



In a clearing in the middle of a wood a tall tower stretched up towards the sky. A fat little man had been building it for months; puffing and panting up ladders, pushing and stretching until the last brick was placed and the tower was finished.

His round tummy rumbles, his mouth watered. He could almost smell the beautiful dinners that would be cooked at the top of his tower.

He did not waste a moment but climbed on his horse and trotted away as fast as he could to find the most wonderful cook in the world.

For days and weeks he crept around kitchen windows and crawled around dining-room doors, his nose twitching and his lips smacking until one day he smelt the most truly delicious smell in the world, stewed rapunzel leaves. He stood up on tip-toe and peered through the kitchen window. A girl was working at the stove. She had a long plait wound many times around her head and she sang as she worked.

"There she is, there she is," squeaked the fat little man. "I will capture her. I will take her back to my tower and she will cook me stewed rapunzel leaves every day".

He grabbed a log from the wood-pile and hid behind the kitchen door. As the girl came out he hit her on the head, heaved her up on to his horse and rode away to his tower. When the girl woke up, feeling sick and dizzy, they had already arrived.

"Come along; come along my dear," said the fat little man, bustling her through the door. "You'll soon feel better"

He took her arms and helped her up the winding steps to the little room at the top of the tower.

"What on earth has happened and where am I?" asked the girl looking round the room.

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, you are here at last," rumbled the fat little man.

"My name is Rachael, and I would like to know what is happening."

"Well, I will call you Rapunzel, my very dear Rapunzel, because that is my favourite food. I have brought you here to cook for me and everytime I come you must have made the most truly delicious meal in the world. Cook the food that is here and tomorrow I shall return. Oh Rapunzel, I am so glad to have found you at last. Do not think you can escape. I will bolt the door to this room and brick up the entrance to the tower." and the fat little man left the room and locked the heavy door behind him.

Rachael banged and kicked on the door, but it was useless. She ran to the window, but the room at the top of the tower was higher than the tallest tree in the forest. There was no way down. Rachael was angry. Rachael was furious. But she knew that until she could think of a way to escape she had no choice but to cook for the fat little man.

The next day Rachael heard a puffing and a panting, a creaking and a groaning. She leaned out of the window and saw the fat little man struggling up a ladder. On he climbed until he reached the top and there he clung, filled with dismay.

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, help me," he called. "The ladder is too short, I cannot reach the window. You must let down your hair so that I can climb up it."

RAPUNZEL



Rachael looked down at the little man.

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair, I'm hungry," called the fat man again.

Rachael unpinned her plait and let it down from the window of the tower. What a struggle that round little man had! How he puffed as he climbed up the long rope of hair. But at last he clambered in through the window, and as soon as he had his breath back he sat down and ate the food which Rachael had cooked. Stewed rapunzel leaves to start with, followed by rapunzel rissoles with baked Rapunzel. Fresh cream and custard to finish. It was delicious. Then the fat little man unpacked the ingredients for the next day's meal and left the tower the way he had come in; taking the ladder away with him.

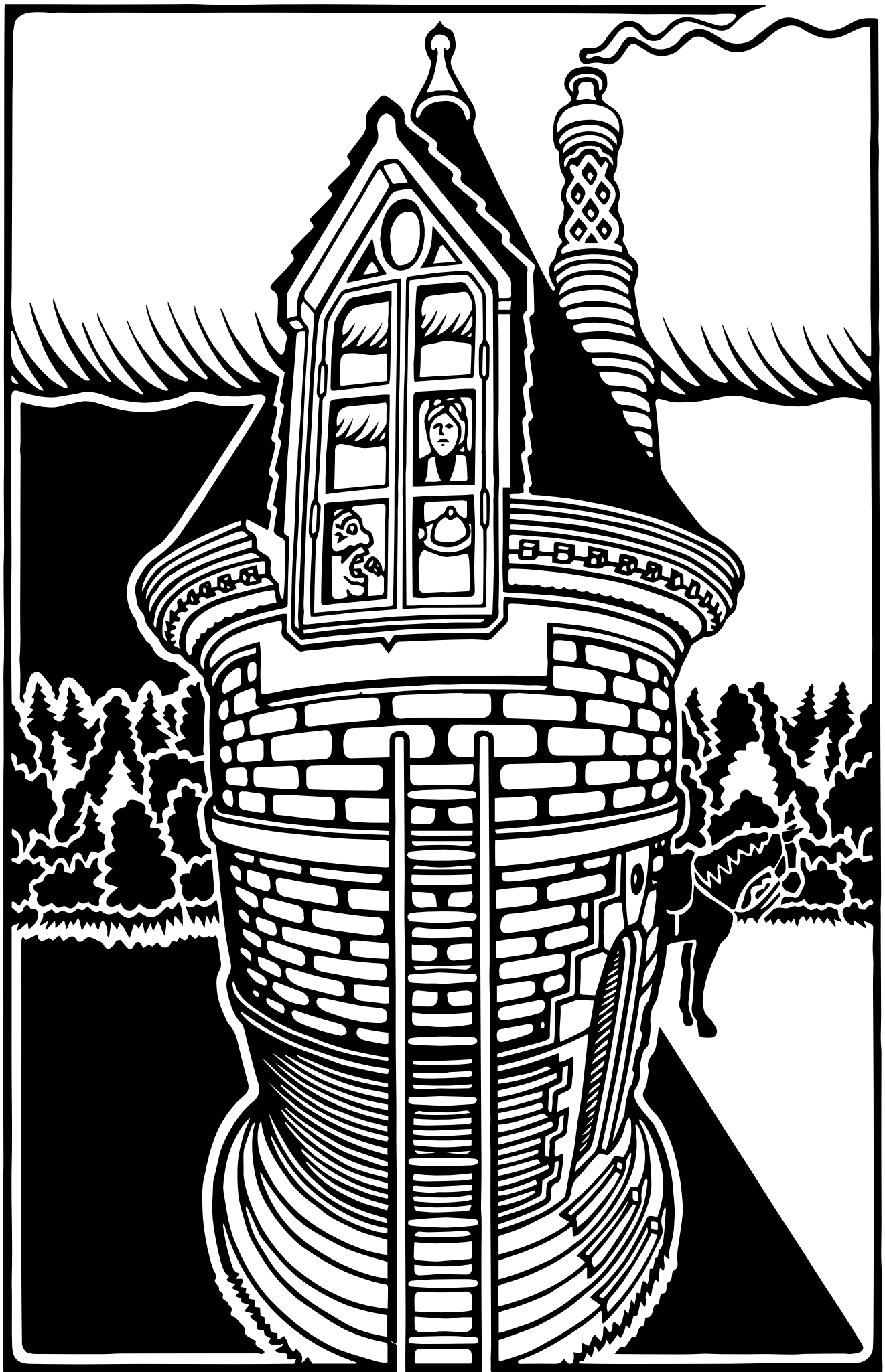
Day after day the same thing happened. Day after day the call would come: "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair, I'm hungry."

