

## RAPUNZEL

Sue Finch

*Rapunzel: A Fairy tale first published 1812 by the Brothers Grimm in Germany  
rapunzel: lambs lettuce (Campanula rapunculus)*

Only ever iceberg now  
and always from the fridge  
I peel away the outer leaves;  
two, three,  
sometimes four have to go  
before it is pale enough for my taste.  
Then, eight wedges  
crisply cut  
are my bland supper.

*Frigid*, he says.  
He does not know what it does to me  
that you are not here to take the milk.  
Salty tears trickling down my neck  
souring the moisture  
that leaks from my breasts  
each time I shift in the chair.

I knitted you a purple blanket,  
grew it each evening after dinner  
twelve weeks of moss stitch  
to wrap my precious baby.  
I never got to see you in it.  
He took you on the darkest night.  
I hope he wrapped you well  
kissed you  
before he handed you over.

He should have gathered us both up, you and I,  
run us far away  
he should have built us a castle  
of thickest stone,  
moated us in.

I listen for you crying in the night,  
think I hear you  
as the clock strikes the even hours.

When at last I sleep, I see you.  
There's the most magnificent tower  
standing against the clearest blue sky.  
The grey bricks are your dress  
sea glass glints and winks,  
embedded in a mortar Empire line;

says you're beautiful now.  
And there's your face at the highest window  
smiling before your mouth opens.

I think you are going to call me mother  
instead you sing  
sending notes travelling  
like unencumbered birds soaring.

I listen for you crying in the night,  
think I hear you  
but I don't  
because I swapped you for lettuce.  
And he let me.