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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Arts and Science
in Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Exploratory Preparations for Publication

by

Rodney Nowosielski

June 1993

Adviser: Professor Robert Keough / Robert P. Keough
Date: 6-11-93

Associate Adviser: Dr. Joanne Szabla / Dr. Joanne Szabla
Date: 6-2-93

Associate Adviser: Luvon Sheppard / Luvon Sheppard
Date: 6/8/93

Special Assistant to the Dean for Graduate Affairs:
Professor Philip Bornarth / Philip W. Bornarth
Date: 6/23/93

Dean, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences:
Dr. Margaret O. Lucas / Margaret O. Lucas
Date: 6-23-93

I, Rodney D. Nowosielski, prefer to be contacted each time a request for reproduction is made. I can be reached at the following address:

Date: May 28, 1993

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Following a suggestion by Jerry Stoeffhaas, I was able to develop a storyline for *The Tower and the Wall* from a different perspective. I am deeply grateful for the creative insight that he inspired. I would like to thank my advisers, Robert Keough and Luvon Sheppard, for their assistance and suggestions throughout the year. I especially would like to thank Dr. Joanne Szabla, for stepping in at the last moment, as my editing adviser.

I would like to thank the Rochester Institute of Technology's College of Imaging Arts and Science for all financial assistance given to me, which helped relieve some of the burden and stress created by financial worry.

Last of all, I would like to thank Becky Eddy for all her support, and for being a friend.

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INTRODUCTION

I have always had an interest in children's literature, folklore, and mythology. As a child, listening to, or reading stories created fascinating images within my mind that swept me off to new lands and adventures. But I often questioned the unexplained elements within stories, finding them to be incomplete and dissatisfying. As an Adult, it became my desire to select a Grimm's tale and rewrite it, filling in the voids by giving reasonable solutions for those unexplained elements.

The challenges within this project were directed toward my personal creative self. Would I be able to write a plausible story even though my writing ability is average? I felt confident enough in my abilities as a story teller to give it a try. The story I selected to revise is the brothers Grimm's fairy tale, *Rapunzel*. Two examples of unexplained elements within the story I have tried to make reasonable solutions for are, how did the tower come to be, and why did Grethel hate men.

I also felt challenged to recreate the story's images as I saw them in my mind, using a computer as my illustration tool. Creating the illustrations involved an exploration of digital image processing, using photographs and scanned images to create a unique style of representational and symbolic images.

I've also added new characters and adventures to attain the interest of children at the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade level, for whom it was written. What I've strived to accomplish, is a novelette deemed worthy for publication.

Writing Procedures

Writing Procedures

There was no set process or procedure followed on this project. I pretty much worked on it, in and around class assignments, whenever I could get the opportunity to do so. In fact, the first draft for my story for *The Tower and the Wall* (Rapunzel) was put on paper as an assignment in Script Writing class. We were given an assignment to write a proposal for a film. We were told to write, "the one big idea or story in the back of our mind that we had always wanted to do." The draft for this story may not have been what the instructor intended for a script, but it was all I needed to get started with my project.

Background

As I said in the beginning, I had no set procedure for writing. I wrote random thoughts and ideas as they occurred and worked them into the story. What I had written for my script writing assignment was a chronicle order of events taking place over hundreds of years lead which up to the main story. It was basically background information beginning with the history of the tower, jumping to Grethel's misfortune as a child, on to Rapunzel's parents, and finally ending with the confrontation at the tower.

Many of the ideas used for background, I formed from basic knowledge gained over the years. Much of this knowledge has been obtained from past learning institutions, reading materials, and TV programs about life in the middle ages, or European history. In Germany, when I was in the military, I learned that towers where used as lookout points for fires, and storms, as well as enemy raids. My knowledge of the plagues that spread across Europe was used to develop the history for the tower. What better way to explain how an isolated tower is found in a forest? So, my history of the tower is a very feasible way for it to come into existence, thus filling one of the unexplained voids in the story of *The Tower and the Wall* (Rapunzel).

Through lessons on European history I've learned children were given away or sold into service. This practice was more common then people realize, and it was the perfect background information

to build the character of Grethel on. It also worked well as an underlying theme within the story. I decided to use it because children are interested in what affects them. I have learned through experience, that children as a group, are concerned with the elements of circumstances that involve them and persons considered part of their group. So explaining how Grethel was treated as a child would help my readers comprehend how abuse can effect a person's behavior later in life.

The unexplained element of how a person could live stranded in a tower was another puzzle I wanted to solve. Adding a garden to the tower roof and a cold storage area in a lower room made the most logical solutions. This was now a tower that someone could live in and never have to leave. Background knowledge of gardening and old ways of storing food supported how this could work. I was very pleased with the way I was able to work these puzzles out.

Theme

The theme within my tale is explicit in the way it offers an underlying concern of how children are treated and dealt with. Although child abuse, neglect, and adoption are lightly touched upon within this tale. I would like to think that it is enough to have an effect on children who may read it, and help them realize how difficult choices can be for adults. Hopefully it will also help them understand that life isn't made easy by snap judgements and quick decisions.

Plot

The Plot in *The Tower and the Wall* basically contains the same outline as the original brothers Grimm Fairy Tale,[1] *Rapunzel* within it's story, which has been expanded upon to include new characters and adventures. The original tale begins with the story of Rapunzel's parents before it becomes involved with the lovers meeting in the tower. I've rearranged the order of events, using parts of the original tale as explanations. However, the main plot is still the same, it's just written in a different style.

---

[1]Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales, ed. Lily Owens, (New York: Avenel Books, 1981), 58.

When I wrote my first outline for *The Tower and the Wall* in Script Writing class, the instructor, Jerry Stoeffhaas, encouraged me to continue with my idea, but he advised me not to write the same story and suggested I change the perspective from whom the story is viewed by. At first I resisted, out of tradition to keep tales as true to the original as possible. My only intentions were to fill in the un explained elements.

Believe it or not, it was Disney's animated film *Beauty and the Beast*,[2] that persuaded me to reconsider my instructor's suggestion. I went to see the movie knowing the storyline had been changed. I was determined not to like it no matter how good the movie turned out to be. But I was wrong. The movie was absolutely wonderful. The change within the storyline and the characters were successful.

As I began to consider the possibilities of looking at the story from another character's point of view, a whole series of new ideas began to fill my mind. The most intriguing idea was to write the story from Grethel's point of view. But I felt it would be too difficult for me to build upon her psychological perspective. I wanted to keep it simple, so I concentrated on the two main characters, and finally decided to write it from the boy's (Eric) point of view. That would be easiest for me since I could relate to what a boy might think and say.

The original style of the Grimm's fairy tales are written in a formal narrative style, which are cold and empty of emotion. There is no personal involvement for the reader, and the tales seem to function better as first drafts. I can't be the only person dissatisfied by their formal style, or there wouldn't be so many rewritings of their tales.

The stories I enjoy reading, and the most memorable, are either written in the first-person's point of view, or in a limited omniscient point of view. I prefer stories written in these styles because they create a personal involvement between myself, as the reader, and the character. I chose to write my story as a limited omniscient point of view over first-person. The omniscient writer chooses to move around, in, and through the characters, knowing everything and giving the reader helpful information.[3] It was necessary for my

---

[2]Walt Disney, Beauty and the Beast, screen play written by Lida Woolverton, 85 min., (Calif.: Buena Vista, 1991), VHS video tape.

[3]Rebeca J. Lukens, A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature, (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1976), 102.

approach because I needed a way to continue with the story after Eric fell from the tower. The limited omniscient view allowed me to build up the climactic peak in the final confrontation by relating what thoughts were going through Grethel's mind, and enable me to continue to relate the tale after Eric fell from the tower, becoming unconscious.

Setting

Originally, I had planned to set the story in the Black Forest region of Germany. It was a good location offering forested hills and valley's where small villages could be found. But I later decided to generalized the location to a mountain pass with a forest nearby. That way readers could use their imagination as to where it takes place.

When the story takes place is also part of the setting I gave a great deal of thought to. I wanted the story to give the impression of the olden times when trade routes were more common for transporting goods than shipping routes, which were developed much later. Trade routes usually extended across mountains passes throughout eastern Europe into Asia, where everything rich, from spices, fabrics, and oils to precious metals and stones were carried. By placing the character of Eric's father within this element and making an inn Eric's home, created a possible setting where the boy would hear stories about strange and wonderful places around the world and invoke the desire for adventure.

I have learned that people can have a tendency to add fanciful overtones not extended to the story. While discussing my story with a friend, I happen to mentioned my solution of how Rapunzel is able to live in the tower, because I added a rooftop garden and a cold storage room. My friend looked at me and asked if I knew what the tower represented. She suggested that my solution increased the tower's symbolic meaning by making it a very fertile symbolic statement. She obliviously seemed to be intent on looking for hidden meanings and was overlooking the purpose for my solution. I stressed my
intentions were to write a story that entertained. My efforts were merely suggesting a feasible way a person could survive in a tower. I was not trying to make a symbolic statement. But I admit, it is difficult avoiding areas that represent some symbolic nature or another. The forest can be seen as both a literal setting and a symbol for the unknown, and the rooftop garden can be both a literal setting and a symbol of natural but cultivated beauty. It seems it can't be avoided, but I feel confident that readers will read my story for it's entertainment value.

I had decided early to add new characters to the story. Since I was telling it from a different point of view it was necessary to develop a new setting and background, supported by a cast of new characters. Personally, I wanted to bring the characters down to a level that readers could easily associate with. That is why I changed the position of the prince from the original tale, to the son of a merchant in *The Tower and the Wall.*

I also took into consideration the archetypes[4] and positions of the background characters in relationship with the main character. Babcia (Bop'cha) is a Polish housekeeper who manages the inn owned by Eric's father. Her archetype is that of the Caregiver. Avial is the all knowing friend and teacher who gives advice. His archetype is that of the Sage. Rapunzel's archetype is a combination of the Innocent, who tries to live in Eden, and that of the Orphan, who, reveals her vulnerability and interdependence. Eric's archetype is a combination of the Lover, who enjoys and respects all of life's diversity, and that of the Creator, who discovers a more adequate sense of self, and that of the Orphan, who also shows his vulnerability and interdependence. And last of all, Grethel's archetype is that of the Magician, who serves as the catalysts for change.

Adding new characters, I've learned can have a great influence on how a story changes. The final dramatic confrontation was rewritten around the addition of Bear, Eric's pet dog. He was added to the story in the first draft when I developed a new ending. It made sense to end the story at the climactic build of the story instead of dragging it out. In the original tale, Grethel takes Rapunzel away and leaves her in a deserted place. After the Prince discovers this, he falls from the tower into the thorns and wanders around blind in the woods for a year. In the end he accidentally stumbles upon Rapunzel and everything works out to a happy ending.[5] By adding Bear to the story I was able to builds an intense scene of action to the climax and forego the long struggle in the woods. Although Bear is a minor character throughout the story, I felt comfortable making him a surprise element at the end.

Because of research, new characters and adventures were added to the story. The character of the wood nymph was inspired by

---

[4]Caren Golden, "What Archetype are You?" East West, September/October 1991, 60.

[5]Owens, The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales, 60.

something I read in *A Hero with a Thousand faces*[6]. Joseph Campbell was writing about ancient tales of wild women who wandered the woods of Russia. The women were hairy and lived in caves, but made good lovers and wives. They also had the ability to disappear. Although I felt adding a creature such as this would be a bit mature for children, I liked the idea of adding the wood nymph as a creature of the wood.

Later, I was informed by three individuals that the wood nymph's tale of the gnarled tree is simular to an ancient Greek myth, Narcissus. He was a youth who fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool and was transformed into a flowering plant. Although I don't recall ever hearing the tale, I found it interesting. It doesn't really match my story of the gnarled tree, except for the end results. So I considered it an interesting coincident in story telling.

The Rabbit character is one that developed out of my original first draft. Later in the writing process I decided to direct another verbal warning at Eric before he discovered the tower. I also felt a need to add additional adventure to hold the attention of my readers, because children can get bored easily. So I gave the rabbit a voice and personality. The rabbit's character was easy and fun to write. The lines of his story and conversation with the main character seemed to pour out of me like water. He is one of my favorite characters in the story and I have given some thought to adding him to another story or sequel.

I tried not to build too much of the story on the wood nymph's or the rabbit's background because they were minor characters. It was more important to build the story around Eric. My intentions were to create the story through Eric's experiences, to show how he felt and what thoughts went through his mind as he experienced the actions of his adventure.

> The importance of a character in a story - primary, secondary, minor, or background important - determines how fully the character comes to the center of the conflict - and therefore the more important the character is - the greater is our need to know the complexity of the character's personality. Conversely, the more the character functions merely as background, the less likelihood that character needs to be developed.[7]

---

[6]Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1949; Bolling Foundation Inc., 1973), 79.

[7]Lukens, A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature, 10.

Although many of the ideas within the story came easy for me, there were many areas that required a lot of thought and careful planning. Two very difficult areas I had to work through were, the introduction into the story, and how Rapunzel's character was to react in many of the conversations.

The introduction to the story was actually written five or six different ways. Dissatisfied with my results I decided to study one of my favorite books written by Katherine Paterson.[8] I hoped that it would inspire a creative spark of imagination. After reading the first chapter I was able to sit down and work out a solution for the introduction. I am quit pleased with the way it turned out, and I give full credit to the writing skills of Katherine Paterson for her influence.

Rapunzel's character and reactions were not easy for me to write. I found it difficult to relate how she would react to Eric, because I personally, find that women can be very complicated. Most of the scenes between Eric and Rapunzel had to be worked out on paper from random ideas. Also the section where Eric realizes he loves Rapunzel and how he approaches her had to be worked through. I reflected upon my own personal experiences to work out a reasonable solution. I was also very conscientious to avoid making this scene too lovesick-mushy for children to tolerate. This was actually the very last part of the story to be worked out and written.

The story is written to entertain. I feel I was able to create reasonable solutions for the unexplained voids so open to question in the original Grimm's tales. I also feel I have managed to meet most of the requirements of good literature by;

1. giving pleasure.
2. providing understanding through observation.
3. showing human motives by inviting the reader to identify with, or react to a fictional character.
4. providing an experience through a logical sequence of events.
5. revealing life's fragmentation by sorting the world out into segments we can identify and examine.
6. revealing situations of society by showing the appropriate circumstances where people give into, or struggle against them.[9]

What I've accomplished, I feel comfortable with. Although I

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[8]Katherine Paterson, Bridge to Terabithia, (Harper Trophy, 1987).

[9]Lukens, A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature, 10.

know more could be added and edited. I am satisfied enough at this point to sent the story out to publishers for their reactions. And, I am prepared to take, and work upon, any constructive criticism that may be offered to get the story published.

Illustration Procedures

Illustration Procedures

At first I had planned to do the illustrations for *The Tower and the Wall* in watercolor. But that option eliminated the need for a computer. Since my purpose here at RIT was to improve upon my computer skills, I decided to find a style of illustration that could either be done on the computer, by simulated on the computer. This required a great deal of mental energy and research. Research that not only uncovered new styles of art and techniques, but also revealed information on how to approach the Children's Book Market.

Research

I discovered some interesting methods during my research. Most of the better articles I've read for illustration techniques were found in the same resources. But those articles expanded upon the methods and techniques the illustrators used to get the results they wanted. When I came across the article *A Tonal Approach to Scratchboard Art*,[10] I read it with great interest. The artist, Brian Pinkney, added color washes to his scratchboard illustration. I found it interesting to compare his technique with mine, which consist of drawing a sketch and adding the color in a heavy layer of crayola under several layers of an ink mixture. Using an outline of my sketch traced onto the ink surface as a guide, I can scratch any texture into the ink surface and the color beneath will appear. It works very nicely. I have also tried to simulate this look using the computer. My efforts resulted in an illustration that looked very much like a woodcut. I like it, and it wasn't difficult to do. So I put this procedure on the back burner of my mind as a possible way to illustrate the images of my story.

I first discovered the method of Photomontage when I read an article in a newsletter[11] demonstrating how to create the images. The

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[10]Ellen Opat Inkeles, "A Tonal Approach to Scratchboard Art," Step-by-Step Graphics, September/October 1991, 81.

[11]Linnea Dayton, "A Photoshop Montage," Step-by-Step Electronic Design, May 1990, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1.

method used in the article created images that were a stylized mixtures of Arthur Rackham and Maxfield Parish, by using a combination of silhouetting and pasted in backgrounds, this photomontage method created a unique story book effect. I loved it, and was very excited to try it. But when I randomly came across a book on the Photomontages of Scott Mutter,[12] I decided to change the approach of style for my illustrations. Looking at Scott Mutter's surrational images influenced my decision to go for a unique blend of surreal-fantasy images. Images that would be both representational and symbolic of scenes from my story. It was the perfect method and approach for using the computer as an illustration tool, because it could easily be done with digital imaging software.

The following pages give a brief outline on how I put the images together. The order of the outline is the order of construction used for each image. The letter references only pertain to the photos as they were used. Creating the illustrations involved an exploration of digital image processing, using photographs and scanned images to create a unique style of representational and symbolic images. The software to create these images is Adobe Photoshop 2.01 and the Adobe Gallery Effect plug-ins.

---

[12]Scott Mutter, Surrational Images, Photomontages by Scott Mutter, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

The Bedroom Window is the first scene in the story. The woodpecker image in the room represents how we see things larger and up close within our minds. This is also the first composition I experimented with as a photomontage.

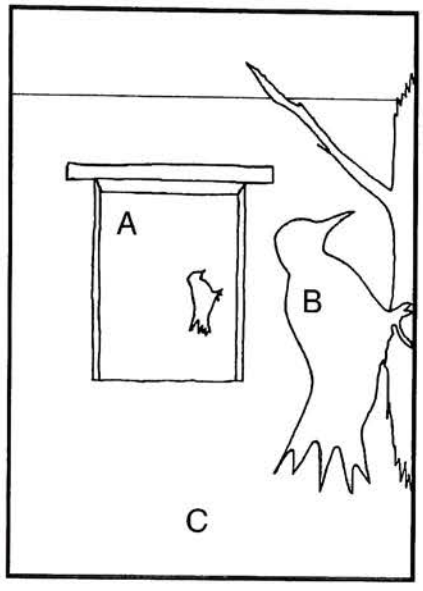
C. Starting with the background, the room's wall, ceiling, and window opening were all constructed from elements out of photo-C.

A. The view is a section of photo-A pasted into the window of background, with the woodpecker from photo-B, pasted onto the tree within the window view.

B. The woodpecker was pasted into the room at a percent age 65% to make it transparent. The branch the woodpecker is on was painted in using the Airbrush tool, and then noise was added to give it texture.

Unfortunately the transparent effect does not show within the color copies of this report. It was because the woodpecker in the window view is almost unseen, that I decided to bring the large image into the room. So I moved the window to the left and rebuilt the wall beside it. Then I illustrated the tree within the room and added the bird.

Photographic Resources for "The Bedroom Window."



B

Photograph #1885 by Lee Kuhn, Pg. 36.

FPG INERNATIONAL Exceptional Stock Photography, Selects Vol.3, 32 Union Square East, New York, NY 10003.

A

Photograph #1747 by Larry West, Pg. 22.

FPG INERNATIONAL Exceptional Stock Photography, Selects Vol.3, 32 Union Square East, New York, NY 10003.

C

Photograph #5043 by Floyd Dean, Pg. 151.

FPG INERNATIONAL Exceptional Stock Photography, Selects Vol.4, 32 Union Square East, New York, NY 10003.

The Tower in the Wall is a representational image. It was also a complicated image to build. Usually the more photos there were to work with, the more intricate the detailing became.

E. I built the background first by selecting a section of photo-E without the water and the boaters.

C. Photo-C was pasted into the top of photo-E to create the sky.

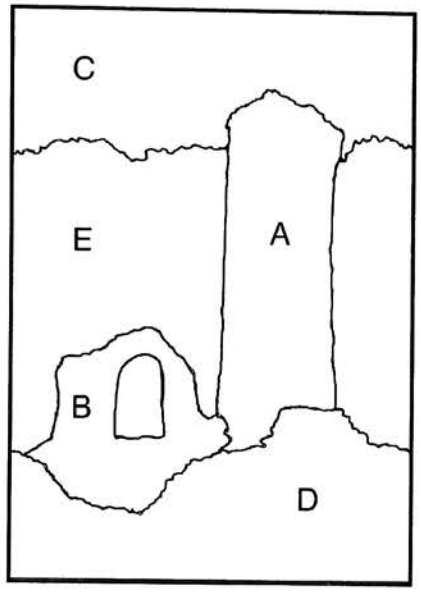
A. The Tower was a top section from the tower in photo-A, and was pasted onto the background of photos-E and C.

B. The arch was selected out of photo-B, flipped and pasted next to the tower.

D. The foreground of photo-D was selected and used as the foreground in the finished composition.

After this composition was put together, it looked somewhat pasted together. So I decided to use the Adobe Gallery Effects plug-ins to give it an illustrated look. This time I selected to use th Drybrush effect. The results show how well it worked.

Photographic Resources for "The Tower in the Wall."



C

Photograph #4926 by Dave and Jeri Gleiter, Pg. 138.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock Photography, Selects Vol. 4, 32 Union Square East, New York, NY10003.

D

Photograph #6 by Masakazu Kure, Pg. 162.

Photonica, URBANE USA INC., 141 Fifth Avenue Suite 8 South New York, NY 10010.

