

Thea Stilton

MOUSEFORD ACADEMY

THE SECRET INVENTION



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Text by Thea Stilton

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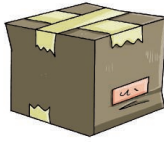
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A NOT-SO-GRAND ENTRANCE

Meanwhile, the Flashyfur's' helicopter had **landed** in a field next to the academy. Ryder and Ruby got out, along with their mother, Rebecca. She had one last *message* for her children before they returned to school.





“Always remember that you two are **winners**,” Rebecca instructed. “You were born to be in the **spotlight**!”

Ryder sighed and headed toward the academy without a word. But Ruby **smacked** a kiss on her mother’s cheek. “Your motto is my motto, Mommy!”

Ruby walked after her brother, ready to follow her mother’s words of wisdom immediately by making a **triumphant** entrance. She was wearing a beautiful **designer** outfit created just for her. She was sure that all her friends would shower her with attention, and she couldn’t wait for her moment of glory!

“Here I am!” she announced, stopping in the doorway of the academy’s main entrance. “You’ll never guess what happened at the exclusive **party** we were invited to —”



Here I am!



Ruby's whiskers **twitched** as soon as she realized no one was paying any attention to her!

“Hey! Am I **invisible**?!” Ruby sputtered, looking around. The hallways were swarming with students, but no one stopped to give Ruby more than a quick hello. They **RUSHED** by her, carrying boxes overflowing with strange equipment.

Even Ryder seemed confused by all the **activity**. “There must be something going on that we don't know about,” he mumbled.

Just then, the brother and sister noticed a huge **BOX OF PAWS** coming straight toward them! It took them a moment to figure out it was actually Shen, carrying a giant box of equipment.

Ryder walked up to him. “Shen? Is that you back there? What's going on? It's like



the academy has gone crazier than mice at an all-you-can-eat **cheese buffet!**”

Shen craned his neck from behind the box and saw his friend. “Wait, you don’t remember? We’re preparing for the big GAMS **competition** — the Global Alliance of Mice in Science! Professor Sparkle told us about it last month.”



“Oh, yeah!” Ryder said, **SMACKING** his forehead. “I forgot.”

Ruby just rolled her eyes. “Ugh. Science. What a **BORE**.”

Shen ignored her and continued. “Tomorrow, groups of students from the most prestigious academies all over the



WORLD will arrive. They'll be here to present models of their **science projects** to a panel of famous scientists. The best project wins **MONEY** so the team can make a real version!"

Suddenly, Shen had Ruby's attention. "So you're saying that this is some kind of competition . . . with a **prize**?" she asked.

"Exactly!" Shen said. "And we Mouseford students will have to **WORK HARD** to win!" Shen was so busy explaining the competition that he didn't notice motor **OIL** leaking out of his box and forming a dark **puddle** by his paws. "Sorry, I really have to get going," he said, starting to head off. "I need to **organize** the welcome for the other schools' delegates, arrange the award ceremony party, and — **AAAH!**"



Shen had slipped on the motor oil! His four paws went flying into the air.

WHOOSH!

