**Rumpelstiltskin/1419**

Jessie Hill was 28, married, and living the life of her dreams, far away from the horrors that once described her life, little did she know, that was all about to change…

Jessie stood by a large window, staring out at the February snow, her husband Renni was going to be home any second and she had great news she couldn't wait to tell him. After a few minutes, the door opened, and Rennie came in and set his stuff down in the usual place. He looked tired as usual. Jessie turned to face him, an apprehensive smile on her face, “Hey Rennie, I've got some big news…” Rennie, looking curiously, smiled, “What is it babe.” Jessie hesitated and then took a deep breath, saying, “I'm pregnant.” Rennie stared in shock. He couldn't believe what he was hearing, but he was over the moon. He smiled and picked Jessie up and spun her around. His smile going from ear to ear, he said, “This is amazing. I’m going to be a dad!” Jessie was overjoyed that he was happy.

Months passed by full of love and anticipation for the new arrival, but something dark seemed to be looming. A nameless shadow around the house and a horrible feeling that Jessie just couldn't shake “Hey Rennie, have you been noticing anything weird lately?” Rennie just shrugged and went about his chores, while jessie stared out the window, at the now spring sky, suddenly out of the corner of her eye, she saw what she thought was the shadow of a little man. She stood there stunned and then shook her head and the shadow had disappeared. She tried to tell herself that she was just imagining things or that she was just paranoid. Days passed and she had all but forgotten about the little man, but Rennie assured her she was just paranoid. This did very little to ease her worries.

She decided to distract herself by getting busy with preparations for the baby. She spent time painting a small bedroom a pastel green and adorning it with cute stuffed animals and fluffy blankets. As spring turned to summer her due date was approaching fast and as the days passed the uneasy feeling grew again. Rennie reassured her that it was just normal worries about having the baby. Jessie agreed and life continued and finally the day was here and after hours of labor, Jessie held her newborn baby girl in her arms. Jessie was overjoyed and Rennie was even happier. Soon, Rennie’s grin turned into an evil sneer. Jessie looked at him confused and slightly scared. Suddenly, Rennie started shrinking and turned into a small ugly old man, with eyes black as Coal and a cold hard sneer. In horror, Jessie remembered back and then memories of the past she’d hoped to have left behind, filled her mind.

A long time ago, Jessie was a 6-year-old girl, walking down a city street with her parents. She had looked around in wonder at the tall buildings and stores, when, out of nowhere, two men in black masks appeared around a corner and shot her parents. Jessie stared down at her parents, horrified, as their blood covered the sidewalk, with Jessie, unable to move or speak. The men then scooped her up and ran off. The world blurred and she woke up chained in a small room and there she would stay for years. Her kidnappers were horrible and abused her in many ways. All Jessie could do was stare and hope for a rescue that never seemed to come. But one day, when Jessie was 16, she sat in her cell, staring at the stone walls shed spent all her time in, waiting for the day’s rations of bread and a cup of water, when a small ugly old man appeared. She looked at him and didn’t flinch, as she couldn’t imagine anything worse than the horrors she was going through right now. As the old man slowly approached her, she watched, his legs looking like sticks as he hobbled across the ground. He spoke, his voice a raspy whisper, “My poor girl.” Jessie stared at him confused, but the old man could see the desperate pleas in her eyes. “I might be able to help you… for a price…” Jessie stared and then slowly responded “a price?” The old man grinned, his smile unnaturally long with twisted teeth, “Oh, yes. I can get you out of here and to the life you've always wanted… just sign here” Jessie looked down as a yellow scroll appeared. She only stared in disbelief. Jessie only had faint memories of the outside world and yet she missed it more than anything she could think of. Jessie didn't ask any questions and signed the yellow scroll. The man grinned, his smile stretching eerily from ear to ear, his dark eyes gleaming with something sinister. Once the scroll was signed, she woke up in the soft bed of a small apartment. She never saw the old man again and went on with her life, thinking that now, maybe, she had a chance. Her life went perfectly; she almost never wondered what the price was. She built a life and after a while, she met Rennie. They hit it off and she always noted his weird smile but nonetheless she was in love, and they soon married. Life finally seemed to be going right.

That was then, and now the truth and the price had all become a way to destroy everything she thought she knew about her life, and it had come crashing down. The little man sneered and snatched the baby and spoke in a harsh tone, “The baby’s my price!” He laughed wickedly and suddenly a little boy came running into the room. The boy looked at the small man and said, “Wait, you can get your baby back if you guess this monster’s name in three days!” Jessie stared now, not being able to process everything that had just transpired, but despite that, she started riddling off names as fast as her tongue could go, but he just shook his head at every word. What happened was as many people as Jessie could find, saying every name they knew, and a day passed. Jessie stared out the window of the hospital and what was a sunny summer day seemed dark and dreary. She tried desperately to come up with more names, but her brain was stuck as she began to think her loving husband had been this old man all along and maybe she never really had what she always thought she did. She could barely handle the thought that everything she had had all been a lie and had now been taken away. These thoughts swirled endlessly in her head, and she still couldn’t believe it had happened. When Jessie stopped thinking, she had been staring out the window for hours. She started riddling off more names, till her throat was dry and she could barely speak. Doctors and onlookers tried to help, but no one had any success. Jessie tried desperately not to think about anything but names, but it became harder as time passed and it was now hitting midnight and she only had 24 hours left. Jessie continued saying names and then writing them after she had lost her voice. Tears began to fill her eyes as she tried desperately to think of more names. The prospect of losing everything she had left, looming closer. Now Jessie frantically hoped this would be the part where a miracle saved her, but it wasn’t. Jessie had to face the truth.

As midnight hit, the little man and the baby and all the people disappeared, and she woke up in a mental hospital. The hard truth she had to face was that none of that was real, nothing about her life was real. Jessie was a paranoid schizophrenic with delusions. Jessie stared, now finally understanding she had been in the hospital all her life. Her whole life had been a delusion. Jessie stared down at the floor, once again, feeling everything, she thought she had, slip away from her. Even if it wasn’t real, it was the closest she came to happiness, and it had all disappeared with her imaginary little man and somehow jessie had managed to lose everything in and out of real life.