

Rapunzel

*Originally collected by the Brothers Grimm
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Once upon a time there lived a young couple who were expecting a baby. They lived in a house in the forest, next door to a witch. One day, the young wife was working in the garden when she stopped to take a rest, and looked over the wall into the witch's garden. There she saw growing the most beautiful lettuces and the young wife suddenly thought that what she wanted more than anything else in the world was to eat lettuce for her tea. So, that evening when her husband came home, she persuaded him to climb over the wall and steal one of the lettuces from the witch's garden. The husband was very reluctant, but his wife begged him with tears in her eyes, and at last he consented, because he loved his wife very much. So that night, after dark, he climbed over the wall into the witch's garden and pulled up a lettuce. Then he climbed back over the wall and he was safe! The young couple ate that lettuce for their tea and they enjoyed it very much.

The next day, in the afternoon, the young wife looked out of her window as she was working in her kitchen, and again she saw the lettuces in the witch's garden. Her mouth began to water. That evening when her husband came home she asked him for a second time to climb over the witch's wall and steal for her a lettuce. The young man was still reluctant, but when he thought how easy it had been to do the first time, and how much he had enjoyed that lettuce, he agreed. That night, like the night before, he climbed into the garden, stole a lettuce, and climbed back again, without being caught.

The next day, the young wife asked her husband a third time to steal a lettuce, and this time he agreed straight away. But something terrible happened! This time, the witch was lying in wait for the young man, and when he set foot in her garden she cried out straight away, "Aha! You are the thief who has been stealing my lettuce! You will pay for this with your life!"

The young man, terrified, fell to his knees and began to plead to the witch. He told her that he was only stealing the lettuce for his wife, who was expecting their baby very soon. When the witch heard this, she agreed to spare his life and let him go – on the condition that when the baby was born, the young couple give it to the witch for the witch to bring up as her own child. The young man was still so terrified that he agreed immediately, and scrambled back over the wall.

Two months later, the baby was born, and the young couple handed the baby over to the witch with tears in their eyes. The baby was a little girl, and they had called her Rapunzel. Rapunzel grew up in the witch's house, thinking that the witch was her mother. Her real mother died of grief not long after her birth.

Rapunzel grew fair and beautiful, with long golden hair. She had a lovely voice and she liked to sing. But one day, when she was twelve years old, the witch found she was jealous of Rapunzel's grace and sweet nature and she took her deep into the forest and locked her in a room in the top of a tall tower. The tower had no staircase, but just one window. Every evening the witch went to visit Rapunzel. She stood at the bottom of the tower and called up to her, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!" And Rapunzel would stand at the window and let down her long golden hair, which she had plaited into a strong golden plait, as strong as a rope, for the witch to climb up and visit her.

And so it went on for many years. Rapunzel lived in the little room in the top of the tower, and every evening she would let down her hair, which was growing longer and longer, for the witch to climb up and visit her.

One day, a king's son was riding his horse through the forest when he heard a voice, singing. He thought it was the most magical thing he had ever heard, and he rode closer, trying to find where the singing was coming from. As he reached the clearing in which stood the tower, he saw the witch appearing. As she looked very evil, the prince hid himself in among the trees, and he saw the witch stand below the window and cry, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!" Then he saw the long rope of hair come swinging down and the witch climb up to the room at the top. The witch stayed with Rapunzel for an hour and the prince hid all the while in the trees and waited. When he finally saw that the witch had gone, he left his horse and went to the foot of the tower and he cried, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!" The long rope of hair came down immediately, and the prince climbed up it easily. When he reached the tower room, Rapunzel was scared to see the prince instead of the witch, but the prince quickly reassured her. He thought she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen and he fell immediately in love with her. As for Rapunzel, she fell in love too. She was used to the company of the witch, and the prince was so

charming and handsome that she realized how lonely she really was. That night the prince stayed for several hours, and when he left it was with promises to return. And so it went on – the prince came to visit every day just as the witch did, but he was very careful to hide whenever he saw the witch approach.

One day, however, the witch came to the tower and shouted “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!” As soon as she had climbed to the top, Rapunzel said, “Mother, why are you so heavy? When the prince climbs up my hair I hardly notice the weight.” As soon as she said this she became very frightened, because she saw that the witch was very angry.

“So you have been visited by a prince, have you!” she said, and she cut off Rapunzel’s beautiful long plait and cast Rapunzel out into the forest. That evening, the witch stayed in wait in the tower room, and when she heard the prince call, “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!” she lowered Rapunzel’s plait out of the window for the prince to climb up. Imagine the prince’s horror when he came face to face with the witch and not his beloved Rapunzel! He was so surprised that he let go of the plait of hair and fell to the bottom of the tower, into some thorn bushes. The thorns scratched him all over and even went into his eyes and blinded him. Howling with pain, the prince ran away into the forest and the witch stayed in her tower, laughing with triumph.

The prince wandered lost and blind for many years in his kingdom. He earned money by begging coins, or husks of bread. One day, when he was stumbling along a country road, he heard a familiar voice, singing a familiar tune. Even though he could not see her face, he knew it was his Rapunzel! Crying out her name, the prince ran towards her, and as soon as Rapunzel recognized him, she threw herself into his arms. She was so happy to see him that she began to cry. Two of her tears landed on his eyes and restored his sight.

Overjoyed, the happy couple made their way to the castle, where the prince discovered that while he had been lost and blind, his father, the king, had died. Luckily his mother recognized him and the prince was given his throne and crowned King. He married Rapunzel, who became his queen, and they lived happily every after.

The End