stories will waken
the scholarly mind.
With foot-notes and end-notes,
listings of all quotes.
Think of the bibliographical style!

*(they raise their arms triumphantly but stop frozen when the bell rings backstage.
They look at each other, arms still in the air.)*

Come in!

(Brentano enters)

BRENTANO: Good evening, Brothers Grimm,
I'm glad that I've caught you.
Again the pleasure, is yours.
I have done alot of thinking,
things you would not understand,
and I believe that I have a thought.
I do not want a book of tales,
silly uninteresting, juvenile tales.
No one cares about common folk.
No one cares for common places.
So cease and desist for no one would care
for a book by the Brothers Grimm.
Farewell!

(he exits, the brothers, completely dejected, lower their arms.)

JACOB: Oh, why do we bother, brother?

WILHELM: Why do we even try?

BOTH: No one, but no one,
will ever care about the Brothers Grimm.

It is time for bed
and I feel so weary.
The day was a thrill,
but the night is so dreary.

*(they begin to prepare for bed, pulling out their shirts which are as long as
nightshirts. They take off their pants and get the quilt. They sit next to each other on the
stools and pull the quilt over themselves.)*

JACOB: Goodnight, Wilhelm.

WILHELM: Not really, Jacob.

BOTH: Sleep well,
and may your dreams
bring you peace.

(A long, loud bell is heard off-stage. The brothers pop awake, screaming. Dorthchen, Viehmann and Krause rush in.)

DORTCHEN: Wilhem! Jacob! Such wonderful news!

VIEHMANN: We have told the townsfolk about your book and everyone wants to read it.

KRAUSE: My grandson wants to be read to sleep.

VIEHMANN: The people who buy my book are enthralled.

DORTCHEN: And the schoolmaster wants copies for all of his schools - five hundred copies for all of his students.
Dear brothers...he paid in advance!

(She juggles a bag of coins. The brothers climb out of bed.)

BROTHERS: Could it be real?
Could it be true?
Could it be possible
someone actually cares?

We need to publish this book ourselves,
and show the world that they should believe
in wolves that can talk,
and straw turned to gold,
and witches in towers,
and fairies and dwarves,
in dragons and giants,
and what it is like to be young!

ALL: What it is like to be young.

Riches to hardly imagine,
fame that will carpet the world.
and finally someone

will care very much for the book,
by the Brothers Grimm.
Yes, happily ever after we'll read
the book by the Brothers Grimm!

*(Jacob and Wilhelm hold the book above them. The front has been removed and
it now reads. The Brothers Grimm.)*

The End