SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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SF PERUSALS

Rumpelstiltzkin

A pantomime

Norman Robbins

Samuel French — London
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RUMPELSTILTZKIN

CHARACTERS

King Marmaduke of Mirth
Prince Roland, his son
Alan, Squire to the Prince
Rosamund, his sweetheart
Mother Hubbard, the Miller's widow
Grettle, her daughter
Sammy Slowcoach, the village simpleton
Baron Bludshot of Grabitt Hall
Smash, **Grabb** } The Baron's Men
Rumpelstiltzkin, an evil gnome
A Herald, **A Footman** } may be doubled if desired
Guards, Villagers, Courtiers

Act I Scene 1 The Village of Merrivale, in the Kingdom of Mirth
Scene 2 Outside the North Tower
Scene 3 Inside the North Tower

Act II Scene 1 The Throne-room of the Palace. Three years later
Scene 2 A path in the Great Forest
Scene 3 The Throne-room of the Palace

FOREWORD

This version of the Rumpelstiltzkin legend was originally written as a children's play, and as such, achieved reasonable success in local schools and church drama groups around my home town.

Some time later, I was approached with a request to re-work the play into pantomime form to mark the opening of a new theatre in a youth club a few miles away. The result was a highly spectacular and lavish pantomime involving Golden Spiders (who wove the flax into gold), skeletons dancing in the North Tower, a ballet of deer and rabbits in the forest, and much, much more. The youth club organisers were delighted with it, but pointed out with regret that their stage could hold no more than ten people at once.

When I'd recovered from this staggering news, I scrapped my new version and began all over again, this time confining the action and number of characters to the tiny space available. It was a huge success, and one which has been repeated several times.

The script you *now* have, combines the two styles of writing, and is a blend of straight play and traditional pantomime, so the would-be-director may choose for him- or her-self which best suits their requirements.

If as a play, omit the songs (which should be of a popular type), and any dialogue leading into a song. Add your own dialogue as required to give your performers exits.

If as a pantomime, insert songs as indicated, plus Lane scenes if required.

There is no hard and fast rule about inserting more musical numbers than printed. Many places in the script offer scope for additional songs and dances, and if you feel up to a ballet of Golden Spiders at the end of the Tower scene, then by all means go ahead. You'll find the effort well worth while.

Scenery is very simple, and may be played in drapes with cardboard cut-outs to illustrate the Tower, Throne-room, etc., but traditional painted scenery will score over this any time.

Costumes may be as simple or elaborate as possible, and the whole thing played on a stage ten feet by four feet or the size of Drury Lane.

Props have been kept to a minimum.

Playing time: As a play (with a 15-minute interval) approx 80 minutes.
As a pantomime (15-minute interval) 90 minutes upwards.

Norman Robbins 1978

For
Adam Godfrey Robbins

ACT I

SCENE I

The village of Merrivale in the Kingdom of Mirth

A typical pantomime village square. The backcloth shows the Great Forest, and in the distance, the Royal Palace atop a mountain. The Mill, home of Mother Hubbard and her daughter Grettle, is up L, and an archway connects it to the house downstage of it. Other buildings can be seen up and down R of the square. If possible, a small bridge may be situated almost against the backcloth, its other end vanishing behind the buildings R, and leading to the Forest

When the CURTAIN *rises, the Villagers are singing and dancing*

SONG I

At the end of the song, the Villagers quickly divide themselves into small groups about the stage, huddle close together, and chatter brightly amongst themselves with sudden bursts of laughter and the occasional cheer. After a moment, the Mill door opens, and Grettle appears, wreathed with smiles

Grettle (*cheerily*) Hello, ev'ryone. (*She closes the door behind her and trips lightly down centre*)

No-one appears to have heard her, as there is no reaction. She looks slightly surprised, then tries again.

I said "Hello, ev'rybody".

There is still no reaction, so she goes to the group nearest to her and gently taps one of the boys on the shoulder. He turns to her, and she smiles at him

Hello.

Boy (*smiling*) Oh, hello, Grettle. Have *you* come to join in the new game too? It's ever so much fun.

Grettle (*hesitantly*) Well—I don't know. What is it?

Boy "Ladder-words", of course. *Everybody*'s playing it. All over the village. Look. (*He indicates the groups*) You *must* try it, Grettle. (*To the others*) Mustn't she?

The others all move down to them, nodding and smiling

Grettle Well—I'd *love* to—but I don't know how. I mean—I've never even *heard* of it before.