A

Photograph - Glendalough: the Round Tower by T. Hopker (Magnum), Pg. 34.

IRELAND OBSERVED, May Veber (Translated from the French by Jean Joss), Oxford University Press Inc., 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, 1980.

B

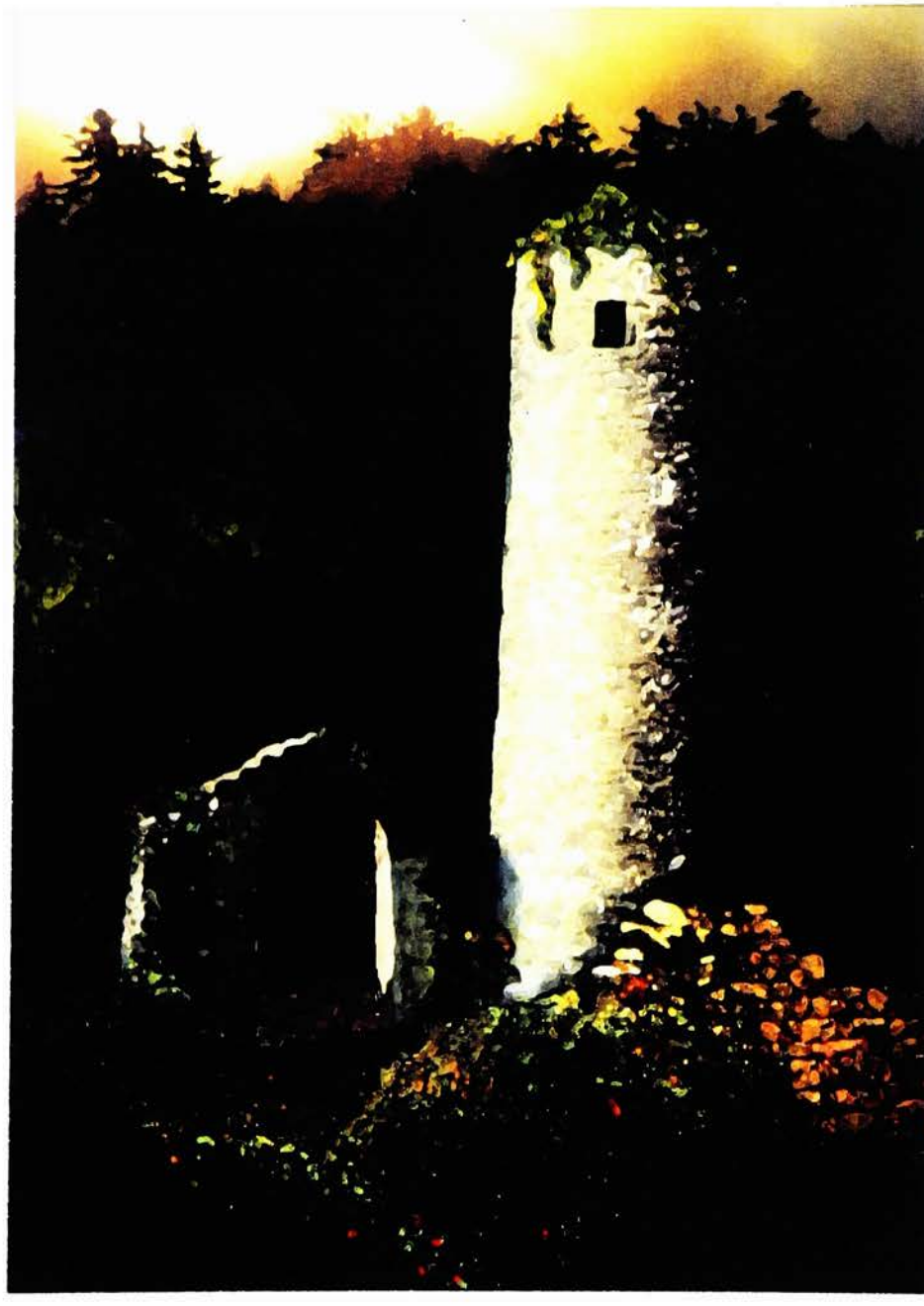
Photograph - St Guilhem-le-Desert by Dr. H. Hell, Reutlingen, Pg. 123.

THE GREAT PILGRIMAGE OF THE MIDDLE AGES, Vera and Hellmut Hell, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc./Publisher, New York.

E

Photograph #4017-Rowboat, Pg. 177.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY CATALOG., tenth edition 30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003



The Gnarled Tree and the Wood Nymph was one of my better surprises as an illustration effort. It is very representational of the scene in the wood.

B & C. My first challenge was to make the figure in photo-B look like a tree. It worked best by pasting a 75% of the tree bark from photo-C over the figure. Then I added the grouping of leaves selected from photo-D.

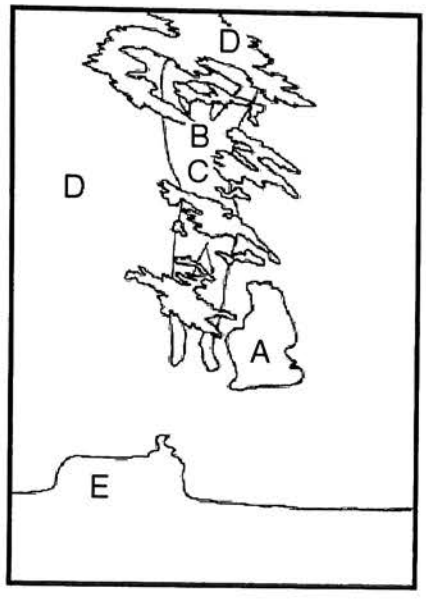
A. The wood nymph is actually a young boy from photo-A whose image was manipulated with various imaging tools.

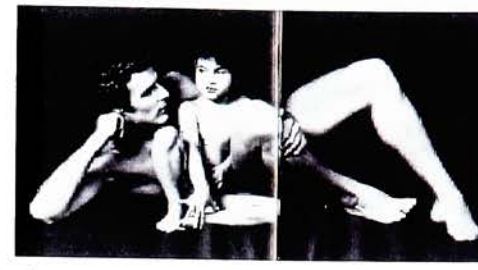
D. The background is only a section of photo-D darken to make the gnarled tree figure stand out, then the figure was pasted in.

E. The pool is a section of photo-E pasted into the back ground to finish the description given in the story.

I am very pleased with this image and would like to create more of a similar nature, in the future.

Photographic Resources for "Gnarled Tree and theWood Nymph."





A Photograph - father and son by George M. Hester

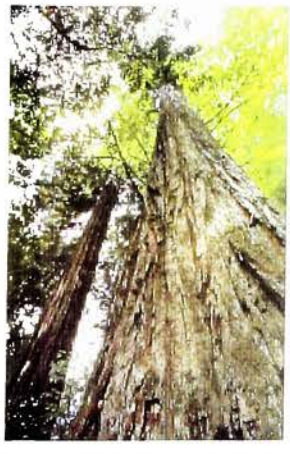
THE CLASSIC NUDE by George M. Hester,
American Photographic Book Publishing Co., Inc.,
Garden City, NY., 1973.

B

Photograph - Male nude model by George M. Hester

THE CLASSIC NUDE by George M. Hester,
American Photographic Book Publishing Co., Inc.,
Garden City, NY., 1973

C



Photograph #2319-Redwoods, Pg. 30.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

D

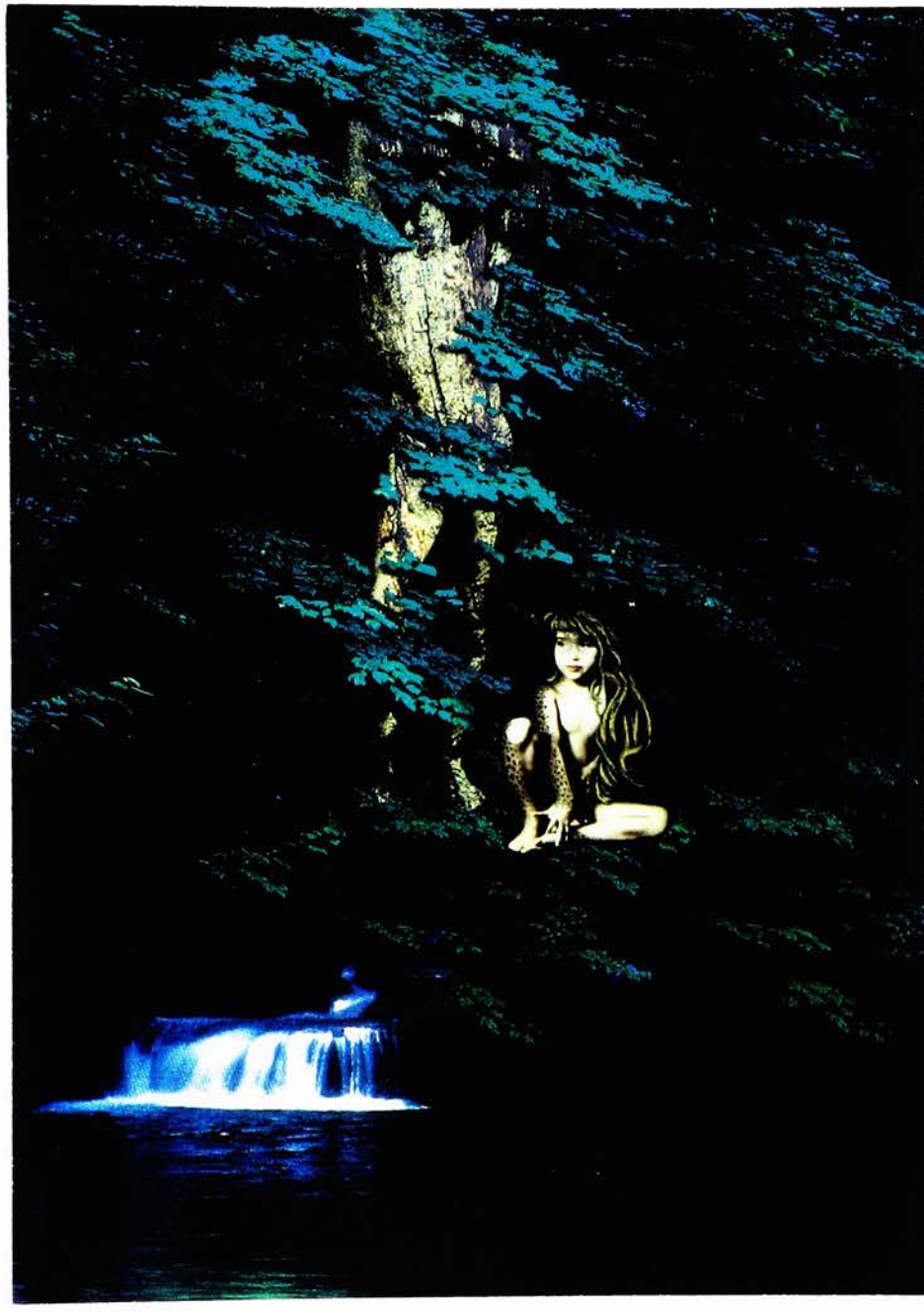
Photograph #2383-Waterfall, Pg. 69.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

E

Photograph #4238-Waterfall, Pg. 187.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003



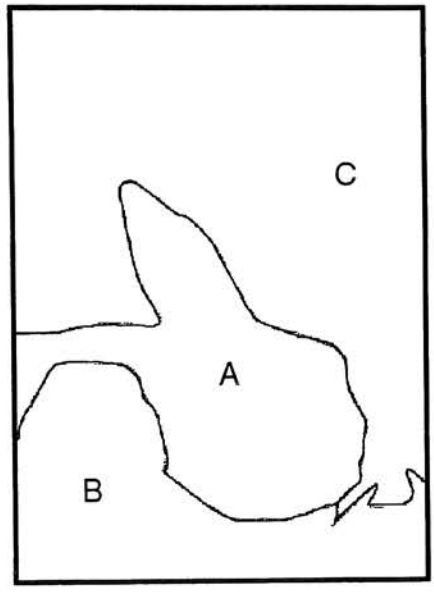
The Rabbit is actually an alternate solution as a image. I was disappointed because I could find the image I wanted, which was, a person standing and holding a rabbit by the ears. I was happy to alter my original idea as long as I could find a mushroom to go into the image. That would better tie it to the story.

A & C. The rabbit was selected from photo-A and pasted over the log in photo-C.

B. The mushroom and the foreground of photo-B were pasted over the rabbit on the background of photo-C.

Using the Adobe Gallery Effects plug-ins, I decided to experiment with the Splatter effects. I selected my variables and let the computer render it. I liked the results right, and saved it. I feel the composition is a good representation of the rabbit hiding in the undergrowth of the forest.

Photographic Resources for "The Rabbit ."



A

Photograph #2317- Tortoise, Pg. 28.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

B

Photograph #7 by Naomi Hayase, Pg. 177

Photonica, URBANE USA INC., 141 Fifth Avenue Suite 8
South New York, NY 10010.

C

Photograph #4206- Tree trunks, Pg. 186.

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CATALOG, tenth edition
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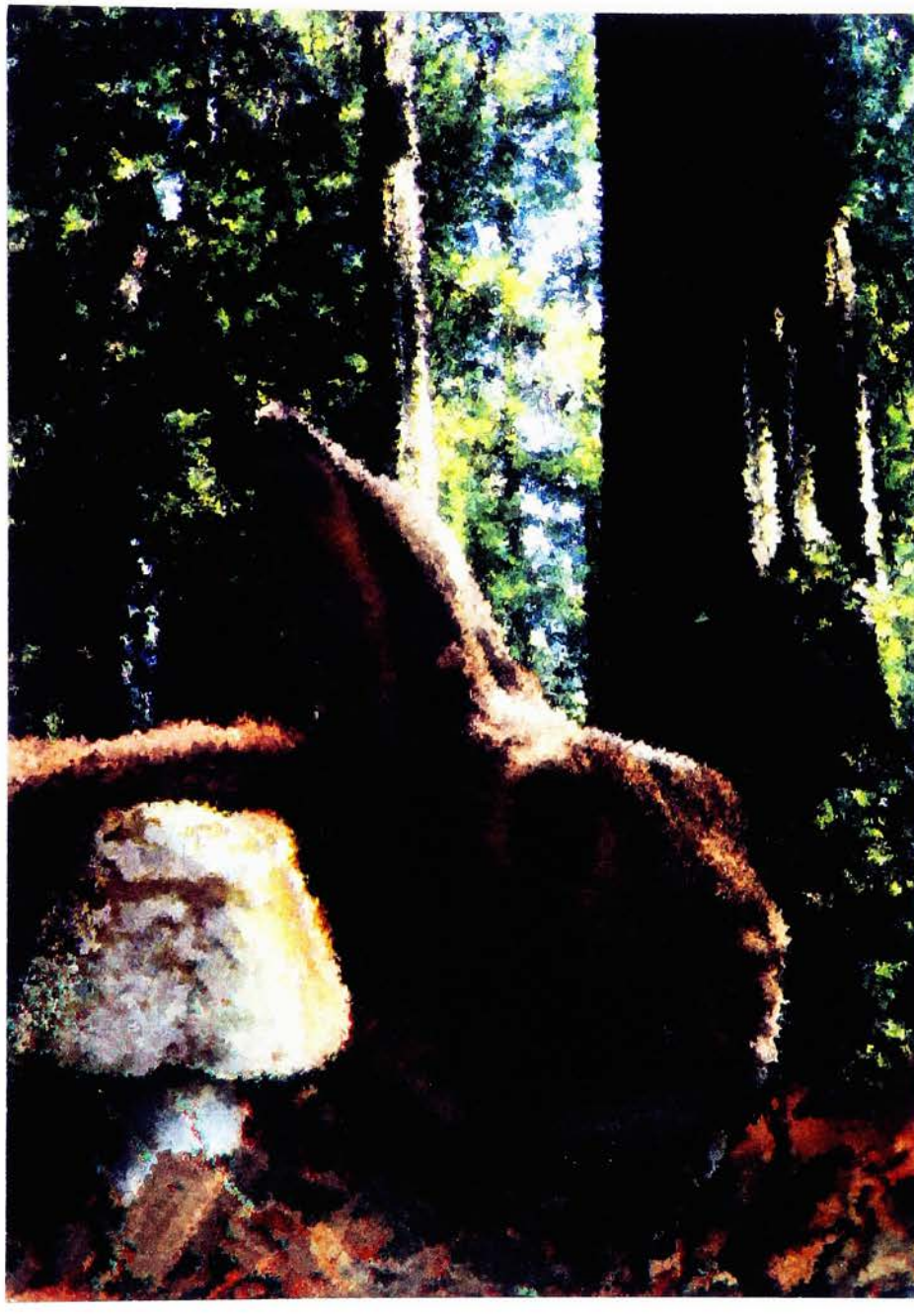


Spying through Bushes is a composition that is representational of Eric when he watches Grethel from the bushes, when she called out for the braid.

I used a photograph of Philip Hoff I had taken in September when Phil and I had Book Illustration class together. It is a pose I planned to use when I first considered to illustrate my story with watercolors. I used only a section of the photo to meet the 5x7 format set for all the compositions.

To make the photograph look illustrated, I used the Adobe Gallery Effects plug-in software, which can be added to Photoshop. I chose to use the Watercolor effects and set my variables. Then I let the computer render it. I was not satisfied with the results, because it still looked too much like a photograph. So I set up the same picture again using the same variables in Watercolor effects, and let it render one more time. This time it was a keeper.

Photographic Resources for "Spying through Bushes."

Photograph - Philip Hoff by author.

The Hand and the Braid represents Eric's need to use the braid as the only way into the tower. He is what you could say, tied to it. That is why I placed the twine about his wrist.

B & C. The background is actually a combination of photos-B and C, with photo-C pasted in at 15 percent.

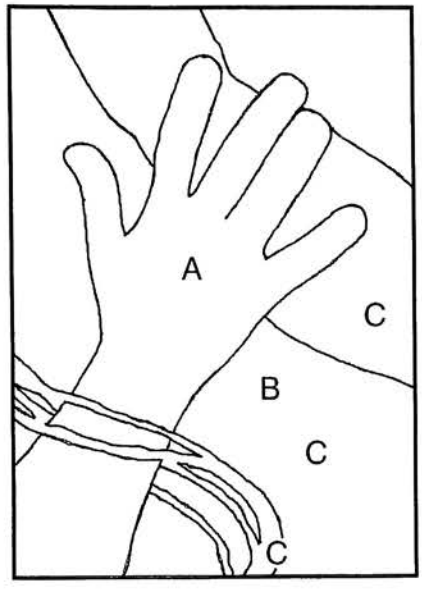
C. The braid is a selected section of the twine pasted in at 85 percent. I often used percentages to create a blend between the two elements of the photos so that they don't have quite a pasted in look.

A. Is a scanned image of my hand. It got separated into colors because it was impossible to hold my hand still while the scanner made it three passes for color. But I like the effect and decided to keep it.

C, bottom. After pasting in my hand, I added the twine about the wrist. What makes the illustration work, is that I took the time to airbrush in the shadows of the twine.

As simple as this illustration looks, it proved to be one of my greater challenges, but I am pleased with the results of my efforts.

Photographic Resources for "The Hand and the Braid."



A Scanned image of author's hand

B

Photograph #4589-Stone walls, Pg. 201.

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C

Photograph #4553-Silk, Pg. 200.

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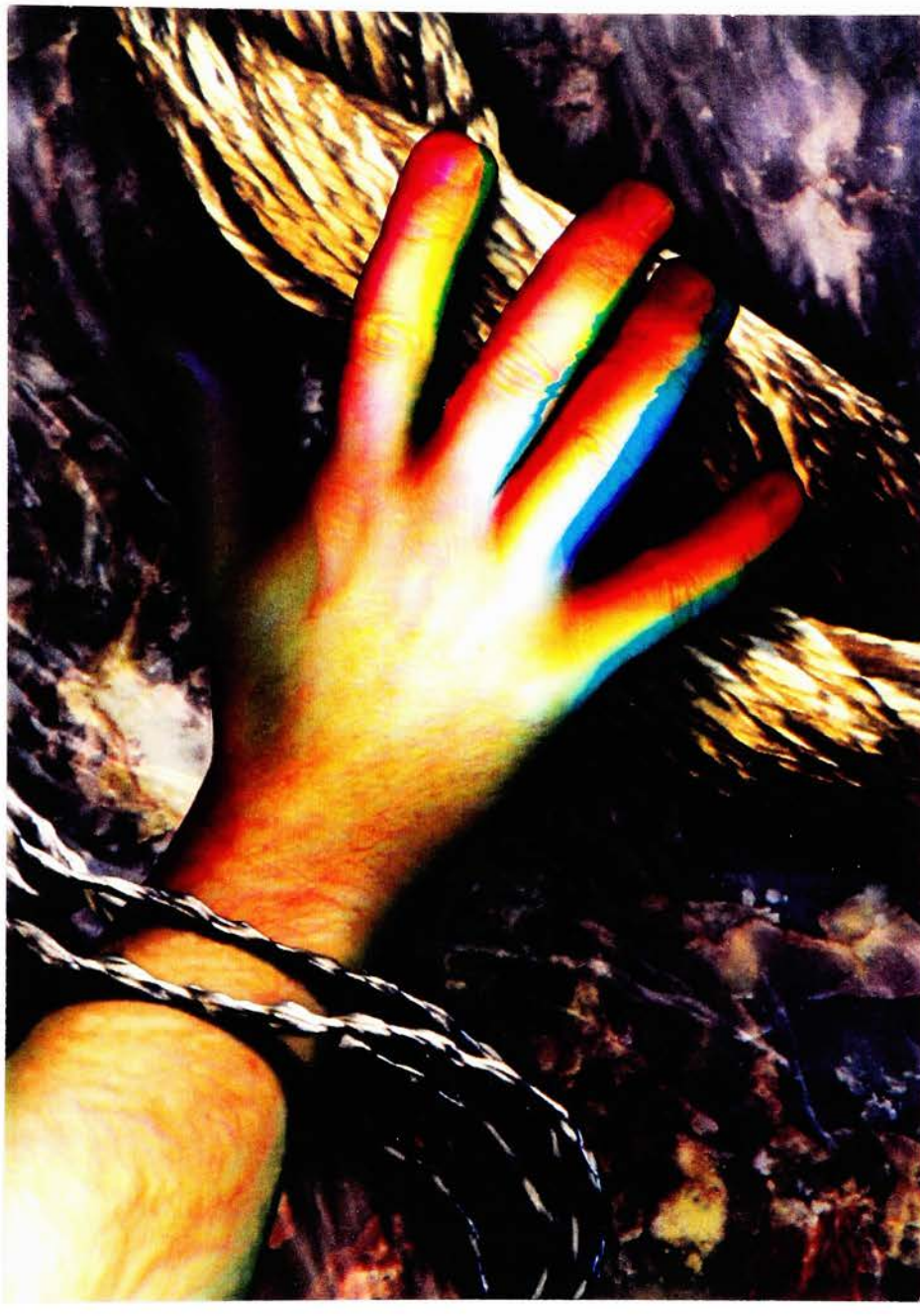


Rapunzel is another very effective surreal-fantasy image. This composition represents how Eric sees her in the garden.

