

Fake

Snow White's Grimm Academy handbook slipped from her fingers and hit the hallway floor with a smack. "Oh, hobwoggle!" she exclaimed as she bent to pick it up. Stuffing the handbook into the sparkly blue school bag that hung over her shoulder, Snow shut the lid-door of her trunker — a fancy leather trunk that stood tallwise on its end and opened like a locker.

The trunker key that hung from Snow's silver necklace clinked against a round crystal amulet as she pulled up on the chain that held them both. There was a four-leaf clover inside the amulet. Although it was the luckiest among her collection of good luck charms, its luck wasn't working for her today. She had accidentally missed her first class!

And now Snow was running late for second period. All because she'd spent *hours* lying awake last night and worrying that *some* people were suspicious of her loyalty to the Academy. A little spear of hurt stabbed her as she glanced over at the trunker two down from hers. There was a small

heart-shaped picture on it of a girl with red-streaked, curly black hair, wearing a hooded red cape. Her so-called BFF, Red Riding Hood. It was all *her* fault Snow had overslept today. Ever since Red had started hanging out with a boy named Wolfgang, she'd started acting funny around Snow, like Snow couldn't be trusted. It was so not fair — especially since, in Snow's opinion, Wolfgang didn't seem very trustworthy himself!

Quickly, Snow poked her key into the trunker's lock and chanted the locking part of her combination. "Nine, ten, a-big-fat-hen!"

Snick! As the lock snapped into place, an image of Snow's face magically painted itself in the small heart-shaped inset on the trunk, right above the lock. Short, neat, ebony hair. Pale skin with rosy cheeks, and green eyes.

She slipped her key back out of the lock and dashed down the first floor hall of Pink Castle, where the girls of Grimm Academy lived and had most of their classes. There were hardly any students around the halls as Snow raced toward the grand staircase to get to Threads class. Most everyone else was already *in* class.

A mere dozen feet from the stairs she heard a familiar sound. *Click. Click. Click.* It was the sound of high heels on the marble steps.

"Oh, no!" she muttered, screeching to a dead stop. Snow's stepmom, Ms. Wicked, was coming down the stairs. Her

favorite handbag hung over her arm and she held a rolled up piece of vellum paper in her hand. She was probably heading for her classroom on the first floor, where she taught Scrying — the art of using crystal balls and other reflective surfaces to predict the future.

Hoping her stepmom wouldn't look up and see her, Snow leaped to hide behind a tall stone column. Unfortunately, she tripped over one of her shoelaces mid-leap. Standing with her back against the column, she looked down to see that her lace had broken. Had her stepmom seen her stumble? Snow held her breath, staring at the lush scene of feasts and pageantry woven into the tapestry on the hall wall across the way. If only she could wish herself inside of it so she could *really* hide. But they wouldn't learn how to do that kind of magic in Threads class till next year.

Click. Click. Click. The footsteps came closer. "Snow! Come here!"

Talk about unlucky! Her stepmom had spotted her after all. High overhead, carved gargoyles grinned down at Snow from the top of a column farther down by the trunks. Although she would rather have faced a real, live gargoyle, Snow obediently stepped out from behind the column.

"Hi," she said, giving her stepmom a weak grin.

Ms. Wicked frowned with disapproval. Typical. It was the expression she almost always wore whenever she

looked at Snow. “I just spoke with Ms. Queenharts,” Ms. Wicked snapped in an accusing tone. “She told me you were absent from Compartment class this morning.”

Snow gulped. “Oh, yeah. I overslept,” she explained. Honestly, she hadn’t minded missing Compartment. Ms. Queenharts was terrible at teaching manners!

Her stepmom’s dark eyes narrowed. “If you’re trying to get more beauty sleep, it’s not working, sweetie.” She looked Snow up and down and pointed the end of the velum roll she held toward Snow’s ankles. “Also, the hem on that gown is way too short. Your ankles are showing and they aren’t exactly your best feature.”

Just then, Prince Hunter and Prince Awesome walked by on their way to class. Had they heard her stepmom’s criticisms? How grimbarrassing! Snow felt a rosy flush creep up from her neck and spread over her entire face.

But Ms. Wicked sent the passing students a beautifully sweet smile. *Why is she nice to everyone but me?* Snow wondered. It made her feel so . . . inadequate. She could never figure out which part of Ms. Wicked’s personality was the real one. The smiling, beautiful one? Or the mean, critical one?

Bong. Bong. Bong. The Hickory Dickory Dock clock over in the Great Hall echoed throughout the school, signaling the hour and the start of second period as well.