Girl (*smiling*) Of course you haven't. It's a *new* game. We only found out about it this morning. From a little gipsy boy.

Grettle Oh. Well, it certainly must be something special to keep you all so interested. How do you play it?

Boy It's easy. You simply take any word of four or more letters, and by altering them one letter at a time, make it into a completely different one.
Grettle *That* doesn't sound too difficult.

All chuckle

Girl That's what *you* think. You see, every time you change a letter, the word you make has to be a *proper* one. Look, I'll show you.

She motions to two of the boys who run off and return with a blackboard, easel and chalk. The boys set the easel and board, and the girl takes the chalk

We'll take the word "Fish"—(*she writes it on the board*) and change it to the word "Tent". (*she writes it on the bottom of the board*) Right? Now first we change the H to a T. That gives you FIST. (*She writes it under the word Fish*) Now change the F to an M, and that gives you MIST. (*She writes it under Fist*) The S to an N gives you MINT. (*She writes it under Mist*) The M to a T gives you TINT. (*She writes it under Mint*) and lastly the I to an E to get TENT. See? (*She indicates the final word*)
Grettle But that's *easy*. Anyone can do *that*.
Boy Oh yes? Well in that case, we'll think up a word for you to try it with. Then we'll see how easy it is. Come on, gang, gather round.

With excited laughs, the crowd huddle together for a moment, while Grettle moves away

Grettle (*calling*) And no very long words, if you don't mind. I'm only a beginner, remember.

The group breaks up, and the girl moves to Grettle

Girl Here's a good one for you. Take the word "Flax"—and change it into "Gold".
Grettle (*with a laugh*) "Flax" into "Gold"? Oh, I'm sure I can do that easily enough. Who's got the chalk?
Boy (*laughing*) Oh, no. Not so fast, Miss Grettle. You haven't to use the blackboard. You've got to do this in your head.

All agree

Grettle Oh, well, in that case ... (*She thinks*) Change the F to a—a ... No—wait. I mean the A to an E.
Girl That gives you "Flex".
Grettle Now the X to a W—and the—no. No. Wait a moment. The X to a B—I mean *D*—and the E to a—a—a ... Oh, dear ...

The Villagers look amused

(*ruefully*) It's not as simple as it looks, is it?
Boy (*laughing*) Never mind, Grettle. Keep trying and you'll soon get the hang of it. We're off to think up some more words to use, but don't forget to let us know how you work it out. There's nothing like an "easy" game to keep you occupied, is there?

The Villagers all laugh and exit happily, taking the blackboard and easel with them

Grettle Change the X to an E—I mean D—and the A to a—a—a ... Oh, it's no use. I'll never be able to do it. Change the X to a W ...

Sammy Slowcoach enters up right

Sammy Hello, Grettle.
Grettle (*looking up*) Oh, hello, Sammy. (*She turns away*) The L to an E.
Sammy Is that algebra you're doing, Grettle? For your homework?
Grettle Of course it isn't, Sammy. We don't *do* algebra at our school.
Sammy Don't you?
Grettle No. (*She frowns*) The E to a B—I mean O—no *A*.
Sammy Well if you're not doing algebra, what *are* you doing?
Grettle (*with a sigh*) If you really *must* know, Sammy, I'm trying to turn "Flax" into "Gold".
Sammy Oh, is that all? I once knew a man who ... (*He realizes*) Eh? You're doing what?
Grettle Trying to turn "Flax" into "Gold". Now please go away.
Sammy (*peering closely at her*) Er—do you feel all right, Grettle?
Grettle Of course I do. (*She sighs*) Well, if you're not going to go away, you may as well try to help me.
Sammy (*hesitantly*) To turn Flax into Gold?
Grettle That's right.
Sammy (*edging away*) Oh—well—I—er—I don't think *I'd* be much help to you there, Grettle. The—er—the only thing *I* know, is how to turn a horse into a field.
Grettle (*interested*) Really? And how do you do *that*?
Sammy Just open the gate and shove it through.
Grettle (*making a face*) I should have known better than to ask *you* for help, shouldn't I? Never mind. I'll just have to work it out for myself.

