

## Julian At School By Jeremy Taylor

“...and the Prince and Rapunzel ran away together and lived happily ever after.” Miss Walsh closed the book but her six year old pupils still looked up at her, heads full of the magical story of the beautiful Rapunzel, trapped in the tower by the wicked witch and the heroic Prince who uttered those unforgettable words, “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!” Most of the girls wanted to have beautiful long hair like Rapunzel. Many of the boys wanted to do something heroic although kissing girls, even if she was a Princess, was going a bit far. It had been a wonderful story, beautifully told by the best teacher in the world, Miss Walsh. Everyone was happy. Well, everyone except for a boy who sat at the front of the class, a boy wearing red shorts, a beige tank top and a shirt with ridiculously large lapels. This boy had a puzzled, questioning look on his face. Something was clearly troubling him.

“Are you okay, Julian?” asked Miss Walsh, noticing Julian Stronglove squirming uncomfortably. The first time that she had seen Julian squirming she had thought that he was suffering from worms. Now she realised that when Julian started squirming it was not a physical problem, but something cerebral. Educational Psychologists would describe Julian as a ‘demanding pupil’, possibly suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder. Miss Walsh knew that Julian was simply a pain in the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>.

“No, Miss Walsh. I’m not entirely okay.”

Miss Walsh and the other 27 pupils waited for Julian to continue.

“There is a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> in the logic of the story,” proclaimed Julian.

Once Miss Walsh had explained the difference between flaw and floor, Julian continued. “The Prince asked Rapunzel to let down her hair so that he could climb up it.

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<sup>1</sup> A part of the body - found above the belt...

<sup>2</sup> a homophone of 'floor', this word refers to an error or imperfection

Let us presume that the Prince weighs about 75 kg, like my father, surely his body weight would have simply pulled off Rapunzel’s scalp.”

This revelation brought squeals of horror mixed with morbid delight from his classmates. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>, for Julian, the matter was one of purely academic importance. He looked to Miss Walsh to clarify this apparent discrepancy.

“Well, perhaps she tied her hair to the bars of the window,” suggested Miss Walsh, hoping that, this time, she would be able to give a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> explanation to one of Julian’s complaints.

“Then if she was capable of doing that, then why didn’t she simply cut her own hair and escape without the Prince? Surely a shaved head would be a small price to pay for her freedom.” A slight smile appeared on Julian’s \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> and Miss Walsh immediately admonished herself for wanting to slap Julian’s smug little face. She was 31. He was 6. There was no doubt that she could beat him, was there? It just took a little brain power.

“Well Julian, perhaps Rapunzel didn’t have anything to cut her hair with. Perhaps the Prince had a knife or a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> of scissors.”

Julian looked at Miss Walsh with a look that said, ‘Oh yes, and \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> can fly.’ Remaining patient, he continued his logical argument. “Okay, let us presume that the Prince had a pair of scissors in his back pocket to cut her hair – just how long was Rapunzel’s hair?”

Miss Walsh thought back to the story. In the picture, Rapunzel’s golden locks had cascaded down the sides of the tower – at least ten metres. “Ten metres,” said Miss

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<sup>3</sup> A discourse marker, but which one?

<sup>4</sup> What is the adjectival form of the word 'logic'?

<sup>5</sup> the red parts of your body which surround your mouth

<sup>6</sup> when something consists of two parts, shoes, trousers etc.

<sup>7</sup> which animals are used in this expression to mean that something is very unlikely?

Walsh confidently. She knew that Julian didn't trust her every word but she didn't want to lose the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> of her other pupils.

"Ten metres?" gasped an incredulous Julian. "Well, Miss Walsh, I have some news for you..."

Miss Walsh groaned audibly. She didn't like news from Julian. Last week he had informed her that it would not be possible for Peter Pan nor Wendy to fly as they were people, not birds or insects and lacked the appropriate body parts for \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup>. The week before Julian had informed her – and his long-suffering classmates – that the tooth fairy didn't exist. Julian had asked all his classmates how much the tooth fairy had given them for their teeth. He had then noted the age and \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup> of car driven by the parents of his classmates. He then showed a direct correlation (where did a six year old boy pick up a phrase like 'direct correlation'?) between the amount of money received for teeth and the approximate \_\_\_\_\_<sup>11</sup> of the recipient's parents' car. (He had checked the prices in advertisements for second hand cars in the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>12</sup> paper). Julian's suspicions were confirmed when he found a small container of his own milk teeth in his mother's bedside table.