A & B. I added and changed the color to the figure of photo-B before I selected the face from photo-A, flipped it and pasted it over the image of the figure. Then I soften the edges around the face.

D. I then selected flowers from photo-D and pasted them over the flowers in the figures hair.

E. I used the top section to photo-E to begin building the background.

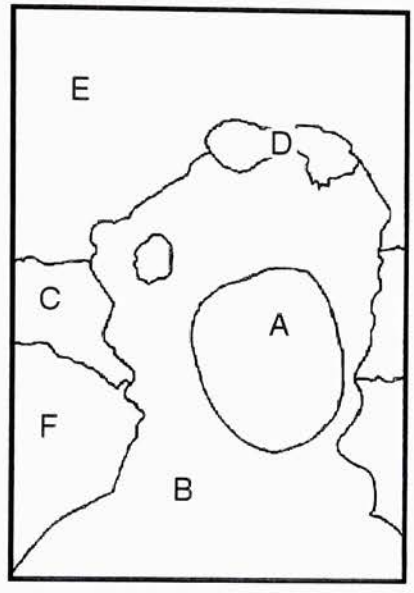
C. The wall from photo-C was pasted into the background to represent the edge the of tower roof.

A & B. The new composition of the figure was then added onto the background.

F. The finishing touch was to add the flowers to the rooftop garden from photo-F using the Rubber stamp tool.

When this composition was completed, I was told by one individual that it looked haunting and made the person feel uncomfortable. It just goes to show how everyone sees things differently.

Photographic Resources for "Rapunzel."



E

Photograph #4381-Roads, Pg. 193.

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CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

A Photograph #3299-women, Pg. 147.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

B Photograph #7 by Mariko ABE, Pg. 131.

Photonica, URBANE USA INC.,
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South New York, NY 10010.

C Photograph #3298-women, Pg. 147.

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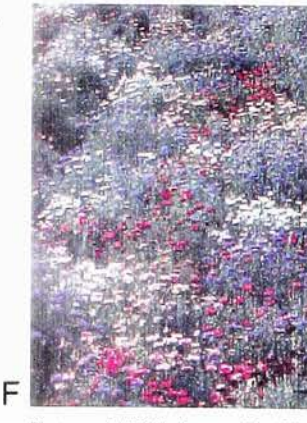
D

Photograph #5060 by Diane Padys, Pg. 152.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock
Photography, Selects Vol. 4,
32 Union Square East, New York, NY10003.



F

Photograph #4317- flowers, Pg. 190.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
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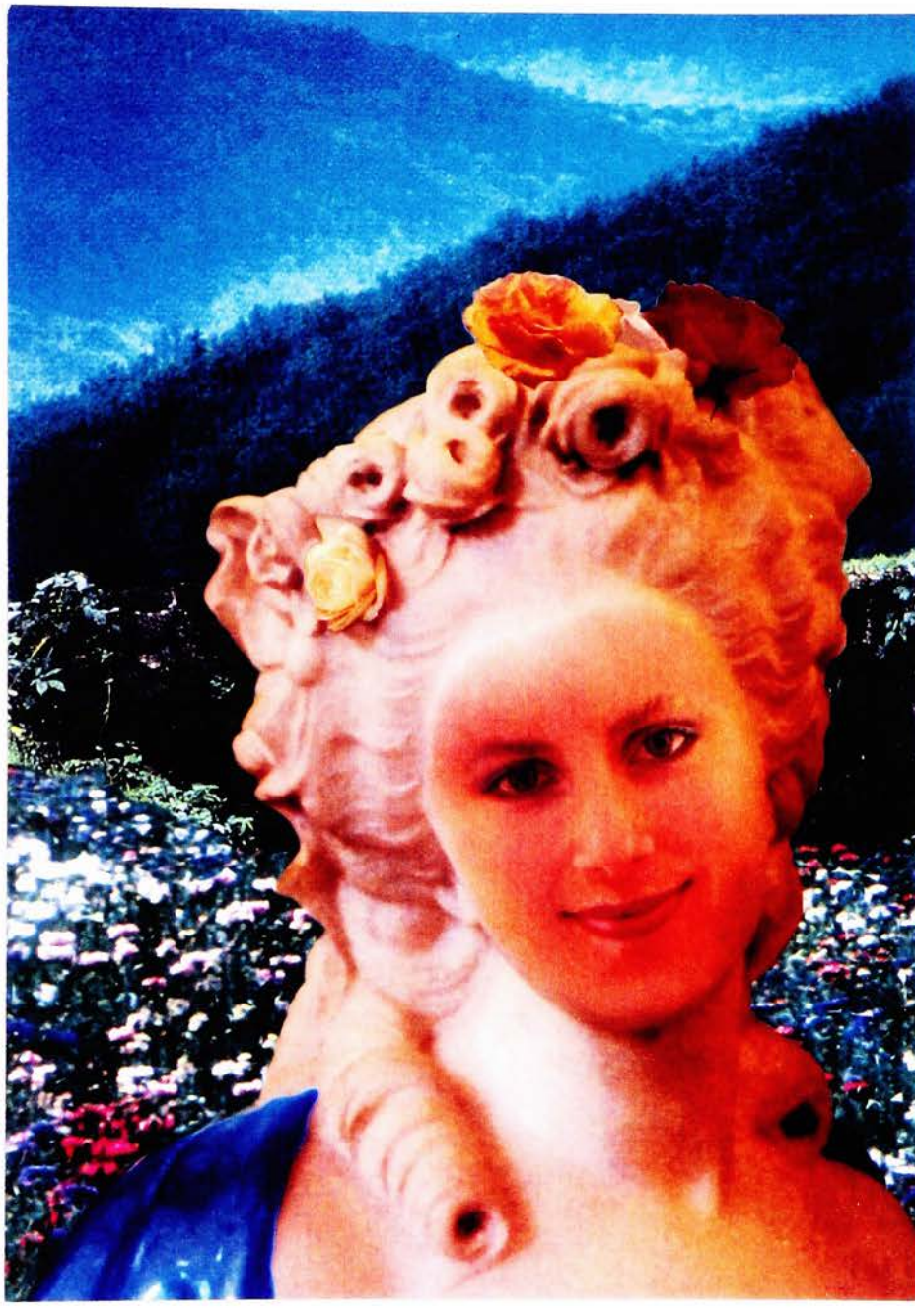


Pulled from the Thorns is a good surreal-fantasy representational image of Eric after Rapunzel pulled him from the thorns.

D. The stone texture in photo-D was the best way to fill in the background to create the proper mood.

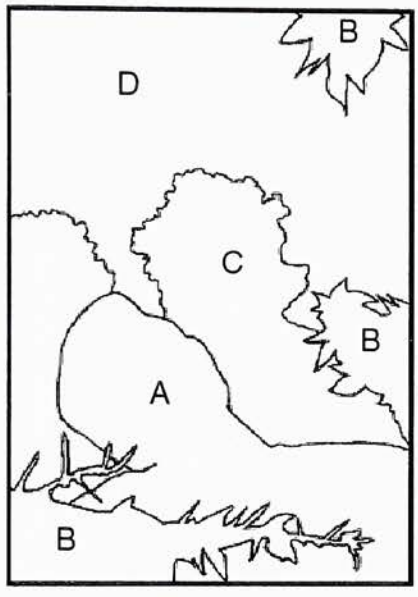
C. Elements of photo-C were than pasted repeatedly onto the background.

A. Philip's image was selected and pasted in over the background. Then I used the imaging tools to change his shirt to a proper style.

B. To give the image perspective, I pasted elements of photo-B into the foreground. I also used the imaging tools to create the thorns.

I have been told this illustration is too gruesome, but I feel it is effective as a representation in showing the results and consequences of our own actions.

Photographic Resources for "Pulled from the Thorns."



A

Photograph - Philip Hoff by author.

C

Photograph #7 by David Brookover, Pg. 225.

Photonica, URBANE USA INC.,
141 Fifth Avenue Suite 8
South New York, NY 10010.

B

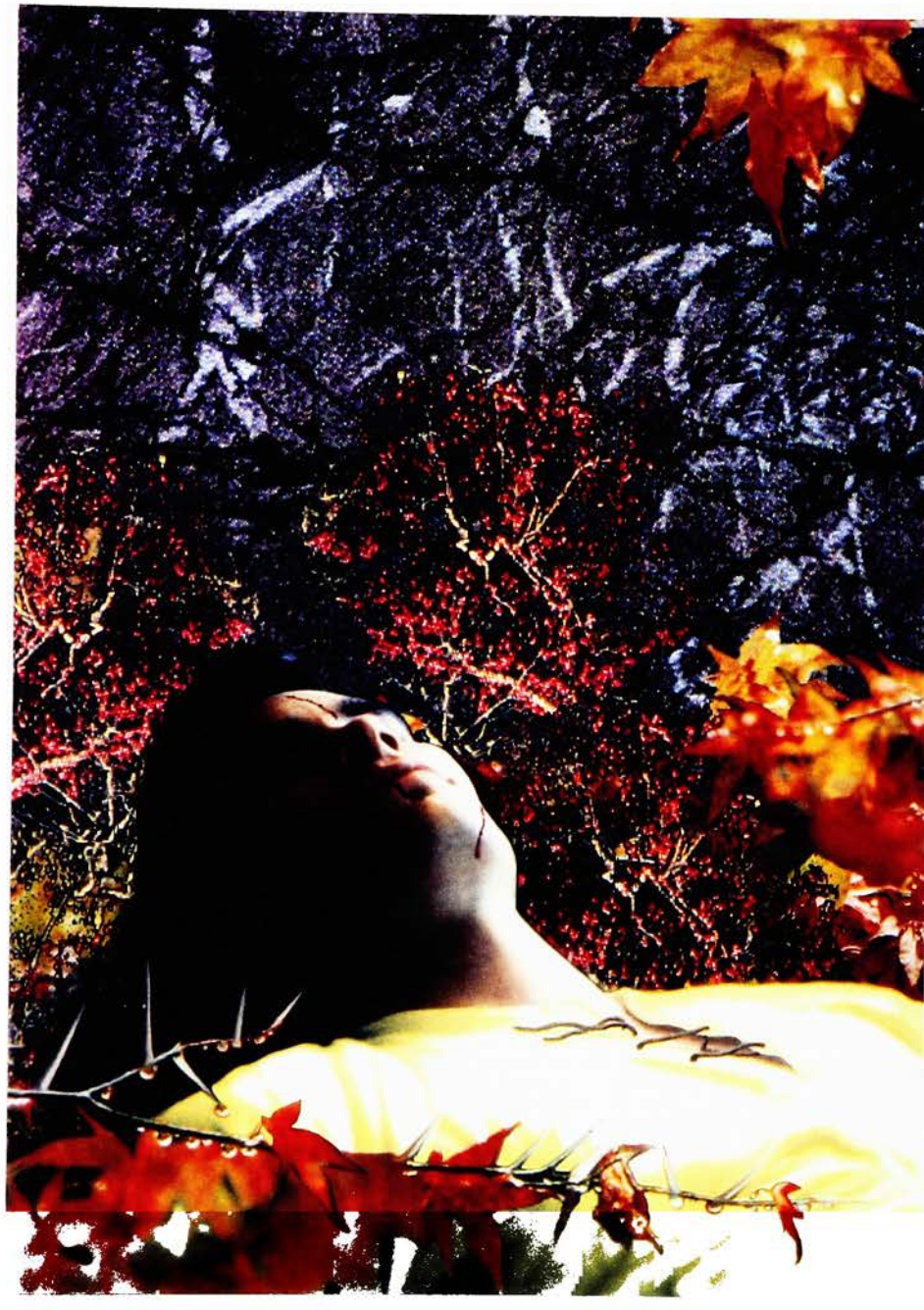
Photograph #1834 by Jeffry W. Myer., Pg. 31.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock Photography,
Selects Vol. 3, 32 Union Square East
New York, NY10003.

D

Photograph #4582-Stone texture, Pg. 201.

COMSTOCK STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY
CATALOG, tenth edition
30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003



The Fury is the last illustration I worked on during this time of experimentation using the photomontage method. It also required the most detailing out of all the illustrations.

B. First I selected the raincoat in photo-B and added texture to it so that it looked more like a knitted shawl.

A. I selected the girl in photo-A, flipped her image and lengthen her dress by cut and paste method. Then I lowered her legs under her and changed the color of her hair to white.

C & E. I built the background with photo-C and added a section of photo-E to the sky by pasting it in at 85 percentage.

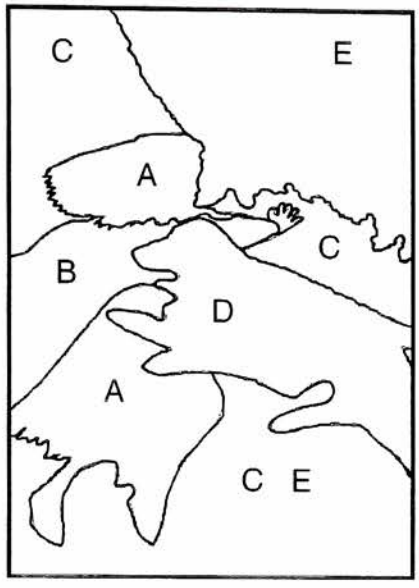
A & B. Photo-A was then added to the background and photo-B was pasted onto the girls figure as the shawl. Using the Smudge tool, I created the texture for the womans hair and dress.

D. The dog's image was first changed using the imaging tools. I changed the position of his paws, added a backend to his body before tilting the body position. He was then selected, flipped and pasted onto the background over the women.

B. Last of all the woman's face and hands had to be created using the imaging tools.

This composition has a very unique look about it. It resembles an early book print, because of the way the red colors seem to effect the mood in the illustration.

Photographic Resources for "The Fury."



A

Photograph #3858 by John Terence Turner, Pg. 26.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock Photography,
Selects Vol. 4, 32 Union Square East
New York, NY10003.

B

Photograph #3971 by Toyohiro Yamada, Pg. 38.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock Photography,
Selects Vol. 4, 32 Union Square East
New York, NY10003.

C

Photograph #6 by Masakazu Kure, Pg. 162.

Photonica, URBANE USA INC.,
141 Fifth Avenue Suite 8
South New York, NY 10010.

D

Photograph #1981 by Arthur Tilley, Pg. 46.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock Photography,
Selects Vol. 3, 32 Union Square East New York,
NY10003.

E

Photograph #1839 by Jeffry W. Myer, Pg. 31.

FPG INTERNATIONAL Exceptional stock Photography,
Selects Vol. 3, 32 Union Square East
New York, NY10003.

I found three articles, although written by different authors, that supported one another's statements on how to break into the children's book market. Two articles gave details on how to prepare an illustrated dummy book, from storyboard planning to completion. This information supported class information taught in Luvon Sheppard's Book Illustration class.

But the information on how to submit your work to a publisher, including "Do's and Don'ts", is usually hard to come by, unless you learn it the hard way through trial and error. Some of the suggestions recommended by the articles for submitting work included:

1. Do research. Study the children's book market. Find out what styles of art and stories are preferred by the different publishers.
2. Read children's books, to get an idea of what is publishable, Madeleine, Goodnight Moon, The Velveteen Rabbit, Where the Wild Things Are, etc.
3. Call ahead. Find out who to send your work to.
4. Send it sensibly. Photocopies of Black and white art or color copies are is preferred. Never send originals! For stories, never send more than two copies of artwork, and send it with an SASE.
5. Be prepared to wait and don't expect to receive a detailed critique. If they are impressed with your work, they will contact you.

If you are successful in getting a story to print, you should expect a children's picture book to pay 5 percent royalty for the author and a matching 5 percent royalty for the illustrator. A writer/artist nets both fees, and if the book is thin, expect a 4 percent royalty. So, regarding the information and advise offered, I highly recommend these articles.

1. "The Art of Children's Books," by Uri Shulevitz in the March/April 1985, Step-by-Step Graphics.
2. "ABC's of Children Book Production," by Daniel S. Cutler in the September/October 1991, Step-by-Step Graphics.
3. "Picturing Yourself in the Children's Book Market," by Betsa Marsh in the February 1992, The Artist's Magazine.

Appendix

EQUIPMENT

Hardware

13" Apple Color Monitor
Macintosh IIci
APS Technologies External Hard Drive
5.25" 44 Megabyte Removable Cartridge
Apple Laser Writer IINT
Canon CL 500 Color Copier
Kodak 7700 Continuous Tone Printer

Software

QuarkXPress 3.11
Adobe Photo 2.01
Adobe Gallery Effects

Camera

Fujica ST 901 35mm LED

Film

Kodak Gold 400 for Prints ISO 400/27°

PHOTO REFERENCES

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New York: FPG International.

1. #1747 by Larry West, 22.
2. #1885 by Lee Kuhn, 36.
3. #1834 by Jeffry W. Myer, 31.
4. #1839 by Jeffry W. Myer, 31.
5. #1981 by Arthur Tilly, 46.

Exceptional Stock Photography, Selects Vol. 4,
New York: FPG International.

6. #5043 by Floyd Dean, 151.
7. #4926 by Dave and Jeri Gleiter, 138.
8. #5060 by Diane Padys, 152.
9. #3858 by John Terence Turner, 26.
10. #3971 by Toyohiro Yamada, 38.

Ireland Observed, New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

11. Glendalough: the Round Tower
by Magnum T. Hoper, 34.

The Great Pilgrimage of the middle Ages,
New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

12. St. Guilhem-le-Desert
by Dr. Reutling H. Hell, 123.

Photonica, New York: Urbane USA Inc.

13. #6 by Masakazu Kure, 162.
14. #7 by Naomi Hayase, 177.
15. #7 by Mariko Abe, 131.
16. #7 by David Brookover, 225.

Comstock Stock Photography Catalog., tenth edition, New York: Comstock Inc.

17. #4017 - Rowboat, 177.
18. #2319 - Redwoods, 30.
19. #2383 - Waterfall, 69.
20. #4238 - Waterfall, 187.
21. #2317 - Tortoise, 28.
22. #4206 - Tree trunks, 186.
23. #4589 - Stone walls, 201.
24. #4553 - Silk, 200.
25. #3299 - Women, 147.
26. #3298 - Women, 147.
27. #4381 - Roads, 193.
28. #4317 - Flowers, 190.
29. #4582 - Stone texture, 201.

The Classic Nude, New York: American Photographic Book Publishing Co., Inc.

30. Father and Son
    by George M. Hester
30. Male Nude Model
    by George M. Hester

Photo Images by Author

32. Philip Hoff in bushes
33. Philip Hoff lying back
34. Scanned image of author's hand
    (Not shown on resources page)

Model Release

I)We), Philip Hoff being of legal age hereby consent and authorize Rodney Nowosielski, successors, legal representatives and assigns to use and reproduce a photograph(s) taken by Rodney Nowosielski in Sept. 92 and to reproduce my name (or any fictional name), photograph, picture of portrait in all forms and media, for any and all purposes including publication and advertising of every description. No claim of any kind will be made by me. No representations have been made to me.

I hereby warrant that I am of legal age and have every right to contract in my own name; that I have read the above authorization and release prior to its execution and that I am fully familiar with its contents.