Grettle exits slowly down L, still puzzling

Sammy (*looking after her*) Well—either she's crackers, or I am. Trying to turn Flax into *Gold*? (*He laughs*) Still—(*to the audience*)—we mustn't laugh, must we? Mustn't point the skinger of fawn. I mean—she's not always like that, you know. Most of the time, she's as sane as I am. (*Suddenly he points into the audience*) I heard that. You laughed, didn't you? Yes you *did*. You think just because I'm dressed in funny clothes, I'm a bit simple, don't you? (*He pauses*) Well you're right. I am. But I'm not *that* simple. I'm smart enough not to let Mother Hubbard trap me into marrying her. Mother Hubbard. (*He chuckles*) Have you seen her, yet? Oh, you will. She owns that Mill over there. (*He points to it*) And Grettle's her daughter. You wouldn't think somebody as ugly as Mother Hubbard would have a nice daughter like her, would you? But it's true. I mean—if a woman's face is her fortune—*she'll* never have to pay any income tax. (*He laughs*) Still, looks aren't everything, are they? In her case, they aren't anything. (*He laughs again*) Mind you—she's got a fascinating left eye. Honest. An absolutely fascinating left eye.

I mean—it *must* be, mustn't it? Her right one keeps looking at it. (*He crosses his eyes and laughs*)

The door of the Mill opens, and Mother Hubbard enters

She used to be a model, you know, did Mother Hubbard. Oh, yes. Where do you think Cadbury's got their *mis-shapes* from? (*He laughs*) Oh—it's a good job she can't hear what I'm telling you about her. She wouldn't half have something to say.

Mother Hubbard (*grimly*) You're so right. (*She rolls up her sleeves*)

Sammy She went into the cornfield last week and frightened the birds so badly, they brought back the corn they pinched *last* year.

Mother Hubbard (*moving down to him with menace*) Did they really?

Sammy (*looking round at her*) Yes. (*He turns back to the audience*) And yesterday, when she ... (*He realizes and spins back round to face her*) Oh—ecky thump. (*Weakly*) Hello, Mother Hubbard.

Mother Hubbard (*fiercely*) Don't you "Hello, Mother Hubbard" me, you—you poor man's Rudolph Vaselino. Open your mouth.

Sammy (*nervously*) W-what for?

Mother Hubbard (*waving her fist*) I'm going to put *this* in it.

Sammy (*cringing*) Oh, don't hit me, Mother Hubbard. I was only joking. Honest I was. It was only for a laugh.

Mother Hubbard Only for a laugh, was it? (*Loudly*) Well let's see you laugh this one off. (*She waves her fist again*)

Sammy Wait—wait. Ask the boys and girls, if you don't believe me. They'll tell you I was only kidding—(*To the audience*)—won't you? (*To Mother Hubbard*) You see? As a matter of fact—just before you came on, I was telling them how BEAUTIFUL and INTELLIGENT you were. (*To the audience*) Wasn't I? (He nods his head furiously to them)

Mother Hubbard (*to the audience*) Was he?

Audience reaction

Sammy Oooooooh, you big fibbers. Ooooooooh.

Mother Hubbard (*turning to him*) Right. That's done it. Come here.

Sammy You don't want to take any notice of that lot, Mother Hubbard. They'll say *anything*, they will. (*To someone in the audience*) Just you wait. I'll get you for this. (*To Mother Hubbard*) I was telling them about your lovely complexion and things.

Mother Hubbard My what? (*She pauses*)

Sammy Your lovely complexion.

Mother Hubbard (*preening*) Oh, Sammy. Were you really?

Sammy Of course I was. I was telling them I didn't know how you managed to keep looking so smashing all the time.

Mother Hubbard Is that right?

Sammy Of course it is.

Mother Hubbard Shall I tell you?

Sammy I wish you would.

Mother Hubbard Well—I use a good rouge to bring out my cheekbones. A good mascara brings out my eyes. A good lipstick brings out my lips ...

Sammy (*to the audience*) And a good sneeze brings out her teeth.
Mother Hubbard (*fiercely*) What was that?
Sammy (*quickly*) Nothing.
Mother Hubbard Yes—and another "nothing" like that one, and you're going to end up flat on your back in—(*she names the local hospital*)
Sammy (*worried*) Oh, you wouldn't send me into that place, would you, Mother Hubbard? They took Tom the Piper's son in there last week after he swallowed that fifty pence piece, and he hasn't come out yet.
Mother Hubbard Oh. How is he?
Sammy (*shrugging*) No change. (*He laughs*)

