



The Message

Rapunzel lifted the silver chain that hung around her neck, and poked the key that dangled from it into the lock on her trunker — a fancy leather trunk that stood tallwise on its end like a locker among other trunkers lining the school hallway. As she turned the key, she softly sang her unlocking combination. *“I love to dance, dilly dilly, I love to sing. When I am queen, dilly dilly, you’ll be my king.”*

Most of the unlocking combinations at Grimm Academy were short and could be chanted or spoken, but she'd gotten a long one, and it had to be sung in tune. Luckily, she had a good voice.

“Hey! Thanks for the offer. But I’m too young to get married,” a boy called out. It was Basil von Valerian. As he went to his trunker nearby, Rapunzel sent him a quick glance, her lips curling into a smile. He was a head taller than she was, with light brown hair and mischievous green eyes full of good humor.

Rapunzel's three best friends here at school were girls — Snow White, Red Riding Hood, and Cinderella. But Basil was her guy BFF. They'd been friends ever since she'd rescued him from a bully named Little Jack Horner on the first day of first grade. Jack had been such a bully that teachers had often made him sit in a corner where he couldn't bother other students.

"Ha-ha," she said to Basil as her trunker door swung open. "We're only twelve. Besides, I'm not a princess and you're not a prince. So how could I ever make you a king or —" Rapunzel's tongue froze as she noticed the boy opening the trunker just beyond Basil. Prince Perfect. Her super-secret crush.

He was the only boy in school who could make her blush with embarrassment over nothing and stumble over her words. Seeing him unsettled her, and her hand trembled as she reached for her Academy Handbook. As she pulled it from its shelf, a mouse-shaped cat toy tumbled out of her trunker and rolled halfway across the hall. *Tink, tink, tink* went its bell.

"Oh, frogwoggle," she murmured under her breath. There was a flash of blue in her long glossy black hair as she flipped it over one shoulder and scurried after the toy. She grabbed it, then quickly ran back and stuck it in her trunker.

She'd worn her hair mostly loose today, with only the