

Diana Wynne Jones

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE



EXTRAS
INSIDE

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HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE



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Dedication

This one is for Stephen

The idea for this book was suggested by a boy in a school I was visiting, who asked me to write a book called *The Moving Castle*.

I wrote down his name, and put it in such a safe place, that I have been unable to find it ever since.

I would like to thank him very much.

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Chapter One

IN WHICH SOPHIE TALKS TO HATS

In the land of Ingary, where such things as seven-league boots and cloaks of invisibility really exist, it is quite a misfortune to be born the eldest of three. Everyone knows you are the one who will fail first, and worst, if the three of you set out to seek your fortunes.

Sophie Hatter was the eldest of three sisters. She was not even the child of a poor woodcutter, which might have given her some chance of success! Her parents were well to do and kept a ladies' hat shop in the prosperous town of Market Chipping. True, her own mother died when Sophie was two years old and her sister Lettie was one year old, and their father married his youngest shop assistant, a pretty blonde girl called Fanny. Fanny shortly gave birth to the third sister, Martha. This ought to have made Sophie and Lettie into Ugly Sisters, but in fact all three girls grew up very pretty indeed, though Lettie was the one everyone said was most beautiful. Fanny treated all three girls with the same kindness and did not favor Martha in the least.

Mr. Hatter was proud of his three daughters and sent them all to the best school in town. Sophie was the most studious. She read a great deal, and very soon realized how little chance she had of an interesting future. It was a disappointment to her, but she was still happy enough, looking after her sisters and grooming Martha to seek her fortune when the time came. Since Fanny was always busy in the shop, Sophie was the one who looked after the younger two. There was a certain amount of screaming and hair-pulling between those younger two. Lettie was by no means resigned to being the one who, next to Sophie, was bound to be the least successful.

"It's not fair!" Lettie would shout. "Why should Martha have the best of it just because she was born the youngest? I shall marry a prince, so there!"

To which Martha always retorted that *she* would end up disgustingly rich without having to marry anybody.

Then Sophie would have to drag them apart and mend their clothes. She was very deft with her needle. As time went on, she made clothes for her sisters too. There was one deep rose outfit she made for Lettie, the May Day before this story really starts, which Fanny said looked as if it had come from the most expensive shop in Kingsbury.

About this time everyone began talking of the Witch of the Waste again. It was said the Witch had threatened the life of the King's daughter and that the King had commanded his personal magician, Wizard Suliman, to go into the Waste and deal with the Witch. And it seemed that Wizard Suliman had not only failed to deal with the Witch: he had got himself killed by her.

So when, a few months after that, a tall black castle suddenly appeared on the hills above Market Chipping, blowing clouds of black smoke from its four tall, thin turrets, everybody was fairly sure that the Witch had moved out of the Waste again and was about to terrorize the country the way she used to fifty years ago. People got very scared indeed. Nobody went out alone, particularly at night. What made it all the scarier was that the castle did not stay in the same place. Sometimes it was a tall black smudge on the moors to the northwest, sometimes it reared above the rocks to the east, and sometimes it came right downhill to sit in the heather only just beyond the last farm to the north. You could see it actually moving sometimes, with smoke pouring out from the turrets in dirty gray gusts. For a while everyone was certain that the castle would come right down into the valley before long, and the Mayor talked of sending to the King for help.

But the castle stayed roving about the hills, and it was learned that it did not belong to the Witch but to Wizard Howl. Wizard Howl was bad enough. Though he did not seem to want to leave the hills, he was known to amuse himself by collecting young girls and sucking the souls from them. Or some people said he ate their hearts. He was an utterly cold-blooded and heartless wizard and no young girl was safe from him if he caught her on her own. Sophie, Lettie, and Martha, along with all the other girls in Market Chipping, were warned never to go out alone, which was a great annoyance to them. They wondered what use Wizard Howl found for all the souls he collected.

They had other things on their minds before long, however, for Mr. Hatter died suddenly just as Sophie was old enough to leave school for good. It then appeared that Mr. Hatter had been altogether too proud of his

daughters. The school fees he had been paying had left the shop with quite heavy debts. When the funeral was over, Fanny sat down in the parlor in the house next door to the shop and explained the situation.

“You’ll all have to leave that school, I’m afraid,” she said. “I’ve been doing sums back and front and sideways, and the only way I can see to keep the business going *and* take care of the three of you is to see you all settled in a promising apprenticeship somewhere. It isn’t practical to have you all in the shop. I can’t afford it. So this is what I’ve decided. Lettie first—”

Lettie looked up, glowing with health and beauty which even sorrow and black clothes could not hide. “I want to go on learning,” she said.

“So you shall, love,” said Fanny. “I’ve arranged for you to be apprenticed to Cesari’s, the pastry cook in Market Square. They’ve a name for treating their learners like kings and queens, and you should be very happy there, as well as learning a useful trade. Mrs. Cesari’s a good customer and a good friend, and she’s agreed to squeeze you in as a favor.”

Lettie laughed in the way that showed she was not at all pleased. “Well, thank you,” she said. “Isn’t it lucky that I like cooking?”

Fanny looked relieved. Lettie could be awkwardly strong-minded at times. “Now Martha,” she said. “I know you’re full young to go out to work, so I’ve thought round for something that would give you a long, quiet apprenticeship and go on being useful to you whatever you decide to do after that. You know my old school friend Annabel Fairfax?”

Martha, who was slender and fair, fixed her big gray eyes on Fanny almost as strong-mindedly as Lettie. “You mean the one who talks such a lot,” she said. “Isn’t she a witch?”

“Yes, with a lovely house and clients all over the Folding Valley,” Fanny said eagerly. “She’s a good woman, Martha. She’ll teach you all she knows and very likely introduce you to grand people she knows in Kingsbury. You’ll be all set up in life when she’s done with you.”

“She’s a nice lady,” Martha conceded. “All right.”

Sophie, listening, felt that Fanny had worked everything out just as it should be. Lettie, as the second daughter, was never likely to come to much, so Fanny had put her where she might meet a handsome young apprentice and live happily ever after. Martha, who was bound to strike out and make her fortune, would have witchcraft and rich friends to help her. As for Sophie herself, Sophie had no doubt what was coming. It did not surprise