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Rapunzel

By Max Bush



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

Dedication:
To Debra Olsen
With Gratitude, Love and Congratulations.

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Dramatic Publishing Company
311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098
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RAPUNZEL

CHARACTERS

Helga, *Rapunzel's mother*

Theo, *Rapunzel's father*

Mother Gothel, *The Witch*

Rapunzel

Prince Derrick

Ballard, *Old man, servant to Prince*

Narrator

SETTING

The Witch's garden and Theo and Helga's house. Later a tower in a woods and a wilderness. Long ago.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Settings can be quite simple. For the house, Theo's chair, a wood bin, perhaps something indicating a wall. For the garden, the large rock and something representing the actual garden holding the radishes. A cut-away wall of stone stands between them. All the business concerning the window can be mimed.

The tower contains a bed, a chair, and a small table. A practicable stump sits in the woods. The tower itself is large and round—large enough to allow for the broad physical action—again suggested by a cut-away wall. A platform sits just inside the window to aid in the illusion of height.

The wilderness can be played anywhere on an open floor.

Stage lighting is useful but not necessary.

CASTING NOTES

All roles can be filled with four actors—two males, two females.

The Narrator can be played by one or more of the actors.

RAPUNZEL

RAPUNZEL was commissioned by the Grand Rapids Circle Theatre of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and opened there in August, 1986, with the following cast and crew:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <i>Helga</i> | Jane Hobart |
| <i>Theo/Ballard</i> | Mark Jones |
| <i>Witch Gothel</i> | Wendy Pestka |
| <i>Rapunzel</i> | Lisa Blanchard |
| <i>Prince Derrick</i> | Kevin Abbott |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Director | Penelope Victor |
| Assistant Director/Stage Manager | Sondra Loucks |
| Assistant Stage Manager | Sallie Loucks |
| Costumier | Sue Leatherman |
| Properties | Sondra Loucks |
| Sound Design | Timothy Parsaca |
| Light Design | Timothy Parsaca |
| Scenic Design | D. Robert Green |
| Carpenter | Karin White |
| Special Effects | Tacey Boucher |

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Managing Director | Joseph Dulin |
|-------------------|--------------|

| | |
|----------|-----------------|
| Art Work | Penelope Victor |
|----------|-----------------|

RAPUNZEL

Spot up on NARRATOR, who holds a large book.

NARRATOR: (*Opening book*) “The Frog Prince” . . . “Sleeping Beauty” . . . “Cinderella” . . . “The Golden Bird” . . . “Rapunzel.”

Reading

There once was a man, (*Looking up to audience.*) Theo, in our story today,

THEO enters, paces intensely. Reading.

and his wife, (*Looking up.*) Helga, we’ll call her, (*Reading.*) who wished for a child to be born to them.

HELGA enters.

THEO: (*Stopping pacing, anxiously*) Yes?

HELGA: (*Wistfully.*) No.

She exits.

NARRATOR: They had long wished for a child. Month after month passed and there were no hopeful signs. Month after month they waited, still wishing, still longing for a child.

THEO’s pacing is gradually slowing.

Month after month after month . . .

THEO, exhausted from pacing, paces very slowly. HELGA enters.

THEO: Yes?

HELGA: No.

Exits. THEO falls into his chair.

NARRATOR: One day—

THEO sleeps in the chair. HELGA enters. THEO opens one eye.

THEO: Yes?

HELGA: Yes!

THEO: Yes?

HELGA: Yes! Our wish has been granted!

THEO: A child!

HELGA: Our child!

THEO: Helga! I’m proud of you. (*Out window*) We’re going to have a child! I’m going to have a daughter!

HELGA: Or a son.

THEO: Both!

HELGA: We’ll have twins!

THEO: I'm going to tell everyone in town! Everyone I meet!
Heading out door.

HELGA: Theo!

THEO: (*Seeing someone on the road.*) Roland, Dagmar, wait! The world is changed! A child!
He is gone.

HELGA: (*A little embarrassed but still delighted at his exuberance.*) Theo . . .
She starts after him; the NARRATOR stops her.

NARRATOR: There was a little window in their house overlooking a beautiful garden,
HELGA crosses to window, smiles, full of satisfaction.
 full of lovely flowers and shrubs. It was, however, surrounded by a wall and nobody dared enter it because it belonged to a powerful witch who was feared by everybody.
HELGA's smile fades away.

One day, Helga, standing at the window and looking into the garden, saw—

HELGA: Rampion . . . fresh . . . red . . . radishes . . .
She dismisses them, turns from window, crosses away.

