

Snow White's Magic Mirror

by Paula D. Rugen

Sunlight barely shines through narrow slits as I remain locked in this dingy turret. A faint scent of forest lilacs reaches my consciousness. Peasants shout obscenities at me from outside the castle walls; they all believe I'm an evil woman, an ogre obsessed by Snow White's demise. But I didn't dress as a witch with an apple in my pocket and murder in my heart. It was my sister who gave her the poisoned fruit.

Actually, it was all Snow White's fault.

It began the year I married Snow White's father. She was four with beautiful snow-white skin, blood red lips and coal black hair. Her father gave her everything she wanted—including a magic mirror!

With a smile on her face, she spoke softly and expressed kindness toward others—unless she and I were alone. I tried to be her friend, but she destroyed every gift I gave her.

I'll never forget the first evening I went into her room to bid her goodnight. She turned to her magic mirror:

*"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest one of all?"*

The mirror replied:

"The queen is the fairest one of all."

With eyes glaring and her fists in the air, Snow White hurled herself at me. Then, she kicked and punched, shouting, "I hate you! We all hate you! Leave our castle!"

Shaking, I withdrew from the room with tears in my eyes.

After months of rejection, I learned to dread our times alone. The real Snow White was a brat.

One day, a familiar-looking woman, dressed in rags, arrived at the castle gates. I discovered she was my twin sister, who, as a child, lived in a make-believe world. She embarrassed me by singing in her nonsensical way instead of learning useful work. Now I was alarmed that someone might discover I had a bizarre sister, but how could I turn away my own flesh and blood? I led her to an unused turret, and she lived there unbeknownst to anyone.

Creeping through hidden passageways, Sister heard Snow White ask:

*"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest one of all?"*

My sister remained happy as long as the mirror answered:

"The queen is the fairest one of all."

However, the day Snow White turned 16, the mirror responded:

*"The queen was fairest, in my mind,
Snow White's now fairest I do find."*

Thinking of Snow White's malicious behavior, Sister became agitated. She thought and planned, then seized some of my clothing; she practiced and became proficient at imitating my speech and stride.

While I accompanied the king to a festivity in the next kingdom, Sister ordered the huntsman to take Snow White to the far woods and cut out her heart. When he returned with a heart, Sister crept to the mirror and inquired:

*"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest one of all?"*

The mirror replied:

"Snow White's the fairest one of all."

Sister stomped her foot and shrieked. The huntsman allowed Snow White's escape!

Sister developed a new plan; she painted her face and dressed as an old woman selling buttons and laces. When she found Snow White, she encircled her neck with a ribbon of lace, pulling it tight. Snow White collapsed to the floor, and Sister sneaked back to the castle to confront the mirror.

The mirror again responded:

“Snow White is the fairest one of all.”

Disguised as a friendly neighbor, my infuriated sister presented an apple to Snow White. Sister took a bite on one side to show its tastiness and the princess gratefully accepted the gift. Biting into the poisoned side, Snow White crumpled to the floor.

As the king and I returned to the castle, the disguised woman approached me, a curious smile on her face. It horrified me to listen to my sister confess her hostile actions.

Creeping to the magic mirror, she whispered:

*“Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest one of all?”*

And the mirror answered:

“The queen is the fairest one of all.”

Learning of Snow White's death, I sank to the floor in anguish.

You can imagine the surprise I had when we went to our neighbor's wedding. There stood the bride—Snow White! It's true that I screamed and I reached for her. But it isn't true that I attempted to harm her. Shaking with rage, Snow White twisted toward me and wailed, “She's the one!”

The guards rendered me motionless for hours. By the time I was returned to the castle, Sister had disappeared. No one believed she existed. The magic mirror remained silent, and I was blamed for trying to eliminate Snow White.

I may be locked in this turret for the rest of my life, but I am innocent!