5/10/93
Date

Patrick Byrnes
Witness

Philip M. Hoff
Name

Address

Address

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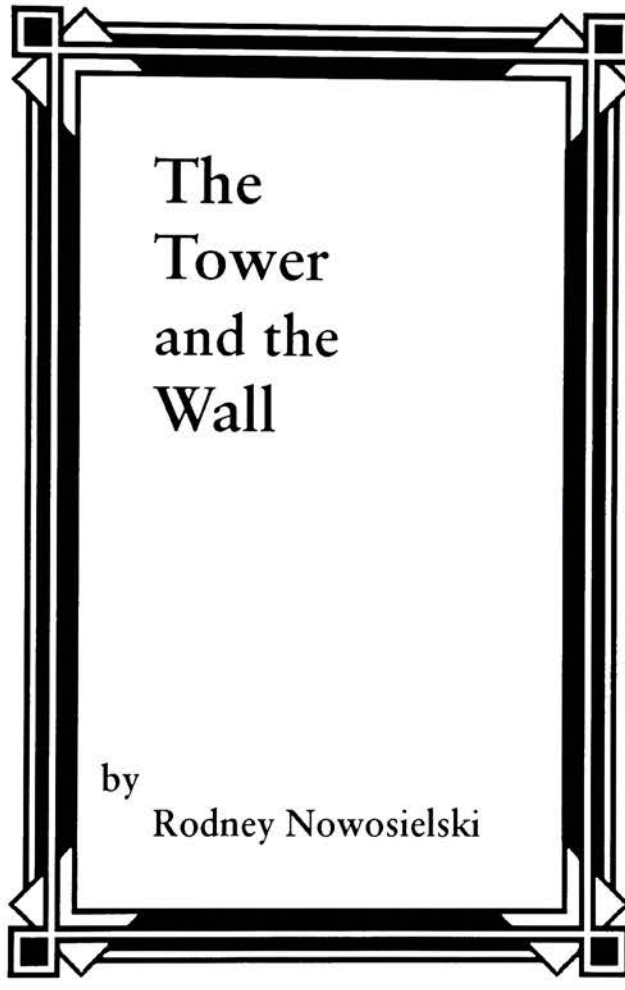


The Tower and the Wall

by

Rodney Nowosielski

I wrote this story to
fulfill my desire to
create images
within the mind,
and not just on
paper or canvas
or computers.

It is dedicated to
my mother,
Ione Harriet Walls (Wahlfors)
for the encouragement,
support and
love
that made it
possible.

The Tower and the Wall

Dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut! The sound woke him. He turned his head to look out the small window of his room. As he did so, a mild jolt of pain raced through his neck. He winced a little. He had momentarily forgotten, but the pain quickly reminded him to lie still. *Dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut!* There it was again. Outside his window he could see the ancient oak tree. Its leaves had begun to burn with the autumn fire red, yellow and orange blazing in the morning sun. It was so vibrant and alive with color that he could not recall ever seeing it more beautiful. But then, he never took the time to really look at it as he did now. *Dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut!* The sound was louder this time. He knew what made the sound, but he wanted to see it for himself. He looked earnestly through the branches of the oak when suddenly it appeared. A red-capped woodpecker was hopping about the tree searching for bugs to feed upon. It thrilled him to watch it as it flipped about from branch to branch. He held his breath as if it might discover him and fly away. Yet, even after it disappeared from view, he continued to watch for its return. He lay quietly in bed and listened to its

hammering: *Dut, dut, dut, dut,* until the sound faded away. Still, the view of the tree filled his window with the dancing colors of autumn.

While watching the tree, he realized how he had taken his sight for granted. If it had not been for the confrontation that almost cost him his life, he would never have given it another thought. In fact, he was amazed, absolutely amazed, to find himself lying in his bed recovering from wounds that should have left him dead. Although he couldn't remember all the details of what had happened, it really didn't matter; he could sort it out. Still, so much had happened; he felt it was important to remember it. It should not be forgotten.

But how could he sort matters out if he didn't know where to begin? *It had to start somewhere. What day? What evening? That's it!* Maybe it was the evening he first heard the tale told to him by Avial. *The tale, yes, the tale!* He could suddenly see the pieces come together. Eric closed his eyes and thought back to that day. . . the day Avial returned.

It was late spring. One of those warm sunny days that draws you outside into the sun. He remembered how refreshing it was to feel the new mountain air wash over his face. So, taking advantage of Babcia's* good nature, Eric managed to slip away from his father's inn. The chores could wait. He was feeling restless and wanted to go outside to explore the hills. There was a pond where Eric enjoyed spending time, and today was the perfect day

*Babcia pronouced - bop'cha - is Polish for grandmother. Not in the formal manner, but in the familar way as a term of endearment.

for it. It was one of Eric's favorite places. There was always something new to discover and nobody ever bothered him there. But maybe that was because it was so close to the Dark Wood. The villagers never came up this way because they said the Dark Wood had mischievous spirits. Eric hadn't seen anything out of the ordinary when he was there, so he shrugged it off as an old wife's tales.

Eric called out for Bear and off they ran together. He and Bear had spent most of the day at the pond. Bear was in one of his playful moods. He chased around the air and rolled in the grass. When Eric splashed water at him from the edge of the pond, Bear barked back in a scolding manner. Eric laughed and splashed him more. He loved Bear and his crazy ways. He always thought of Bear as the best dog in the world.

Most of that day Eric waded in and out of the pond. The mountain waters that fed the stream were icy cold so he couldn't stay in for very long. He had spotted a large green frog basking in the sun among the reeds. As he bent down with his hands stretched forward ready to capture it, the bells from down in the village square rang out. The sound traveled up into the air and over the hills. As the growing sound rang out over the field toward Eric, it startled a large black bird in a nearby tree. The black bird, angered by the disturbance, flew out over the pond calling loudly. Suddenly the frog to dived beneath the surface of the water and Eric's hopes of capturing it were lost. "Darn that bird! Darn those bells!" he thought to himself.

"Oh no, the bells!" Eric looked up at the position of the sun. It was beginning to creep to the edge of the mountains that formed their valley. Eric had been so occupied with his explorations, he had forgotten the time.

It was getting late, and he was late with his chores and his supper. He climbed out of the pond and quickly put on his boots. Calling Bear after him, he rushed back to the inn for his supper and to do his chores before it got too dark.

Located behind his father's inn is the cottage where Avial stayed during winter. As he raced by the cottage, Eric noticed a light through the opened door. He knew Avial was gone on his usual summer excursions and would not be back until late fall. So, he assumed Babcia had taken advantage of Avial's absence to clean and air out the cottage. Normally, she would not go near the place. Avial had never allowed her the opportunity to organize his life. Besides, she always said keeping up with the inn was more than enough work for any women.

Eric and Bear burst in through the back door to the kitchen to find Babcia standing at the table, putting a wax cloth over a bowl of food. She looked up at him with concern in her eyes. "It's about time you showed up, young man. When you're out on the hills, let's not forget there are chores to be done."

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "I'm sorry! It was such a beautiful day, I couldn't help myself. I'll make it up to you tomorrow."

"Well, we'll see when tomorrow comes. Right now, I want you to go out to the stable and tend to the horse of our guest. While you're doing that, I'll warm up your supper."

"We have a new guest?"

"Yes. I think he's planning to stay awhile. So be a good boy, and do a good job caring for his horse."

"Babcia, you know I always do my best with the horses."

"Yes, I know you do. So go now! Get out of here before it gets too dark and I forget to warm up your supper."

Babcia gave him a big warm smile and waved him off with the towel in her hand. She always had a towel in her hand.

Out the back door Eric went with Bear trailing after him. They headed straight for the stable. They didn't often get guests with horses. Usually, the guests they received were foot travelers and wanderers with pack animals.

Upon entering the stable, he immediately felt that something was wrong. He found the stalls as empty as he had left them that morning. *What happened? Where was the horse? Maybe the horse had not been properly tied and wandered off.* He turned to race out into the yard and look for the missing animal when he heard a soft stomping sound. It came from the farthest end of the stable where they kept their private stock. Guests were not allowed to put animals there. He walked over to investigate and stopped in his tracks. He couldn't believe it. There stood a horse that looked exactly like Cloud. Cloud was Avial's horse for as long as he could remember. But Avial was gone.

What was Cloud doing here in the stable? He stepped into the stall and looked Cloud over. He was just as beautiful as always. He admired the horse's whitish gray coloring with dark gray spots along his nose and down his legs. He was a smaller breed of horse than Eric usually had the opportunity to see. Most horses were work horses. They were large animals that reminded him of moving mountains. People used them for hauling, plowing, and carrying heavy loads. But Cloud was the perfect size for riding. Avial rode him when he traveled long distances.

Eric saw that Cloud had already been tended to, so he turned and raced back to the inn to find out what Cloud was doing there. Had Avial come back, or did he sell Cloud to someone else? Or, maybe someone had stolen him? Whatever had happened, he was going to find out.

As Eric approached the back door to the inn, he heard voices and laughter coming from the kitchen. He entered to see Babcia pouring his hot steamy food into a bowl while someone bent over the fire stirring through the embers. As the figure stood and turned there was no doubt about it. It was Avial.

"Avial!" Eric called out as he flew across the room to embrace him. "What a surprise! What are you doing here? We weren't expecting you back for months. Has something happened?"

Avail returned his embrace.

"No, no, nothing is wrong. I decided to spend the summer here in the mountains instead of traveling around the country. I've seen all there is to see. Besides, I am feeling the effects of age and it's time I settled down."

"Does that mean I'm expected to continue with lessons through the summer?"

"No, summer is my break, as well as yours. Besides, I have other plans," and Avial smiled with a wink. Eric sighed with relief.

"All right, that's enough now," said Babcia, "eat your supper so I can get on with tending to our guests."

The evening turned out to be very entertaining. The guests were drinking ale and relaxing in the main hall in

front of the fire. One of them, a lanky dark skinned gentleman wearing bright clothes with a cloth wrapped about his head, began to tell stories. He told stories of far away lands where people had skin darker than his own, almost as black as the night. He spoke of kings and mighty warriors in a land where strange and wild animals roamed. Eric sat listening and let his mind fill with the images described by the traveler. He was always eager to listen to these strange and wonderful tales.

When the gentleman finished his stories and retired for the night, Eric's mind was still reeling, caught up in the excitement of the traveler's adventures. He wanted to hear more. Eric pleaded with Avial to tell one of his tales, knowing that Avial had many adventures to speak of. At first, Avial said it was getting too late, but Eric persisted with his pleading until Avial gave in. Avial chose to tell a secret story directly from the mountain regions where Eric lived.

Eric protested, "What kind of story can you tell me about the mountains that I haven't already heard? They are nothing but old wive's tales. I've heard them all. It's the true stories from strange new lands that interest me. I hope someday to explore them for myself."

"Listen to me," said Avial with a hushed tone and a stern look in his eyes, "the mountains are your home. To people from other lands the mountains are as mysterious as their land is mysterious to you. When you travel, remember, you are the stranger. Wherever you go, you will learn there are secrets. If you wish to know what those secrets are, you have to be trusted by the people who keep them. By sharing what you know, you can earn the trust of others. But you must be careful in the way you approach them. Some secrets are not meant to be shared. If you're not

careful, they can cause you great harm."

"Now, the mountains also have their secrets. Secrets almost as old as the mountains themselves. It would be a pity for a young man to explore new worlds, seeking knowledge, without knowing the secrets of his own land. Yes, there are a few secret tales you should know about the mountains, tales that are true, tales only known by a few old and wise mountain folk, who do not often speak of them. So, be still and I will tell you one of them."

"In the olden days, before the time of castles, there was built a great city somewhere up in the mountains. For its time, it was a city that lead to many trade routes. Riches from all lands passed through the streets of this city. With so much treasure passing through every day, the citizens decided to build up a mighty wall to protect the people against invading marauders. At the entrance of the wall a tower was built, so a watch could be kept over the land for any sign of trouble, be it an invading army, a storm or a warning of fire."

"The walls of the city stood strong for many ages, and the tower watch saved many lives. But as strong as the wall was, it could not keep all the enemies of the people out. There came a great sickness that spread across the land, and the people within the city feared it would soon strike them down if they did not protect themselves. So they decided to hide from the rest of the world, hoping to avoid any contact with the disease. No family or friends living outside the city were allowed in to visit. Out of fear and selfishness, the people plowed up their roads and planted trees to hide the city within a great forest. They planted secret gardens in the forest for food, and they grew medicinal herbs to protect them from illness. Yet, all their efforts were in vain. The people eventually were

stricken with the terrible illness and everyone died. The city, without people, became a cold, empty tomb. No one mourned the lost city, and only a handful of people lived to pass on the tale. As the years passed, weather and nature began to have their effect upon the buildings, and they slowly crumbled away, growing thick with bramble and thorn. Some say only the tower stands, still keeping watch over an empty field of stone. A great city and its people have become nothing more than a whispered tale spoken on the lips of old folk at evening fire."

Eric sat in silence. He listened to the rushing, crackling sound of the fire in the hearth and stared into the flames until his eyes felt as if they would melt. He found the story a little haunting. He had never heard it and wondered how many other tales there were like it. If the story were true as Avial said, then there still had to be some trace of the city remaining.

He looked up at Avial, who was also staring into the fire and said, "I would like to look for that city. Who knows! Maybe a city once so popular with trade could still have hidden treasure to be found."

Avial turned his head and looked Eric in the eyes. It was a dark, shadowy look that caught him off guard. Avial held the look for just a moment before a smile crepted across his face. Then he nodded silently and waved Eric off to bed.

Eric woke the next morning with his head swimming in strange visions of wild dreams he had while sleeping. Listening to the strange tales of the night before had affected his dreams. In them, he had traveled to new lands

and met some wonderful characters. Now, he laid back in bed thinking about them, trying to recall all the wild imaginations of his mind. It was the closest he would come to having an adventure.

While he lay thinking over the events of his dream, he decided he no longer wanted to wait for something exciting to happen in his life. If others went out exploring for new discoveries, so could he. But where? Where could he go in this valley no one else had been, or was willing to go. Suddenly he knew. Of course! Why hadn't he thought of it before. The excitement of his idea rushed through him.

"Yes," he said to himself, " it's perfect."

He would start today. He would take Bear and explore the Dark Wood.

With that decided, he leaped out of bed, dressed and rushed to finish his chores. The sooner he could start the better. He asked Babcia to prepare a cold meal to be put in his knapsack. When he finished his chores, he would stop by to pick it up. He was surprised to find Avial having breakfast with Babcia. It was not Avial's habit to come over to the inn from the back cottage. But then, maybe he changed his habits during summer. Eric shrugged it off not giving it another thought.

When Eric had finished his morning chores, he picked up his pack and called for Bear. It was time to be on their way. He headed for the hills, not saying anything to anyone about his plans. This was to be his secret. If they knew what he was up to, they would have forbidden him to go. Up by the pond Eric searched for the best way to approach the Dark Wood. He decided to follow a small stream that fed into the pond. Tracing it with his eyes, it seemed to lead straight into the mysterious forest. He and

Bear followed the stream into the wood. But the the forest did not appear to be any different from any other forest. It was shady and cool with a sprinkling of sunlight dancing through the trees. So far he had grown disappointed in the adventure and had considered turning back. But as long as they were there, they might as well continue.

They continued to follow the stream. Eventually, it lead to a small pool of water next to an out-cropping of stone and earth. A spring bubbled up from the outcropping and fed into the pool. He noticed an old twisted gnarled tree growing out at the top of the outcropping, with roots buried and tangled among the stones and earth. Eric studied the tree and began to recognize human features within its shape. His eyes grew wide and his heart leaped in his chest when he realized the tree had the appearance of a man, locked and grown twisted within its bark. Bear approached the tree to inspect it with his nose. He then directed his attention to the thick shrubbery growing behind the tree and waving his tail slowly he gave a small bark. He returned to Eric's side and facing the bush, barked again.

"What is it Bear?" asked Eric in a hushed voice, "Is there something there?"

"It is only I," came a tiny, soft spoken voice from behind the tree.

Eric jumped. He hadn't expected someone to be there. He thought maybe a small animal had caught Bear's attention. What appeared to be a small female child stepped out from behind the twisted tree. Only she was not a child. Not in the way he had ever seen one. She was a magical creature of the forest, a wood nymph. He knew this from stories he had heard. She stood only half the height of Eric. Her skin was light brown with speckles of

darker brown spots. Long tresses of flowing, green hair concealed her naked body. Her face was small, round and perfect, with penetrating green eyes. Eric caught his breath at the sight of her. He wasn't sure how to respond.

The small childlike figure looked at Eric and smiled. "How wise of you to travel with such a worthy companion. Who are you wanderer, and why do you venture into these wood?"

"I am Eric," he answered. "I come from the village beyond the hills, east of here."

"Do you seek treasure? For if you do, there is none to be found." she told him.

"No, I am only exploring. I come here because no one else is willing to come through these wood. They are afraid."

"They may have good reason to be afraid. Do you see this tree?" she asked.

"Yes, I do. It looks like a man."

"Yes, you have a good eye Eric. It was a man once. Now he shall forever remain a tree," she said. "He was a man who ventured into these wood exploring for what he might. He thought there was treasure here. He would not believe me when I told him there is none. He played with my favors, to win the secret of treasure from me. He won the only treasure I possessed, that of my heart. When he realized there was no treasure, he planned to leave me.

But it was too late, for I knew him. I knew the way he thought and what he would do. So I told him there was a treasure here. When he could not find it, I told him it was buried. He dug the earth throwing it aside into this hill. He dug a hole so deep that he hit the spring flowing beneath the ground. The water from the spring began to fill his hole. I watched him, exhausted from his efforts, as

the hole filled with water. A strange look spread across his face and he began to laugh. Cupping his hands into the pool, he took a long deep drink. When he finished, he said to me, "Now you will get what's coming to you." With evil in his eye, he told me I would pay for my deceit. He began to approach me in a threatening way. But, it was not I who did this to him. It was not the Waters Of Truth that did this to him, for when one drinks of them, the water only reflects what is in the soul. His was a soul twisted. So, now he stands here forever, never to leave my side."

A tear slowly traced down her cheek as she finished her tale.

"I am sorry," was all Eric could think to say.

She looked into his face and smiled. "You have a good soul Eric. I will allow you into the forest. But heed my warning. Whatever you may find, whatever you discover, the treasures you should value most can be held in your head, your heart, and your soul."

Then she turned and disappeared behind the twisted, gnarled tree. He stood a while longer studying its twisted form. At the base where she stood was a large flat stone entangled with the gnarled roots of the tree.

From some forgotten tale, perhaps, out of the fathoms of his mind, he felt he had to do something. Slipping his knapsack from his shoulder, he opened it and placed the contents of his meal onto the flat stone. It was an offering to the wood nymph in return for his safe passage. With that done, he picked up his knapsack and continued into the Dark Wood.

The ancient forest began to change after Eric and Bear

passed the twisted, gnarled tree. Fern plants were knee high and made the forest floor look like a sea of green. The trees grew tall into the sky blocking out the light and casting a shadowy mood of absolute never ending calm. It was a darken stillness, as if the whole forest were in a deep sleep. Even the slightest breeze dare not blow faster than a whisper.

Venturing deeper into the forest, they stumbled across a strange arrangement of stone mounds. Eric almost hadn't seen them because they were overgrown with thick moss and shrubbery. As he explored one of the mounds, he discovered part of an ancient wall. He was sure of it, despite the tangled growth of moss and vines clinging to it. He was sure he had discovered something that needed to be explained. As he investigated farther, he found that the stone mounds trailed through the forest in a broken, moss covered line. Looking closely, it was easy to distinguish. He began to walk beside the mounds following their path.

Suddenly a rabbit sprang out from under a large stone just in front of them and raced away. Alert, with his natural hunting instincts, Bear shot out in pursuit of the rabbit. Caught up by the sudden excitement of the chase, Eric bound after Bear calling out encouragement. But the rabbit was fast and lead them on a merry chase. It dodged under one mound of stone only to leap up from another. It dove under fallen trees to spring straight out from the other side. As if nothing could stop it, it continued through bushes, thickets, and shrubbery, always keeping ahead of its pursuers. Yet Bear managed somehow to stay on its heels. Before long, Bear and the rabbit left Eric behind, racing to keep up. He began to worry he would lose them, when he heard a scream. It was a high pitched

shrill coming out of the forest directly in front of him. He stopped dead in his tracks and listened. Another scream pierced the air, followed by what sounded like frantic squealing.

"Bear," he called out, concerned for his pet. "Bear!"

He heard a muffled half bark and a growl from the direction ahead. He couldn't see anything because of the forest undergrowth, so catching a quick breath he launched ahead to find his companion. He found Bear in a small opening where the trees had begun to thin. Bear, crouched down on his stomach, was holding the rabbit with his mouth and paws. There was a terrible ruckus being made. To Eric's amazement and disbelief, it was the rabbit carrying on and making all the fuss.

"Let me go! let me go! help! help!" cried the rabbit, as it struggled to break free of Bear's grip. "Please don't hurt me! please let me go! help!"

"Hold, Bear!" Eric commanded, "Hold him good."

He circled Bear and the struggling rabbit to determine the best way to approach this situation. He noticed the rabbit's ears sticking out from under one of Bear's paws and bent down to take a firm hold on them.

"Steady boy, Hold," he instructed Bear until he was sure he had a good grip.

"OK, nice and easy. Let go. Let go, Bear."

Bear hesitated at first, then slowly relinquished the rabbit from his hold. The rabbit jerked up and tried to burst away, but Eric's grip was strong. He brought the rabbit up level with his face, as it struggled in his grip.

"Help! help! Let me go. Let me go," cried the rabbit. "Help. Please don't hurt me, please. Please don't hurt me." Then the rabbit suddenly went limp, giving up all hope, and began to sob.

"Please let me go. I don't want to die," Blubbered the rabbit with big wet tears running down his little furry face. "Please don't hurt me. I don't want to end up in a pie. You won't like me. I won't taste good. My meat is old and tough and stringy. Please let me go."