Mother Hubbard hits him with her bag

Mother Hubbard Anyway—I'm glad I've found you. I've got something else to settle with you. (*She begins to search in her bag*)
Sammy Eh? (*He backs away*) But it wasn't me. I mean—I didn't do it.
Mother Hubbard (*looking up*) Didn't do what?
Sammy Whatever it was you *think* I've done.
Mother Hubbard Oh. So you haven't done *anything*.
Sammy (*nodding*) No. Nothing at all.
Mother Hubbard I see. (*With a big smile*) Well that's all right then, isn't it?
Sammy (*shaking his head*) Yes.
Mother Hubbard And I won't have to pay you, will I?
Sammy (*blankly*) Pay me??? (*He remembers*) Oh—pay me. Yes. Of course. It's payday, isn't it?
Mother Hubbard (*beaming*) That's right.
Sammy Oh—but Mother Hubbard. You can't not pay me my wages. It wouldn't be fair.
Mother Hubbard And why not, pray? You just told me you hadn't done anything, didn't you?
Sammy Well—yes. But ...
Mother Hubbard Well I'm certainly not going to pay you for doing nothing, am I? The only people who get paid for doing nothing are politicians.
Sammy But, Mother Hubbard, you've *got* to pay me. I need the money to get married.
Mother Hubbard Married? Married? Who'd want to marry a half brained twerp like you?
Sammy Well, your Grettle might.
Mother Hubbard Our Grettle? You've some hopes. And anyway—what's she got that I haven't?
Sammy Nothing—but you've had yours a lot longer.
Mother Hubbard Is that so? Well you *can't* marry our Grettle because ...
Sammy Oh, it's all right. It doesn't bother *me* about her being crackers.
Mother Hubbard That's as may be, but ... (*She realizes*) Here—are you asking for a belt round the earhole? What do you mean, you don't mind her being crackers?
Sammy Well—I saw her a few minutes ago, and she said she was trying to change Flax into Gold.
Mother Hubbard And what's wrong with that? *Anybody* can change Fla ...

She what? (*She puts her hand to her face*) She must be off her rocker. Oh, I knew there was a touch of her Uncle Fred in her.

Sammy Uncle Fred? Who's he?

Mother Hubbard My late husband's brother. He thought he was a hen for over fifteen years.

Sammy Why didn't they get the doctor to cure him?

Mother Hubbard Because they were too busy selling the eggs, stupid.

Grettle enters excitedly

Grettle I've done it. I've done it. I've turned "Flax" into "Gold".

Mother Hubbard (*reacting*) Ooo-er. (*She hurries to her*) Now just sit down and take it easy. I'll go get the doctor.

Grettle (*brightly*) It was so *easy* after all. You simply change the X to an N.

Mother Hubbard Eggs to a hen. Oh, I knew it. It's all Uncle Fred's fault.

Grettle *That* gives you FLAN.

Sammy Oh—she's on about cakes, now.

Grettle Then the F to C, which gives you CLAN ...

Mother Hubbard (*wailing*) Clan. I *knew* it was Uncle Fred. He was a Scotsman. Clan Mackintosh, he was. Always wet.

Grettle (*frowning*) What *are* you talking about, Mother?

Mother Hubbard Your Uncle Fred.

Sammy No she isn't. She's Grettle.

Grettle (*baffled*) I don't understand.

Sammy (*horrified*) She's lost her memory.

Mother Hubbard (*sobbing*) Oh—my poor daughter. She's got Ambrosia.

Grettle (*staring at her mother*) What *is* it?

Sammy (*to Grettle*) It's your *mother*.

Mother Hubbard (*wailing louder*) Oh, she doesn't recognize me.

Grettle Of *course* I recognize you, Mother. Whatever's the matter?

Mother Hubbard (*delightedly*) Oh, Sammy—she recognizes me. Her memory's come back. (*She flings her arms around Grettle*) She's *cured*.

Grettle (*blankly*) Cured? But, Mother—there's nothing wrong with me.

Mother Hubbard Of course there isn't, love. Now just you come and have a little rest while I make you a nice cup of tea. (*She begins to lead Grettle toward the Mill*)

Grettle (*protesting*) But I don't *want* a rest, Mother. I want to find all the others and tell them I've done it. I've changed "Flax" into "Gold".

Mother Hubbard reels

And it only took five tries.

Sammy (*pulling Mother Hubbard to one side*) We'd better humour her.

Mother Hubbard (*weakly*) I wish somebody would humour me. (*She wipes her eyes*)

Sammy Don't worry, Mother Hubbard. Just try to keep her happy.

Mother Hubbard Happy? (*She wails*)

Grettle looks bewildered

Sammy (*to Grettle*) So—er—so you finally managed it, did you?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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