NARRATOR: This longing increased . . .
HELGA stops.
 day after day . . .
HELGA returns to the window.

HELGA: Rampion . . .

NARRATOR: . . . after day . . .

HELGA: . . . rampion . . .

THEO: (*Entering, carrying a baby toy.*) Helga, see what I've made!

HELGA: Theo, it's perfect!

NARRATOR: . . . after day . . .
HELGA turns back to window, as THEO plays with toy.

HELGA: Theo!

THEO: What is it, dear wife?

HELGA: Out the window.

THEO: (*Crossing to window.*) In the Witch's garden?

HELGA: Red radishes, fresh rapunzels.

THEO: Helga, what's making you pale?

HELGA: I want some rampion.

THEO: Then I'll go to market and buy you—

HELGA: I must have **that** rampion.

THEO: How are you going to get them? (*She turns to him.*) You know what happens if Witch Gothal catches someone in her garden. She scratches out their eyes, or turns them into a rock, or locks them inside a tree.

HELGA: If I can't have any of that rampion . . . I'll die.

THEO: You mean you'll stop breathing and we'll bury you?

HELGA: I shall die, Theo.

THEO: (*Surprised and concerned.*) Then you'll have that rampion tonight.

HELGA: Now.

THEO: The sun is just setting. Wait until after dark and—

HELGA: Now.

THEO: I'll go now, if that's what you need.

NARRATOR: In the twilight, he set out.

THEO crosses to wall.

THEO: Theo . . . before you let your good wife die, you'd better bring her some Witch's rampion . . . now . . . (*He looks over wall.*) no matter the cost.

He climbs the wall, slips, falls over into garden.

Oh! . . . I fell over the wall. I'll just climb back over . . .

He crosses to wall, stops, listens.

Witch Gothal?

The cry of a nightbird startles him. He dives behind rock.

Theo . . . before you let your good wife die . . . (*He crosses to rampion.*) Here . . .

He pulls one out. From the direction of the Witch's house comes the sound of a single recorder or possibly a harp, playing a slow, sad melody. THEO starts, freezes.

Music? . . . Witch's music! Magic! She's casting a spell!

He runs to wall, listens, looks at himself.

I'm still here. I'm still Theo. It's not a spell for me.

He quickly gathers six radishes, shakes them out, covers the holes, begins sneaking toward wall. The music stops abruptly. He stops. Silence. He bolts to wall, climbs over frantically, enters house.

Witch's rampion! For my dear wife!

HELGA: (*Taking the rampion.*) Oh, Theo, you've saved my life. (*She begins to eat one.*) Mmm . . . oh . . . Theo, they're strangely delicious; like no other rampion I've tasted.

THEO: Please, Helga, eat them slowly.

HELGA: I can't.

THEO: And I can't go back for more. Did you hear the music?

HELGA: Rampion, rapunzels. Oh, Theo, they taste better than anything I've ever eaten.

THEO: (*Sitting in the chair*) Witch's music . . . shouldn't be heard by any man . . . steal his mind . . . make him eat grass . . .

NARRATOR: She ate them all and was very happy.

HELGA: I'm happy.

NARRATOR: The rapunzels were so good the next day her longing for the Witch's rampion increased three times what it was.

HELGA crosses to window. THEO sleeps. HELGA turns to THEO, looks at him, back out window, back to THEO.

HELGA: Theo!

THEO: (*Falling out of his chair*) What? Who—what is it? Helga? What's wrong? Did you call me? Someone—I was asleep—did you call me?

HELGA: You must get more rampion.

THEO: If I go back she'll turn me into a rock, like the one in her garden now.

HELGA: If you don't get me more—

THEO: Don't say it, Helga.

HELGA: If you don't get me more of that rampion—

THEO: She'll lock me inside a tree!

HELGA: If you don't get more of her rampion . . . I shall die.

THEO: There it is, Theo. Before you let your wife die, you must fetch her more rampion, **tonight, after sunset**— (*Starting to sit.*)

HELGA: Now.

THEO: (*Stops mid-sit, pulls himself up.*) — now, no matter the cost.

HELGA: Now . . . now . . .

THEO: (*Picking up bag*) Watch, and if she catches me, come and speak to her.

HELGA: I will.

NARRATOR: In the twilight he set out again.

THEO: (*He crosses to wall, looks over. Calling.*) Witch Gothal? (*Louder.*) Witch Gothal?

He carefully climbs over wall, hides behind a rock. Music resumes.

I didn't want to hear that . . . (*He realizes he's touching rock, pulls his hands back.*)
Oh . . . I'm sorry. (*He looks up.*) Before you let your wife die . . .