"Hold on. Hold on," said Eric to the rabbit, giving it a little shake. "My! You're making such a big fuss. We're not going to hurt you, so stop. Stop all this crying and blubbering."

He watched the rabbit as it slowly tried to recover from its state of desperation.

"Now, that's better," said Eric.

"What did you expect?" said the rabbit sniffling and trying to show signs of indignation. "How would you like to be chased all over the forest by some big, evil, filthy beast? And then mauled until your very last breath has been chocked out of you? You wouldn't like it, not one bit, I can tell you that."

"Are you hurt?"

"Well, of course I'm hurt. What do you think?"

"Where, where did he hurt you?" asked Eric. "I don't see any blood."

"Well," stammered the rabbit. "Well, I, I don't know." And he began to blubber again, "But I know he did. He must have."

Eric, still holding him up by the ears, turned him this way and that, checking one more time for any signs of damage. He could find nothing wrong.

"Well," he said at last, "I think you just had a good scare and if anything is hurt, it's your pride."

"Of course, you would say that," sniffed the rabbit.

Eric shook his head again and asked, " How is it that you can talk?"

"Talk? Talk? Well of course I can talk." Said the rabbit, "I wasn't always a rabbit, you know. Rabbits can't talk. Don't be silly. But I can, because I'm not a rabbit. Or, at least I didn't used to be. I was a man, same as you, I was. The kind of person who minds his own business, I was, and look where it got me. Now I'm a rabbit, and always will be for all I know."

"What happened? How did you become a rabbit?"

"Oh my," said the rabbit, "It was such a long time ago, but I still remember it. I remember it like it was yesterday. Oh no, I won't forget. I had come to the forest to gather mushrooms. They make such lovely soups, you know. Not that we should be talking about eating right now. You have eaten, haven't you?"

The rabbit looked down at Bear with a nervous eye. Bear, staring up at the strange rabbit, licked his chops and wagged his tail.

"Yes, I was gathering mushrooms," continued the rabbit, "beautiful mushrooms. They grow large here in the forest and I could hardly wait to get home with them. Anyway, I was minding my own business gathering mushrooms when this old hag of a women appeared out of nowhere, and a very disagreeable person she was, too. Just horrible, horrible. She asked me what I was doing, as if she couldn't see for herself, and I told her I was gathering mushrooms. "If it's any of your business," I said. Then she called me a liar, and accused me of spying on her. As if I make a habit of going about prying into other people's lives. Really, I didn't even know the old hag was there.

Anyway, she got all upset and told me I shouldn't be in her forest. Then she threw some outrageous fit, screaming incantations, and the next thing I knew, I was looking up from her ankles. Not a very pretty sight, I can assure you! I

thought she had turned herself into a giant, so I turned about and ran. I ran as fast as my legs would carry me. It wasn't until later that I realized what had really happened.

And let me tell you it has not been easy. It seems like every creature in the world has a taste for rabbit. I spend more time running about, being chased, or in hiding, than I care to remember. It is really very tiring, to say the least."

When the rabbit finally finished talking, it was Eric who drew in a deep breath.

"I'm sorry about what happened to you." he said. "Is there anything I can do for help you? Would you like to come home with me?"

"No, no, heavens no!" Exclaimed the rabbit. "I think I have a better chance for survival here in the forest. Last thing I need to worry about is someone sneaking around behind my back trying to make a pie out of me. Not that I think you would try it, but one can never be too careful. So, if you please, I would be most grateful if you just set me free right here."

"OK," said Eric, and he began to lower the rabbit down to the ground.

" Wait! wait! Stop, please." The rabbit began to pitch a fit again.

"What's the matter now?"

"Well you're not going to set me down in front of that filthy beast, are you?"

"He's not going to hurt you. He will stay when I command him to."

"No! no! no! no! no! no! no!" Cried the rabbit, "Not in front of the filthy beast. I don't like the filthy beast. Please put me somewhere away from him, on that rock over there by the bushes," and he pointed with his little paw to a rock

behind Eric.

Eric instructed Bear to hold and made a hand gesture, at which Bear promptly sat down. Eric walked over to the rock and slowly lowered the rabbit on top of it. As soon as he released the rabbit he expected it to run off at a fly, but he did not. Instead the rabbit turned to face Eric and spoke to him.

"I wish to thank you for your kindness. Some men would have killed me for their dinner table. Others would have killed me just for sport. You have a good soul and a level head on your shoulders. But heed my warning. When you go into the forest, take care where your heart may lead you, for if you do not, you may very well lose it and fall."

With that said, the rabbit turned and disappeared into the bushes.

Eric stared into the bushes until Bear made a whining noise drawing his attention. Walking back to Bears' side he reached down and petted his friend behind the ears. "Good boy."

Amazed by the events that had occurred, Eric felt he had to sit down and think. If he tried to tell this to anyone, no one would believe him. He walked back over to the rock where he had just released the rabbit, and sat down. But as he sat he continued to fall. The stone had given way beneath him.

Down Eric tumbled until he came to rest at the bottom of a large mound of lose earth and stone. Bear was soon on top of Eric licking his face thinking they had started a new game. He pushed Bear aside to get to his feet and to look at his new surroundings. He found he had tumbled

down an embankment of a hill looking out over a large meadow. The ancient trees bordering the meadow grew straight and tall. In deed, they were so tall, he felt as if he were looking up from the bottom of a well. Another strange thing about the place was how it looked, as if a pack of giant moles lived there. It was filled with many hills of large stone mounds.

To have a better look around, he climbed one of the large mounds. As he reached the top he froze. There at the other end of the meadow, with the sunlight beaming down upon it, stood a lonely ancient stone tower. It was sun bleached and crumbled, with moss creeping up one side. The other side was attached to a wall with the remains of an arch or entrance. All around the tower's base was grown thick with shrubbery. No entrance could be seen into the tower. Yet, toward the top, a dark opening looked out over the field.

Eric felt his heart beating in his chest as he held his breath. Had he really discovered the tower of Avial's tale? *Could this be the hidden city?* He climbed down from the mound and walked toward the tower for a closer look. As he drew nearer the tower, he thought he heard singing. It played light and sweet upon the air, coming very faintly to his ear. This made it difficult to determine exactly where it was coming from. He stopped to look around; then he realized it was coming from the tower. He began to follow the sound when Bear gave a low warning growl.

Heeding the warning, Eric stopped. "What's the matter Bear," he asked, "is there something wrong?"

Bear gave another low growl and then a muffled bark. Eric looked in the direction Bear was staring, in time to see an old woman emerging out of the forest from the other side of the meadow. Pulling Bear aside, Eric stooped

behind a pile of stones to watch her. The old woman walked slightly bent over and she wore dark clothing. Her complexion was pale and her hair was grayish white. She wore a golden shawl and carried a large bundle on her back. She continued across the meadow, making her way around the large mounds, until she reached the bottom of the tower. Then, looking up at its dark opening, she called out, "Rapunzel! Rapunzel! Maiden so fair, let down the braid of golden hair."

The cracking of her voice traveled out over the meadow to the trees. How strange, Eric thought, as he watched to see what would happened. He didn't have to wait long. Soon a long rope appeared from the dark opening at the top of the tower and snaked its way down the side until it reached the old woman. She took the rope in her hand and gave it a tug, whereupon she was lifted away from the ground, and floated straight up the side of the tower to the opening. When she reached the opening, she stopped in mid-air and stepped in through the darkness and disappeared, after which the rope retreated back out of sight. Eric excited about this strange new discovery, lingered awhile, to see if anything else would happen. But nothing did, so he and Bear quietly slipped away and rushed home.

Eric didn't share the excitement of his discoveries with the others. Instead, he had two days of chores to catch up on. So, he worked extra hard to make up for lost time. To make it up to Babcia, he did additional errands to keep within her good grace. During those days he thought often about the events that occurred in the Dark Wood.

He wanted to talk to Avial, but he was afraid Avial would forbid him to return to the forest.

Later he decided to make up a story and say it was a dream. He decided not to mention the wood nymph, the rabbit, or the tower, only the mysterious magical old woman. He approached Avial with his dream story. Avial listened to his dream about an old women who lives in a secret place and uses magic to fly as high as the tree tops. Eric explained to Avial that in the dream he was concealed behind a tree and was not seen. Then he asked Avial the meaning of his dream. Avial was concerned about the old woman who uses magic powers. If someone has hidden themselves away, uninvited curiosity may be seen as an intrusion. So, Avial advised Eric that it is a sign to stay clear of strange places. Eric nodded in agreement and considered what Avial advised.

But Eric's curiosity became more than he could bare. He was so intrigued by the tower, the beautiful music, and by the sight of the old woman who floated in the air, he decided to investigate these curiosities further. He felt driven to seek out the answers. It would be his secret. He couldn't bring himself to tell Avial because he wouldn't have understood. Avial's warning made that clear. This was going to be his quest, his adventure, and he was willing to take all the risk that came with it.

With Bear at his side as his trusting and loyal companion, Eric started out. Bear always offered him all the companionship he ever needed. Besides, whatever they discovered, he knew that Bear could not tell.

So there he was once again, in the ancient Dark Wood, heading for the tower. They stopped only once to leave an offering of food at the twisted gnarled tree. He hoped this would ensure safe passage through the forest. He

remembered when he returned from his first visit, that the food he had put out was gone. He wondered if the wood nymph had accepted his offer, or if animals from the forest had eaten it.

As they reached the meadow, he held Bear back within the cover of the tree line. He wanted to make sure they were safe before stepping out from the concealment of the forest. He scanned the tree line alone the meadow's edge for signs of movement. The air was silent as he looked around for the old woman. She wasn't anywhere to be seen. All was still.

He gazed out over the mounds of stone and grass that made up the meadow. It was as he remembered it, a large pool of stone mounds and sweet smelling grass surrounded by a wall of dark, silent trees. There was a gentle breeze blowing lightly over the grasses making them dance with the butterflies upon the air. A warm breeze gently washed over his face bringing the sweet scent of mountain flowers to his nose. It was so tranquil. He stood very still not wishing to disrupt the peace by moving.

Every now and then a bird's call would pierce the silence from within the forest. It would carry out over the meadow, like an arrow darting through the air. The sound echoed off the trees and faded away until, once again, it was peaceful.

Eric felt a presence about the place, as if it were alive and watching him, not in a threatening way, but rather, in a way that reminded him of the warm gentle embraces of his mother. He didn't think of her very often because she had died when he was young. But for some strange reason he was reminded of her now. He remembered her love even though he couldn't remember her face. As he

scanned the large circling arch of trees at the meadow's edge, he felt a warm glow pass through him like a whisper, saying, "*come out into the light. Come. Let me cast my eyes upon your face. Come.*" Thus encouraged, he walked out into the sweet meadow grass and felt the sun's warmth upon his face.

Eric looked in the direction of the tower and found it quickly. It stood isolated toward the northeast end of the meadow supported by it's crumbling wall. With Bear at his side, he walked toward the tower, keeping close to the tree line. As he drew near, he continued to look for signs of danger. He half expected the old woman to jump out and catch them, but she was nowhere to be seen. All remained silent. When he was close enough, he looked cautiously around the edge of the trees before proceeding across the open meadow to approach the tower.

Upon reaching the tower, he began exploring it's base, hoping to find another entrance. Maybe a secret escape doorway could be found in the bushes. He also studied the tower and reasoned it must have been a much taller structure at one time. Around it's base lay a pile of broken stones, which must have tumbled from it's walls. If there was any sort of entrance, it was surely buried under the broken pile of rubble. The wall attached to the tower was also crumbling away, leaving only an archway. Years of age and weather had left an outline of the arch still standing in stone, reminding him of a large wish bone, unbroken, waiting for a last wish.

The most troublesome and annoying thing about the tower were the old bramble bushes growing around it. They grew high and were thick with thorns as sharp and piercing as metal spikes, making it impossible to get near the tower walls. The only path through the bramble led to

the area beneath it's dark opening. As hard as Eric tried, he could not find another entrance into the tower. The opening at the top seemed to be the only way in, the same opening the old woman had floated up to.

He looked up at the opening. It was quiet and dark. Not even the faintest whisper of sweet music play upon the air. He pondered how he might explore this old structure farther, when a wild idea disrupted his thoughts. *Why not call out the old woman's chant to see if anything happens?* But that's crazy, even for him. How had he come across such an idea, or how could he expect it to work for him? *What if the old woman was up there?* What if she came out after him. He had better be ready to run.

Eric looked back up at the opening and stared at it a moment longer. It became a silent mysterious hole beckoning to him, daring him to cry out the magic words. He could feel excitement growing in his body. Thoughts began to race through his head urging him on. Should he or shouldn't he? What would happen? Could he run fast enough to escape danger? *Come on, do it. Wait.* He had to think. *What were the words she used?* He hoped he would remember them right? As his head raced with thoughts, he stared intensely at the opening. It seemed to grow larger and stare back at him, urging him on. *Come on do it. Do it now. Do it quickly.* As excited urgency peaked to a breaking point, he suddenly took a deep breath and shouted up to the window, "Rapunzel! Rapunzel! Maiden so fair, let down the braid of golden hair."

Eric listened as his voice carried over the meadow and echoed across the forest trees. He wanted to run, thinking a demon might fly out at any moment in pursuit. Instead, he stood silent, waiting and listening as his voice faded

into the trees. Nothing happened. He waited, anticipating. It seemed like an eternity. But then, to his amazement, he watched the magic rope snake its way down to meet him. It was the same magic rope that lifted the old woman off the ground and floated her up to the opening. It came down and stopped just within his reach. His heart began to race anew. His adventure would continue.

Only now did he question this response. Would he also be lifted off the ground and float up to the opening as he had spied the old woman do? Too impatient to let the question slow him down, he reached out and took the rope in his hand. *But wait! Something was wrong; something was different.* It didn't have the hard, dry course feel that rope should have. He let go of the rope and took a closer look at it. *Why, it wasn't rope at all! It's a long braid of hair!* The longest braid of hair he had ever seen! *Who or what kind of creature could possibly grow hair this long? What could possibly be up in this tower? Could it be a giant? A troll? No, it couldn't be.* Neither of those could sing as sweetly as he had heard. *Maybe it was another sorceress?* Eric could feel his heart racing faster and his breath became faint. He swallowed as he reached out and gently fingered the braid to examine it. *Yes, it was hair, soft and light and golden, with a green ribbon entertwined in the weave of the braid.* He looked up again at the tower opening. He couldn't help wonder how many more surprises he would discover at the end of this braid?

He took the braid carefully in his hand, the same way he had seen the old woman do, and gave it a tug. With

building anticipation, he waited to be lifted into the air. Nothing happened. He gave the rope another tug and waited. Again, nothing happened. He tugged it harder a third time, but it became obvious the powers of the golden braid would not work for him. He was a little disappointed. Even though the thought of being carried up into the air by magic was a little unnerving, he had looked forward to the experience.

With determination, Eric grasped the braid in both hands and decided to climb up to the opening. If he was going to find out what mystery awaited in the tower, he figured he might as well use the braid as a climbing rope. He hoisted himself upon the braid wrapping his arms and legs around it. It proved to be more difficult to climb than he had thought. The smooth, soft texture didn't give the same kind of support a course dry rope did. To hoist himself farther up, he had to entwine his legs within the braid to ensure a secure hold.

As Eric began his climb, he looked up to the opening and realized for the first time how high it was. It had to be at least 16 times his height. That could prove be dangerous if he should slip and fall. Only broken rock and thorny bramble lay about the bottom of the tower. The bramble thick with sharp dagger like thorns would surely cut and tear through his flesh. The thought worried him and he wondered if it was part of the magic to keep this place private.

Eric continued to pull himself up the golden braid. Taking his time and carefully placing hand over hand, he continued to hoist himself higher and higher. As he did so, he looked out over the sea of stone mounds and grass that made up the meadow. He thought he could make out areas that were once dwellings with paths running

through them. In another area was an open spot that could have been the square or market place. The wall attached to the tower lead a broken pile of stone around the sea of mounds and grass and continued straight into the forest. That was the direction he and Bear had come from. Beyond the broken wall the land lay more natural. That was the direction the old woman had appeared from. *The old woman!* He remembered her very clearly. The thought of Avial's warning suddenly made him feel uneasy and he felt an urgent need to get on with his exploration.

As he moved up the braid drawing closer to the opening he noticed how dark and ominous it looked. Its dark silent gap seemed to stare out over the meadow as if watching and waiting the approach of his intrusion. The silence of the meadow joined the silence of the cold empty stare of the tower. The feeling of possible danger began to creep into his mind and he felt a chill go through his body. Still determined to seek the answers to this mystery, he continued to climb toward the cold black hole.

Finally, Eric reached the opening's ledge. His gut was dancing with a mixture of nervousness and excitement. Now he would finally see what secrets hid within the tower. He hoisted himself up one last time. Taking hold of the ledge, he drew himself onto it. Cautiously Eric looked in. He noticed that the golden braid was tied to a metal post imbedded in the stone wall beside the opening. On the floor next to the opening sat a large basket where he assumed the braid was kept. At first, he could only make out shapes because his eyes hadn't adjusted to the dim light of the interior. As he continued to stare into the exterior, he slowly began to make out furnishings in a large, half circular room. When he recognized the furnishings, a wave of disappointment washed over him. *It*

was nothing but a hut! A weaver's hut! And the opening wasn't an entrance at all. It was really a window!

There was no sign of anyone present so Eric proceeded to climb in through the window. Once inside, he surveyed the interior of the tower room and was impressed by its cozy, comfortable setting. It was very clean with simple furnishings. The window had a heavy tapestry hung over it, pulled to one side, where it was tied to let in the light. Tapestries lay across the wooden floor and hung in various colors and lengths over the walls.

A loom stood close to the window, with a beautiful tapestry still entwined upon its threads. He walked over to closely inspect the tapestry design. It pictured a golden meadow with a tower in it's center. Around the tower, circled forest animals and birds as if marching in a parade. The gold coloring faded to a rich green at the edge, where the border trimmed the design with an intricate pattern of forest flowers. It was beautiful. He hesitated to turn away, but as he did so, his foot struck against a basket filled with skeins of wool. He bent down and put it back in its place and noticed there were many more baskets scattered about the floor, under the loom. Each basket was filled with a variety of material, including wool, flax, and linen.

Across from the loom was a large poster bed, also draped in heavy tapestries. Along the wall dividing the tower room was a tall carved wooden bookcase. But there were no books, only shears, shuttles, and darning needles with die pots and other tools used by weavers. On the opposite side of the room was a hearth with wood embers still glowing. Next to the hearth was a small table with several stools. He walked over to sit upon a stool when he noticed a bowl on the table containing a half eaten meal. *Someone was there!*

He quickly turned and looked around. *Of course, someone was there. Someone had to be there, somewhere.* Out of the corner of his eye he caught a slight movement. He turned to face the wall lined with shelves. In the corner of the wall was a small door slightly ajar. *Someone was there watching him!* A feeling of uneasiness began to creep through his body as he stared at the door.

"Who is there?" he called out. Slowly he backed his way toward the window in case he needed to flee.

"Who is there? Come out and let me see you."

The door stood silent. There was no response.

"I mean you no harm. I've only come to explore, to discover what this place is. Please come out."

"Who are you?" Came the reply from behind the door.

"I'm Eric. I have come up from the village," he returned. "Now won't you tell me who you are?"

"Why do you ask who I am when you already know who I am?"

What was this? He didn't understand. How could he know who was behind the door? He was somewhat bewildered by this response.

"I am at a loss," he returned. "I do not know who you are. Surely you know I have never come here before. Do you know me from another place? Is that how I am known to you?"

"You are not known to me. Why do you ask who I am when you know me?"

This was too much for Eric. Frustrated by the response, he asked once again.

"Wait, I am confused. Why do you keep saying I know you? How could I possibly know who you are?"

"Was it not you who called out my name? Was it not you who requested the golden braid?"

Eric had to think. He hadn't called out any name. He had only called out the magic words, and it worked, or so he thought. But it was obvious that the golden braid had no magic powers. Whoever was hiding behind the door must have let down the golden braid. *They could have mistaken him for someone else, for the old woman. But the old woman used magic to get into the tower, and she used the golden braid to do it.* This was becoming more confusing. Eric decided he should explain himself better.

"I didn't call out any names. I called out the magic words, the same magic words I had spied an old woman use not but a forth night ago. I wanted the magic to work for me, but nothing happened. Only the golden braid appeared, so I climbed up the braid to see what was up here, and what do I find, but a weavers' hut with a talking door."

There came no response from the door. It remained slightly ajar. Eric strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of who might be there, but it was of no use. The door stood silently waiting. This was odd, but he decided to play alone until whoever was hiding felt at ease enough to come out and talk. Since he found himself addressing a door, why not call it a door?

"Well since you refuse to come out from hiding, I must assume there is really no one there. And since I find myself talking to a door, may I call you Dori?" he asked with a smile. "Yes. Dori. It's perfect and appropriate, don't you agree?"

"Do not jest with me," came back the response. "How do

I know you are to be trusted? How do I know you are not a murderer and a thief who has come to kill me and steal away what little I have?"

"No!" cried Eric. "I come as I have told you, only to explore, to discover what this place is. Can't you see I carry no weapons? I am here alone as I stand. I will do you no harm. I promise. My only crime is my curiosity, that I am guilty of. If I had other intentions, I would not have stood here talking to a door? Any true robber wouldn't have the patience for this. He would have surely turned this place into a shambles and done with you what he will. So now, I think I have reasoned this out fairly well and you are being unkind. Please come out and let us talk. "

"I'm sorry. I can't allow that at this time. Please go away."