Day after day a beautiful meal would be cooked and eaten. Usually there would be rapunzel of some sort, but Rachael also cooked many other wonderful things.

Now no-one knows why, but Rachael's long hair began to grow and grow. Maybe it was the weight of the fat little man. Maybe it was all the rapunzel leaves she was eating, but as the fat little man grew rounder and rounder, Rachael's hair grew longer and longer, and each time he called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair, I'm hungry," he had to climb fewer and fewer rungs of the ladder before he could reach the long plait - and Rachael began to count!

On the day she made chocolate mousse the fat little man climbed only seven rungs of the ladder.



On the day she cooked roast duck with rapunzel sauce the fat little man climbed only six rungs of the ladder.

On the day she made trifle and rapunzel cakes the fat little man climbed only five rungs of the ladder.

On the day she made chocolate cake with rapunzel cream filling the fat little man climbed only four rungs of the ladder.

On the day she cooked chicken with rapunzel stuffing the fat little man only climbed three rungs of the ladder.

And on the day she made rapunzel salad with lobsters in cream sauce the greedy man climbed only two rungs of the ladder before his fat little hands could reach the end of Rachel's plait.

Rachael could hardly hide her excitement as he ate his dinner. She even waved to him as he climbed down her hair and trotted contentedly away on his horse.

As soon as he was out of sight, Rachael picked up a sharp kitchen knife and put it in her pocket. She hitched up her skirts, tied the end of her plait to the window frame and began to climb down her own hair. When at last she reached the bottom of the tower she cut off her hair with the knife and left the long plait hanging from the window. She had escaped! She looked around, laughed aloud, and set off into the forest.



Authors' Notes

This story is one of a number which were going to be published originally as a book called Once and Future Tales for which we wrote this introduction.

This is a book of traditional fairy tales rewritten by four women in Merseyside Women's Liberation Movement.

We have been told by some people that we have no right to alter traditional fairy tales - they are part of our heritage. It is true that we are attacking a heritage; the heritage of a competitive and acquisitive society where the majority of people are inevitably under the control of a rich and powerful minority.

We have also been told that such work is trivial; we should be involved in direct political action. Fairy tales ARE political. They help to form children's values and teach them to accept our society and their roles in it. Central to this society is the assumption that domination and submission are the natural basis of all our relationships. This is clearly seen in the models provided by fairy tale heroes and heroines. Boys are required to go out and seek their fortune. The most daring and resourceful of them win power, riches and property - possession of the princess and half the Kingdom. Girls are required to be pretty, dutiful and compliant. The lucky ones will be rewarded with a life of decorative idleness as the wife of a prince. Traditional fairy tales encourage children to admire these values; acquisitive aggression in men and the dutiful nurturing of this aggression by women.

This book of stories has been written in the belief that our society can never be fundamentally changed while children's imaginations are imprisoned by its myths.

LIVERPOOL 1972

This story was collectively written in 1972 by Audrey Ackroyd, Marge Ben-Tovim, Catherine Meredith and Anne Neville, and illustrated by Trevor Skempton.

In collaboration with the authors and for FACT's (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) season dedicated to the exploration of gender, identity and representation, we have reissued a limited edition of Once and Future Tales.

Join us in celebrating the feminist retellings of Snow White, Rapunzel and Red Riding Hood and pick up your own limited edition from FACT for £2 each or a set of three tales for £5.

Enjoy a series of fairy tale inspired events throughout April, May and June 2019 including two special events where we'll be reading the Once and Future Tales aloud and hearing from the women who rewrote the stories in 1972.

FACT, 88 Wood Street, Liverpool L1 4DQ
fact.co.uk/fairytales