His classmates hadn't understood the details of his \_\_\_\_\_<sup>13</sup> but had understood the possible non-existence of the tooth fairy. Predictably, there were floods of \_\_\_\_\_<sup>14</sup>, the tide of which Julian tried to stem by telling his classmates that they didn't have to tell their parents that they knew - and that it was very likely that their parents would continue to play the role of tooth fairy. To no avail, the tears poured and there was nothing that either Julian or Miss Walsh could do about it.

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<sup>8</sup> respected is the adjective, what is the noun?

<sup>9</sup> the verb is 'to fly'. What is the noun?

<sup>10</sup> make, brand, or variety?

<sup>11</sup> What something is worth is its \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>12</sup> a paper that is not national is \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>13</sup> 'to argue' is the verb, what is the noun?

“Yes, Julian?” asked Miss Walsh, feeling like a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>15</sup> with a doctor who is about to be told that they have a life-threatening illness.

“My brother has a book with which I presume you are familiar.” (Why did he use such archaic expressions? No one said ‘with which’ any more. It was perfectly acceptable to put a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>16</sup> at the end of a sentence – well acceptable to everyone except Julian who considered it ‘common’. And that word ‘presume’. How did six year old Julian Stronglove manage to put so much condescension into that one word?)

“And what book is that, Julian?”

“The Guinness Book of Records.”

“Yes, I am familiar with that book, Julian.” It was like the showdown at the end of a Western, the good sheriff and the bad guy (Miss Walsh was \_\_\_\_\_<sup>17</sup> sure that Julian saw himself as the sheriff, defeating the evil Illogicality).

“Well I was reading the Guinness Book of Records last month and I noticed a particular world record that seems to cast serious \_\_\_\_\_<sup>18</sup> on the possibility of Rapunzel having hair that is ten metres in \_\_\_\_\_<sup>19</sup>.”

“And what record would that be, Julian?” asked a weary Miss Walsh.

The person with the longest hair in the world is a woman from Turkey, Ursna Orbal if I remember rightly (Miss Walsh knew that Julian *always* remembered rightly so she wouldn’t need to check). Her hair has grown to an impressive 210cm....”

“That’s very long!” said Anne-Celina, who actually enjoyed listening to Julian.

“Yes, Anne-Celina!” said Julian, holding up a finger to show that, in his lawyer-like \_\_\_\_\_<sup>20</sup>, he was finally coming to the crux of the matter. “But hair that is

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<sup>14</sup> the drops of saltwater that fall from your eyes when you are sad

<sup>15</sup> when you visit a doctor you are a \_\_\_\_\_. Also teachers should be \_\_\_\_\_ with their pupils!

<sup>16</sup> a part of speech, but which one?

<sup>17</sup> this modifier also means ‘attractive’

<sup>18</sup> ‘to doubt’ is the verb, what is the noun?

<sup>19</sup> long is the adjective, what is the noun?

210cm is hardly long enough to toss over the side of a tower and up which a Prince could climb!” The smile was back.

“But Julian!” cried Andrew Varney, who loved Miss Walsh and didn’t want to see Julian get the better of her again. “It wasn’t that woman from Turkey. It was Rapunzel that had the long hair! You’re getting them all jumbled up!”

Julian gave Andrew a look which was half contempt as Julian never ‘got things all jumbled up’. And partly pity, as it was clear that Andrew Varney, and no doubt most of his other classmates, could not follow his argument.

“And anyway,” burst in Anne-Celina. “It’s only a story! In a story ANYthing can happen, Julian. Anything at all!”

It was probably the first time in his six years that Julian had been confronted with the possible acceptability of fantasy. It went against everything that he believed in. Logic, reason, facts. “But, but...” he began, his head struggling to take it all in.

“It was a story, Julian,” continued Andrew. “A very good story, not a real story about real people but a pretend one. Sometimes it’s nice to pretend, don’t you think so?”

Julian clearly hadn’t thought so before but the arguments that Anne-Celina and Andrew had presented were persuasive. “Well I, I’m not sure that... But...”

When Julian saw a small smile appear on the lips of Miss Walsh he knew that he had lost. Julian’s brain, not used to this unusual situation reacted quickly. Miss Walsh nor her class had ever seen Julian cry before. But on that day the flood gates opened and Julian bawled his little 6 year old heart out.

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<sup>20</sup> fashion, style, or mode?