Eric was crushed. He had hoped he would be able to convince the person hiding behind the door he that could be trusted, but he had failed.

"OK. I will leave as you wish." He replied. "By doing so, maybe you will see I mean you no harm. If you do not wish to see me again, do not let down the golden braid. But, I promise I will return. My curiosity now stronger than ever."

"You must not risk coming here, for there is great danger in it for you," came back a warning.

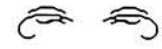
"Does that risk come from you?"

"No. The danger comes from the old woman you spied upon. Be very wary of her, Eric."

The voice said his name, showing concern for his safety. This mysterious person behind the door was not so bad after all. Eric turned to go out the window. Just before lowering himself below the ledge, he called back through the opening, "Good bye, until we meet again." Then he slid down the braid to the base of the tower where Bear

had patiently waited for him.

At the inn he went through the motions of doing his chores. But his mind played over the events of what had happened at the tower. *Who could the person be? Could it be someone he had once met in passing, possibly a guest from the inn?* He shook his head in wonder. Maybe, maybe not, but he knew one thing for sure; it was a girl.



The next few days it rained, a heavy miserable spring rain with loud thunder rolling out over the hills of the mountain valley. The longer it rained the more agitated and restless Eric became. So, to keep himself busy, he spent his time helping Babcia clean around the inn and out in the stable. No matter how hard he worked, his thoughts were preoccupied with returning to the tower. He had to find out who the girl was hiding behind the door. He was now certain it was a girl. The more he ran the events of their encounter through his mind, the more convinced he became. The tone of the voice was too soft, and a boy would not have hid from him. As soon as the weather cleared, he would go back. There were too many questions he wanted to resolve.

Maybe she was ugly or hideous to look upon. He had heard tales of people being abandoned because of their appearance, of people who hid because they were shunned and scorned by others. He remembered what his father had once told him. He was on a trip trying to arrange a new caravan trade route, when he witnessed a poor wretched soul being chased and stoned by an angry mob. His father's heart went out to the poor man. After the mob had cleared, his father carried the poor soul to a

sheltered place and tended his wounds. But he worried about the man's slow recovery, so he sought the whereabouts of a healer. That's when he met Avial. While tending to the poor man's wounds, Avial and his father became good friends, and they were soon traveling the caravan trade routes together.

Avial told Eric, during one of his lessons, that what his father had done was a reflection of his soul. The Gods judged the worthiness of man by his reaction to the world around him. Avail admired Eric's father for what he had done for the poor man and respected him greatly.

So, that had to be it! She must be awful to look upon! That became the most reasonable explanation Eric could think of. Why else would she refuse to reveal herself? Maybe Avial would be able to help her. But, Eric had to find out for sure. As it was, he was only guessing. He had to investigate this mystery farther.

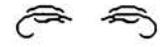
When the weather cleared and the sun finally came out, Eric took the opportunity to go back to the meadow deep in the Dark Wood. Most of his work had been finished during the days of rain. So, no one minded if he should slip away for an afternoon. Before leaving, he packed a meal, this time putting a little extra in it to leave as an offering for the Wood nymph. He decided he would do this each day he entered the forest to insure a safe passage. He left the food upon the flat stone below the twisted gnarled tree, hoping wild animals would not eat it. As he and Bear approached the edge of the meadow, he took the precaution to check for signs of the old woman. There were none, so he stepped out into the openness of the meadow and continued his way to the tower.

As he walked across the meadow, he kept his eye on the tower window hoping to catch a glance of something

inside, but nothing moved. It remained dark and silent, giving no clues. The closer he drew to the lonely stone monolith, the greater the anticipation began to build inside of him. Upon reaching the tower, he hesitated. Would she lower the braid to him? This time real danger may be waiting for him. After all the warnings he had received and shrugged off, he may not be so lucky this time.

He turned to look out over the meadow one more time. It was beautiful. It was sunny, peaceful, and warm. The mist of spirits rose up out of the trees from the forest covered ridges that surrounded the meadow. He watched as the light swirling souls of so many ancient spirits lifted into the air toward the sun, for they could not go without the sun as their guide, and the rainy days had held them back. It would be their final journey to the Gods, and he wished them peace and safe travel. The tranquility in the air carried over into the meadow where birds sang lightly and flew low over the sun drenched grass. If the weather stayed like this, it would be dry by end of day. It was going to be a pleasant day, a good sign, he hoped.

Encouraged, Eric turned his gaze back to the tower window. He might as well get it over with. He took a deep breath and called out the chant as he remembered it. "Rapunzel! Rapunzel! Maiden so fair, let down the braid of golden hair." With his gaze fixed on the window, he waited to see if the braid would be lowered. After a few moments he saw a slight movement at the window's ledge. *Yes!* There is was, slowly snaking its way down to him as before. His heart leaped with excitement. Once again, he would have the opportunity to continue with his adventure.



He grabbed the soft, silky braid and climbed up to the window ledge and peeked in. The interior of the tower was as he had first seen it. Nothing changed. Again, no one could be seen moving about in the room. He continued to climb into the window and looked toward the door in the shelf wall. As he expected, it was ajar and had moved ever so slightly when he looked at it.

"Well, I have returned as I said I would," Eric directed toward the door. "Thank you for letting down the braid."

"Why have you returned?" asked the voice from behind the door.

"Because of my curiosity. I wish to solve this mystery."

"What mystery?"

"Why, the mystery of you, who you are, why you live here in this tower so far away from everyone?"

"I do not live here by choice."

Ah ha! It was as he suspected, Eric thought. *She must be hiding because she is ugly!*

"I have already guessed as much," he continued. "But let me tell you. It doesn't matter how you may appear. I am not one to hold ugliness against a person, so you do not need to hide from me. I will not hurt you. For anyone who sings as beautifully as you, surely proves beauty comes in many forms."

"You are a strange one, Eric. Why do you think I'm ugly?" asked the voice from behind the door.

"Why else would you hide?" He replied. "You see, I have reasoned it out for myself. I've heard stories of how cruel

people can be toward those who are not so fair. So, I am prepared for whatever hideous shape or form may be concealed behind that door. Please come out and let us talk."

Eric watched the door in anticipation as it slowly opened to reveal a dark silhouette standing in the shadows of a room beyond the wall.

"You must think yourself noble to come and face such a horrible beast. You must think yourself brave. Well, let me warn you now. Do not fill your head with unworthy accomplishments. They make you look foolish and smug."

Then ever so softly, she moved forward into the dim light of the room and crossed over to the hearth and stood facing the low burning fire. He stood by the window, not moving, as his gaze followed her smooth motion across the room. He was not as prepared for the sight of her as he had expected.

"I am afraid you're going to be disappointed with what you have discovered," she said, facing the hearth, "for, I am not the hideous hag you had hoped to find."

Eric was so taken by her appearance that he stood dumbly and stared at her. She was beautiful. She was as alluring as the song she sang, and the air about her was as peaceful as the meadow outside the window. As he stood there transfixed, his eyes gazed over her taking in as much as possible. She was young, about his age, maybe a little younger, he guessed. Her complexion was as smooth as cream itself. When she turned to face him, he marveled at the liquid pools of sparkling blue green dancing in her eyes. Her nose sat small and perfect above her full, moist lips. She wore a plain blue dress with the traditional long, full apron down the front. And her hair, her golden hair was so incredibly long, it flowed, reaching all the way

down to her ankles, where the ends had been gathered and braided. He had never seen anyone like her in his life.

Recovering from his state of surprise, he responded to her reproach to him.

"Oh no! I'm sorry! Please forgive any misunderstanding," he pleaded. "I merely wanted to assure you I would not cause you any harm, whatever the circumstances. As it is, I am not disappointed in the least. Instead, I find this to be a rather pleasant surprise."

She studied him for a moment. Then, in a concerned tone, she said. "You should not have come back. It is very dangerous for you to be here. You should go away and never return."

Eric shook his head. "No, I'm afraid I can't do that. If I did, I would never discover what this place is. You see, each time I return, I have found something new. The first time I came here, I discovered something magical. The second time I returned, I discovered something mysterious. And now that I have returned, I discovered something beautiful. Each time I returned has brought something unexpected. Don't you see?" He continued, holding his hands out to his side. "This is my adventure. I've always wanted to go out and find something, discover something no one else knows about. You can send me away a thousand times, but I promise you, I will always return until I know all about this place and you."

She stood by the hearth looking perplexed. To ease the mood, Eric walked over to the table and sat on a stool.

"Come on," he said, tapping the table, "let's sit and talk awhile."

"What shall we talk about?"

"Let's talk about what we know best. Let's talk about ourselves. I would like to know more about you."

"Like what?"

"Well, you know my name is Eric. Why don't you tell me your name?"

Again she gave him that perplexed look.

"But you know my name."

"Why do you keep saying that. How do I know your name?"

"You must know my name. You call it out when you call for the braid. My name is Rapunzel," she said, exasperated.

"Rapunzel! Rapunzel's your name! I thought that was only part of the chant, the magic words." He carried on, "What a strange name to call someone. Don't you know that Rapunzel is a cabbage?"

"Yes, I know," she said indignantly. "But a name is just a name. It doesn't make a person."

"I'm sorry," he said, not intending to belittle her. "You're right. I didn't mean to mock you. But you must admit it is a strange name."

"It is only a name," she repeated as she crossed the room to take a seat at the table opposite from him.

Pleased to see she was willing to join him, he smiled and said, "Well that's better. Isn't this more comfortable than talking through a door?"

She smiled as she answered, "Yes, I admit it is."

"So, tell me why you live up here in this tower?"

"No," she said, shaking her head, smiling. "I refuse to answer your questions until you tell me about yourself. Where do you come from, and how is it you have so much time on your hands that you can spend it wandering about?"

At first he was taken back by her amusement and reproach. Then he remembered the advice Avial had

given him. "*When traveling, remember that you are the stranger. If you wish to learn the secrets of others, you have to be trusted. By sharing your tales, you can earn the trust of others.*"

"OK. Fair is fair," he replied. "I'll be glad to tell you about myself. I live at the inn my father owns in the valley of Clear Water. It lies in the mountain pass of New Path, which is over that east ridge through the Dark Wood." He turned to point at the window to show the direction from which he came.

"I live there with our Polish housekeeper Babcia, who manages the inn, and with Avial, my tutor. I have chores to do in the morning and the stable to keep up, but during the last three days of rain, I have managed to finish most of them. The stable always needs tending to, so I am required to do those chores everyday. I am not the lazy drifter you think I am. Today I just happened to have some time to myself, and took the opportunity to come here for further exploration."

She sat studying him intently and listened to what he said. Her eyes only left his face when he turned to point at the window. She also turned to look, as if she would be able to see his valley, even though she couldn't.

"I knew there was a village around here somewhere," she replied. "Sometimes I hear the sound of bells. Are there bells in your village?"

"Yes, there are," replied Eric, his eyes lighting up. "There is a small tower in the square of the village with bells that ring in the morning before market opens, and then they ring again at the close of market. It really isn't far away. Haven't you ever gone there?"

"No. But I have heard the bells."

"Really?" he asked amazed, ignoring the point about the

bells, because his thoughts began to wonder how she went about getting supplies. After all, his village was the only one around for many leagues.

"Where do you go for your goods?"

"I don't go anywhere. My needs are taken care of, so I always stay here."

The idea that she never left the tower had not occurred to Eric. It was hard to believe a person had never gone anywhere.

"What about outside? Don't you go outside into the meadow?"

"No, how would I get outside?"

"I don't know," he said honestly, "I just thought you would have some way to go outside, to leave the tower."

"The only way in and out of the tower is through the window with the braid, and I do not have the will to climb the braid as you have. I am too afraid of falling."

Then changing his tone, Eric became serious and asked in a hushed secretive manner, "You said you do not live here by choice. Are you being kept a prisoner? Is someone keeping you here against your will?"

Her eyes sparkled, as she smiled and shook her head to reply, "No, no. I am not a prisoner." Then she gave a small laugh.

"Why are you laughing?" I've never met a person who stays in one place. Don't you get bored."

"No. I don't get bored. And, as far as that goes, I have never felt the need to go anywhere. There is plenty here for me to do."

Then she countered him once again. "Tell me," she said, "Why do you feel you must explore so much?"

"Exploring gives me adventure!" Eric replied. "It gives me the opportunity to discover things I never knew

before. In a way, everyone's an explorer, even you, whenever you try something new, like weaving a basket." He picked up a basket from the floor and held it up to examine it. "No matter how many times you have woven one, each basket will be different. They are never the same. This is what you will learn. When you understand that, you have made a discovery."

"I've never thought of it that way," she said. " You're right."

Encouraged by her interest, excitement in Eric grew with this chance to talk about his favorite subject. He had always wanted someone to share stories with, and here was the perfect person, because she never went anywhere and probably never heard anything.

"We get many wanderers and travelers at the inn. They travel throughout the lands across the world and have witnessed the most mysterious sights. I know many fabulous tales I can tell you. Some are so strange that you will find them hard to believe, but they are all true. Would you like to hear about them? If it is OK with you, I would like very much to return. There is a lot we can talk about, and I would like to think that we could be friends."

He studied her face to watch her reaction to his request. He wondered what she might say. He hoped she would allow him to return. If only he had a clue to what she might be thinking. She stared off into the interior of the room at nothing in particular, deep in thought. Then she turned and looked at him once again, her beautiful face becoming a mask while her eyes danced, searching for an answer. Finally she shook her head in agreement.

"Yes, I would like that. I would like that very much," she said in a warm, soft voice. "But, I must warn you about Grethel." She continued in a serious tone. "She is my

guardian and would be very angry to find the presence of a man in this tower. If caught, she will do great harm to you."

"Who is Grethel? Is she the old woman I spied on when I first ventured here?"

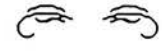
"Yes," she replied. "She leaves early every morning and returns every evening before the sun sets over the ridge. If you wish to return and you would be wise not to, but you seem to do as you please. I will advise you to come when morning is long and stay no longer than mid-day."

"Great! I'll be sure to do just that! You won't regret it either. You'll see. We will have some good talks together. And don't worry about your Grethel. I will avoid her easily."

Eric stood up and walked toward the window. "Well I guess I'll be off now. I don't want to wear out my welcome."

He smiled at his joke and looked at her. Rapunzel returned his smile and nodded in agreement. He went to the window and looked out to see what Bear might be up to. He found Bear lying peacefully in the sun on a large stone. Turning back to her one last time, Eric smiled and said, "Thanks."

Then he climbed onto the ledge and took hold of the braid. Before disappearing out the window he called out, "until we meet again," and was gone.



It was almost a week before Eric went back to visit Rapunzel. Finishing the spring cleaning chores and preparing the inn for it's summer travelers always required

a lot of preparation. This year was slightly different because Avial always seemed to be around offering a hand, especially to Babcia. Eric had never seen him act this way, and wondered if he was up to something. Usually he and Babcia avoided one another like the plague, but now he always smiled and was helpful. Eric was somewhat surprised by the change in attitude and thought something strange was going on.

When he finally got a break from his chores, Eric went off to the tower with Bear at his side. Together they went up into the hills, past the pond, through the Dark Wood and across the meadow until they reached the tower. There, Eric called out the chant.

"Did you miss me?" he asked jokingly, climbing through the window.

She only responded with a smile. Once he was in, she sat down at a bundle of wool and began combing out the fibers. Seeing her up close, Eric was reminded of how beautiful she was. He watched her closely and studied her movements.

"Sorry it took so long for me to return," he said. "Keeping up with my responsibilities at the inn is a lot of work. So, how have you been?"

"Oh, I have been doing quite well, thank you," she replied, "As you can see, I also have my responsibilities to keep up with."

"Well, we can talk while you continue your work. What shall we talk about today?"

"First, tell me how you found the tower," she requested. "I have been wondering about that since your first visit."

Eric began by relating to her the story Avial had told him the night of his return. He told her why the tower was built and the history of what had happened, filling in as

much detail as he could remember. She was fascinated by the story and listened intently to every word.

Eric then went on to explain how the people from his village had superstitions about the Dark Wood, how they were frightened of its mischievous spirits, and how no one dared to venture near them. That made it the perfect place for him to explore, because it hadn't been done before.

But there was more. Eric continued to tell her about the meeting with the wood nymph. He repeated the story about the twisted gnarled tree. Also, he explained how he began to leave the wood nymph offerings whenever he entered the Dark Wood, to safeguard his passing. Rapunzel nodded her agreement with the idea and told him she thought he was wise to do so.

Eric wasn't sure whether or not to mention the rabbit, because he was afraid she wouldn't believe him. But she seemed to be enjoying his storytelling, so he felt encouraged. When he did, she accepted the story with an open mind and with an understanding of how strange things can be in the Dark Wood.

Last of all, Eric told her how he accidentally tumbled down a steep embankment into the meadow and discovered the tower. He told her how he had heard her singing and was coming over to the tower to investigate, when Bear alerted him to Grethel's approach. He explained how they stooped behind some bushes to spy on Grethel as she entered the tower. After that, they went home, satisfied with all their discoveries, only to come back another time to continue their explorations.

When Eric had finished his stories, they both decided to eat something. While he pulled some baked goods and cheese out of his knapsack, she fixed a fresh salad with

vegetables and mushrooms. He offered to share his meal with her and she in turn shared her salad.

"This salad tastes so good! Where did you find such fresh vegetables? Oh wait! of course. I wasn't thinking. Grethel must have brought them for you."

"No she didn't. I grew them myself."

"What? How can you do that? You never leave the tower. You can't grow vegetables without leaving the tower?"

"Yes I can. I grow them on the roof."

"Really?" he said, surprised. "On the roof? I would like to see that, that is, if you don't mind?"

"Sure. Would you like to go up to the roof now?"

"That would be great! Let's go."

Still nibbling on a piece of cheese, Rapunzel got up and crossed over to the door in the shelf wall and passed through. Eric followed her, anxious to see how she managed to grow vegetables on the roof of a stone tower. But he was also anxious to have an opportunity to see more of the tower's interior. As he followed her across the room, he guessed they were passing through a storage area. Beyond the door was a room filled with neatly stacked bundles of various shapes and sizes. Along another wall, timber and sticks had been piled for keeping the fire in the hearth burning. From the wall a lantern cast warm light throughout the room. A staircase leading up and down was set into the wall opposite the door. Rapunzel turned and pointed to the dark area at the bottom of the stairs and told Eric it was a room used for cold storage and for growing mushrooms. Then he watched as she climbed the stairs until she reached a door in the ceiling. He hadn't noticed the cord hanging from the ceiling until she reached out to pull on it. The door in the ceiling abruptly opened, letting a stream of bright sunlight pour through

the opening, filling the room with light. Rapunzel continued through the opening in the ceiling and turned to look back at him.

"Well, are you coming?" she asked.

"Yes, of course," Eric said climbing the stairs. "I just can't get over how." He stopped and caught his breath.

He had never imagined there could be anything like this up here. He turned to survey the roof top in total disbelief.

"It's amazing!" Eric said in a hushed voice of astonishment. "Absolutely amazing."

The tower roof was alive with greenery. It looked like a stone garden of a palace. As he walked slowly around the garden, Eric observed how old wooden posts had been laid on their sides and stacked, dividing the tower roof into pathways and garden plots. There were patches planted with vegetables and flowers mixed together. Flowering blossoms were everywhere, their fragrance filling the air. In one corner of the garden, a small group of flowering shrubbery and fruit trees grew. Along the moss covered stone ledge of the wall, grapevines grew. He noticed how clever she was to have placed wooden barrels, cut in halves, around the roof to catch rain water. A little bit of earth, up here where no one would expect to find it, created a garden in the sky.

Rapunzel was pleased by his reaction.

"It's beautiful! How did you ever manage this?"

"Oh, it wasn't my doing, really, I've just added some of my own touches to it," she answered. "Most of this had already been put here before I came. Grethel had done a lot of the work putting it together. I just keep it growing with Grethel's guidance."

"Now I understand how you stay here without the need

to go anywhere," Eric said. "How clever you are! Still, I can't help wonder how you managed to do this so well."

"I can show you if you like," Rapunzel offered.

"That would be wonderful. We have just started to put our garden in, but in all the years we've had it, it has never looked this beautiful. This will give me something to look forward to, when I return."

"I must admit I really enjoyed your visit today," Rapunzel said. "more than I thought I would."

"Good! I'm glad. I enjoyed it too," he said, pleased to see how well they were getting along. "And I admit, I'm still amazed by what I discover each time I return. It's like a continuing adventure, one we may share as friends."

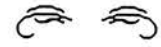
Eric glanced at her standing among the flowers, and thought how beautiful she looked, like a painting. She was as natural as the garden itself. The smile of her eyes brought on the same radiance as the sun drenched blossoms. He wanted to stay longer, but he noticed the sun had drifted past the midpoint in the sky toward the western horizon. He realized it was time he should be leaving, even though he wanted to stay longer.

"I really appreciate your sharing this with me, but I think my time has grown short and I must be leaving." Eric said.

"Yes, I'm afraid you're right," Rapunzel responded, and remembering all the tales he had told her today, she added, "please take care passing through the Wood."

"As long as I have Bear with me, I will be all right." He assured her. "

They returned to the living area and cleaned up from their meal. Then Eric picked up his knapsack and crossed over to the window's ledge. Just before he dropped out of sight, he called out to her, "Until we meet again."



Eric was sitting on the window ledge looking out over the meadow. It was becoming somewhat of a routine to come see Rapunzel whenever he could manage to break away from his chores.

