

Howl's Moving Castle

In the land of Ingary, where magical happenings are quite common, SOPHIE is the eldest of three sisters. She works in her late father's hat shop in the town of Market Chipping and talks to the hats as she trims them with ribbons and feathers, to make them attractive to sell. Sophie has no idea that a very dangerous customer is just about to enter the shop and change her life.

SOPHIE: *(Talking to the hat she is trimming)* You really are beautiful, you know... Red silk and a bunch of wax cherries. *(Putting it to one side, getting up and moving across the shop and picking up a plain black and white hat)* Now you are very stylish! I really like you.

(Putting the hat down and looking around her) But, look at the rest of you... watching me on stands or waiting to be trimmed. What good are you all? Did you know I lost a customer today? She stormed in whirling the pleated mushroom bonnet by its ribbons and complained that she had not met a Count... or anyone at all while she was wearing it! I said that I was not surprised and, with a face like hers, she wouldn't have had the wit to spot the King himself if he came begging! She threw the bonnet at me and stormed out of the shop!

(A very well dressed lady enters the shop)

Oh... another customer. What a grand one too, with a sable wrap, diamonds and a real ostrich plume in her hat! Well, she won't find anything here. None of these are in her class.

(She goes over to the lady and greets her) Would you like a hat madam? Can I help you choose one? As you see, we have a good selection. *(Fetching first one hat and then another)* Here's a very stylish black and white hat. ... No? You don't like the pink one. What about this caterpillar green? *(Beginning to show her annoyance)* Well, we're only a small shop madam. You asked for hats. These are all we've got. I don't know why you bothered to come in.

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(The lady pulls back the feather that has been partly hiding her face and Sophie immediately jumps away from her, recognising who she is) Oh my goodness... I know who you are now! You're the Wicked Witch of the Waste. (SOPHIE flinches as the Witch sprinkles a powder over her face) AAAARGH! What was that? What have you thrown on me? (Her voice starts to croak) There must be some mistake. What are you staring at?

(The Witch sweeps out of the shop and Sophie puts her hands to her face)

(Even more croakily) Oh, what has happened to my face? My hands? They're covered in wrinkles... with veins on the back and knuckles like knots. (Looking down at her feet) My feet too... my legs... they look as if I'm 90 years old!

(SOPHIE hobbles slowly to peer at her image in a mirror on the wall) She's turned me into an old woman!

by Diana Wynne Jones, adapted by LAMDA