He crosses to rampion, HELGA peeks out window. He pulls up a rapunzel, music stops abruptly.

Good. Good?

HELGA: (*A loud whisper*) Good!

THEO: (*Reassuring himself.*) Good.

He pulls up some rampion. The WITCH suddenly appears.

WITCH: How dare you come into my garden like a thief and steal my rampion!

HELGA screams and runs off.

THEO: I . . . I was . . . I . . .

He runs to window of his house.

WITCH: Stop!

THEO: Helga! (*He runs to wall.*)

WITCH: Stop!

She claws the air like a large cat. He grabs his chest in pain as if she scratched him. He turns to run again. Again she claws him, in his back.

Stop, I say!

THEO: I've stopped.

WITCH: You'll pay for this.

WITCH GOTHAL is a lonely social outcast; a plain and unattractive spinster who walks with a slight limp. Which doesn't mean she isn't powerful and threatening and capable of acting violently from her anger. She is and does. But she's also more vulnerable and human than one would assume; certainly much more than she tries to show the world.

THEO: I had to steal them.

WITCH: No one steals from me.

THEO: Then Mother Gothal, may I buy some of your rampion? My wife—(*Calling.*) Helga! (*To WITCH.*) — craves your rampion, saying she would die if I didn't get it for her. And "Now! Now!" And since she's going to have a baby, I thought it was my duty as a father and husband —

WITCH: Your wife—

THEO: Yes. (*Calling.*) Helga!

WITCH: —is going to have a child?

THEO: We have long wished for one.

WITCH: Long wished for a child . . .

THEO: So you see I had to take this rampion.

WITCH: If what you say is true, take as much as you like.

THEO: As much . . . you are kind, Mother Gothal.

WITCH: Yes . . .

THEO: I'll take only six.

WITCH: Take them all, if she'll die without them.

THEO: I will! All! I'll take them all!

WITCH: On one condition.

THEO: What condition?

WITCH: You must give me the child your wife is about to bring into the world.

THEO: I can't give you our child.

WITCH: You will, neighbor.

THEO: Not to a witch!

WITCH: A witch who will curse you with a foul spell if you don't.

THEO: I'm not afraid of you. Or your spells. I won't betray my wife and child to a hag!

WITCH: Hah! *(She claws him again. He starts to run.)* Down! *(He quickly falls on his back, spread eagle.)* Stay! *(He is stuck on the ground, struggles to get away, can't.)*

THEO: Witch Gothal, please, I only took a few radishes.

WITCH: I want your child.

THEO: There are other children. Children of the poor—

WITCH: I want your child.

THEO: I'll find you an orphan. Two orphans. As many orphans as you need.

WITCH: Agree, now, or you'll die.

THEO: You mean I'll stop breathing and they'll bury me?

WITCH: You shall die.

THEO: Then . . . I agree. The child will be yours.

WITCH: Rise. *(He does.)* Give me your hand.

THEO: I'm a man of my word.

WITCH: Give me your hand, Theo.

THEO: *(Bravely.)* Here.

WITCH: *(Taking his wrist.)* You needn't worry. All will be well with the child. I will raise it in kindness, love it dearly.

She cuts his palm with her fingernail.

THEO: Ah!

She cuts hers, then places them together.

WITCH: There. The bargain is sealed in our blood. The rampion is yours. *(He quickly takes rampion.)* Take it all . . . it will protect the growing baby . . . until I come for it . . .

He climbs over the wall.

good neighbor Theo.

She exits; he crosses into house.

THEO: Helga!

HELGA enters.

HELGA: *(Taking bag.)* Did you get them?

THEO: Why didn't you come when I called?

HELGA: The bag is full! Oh, Theo! You got them all!

THEO: Why didn't you come when I called?

HELGA: *(Eating.)* Oh, they're even more delicious than the others.

THEO: Enjoy your rampion, Helga. We've paid dearly for them.

HELGA: What have we paid?

Words: Max Bush
Music: Dale Dieleman

RAPUNZEL'S LAMENT

slowly

Why do you search, my knight and my
 friend? Why do you search my knight and my
 friend? Oh, where do you tra - vel? Oh, where do you
 tra - vel? Oh, where do you tra - vel? Oh, where is your
 end? a - cross the des - ert, the
 wood and the ci - ty, o - ver the moun - tain so
 far - from me. Why do you search? What
 must - you see? Why do you search? What
 must - you see? Oh, here my ha - nd
 here is my ha - nd. Here is my hand, are you
 searching for me?