"Tell me," he asked, "why did Grethel name you Rapunzel? I mean, it's such an odd name to give a person. I was just wondering why she did it."

"It's a story that has to do with my parents," Rapunzel replied.

"You mean you have parents who allow Grethel to keep you here in this tower?" Eric asked in disbelief.

"My parents gave me away," she said abruptly. "Besides, Grethel has always taken good care of me."

"Oh," he said, realizing this was a topic she may feel uncomfortable talking about. But still, he was curious to know. "Can I ask what happened?"

"I only know what Grethel has told me."

"Well, tell me what you know, that is, if it doesn't bother you."

"No, I don't mind," Rapunzel said, pausing to gather her thoughts. "Grethel told me that my mother was a very beautiful woman from a wealthy family. My father was a simple farmer, a laborer, who worked on her father's land. She fell in love with him because he was handsome and strong and worked very hard for her father. When they married, they were given a cottage and some land as a wedding gift from her parents. But my grandparent's gift was not sincere. They felt she married below her class. So secretly, they gave the newlyweds the worst plot of land on

their property, hoping my father would overwork himself and fail. Then, they hoped, my mother would grow tired of him, recognize her mistake, and leave him for good."

"I hate to say it," said Eric, "but your grandparents don't sound like very nice people."

"No, I'm afraid you're right. I was ashamed when Grethel told me about this."

"Well, don't let it bother you," said Eric, trying to comfort her. "You can't help the way other people behave."

"No, but if they hadn't treated my father so unfairly, things may have been different," she said. "My father loved my mother very much and was willing to do whatever he could to retain her love. He worked hard plowing, planting, and tending the fields, but his crops came up poorly. His efforts were wasted on bad land. The living conditions of my parents turned into a struggle. They had little money and their food supply had grown short. They ate only one meal a day, consisting of a meager serving of porridge. During these hard times, my mother began to show signs of carrying a child. I was the child she carried in her stomach. Her belly began to grow and she began to have cravings for strange food they could not have, nor afford."

"One day my mother decided she must have a salad for her supper. She knew the old woman, who was their neighbor, had a lovely garden with a large variety of vegetables and cabbages. She insisted that my father get her some, and she didn't care how he went about it. My poor father, out of love for my mother, was willing to steal for her, cost what it may. So he waited until late evening before climbing over the neighbor's wall, and into her garden, to steal away some vegetables. He gave them to my

mother who made them into a salad and ate it all herself. It tasted so good, that in a few days, her cravings came back. Once again, she gave my poor father no rest until he promised to get her some more."

"Why didn't he just ask the neighbor?" asked Eric.

"I don't know," she answered. "Maybe my father thought if he took just a few, no one would notice them missing."

"Well, I don't know. Your father was taking a great risk. In some areas, stealing is a very serious crime. . . So, what happened next?"

"My father went back again," she said. "He waited until late evening and climbed the wall into the neighbors garden. As he slid down into the garden, he found Grethel standing there waiting for him."

"Grethel!" cried Eric. "Grethel was the neighbor your father was stealing from?"

"Yes," she answered. "She told me how angry she was to find someone had been stealing from her. At first she thought it was an animal, but when she found my father's foot prints by the wall, she decided to catch him in the act."

"Your Grethel's a very clever person," said Eric. "What did she do with him?"

"Oh, she was angry. She had worked hard in her gardens and he was stealing the food from her table. So she threatened my father for being a thief and told him he would pay dearly for his crime. My father was shaken with fright and pleaded for mercy. He told her how poorly his fields were growing. No matter what he did, his crops had continued to fail. Then he explained their living condition and told Grethel he had not stolen for himself, but for his wife who was with child. He went on about how my mother was so desperate to eat salad, she felt she

would surely die. When Grethel heard my father's explanations, her anger abated a little. Together, they walked to my parent's cottage to see my mother. My mother confessed to Grethel that what my father said was true. "

"Seeing the state of their poor condition, Grethel's heart went out to them. She inspected their land and crops and told them they were wasting their time because the soil was worthless. Then she gave them full permission to take as many vegetables from her garden as they needed, but on one condition. They were to give up their child to her when my mother brought it into the world. At first my parents were alarmed by her request, but they soon gave in to her wishes. Grethel promised them she would give me a good home. She would love me and be as careful with me as a mother could be. So my parents finally agreed."

"They continued to feast on the vegetables grown in Grethel's garden. When I was born Grethel went to claim me, and my parents gave me up willingly to her, as they had promised. Grethel then moved away to another village because she felt it would be too hard on my parents if she stayed there with me. I also believe she no longer trusted them and worried they might try to steal me away."

"I was given the name Rapunzel after the favorite vegetable my mother craved so much from Grethel's garden."

Rapunzel stopped abruptly. She stood staring into the embers glowing in the hearth. Eric could feel that she was in a solemn mood. He wasn't sure what to say, so he waited for her to continue.

"I sometimes wonder what my life would be like, if my parents had not given me away," she said. "Not that I

regret my life," she said turning her head to look at Eric, "because it is good. But still, I can't help wonder what it would have been like."

"I know what you mean," Eric said. "Sometimes I wonder how different things would be for me if my mother were still alive. I wonder if my father would be home more, instead of always away organizing his trade routes."

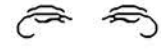
"Sometimes I feel I should be ashamed for wanting to know what it would be like to be back with my parents," Rapunzel said. "Grethel has always been so kind and loving, and I have everything I need." Then she repeated, "I was named Rapunzel after my mother's favorite vegetable."

Eric deep in thought, looked up at her standing in front of the hearth all alone, like a statue. He stood up from the window ledge and walked over to stand behind her.

Placing his hands on her shoulders, he remarked, "It shows that the name Rapunzel has a lot more meaning behind it than one would first expect. It is not just a name."

She lifted her hand to place it over his as it rested on her shoulder. Then she tilted her face to rest it against both hands. It was an endearing move that captured Eric's heart.

"Yes, it does," she said in a softly spoken voice. "I've never given it much thought. You're right."



"Will you please pack me another meal today, Babcia?" asked Eric, coming down from his room and placing his knapsack on the table. "I want to go out after I finish my

chores, to visit my friends."

That was how he explained his going off so often to Babcia. He didn't tell anyone where he was going or whom he was seeing. He would just say he was going to visit his friends.

"Well," said Babcia, "when are you going to bring friends around here? I would like to know what kind of people require so much of your time."

"Sorry," said Eric, "but you know how it is. Some people just aren't able to break away. That is why I try my best to visit as often as I can."

"You know you're getting to be just like your father," claimed Babcia, in her broken Polish accent, "always gone away. That is no good. Just make sure you and your friends stay out of trouble," she said waving her towel about in the air. "Your friends are such a secret, I worry. Maybe your friends are bad for you. When you choose your friends, make sure they are good people. People you trust in your heart. Remember," she said with a wry smile and a tease in her eyes, "the heart is the path to your soul. Make sure you do not let the wrong person into your heart, or it may end up broken."

Eric knew right away what she was getting at. He crossed the room and put his arms around her and gave her a hug. "Too late for that," he said. "You have already broken it, my lovely old lady. Don't think I haven't noticed the way you've been leading Avial on. I knew something was up when he asked me the other day if I thought your feet were too big," and he broke out laughing.

"Ha!" said Babcia, giving one of her mock frowns. "Do not joke with me. You men who play with women's hearts, better take care. It is said that some women will turn into demons to protect themselves," and she placed both her

hands over her chest.

Eric laughed and shook his head at her. Then, grabbing a sweet roll from the table, he went out to do his chores. When he finished, he stopped by Avial's cottage to see if he was in. Eric had something on his mind and he wanted to talk with Avial about it. Eric was lucky. Avial was sitting at his table glancing over some old manuscripts and maps. Eric called out and Avial gladly invited him in.

"Well, this is an honor," said Avial. "I'm surprised to see you can take time out for an old friend. Come in. Come in and have a seat," and he pointed to a stool at the table.

"There is something I would like to ask you about," said Eric. "I thought that since you have traveled through so many lands, you might be able to answer my questions."

"I don't know if I can answer them, but I'll do my best to help you out. What is it that concerns you?"

"What do you know of parents who give their children away?" he asked.

"Well, let me see," said Avial, as his brow knitted together across his forehead. It was a sign revealing he would have to think this question over before jumping into an answer. "I know of it, and I know that it happens. It happens in many places across the world. Why would you ask about this?"

"I've heard about it from a friend. I find it hard to believe that parents would give up their children."

With his hand over his chin, Avial rubbed his face and then brought his hand down to pull on his short gray beard.

"It is not a choice parents are pleased to make. There are many reasons why parents may give up children, and often it is a difficult thing for the parents to do."

"What would cause a parent to give up a child?"

"Most often, the child is given up because hardship has befallen the family. The family becomes too poor and can not afford to take care of the child, so it is either given up or sold."

"Sold!" exclaimed Eric. "You mean people will actually sell their own children?"

"Yes," said Avial. "They will sell the child to raise money to help the rest of the family. I know it sounds bad, but it is not as easy as it sounds, Eric. Parents aren't happy about making a choice like that, but they feel it must be done for the best of everyone involved. Look," Avial continued, "suppose you have a wife with three little ones to feed, but you are hurt in an accident and your leg has gone lame. Now, you can't work as well or earn enough money to keep your family going. How can you afford to raise a family and take care of your wife, who, by the way is expecting another child? What are you going to do? You can only manage enough money to support yourself, your wife and one child. Which child will you keep?" Avial stopped to await Eric's answer.

"Why can't I keep them all?"

"Listen to me," said Avial. "This is life when it is most unforgiving. It is not a game. If you keep all of them, you will not be able to feed them well. You, as their father, will watch them grow hungry, weak, and sick. In the end, you will all die. What good will that do? By giving your children away or by selling them, you give each child a chance at life you cannot offer. Now Eric, which child will you keep?"

Eric began to realize how important this lesson was that Avial was putting before him. He had never realized how hard and difficult things could be for people. He gave the question more thought this time, before he answered.

"I would keep the oldest child."

"Why?"

"Because, if I have a lame leg," explained Eric, "the oldest child would be able to help me with what work there was, and maybe we could make a better living together."

"Very good," said Avial, as he smiled.

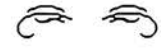
"Was that the right answer?"

Avial shook his head, "There is no right answer. People living in that situation have to learn to make the best possible choices for everyone involved to survive. Unfortunately, there are people who will take advantage of those poor souls, and they will treat them very harshly. The world can be a hard place. That is why your father bought this inn. He wanted to insure his only child would grow up in a safe place away from the harshness of what lies beyond the mountain passes."

"I just wish he were here to share our home together," said Eric.

Avial placed a hand on Eric's shoulder and replied, "Believe me when I say this, Eric. Your father wishes he could be here also. That is why he has been away so much the past two years. He is working on a way to make that possible."

"I know," said Eric. "I just wish he could be here now."



"Have I ever told you about Avial's horse?" asked Eric

"No, I don't think so," responded Rapunzel.

"Well, he's the perfect horse. When I travel I want a horse just like him."

"What I remember of horses always frightened me," she remarked. "They were always so big. I didn't like to go near them. I was afraid of getting stomped on."

"What! When did you see horses?"

She gave him that perplexed look of hers, telling him he had just said something stupid. He was beginning to recognize it as her sign of exasperation.

"Wait. I'm sorry," he said, before she got angry. "What I meant is, with you living up here and never going anywhere, how did you ever see a horse?"

"I haven't always lived here. I was brought to this tower only three years ago."

"I'm sorry. I didn't know," he explained. "I just thought you always lived here. You never said anything to the contrary."

"Your right," she said apologetically. "It's not your fault. I should have mentioned it before."

"So, if you haven't lived here all your life, where are you from?"

"It was a village called High Plain Road. We lived in a small hut outside the village."

"Why did you move here? Did something happen that made Grethel want to hide?"

she looked down at the floor in deep thought and then back up at him. He could see in her eyes she was a little uncomfortable about something. Even though he was curious, he didn't want to push it.

"That's OK. You don't have to tell me anything. I don't need to know all your secrets."

"It's not a secret. Grethel brought me here because I had a friend who was a boy."

Eric didn't say anything because he didn't know what to think. He could see nothing wrong with having a friend

who was a boy. So, he was glad when Rapunzel continued her explanation.

"We were close to the same age," she said. "His name was Hans. We met while getting water from the village well. Hans had been helping his parents because his mother was sick. We walked the same path to our homes, only he lived farther down. Everyday we met on the path to carry water. We talked and became good friends. When we could get away from our chores, we would meet together and play. Hans was the first playmate I ever had. When Grethel found out my friend was a boy, she packed us up and said it was time to move. She said boys would begin to show interest in me. Boys who grow up to become men, and can not be trusted. Grethel said men are evil, wicked, and full of trickery. But, no matter what she said, I could not believe that about Hans. He was a good boy and always treated me well."

"Why do you think Grethel hates men?" Eric asked.

"I'm not sure," she said, "that's a part of her life she has never revealed to me."

"What do you know about her past?"

"Not very much," she replied. "But I know she lived here when she was about my age. From the way she talks, it was the most memorable time of her life."

"Does she talk about it a lot?"

"No, not really," she said. "Usually, she will be showing me how to do something in the garden or correcting one of my mistakes at the loom. She will recall how she had been taught to make the same corrections by her guardian."

"Then, Grethel also lived here with a guardian," he exclaimed.

"Yes, of course," she responded. "That was how she had

learned so much," and gave him that perplexed look again.

"I can't help it," Eric said, throwing his hands out to his side. "I'm always amazed by what I learn when I come here. So, can you tell me anything about Grethel and her guardian?"

"I'm afraid I don't know much," she replied. "From what I gather, Grethel had somehow become lost in the Wood. She sat under a tree crying when she was found by an old woman. Grethel calls her Nanna. She claims Nanna had a smile so warm she could melt butter with it, and her eyes danced among the wrinkles on her face, bringing it to life. Nanna brought Grethel here to the tower to live with her. She taught Grethel how to grow the garden and work the loom. Before that, Grethel had no skills. But Nanna was very patient with her and never scolded her when she made a mistake. Grethel learned a lot from Nanna. But Nanna was old and frail. When she died, Grethel also learned what loneliness was, so she left the tower to live among people again. Whenever Grethel speaks of Nanna, I can hear a deep affection in her voice, and I know she still misses her."

"Grethel seems to be a very strange puzzle," he said after Rapunzel had finished.

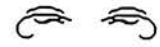
"Why do you say that?" she asked, not amused by his response.

"Because," he said, "she has either a very deep hate for people or a very deep love. Seems like there is no in between with her."

"Hum," she said, gently biting her lip, and she turned away deep in thought. "I suspect something had happened once, maybe a bad love had broken her heart."

"Maybe," said Eric, slowly nodding his head. "Maybe

you're right."



During the summer months, Eric's visits to the tower became more and more frequent. At first he only visited once or twice a week. But as the days continued into summer, he began showing up four or five times a week, stretching his stay until late afternoon. Rapunzel didn't mind. He was her only companion, besides Grethel, who only stayed at night. While Grethel took care of her and tended to her needs, Eric offered her friendship and company.

During their visits together, Rapunzel demonstrated how to set up a mushroom bed in the cold storage room. She shared with Eric gardening secrets, and she gave him instructions on basket weaving. Eric was fascinated by her ingenuity for living in the tower.

In return, Eric told Rapunzel about his village and the inn activities. He told her stories that travelers told at night. He also told her about Babcia and how Avail, his teacher and friend, gave him lessons during the winter months. Eric began to teach Rapunzel lessons because she was anxious to learn about new things. She was fascinated by how much Eric knew about the world, and never seemed to tire of his company.

When festival time arrived, Eric was unable to visit with Rapunzel for two weeks. Every year during late summer, long after the plowing and planting of crops, when the days had eased into the late hot season and the chores were done quickly, the village celebrated with festival. There was music and dancing all through the square.

Plenty of food was served up with large mugs of ale and mead to wash it down. Young children had sweets to eat and were entertained by jugglers, sword swallowers, acrobats, magic acts, dancing bears, and trained dogs. It was an event everyone looked forward to.

Festival time was also the busiest time of the year. Some merchants closed up their shops early, while others kept busy well into the night. Many out of town travelers lodged at the inn. It was gaining a reputation for being the best place to stay for miles around. The rooms were clean, the livestock was cared after, the hospitality was pleasant and the food prepared by Babcia was exceptional. Eric had more than his share of chores to keep up with everything. The inn often became so filled with visitors, he would give up his room and bunk in the stable, where he set up a room in one of the stalls.

Once in a while things slowed down enough to allow Eric an opportunity to partake in the merriment of the festival. One afternoon he wandered into the midst of a wedding celebration. Eric was surprised because it was for a friend he had not seen for a long time. His friend explained that Eric had been so scarce, that he was unable to let Eric know about his marriage plans. So now he insisted that Eric join in the celebration with the rest of the village. Eric, delighted for his friend, joined in with the merriment.

As Eric danced with the crowd, he thought, "*If only Rapunzel could be here*," and all his thoughts went to her. How he wished she could have been there to share the music and dancing with him. He wanted to share the excitement of the celebration. He wanted to show her the animal acts, the jugglers, and the acrobats, so he could watch her expressions at each new surprise. He wanted

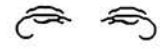
her to be here so badly, that the excitement of his mood changed over to frustration. It wasn't the same. It wasn't fun any more without her. For some reason it all seemed different knowing that she could never be here to share this.

Eric stepped back from the crowd and watched the people dance to the music of the wedding party. He stood, wanting to be a part of the celebration, but his heart was no longer in it. There was a feeling of emptiness inside of him, because he could not share it with the person he most cared about. It wasn't until that moment that he realized what an impression she had made on him.

Eric looked out over the heads of the dancing crowd for his friend, and located him standing next to his bride at the center of the dancers. Eric studied him. He saw happiness and contentment in the face of a person his same age, taking a young woman to be his bride. "*That could be me*," he thought, "*I'm old enough to be married*." The thought surprised him. He had never thought of himself getting married. Oh, sure, he knew he would some day, but, he hadn't realized that the years had come upon him so quickly. He hadn't thought of marriage.

Eric searched the crowd of the wedding party, looking at girls his age to see what prospective brides there might be waiting. But, no matter who his gaze fell upon. No matter how beautiful they were, he felt nothing in his heart for any of them. Another realization then occurred to him. As he stood there, with the excitement of the crowd all about him, he felt separated from it because his thoughts were with Rapunzel. He thought about how she also had life all about her, yet she lived alone in a tower as life passed by. Did she know what she was missing? If she didn't know what was out in the world, would she really miss it? But the

question that concerned him most was, did she miss him the way he missed her at this moment?



Festival slowly wound down and the routine of daily life began to replace the merriment of the late summer celebrations. The last of the inn's guests were still lingering, resting, before moving on to their next destination. But, it hadn't passed quickly enough for Eric, who could hardly wait to slip away to visit Rapunzel. When he finally managed to return, she seemed very pleased to see him. He talked a bit about the festival, but he really couldn't tell her much, because he had spent most of the time working around the inn.

"I can't get over how much things have changed," she said, picking a flower and lifting it to her nose to smell it's fragrance. They were in the rooftop garden. It was a beautiful day, so they decided to picnic for lunch.

He watched her smell the fragrance of the blossom, admiring how beautiful she was. "Changed? What things have changed?" he asked.

"Why, how closely our friendship has brought us together, for one," she said. "When you first popped in through my window, you reminded me of an annoying little bug," and she laughed. "You looked so silly standing there by the window demanding answers to your questions. I remember thinking, when you had left, that I never wanted to see you again."

"Well, maybe I am a little bug and you haven't realized it yet. Have you noticed any lingering itch marks requiring your attention after I leave? You know, the kind that grow

the more you scratch them." He teased and played with his words intentionally, to see if she would pick up on the meaning behind them. He had decided to find out how she felt about him, and this seemed to be the perfect time to do so.

Rapunzel directed her attention away from the flower and turned to face him. Tilting her head to one side, she studied his expression while thinking about his remarks. "Yes," she answered slowly. "It is an itch that seems to have poisoned my heart and my soul."

"How so?" he asked, interested by her response.

"I itch to see some of the sights you are so free to see. You have made me wonder, what it would be like to travel and experience places I had never imagined possible. Now that you have left me with your sting, I wonder if you will grow tired of this place and go off to explore someplace new."

"Why would you think that?"

"Because there is so much available to you. You can go anywhere you want, and do anything you want. Just going to the festival sounds like an adventure to me. Yet, you brush it off as if it were nothing."

Listening to the desire in Rapunzel's voice made Eric realize how fortunate he really was. He didn't have to work as hard as the people in the village did. That allowed him more time to explore, as she said, but he had also realized something else and wanted her to know it. "It doesn't matter what or where I explore. Unless there is someone to share it with me, there is no satisfaction in what I find. I would rather spend my time with you than anywhere else in this world."

"Really?" She asked, her eyebrows arching up, revealing unexpected surprise. "You would rather be here with me?"

"Yes, I would," he said, revealing his serious intentions. "When I went to the festival and discovered my friend celebrating his wedding, I was glad for him. I joined in with the merriment, but it wasn't the same." He held his hand against his chest. "The excitement wasn't here. There was an emptiness; something was missing. Then I realized what bothered me. The person I wanted to share my excitement with, could not be there, because she was here in a tower."

The expression in Rapunzel's face changed, melting into a mixture of emotions he found difficult to read. "I am very glad to hear you say that. You have no idea how cold and empty this tower becomes without you. It is an emptiness I have never known before."

"You have no idea how much I hoped to hear that!" He said, feeling a wave of relief wash over him. It was what he wanted to hear. She cared for him. She missed him. "I came here today with the intention of finding out if you missed me as much as I missed you."

Rapunzel reached out and took his hand. "When you were away this time, the days seemed to stretch on forever. Even though I knew you would return after the festival season was over, I began to worry. Maybe you would grow tired of this place and look for a new adventure. The tower seemed to grow taller off the ground, every time I looked out the window for your approach. The air became so quiet in the stillness of solitude, that my shuttle racing across the loom seemed loud and awkward. I have fallen behind in my work, because I prefer to spend my time up here in the garden, in the openness of the air. I come up here and sit for hours recounting the tales you have told me, and I try to picture myself in those strange and wonderful places. I have looked at these dark gray stone

walls and realized for the first time that I am a prisoner. Even though Grethel's intentions are good and she only tries to protect me, I am a prisoner."

Eric's heart went out to her. "I would like very much to take you away from here. It is the dream in my heart, to take you out into the world and introduce you to it once again. I want to show you my favorite places so we may share them together. Will you come with me? Are you willing to leave this place?"

Rapunzel was silent for a few moments as he studied her eyes, two soft pools of liquid blue green, waiting for her answer.

"Yes, I want to leave, but I cannot," she responded.

This time a wave of disappointment washed over him as he listened to her explanation.

"I can't just run away. Grethel is my guardian and I couldn't leave her like that. I know she loves me and is only doing what she feels is right for me. She has put too much of her life into caring, teaching and protecting me, to just walk out. Yet, it is my heart's desire to leave. You must believe me."

"That's fine," he nodded, "I understand. Now listen to what I have to say. When I was away, I admit I was surprised by how much I missed you. I began to realize that I wanted to be with you always. These thoughts occurred to me at my friend's wedding. I watched him dance with his new bride, as if he had the world in his pocket. I saw a young man who was happy and content because he was able to recognize love. My friend is the same age as myself and there he was, getting married. I admit I had never thought of getting married. The idea never occurred to me until then. I looked about the wedding party for available young maidens, and there was nothing in my heart for any of

them, because you have taken my heart and hold it here in this tower. Yes, I am in love, and I recognize it. You are an angel, as beautiful as any who lives in the sky. I would be happy if you agreed to marry me."

"Marry?" Rapunzel asked, surprised, "Do you really want to marry me?" The liquid pools of her eyes filled and a tear slowly began to creep down across her cheek.

"We are old enough to be married, and you would not be running away. If you marry me, we can spend the rest of our lives together," Eric confirmed.

"Yes, I would like that very much. I will marry you. But, what about Grethel?"

"What about Grethel?" he asked in return.

"Well, we should ask her permission."

"Are you sure you want to do that?"

"Yes. I know she loves me, and wants the best for me. It is only right that we seek her blessing." Then Rapunzel stoped and looked down at the flower she held in her hand. "Yet, I know in my heart, she will not approve. Her hatred toward men is very strong. I am afraid."

"Would you marry me, anyway?" Eric asked again.

She looked up into his face and studied it a moment. He understood that she was faced with a decision that would affect their relationship. "Yes," she said softly.

"OK then. Let's see if we can figure out a way to reason with Grethel," Eric said, feeling excitement grow between them, at the prospect of getting Rapunzel out of the tower. "If we can't do that, maybe we can figure out a way to avoid her magic powers. If we knew the secret of her magic, it would help us work something out."

"I believe the power of Grethel's magic comes from her golden shawl," Rapunzel confided, "She has never taken it off.

"How do you Know?"

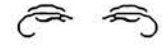
"When she first brought me to the tower, she needed a magic link between us, so she could enter without climbing. She draped her golden shawl over my shoulders and chanted. It made my hair grow the long length of braid, which she uses to enter the tower."

"Excellent! Is that her only magic that you know of?"

"Yes, it is the only thing I have ever seen her use."

"Well, I'm not sure what we can do, but maybe Avial will know," said Eric. "I'll run home and see if he will come to help us. So, don't worry, I will come back and we'll work this out tonight!"

With that said, Eric grabbed his knapsack and rushed to the window. He had to do this. He could feel the urgency growing. He had to go now because he wanted to be back before Grethel returned for the night. But he found it hard to leave her behind. Just before he slid down the braid he stopped to look at her. His eyes locked onto hers and he mouthed the words, "until we meet again."



As his feet hit the ground Eric quickly glanced around for Bear. He was lying on his favorite rock in the sun. Calling out to Bear, Eric turned and began to run. As he ran, his thoughts raced through his mind, blurring thoughts. He had to think of a way to reason with Grethel. But he knew she would be hard to reason with, and she had powers that could very easily hurt him.

There was only one person that could possibly help, but Eric didn't know if Avial would be willing to get involved. He could be funny about that sometimes, saying things

had to work themselves out. But not this time. This time he was determined to make a change, the same way he was determined to explored the Dark Wood, where no one else dared, the same way he was determined to climb the braid of hair to discover what mystery was in the tower. He was now determined to somehow come face to face with Grethel and try to reason with her.

Eric didn't blame Rapunzel for not running away with him. He understood how Rapunzel still loved Grethel even though she was being kept in a tower. Grethel was, after all, the only parent Rapunzel had. She kept her safe, protected, tended to her needs and taught her skills that would make any woman envious. He understood Rapunzel's need to have Grethel's permission and blessing for her to be married.

But Eric was too afraid of what Grethel would do. In fact, he felt very strongly in his heart that Grethel would reject any idea of them getting married. He knew, he understood in his mind how Grethel was trying to recreate the life she had lived with Nanna. Only now she was using Rapunzel to recreate that life, that time Rapunzel said Grethel thought was the best part in her life.

On Eric raced over the hills. Soon he would be home. He hoped Avial would be there and not out in the village. He wished his father were there. It would be nice if his father could come and help him, assist him. He imagined how proud his father would be when he saw how beautiful his love, Rapunzel was. *Where was his father now? Why couldn't he come home and stay where he was wanted, where he was needed?* On he raced, and his mind raced within him, until he reached the inn.

Eric went directly to Avial's cottage and found him there, as always, looking over old manuscripts and maps. He was

relieved if not out of breath.

"Avial," he called out between huffing and puffing. "I need your help."

Avial looked up from his papers and waved Eric in, noting how anxious he was.

"What can I do for you?" Avial asked, concerned. "You aren't in any trouble, are you?"

"No, no," said Eric. "But I need your help, I don't know where else to turn."

Avial put his papers aside and told Eric to catch his breath. Then he walked over and closed the door to the cottage.

"Does this have anything to do with your mysterious friend?"

"Yes," said Eric, "It involves us both."

Eric spent the next hour telling Avial everything about Rapunzel and the tower. He confided to Avial about their secret meetings because Grethel would not have approved. Avial was surprised to hear about the girl in the tower, but he was even more surprised to hear Eric confess his love for her and how he wanted to marry her.

Eric also told Avial of Grethel's magic powers and of her great hatred toward men. He explained how this was his problem and was hoping Avial would help him to reason with her. Last of all he told Avial of how they suspected Grethel's magic powers came from her golden shawl. After Eric finished, he sat, still trying to catch his breath and studied the old man's face. He wondered if Avial would be willing to help.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Eric.

"I think you're a ship about to sail against a strong wind," replied Avail. "And I believe you're right about the golden shawl bestowing the magic powers on Grethel. You did say

the shawl was golden, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Eric, "I've seen it for myself when I first spied on her."

"Then it is probably so," Avial confirmed. "Magic powers usually come from objects, object people would not think could hold magic. A golden shawl would be a perfect place to conceal magic. So, let me see what I may have to help you with."

Avial walked over to an old wooden chest with carved panels on its side. Eric watched, curious, because he had never known Avial to open the mysterious chest before. It always sat in the corner of the room. Avial pulled a thin chain from about his neck with a key on it. Eric watched as he inserted the key into the lock. When he turned the key there was a small spark of blue light. Eric couldn't see much of anything inside the chest, but just the same, Avial reached inside and removed a small box. He closed the chest and carried the box over to the table and set it down in front of Eric. The box was very plain and ordinary. Avial flipped open the lid and inside lay two small leather pouches.

Avial handed both pouches to Eric and said. "Here, take these and wear them about your neck. If your love is true these will ward off any magic used to harm you."

Then Avial turned to gather up his walking stick and cloak. "I'd better take this with me," he said, "it feels like a storm is brewing in the air. Wait here until I get back. I need to collect a few things from the stable before we go."

"Hurry, Avial," called out Eric. "It's getting late and Grethel may be there soon."

"Don't worry," said Avial over his shoulder. "We will be there in plenty of time. It won't take me but a few minutes."

Eric watched as Avial wandered off in the direction of the stable. When he hadn't returned within a few minutes, Eric became anxious. *Come on! come on! what was taking so long?* They had to hurry. *Grethel would be there before them and that wouldn't do.* The tension in his mind spread to his body until he couldn't stand it any longer. This is it, he had to go; he couldn't wait. As long as he had the protective pouches, Grethel's magic couldn't hurt him. Out the door Eric ran. Bear, who was lying on the floor resting, jumped up and was out the door right behind him.

Back up into the hills to the Dark Wood raced Eric and Bear. In his haste, the pouches tore away from Eric's neck and dropped to the ground. Only Bear noticed them fall. He scooped them up in his mouth and carried them as if playing a new game. They raced on reaching the tower well before the sun reached the western ridge in the sky. But Eric didn't see the sun because the sky had grown dark and heavy with storm clouds. When he reached the meadow, the air had grown heavy and very still. He reached the tower and called out the chant. Rapunzel lowered the braid of hair and Eric climbed to the window. Rapunzel was nervous as she greeted him and retrieved the braid back into the window. Eric took her in his arms and they stood in a long, silent embrace.

Then out from the stillness of the air a call rang out, "Rapunzel! Rapunzel! Maiden so fair, let down the braid of golden hair."

Eric told Rapunzel to wait just a minute and stepped behind the door leading back to the storage room. Rapunzel then let down the golden braid of hair. In a moment Grethel was outside the window and stepped in.

"Hello! hello! called Grethel, "how are you doing, my

dear?"

While embracing Grethel in her usual warm way, Rapunzel answered, "As always, I am fine, but tonight I wish to ask of you a favor."

Grethel turned and looked upon her with a smile. "What kind of favor would that be, my dear?"

Eric stepped out from behind the door and said, "That you allow us to be married."

Grethel turned to look at Eric. The smile on her face slowly changed expressions as it melted into puzzlement, then into anger and finally, to a look of stone cold hatred.

"How came you here?" Demanded Grethel in a low grinding voice.

"The same way as you have."

Grethel's eyes shifted to look at Rapunzel, then back to Eric.

"How is it you know the chant?" Grethel demanded in the same manner.

"I was out exploring the forest one day, back in spring, when I spied upon you. That is how I learned the chant."

"And now you think you can use it to come here and steal away my precious daughter?"

"No, I came to ask your permission to allow us to be married," said Eric, matter-of-factly.

"No," snapped Grethel. "You do not have my permission. You are too young and foolish. You cannot take her away from here. It would be too traumatic for her. She is not ready."

"Traumatic!" said Eric, "that's rather a strong term to use. How can you say it would be traumatic?"

"Because, I am her mother," claimed Grethel. "I am the only one who truly loves her, who knows what her needs are. I've shown her how to plant the seed and work the

shuttle. I know what is best, so listen when I tell you she is not ready."

"When will she be ready?"

"For you? Never! She has much to learn, and when she is finished, she will know you for what you are."

"She knows me now," returned Eric. "She knows that in my heart I have made a place for her."

"In your heart! ha!" shouted Grethel. "Men have nothing in their hearts except wicked ambitions; to conquer, to control, to destroy, to abuse, and to use whatever means possible to gain what it is they wish to possess."

The air inside the tower grew very tense, like the air outside waiting for the storm. It had grown darker with lightning flashing through the clouds. The rumbling sounds of thunder began to roam across the sky of the mountains and the storm grew closer.

Seeing the anger rise in Grethel worried Rapunzel. She rushed to Grethel's side and pleaded with her. "Please listen Grethel, for I love him as I love you. I know his heart as I know yours. They are the same. We wish to marry so we can be together. I accepted his proposal because I trust what is in his soul."

Grethel pushed Rapunzel away and looked at her fiercely.

"You wicked child," sneered Grethel. "I thought I had hidden you away from all the world, and now you betray me. I took you in and cared for you so you wouldn't suffer the same fate I had. For you see, I, too, was born into a poor family with parents who could not keep me. They sold me into labor, unknowingly, to a man who treated me badly. He worked me hard as a child and beat me often. When I became old enough, he forced himself upon me. One night, I received a terrible beating because

I refused his advances, so I ran away vowing never to have anything to do with men again."

Grethel stood shaking with anger. Her face had turned dark with furious flashes darting across her eyes. The storm outside seemed to copy her mood, as it moved into the meadow. Rumbling sounds of thunder continuously rolled across the open field and the still air began to move with a cold wind.

"Look, Grethel," insisted Rapunzel. "Look into his soul. See it for yourself, the way you taught me to look, and you will see that he is good. You know it to be true. Why do you refuse to listen?"

It was too late! The wall around Grethel's heart would not allow it. She no longer had control over logic or reason. She had given in to the anger and hatred that had peaked in her mind, creating an uncontrolled demon of madness and revenge. All she had worked for, all she had done was being taken away from her, stolen, but she would be betrayed no more. Over and over again in her life, things had been taken from her. But not this time. This time she would stop them. She would show them. She would hurt them the way they were hurting her. She would separate them forever.

With a wild look of madness upon her face, Grethel advanced toward the young couple. Eric, realizing she was beyond the point of reasoning, stepped in front of Rapunzel to protect her. He reached for the pouches around his neck, only to find they were missing. He was shocked. What had happened to them? Suddenly he felt helpless and lost. But he stood his ground to make his last plea.

"Please, listen," begged Eric "I love her with all my heart."

Grethel reached for Eric and grabbed him by the chest. "Then love her for the rest of your life," she screamed into his face, and whirled him around toward the window.

Eric felt his body being tossed like an old rag doll. He was astonished by her power and strength. He sailed across the tower room. There was nothing he could do to defend himself. He fell against the window's ledge and continued to tumble uncontrollably out the window. As he fell toward the ground, he felt helpless, unable to stop. The sides of the tower rushed pasted him, and the wind whipped against his body. In a shocked daze, he saw the ground race up toward him, plunging him deep into the thorns with a sudden violent impact. At first, all went black and he felt nothing. Then a great wave of pain racked through his body. Sharp cutting, flesh piercing pain coursed through him from all sides. The worse pain was in his head. It was excruciating to the point that his thoughts faded to black.

Shocked by what she had witnessed, Rapunzel rushed to the window screaming. "Eric! Eric! Oh my love Eric!"

Suddenly she was grabbed from behind and pulled down to the floor by the hair of her head. Grethel picked up a pair of shears from the shelves, and in a rage of madness, cut Rapunzel's hair from her head.

"This was my way to protect you," screeched Grethel, "and you used it as a way to betray me."

Then Grethel kicked Rapunzel hard as she lay sobbing on the floor and told her that she never wanted to see her again.

Clutching the shears in her hand Grethel turned and leaped out the window, down to where Eric had landed among the thorns. As she approached him, Bear suddenly leaped in her path, blocking her way and gave a low

warning growl.

"Begone," Grethel screamed at the dog.

Bear stood his ground, lowered his head and growled again. Grethel looked at the dog, evil in her eyes, and showed no sign of fear. Slowly, she began to advance upon him. She raised her arm clutching the shears and charged Bear. Bear jumped to meet her attack. With the full weight of his body, he knocked her aside. Grethel swung her arm through the air and stabbed with the shears into Bear's side, but they bounced out of her hand, leaving no mark or wound. Feeling the blow of her attack, Bear dropped the pouches from his mouth and turned to snap at her. In doing so, he snatched the golden shawl from Grethel's shoulders. Grethel screamed in shock and rage, realizing her magic shawl had been taken from her. Again she approached Bear who stood guard over Eric.

"You miserable beast," growled Grethel in a low voice, "give me back my shawl."

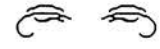
Bear, lowered his head, the shawl tightly clasped between his bared teeth and growled. Grethel took a step forward. The shackles of Bear's shoulders raised in warning as he prepared for her attack. But seeing the determination in Bear's eyes to protect his master, weakened Grethel's will. Without her magic powers she was defenseless. Now she was beginning to feel all of her losses as they clouded her mind and thoughts. There was nothing left in her but the rage she felt for the world.

"To hell with you, beast!" Grethel finally screamed, "to hell with you all," and she turned to flee into the forest.

The wind had picked up a little and the clouds were passing over the meadow without spilling any rain. The storm had blown passed and the sky was beginning to clear for twilight. Sobbing, Rapunzel climbed down the

braid of hair and ran over to Eric's side. Reaching into the thorn, not minding the cuts and scratches to herself, she carefully pulled Eric free. She discovered he was still alive but the thorns had stuck into his eyes. Kneeling down she took him into her arms, and in a mixture of emotions she cried over his body.

A hand reached out and touched her on the shoulder. Rapunzel jerked up frightened to see an old man standing over them. Bear came over wagging his tail and licked the old mans hand. Avial told her who he was and knelt down to study Eric's wounds. He had seen the two pouches on the ground where Bear had dropped them. He picked the pouches up and poured a golden powder out of one, and a silver powder from the other, into his palm. With the tears from Rapunzel's eyes he mixed the powders together into a thin paste and spread it over Eric's eyes. Together they watched until a white misty smoke was seen rising slowly from Eric's wounds, saving his eyes of their injury. Avial then picked Eric up in his arms and looked over at Rapunzel and said, "Come on. It's all over. Let's go home."



Dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut, dut! The sound woke him. Yes, there it was again, the same sound that had awakened him early. The red-capped woodpecker must be back looking for a meal. Once again, Eric turned his head to look out the window. Only this time he remembered to do it slowly. The oak tree outside was as beautiful as it was this morning, only the sun had shifted and he could tell it was now late afternoon.

Eric's thoughts wandered back to his adventure. After he

had fallen out of the tower into the thorn, Eric lay unconscious. When he awakened to find himself in his own bed, he was anxious to hear what had happened. Avial had told him the rest of the details while treating his wounds. But how had Avial found him when he had been left behind? Avial explained that he knew Eric had gone to the Dark Wood and went to find him. It was there he came upon a very talkative rabbit who showed Avial the way through the forest. The rabbit said he owed Eric a favor because he spared the rabbit's life. The rabbit lead Avial to the edge of the meadow, but refused to go any farther because of Bear's presence, and mumbled something about the filthy beast.

It was easy enough for Avial to find his way to the tower from there, because he could see it from where the rabbit had left him. He felt bad about getting there too late to be of any assistance to Eric. He had to witness from the distant fields what had happened, and spoke proudly of how Bear defended Eric and turned the old woman away. Avial rushed as quickly as he could to help. When he reached the tower, he found Eric in Rapunzel's arms, wounded. Using Rapunzel's tears with the gold and silver powders, he explained, was the only way to heal the wounds of Eric's eyes. Her tears were filled with love strong enough to create a medicine with the power to give him back his sight.

Coming back through the wood, Avial, carrying Eric, with Rapunzel doing her best to assist him, met the wood nymph. She offered her services to guide them back to the hills safely. Without her help, Avial felt that he would have surely gotten lost in the Dark wood. As they parted company, the wood nymph told Avial to thank Eric for his offerings in the forest. They had pleased her very much,

and then she wished them well before disappearing into the bushes.

As for Rapunzel, she was there, living with them at the inn. She brought his evening meals up to his room and then she would sit and relate all the activities of her day. She liked Babcia very much, and was helping her with the chores around the inn. Babcia found her to be a very valuable assistant, and was amazed by the girl's skills. Both Avial and Babcia approved of Rapunzel and she seemed to be winning a place in their hearts, as she had in his.

It was decided, with a lot of persuasion by Avial, that their marriage should be put off for a few years. This would allow Rapunzel time to become reacquainted with the normal activities within the community, and not seek marriage as an escape from imprisonment. Eric was upset at first, but understood the reasoning for the decision and finally agreed to it.

Eric's father also agreed with the decision. It was in a reply to a message sent out by Avial telling him what had happened. His father was anxious to hear the complete details of this strange story, and Eric would be able to relate it to him in person, for his father would be returning home to finish two years of effort, arranging a trade route through the mountain pass of their village. That was why, Eric later found out, Avial was always studying charts and maps in his cottage. He was helping Eric's father set up the trade route, and they planned to use the inn as their main station for business. Yes, it was a clever plan Avial and his father worked out together. Eric could see how popular the inn would become for caravan travelers, and his father could finally stay in one place to do his business.

Everything seemed to be coming together. *Dut, dut, dut,*

dut, dut, dut, dut! He watched the woodpecker hop in and out among the branches. "*You and I are alike my friend,*" he thought, "*we are persistent. You continue to peck at the towering trees for your reward, and I peck at towers in the wood for mine, letting no barriers stand between us. We do not live in ancient days, but as time passes, this period may be known as olden, of folktales and stories. These are the days before magic all but fades away. My adventure, my tale will show you that. So don't think of it as just another traveler's story, or as an old folktale to be told around the evening fire. It really happened. An adventure I had always longed for, and it's true, I know, because it happened to me.*"