

Character Description and Dialogue – Example #1

Deep in the Enchanted Forest, in a neat gray house with a wide porch and a red roof, lived the witch Morwen and her nine cats.

Morwen didn't look like a witch any more than her cats looked as if they should belong to one. For one thing, she was much too young—less than thirty—and she had neither wrinkles nor warts. In fact, if she hadn't been a witch, people might have said she was quite pretty. Her hair was the same ginger color as her cat Trouble's fur, and she had hazel eyes and a delicate, pointed chin. Because she was very short, she had to stand quite strait (instead of hunching over in correct witch fashion) if she wanted people to pay attention to her. She was also nearsighted, so she always had to wear glasses; hers had rectangular lenses. She refused even to put on the tall, pointed hats most witches wore, and she dressed in loose black robes because they were comfortable and practical, not because they were traditional.

All of this occasionally annoyed people who cared more about the propriety of her dress than the quality of her spells.

“You ought to turn him into a toad,” Trouble said, looking up from washing his right front paw.

“Who should I turn into a toad?” Morwen asked, looking down from the broomstick she was floating on.

“That fellow who’s making all the fuss about pointy hats and respect for tradition,” Trouble replied. “The one you were grumbling about a minute ago. What’s his name?”

“Arona Michaelear Grinogion Vamst,” Morwen said. “It’s a tempting thought. But someone worse would probably replace him.”

“Turn them all into toads. I’ll help.”

“I’m not planing to turn anyone into anything at the moment, but I’ll keep it in mind.”

“That means you won’t do it,” said Trouble. He looked at his right paw, decided it was clean enough for the time being, and began washing his left.

Character Description and Dialogue – Example #2

Morwen landed her broomstick and stood up, just as the Chairwitch reached the porch steps. The Chairwitch looked exactly as a witch ought: tall, with a crooked black hat, stringy black hair, sharp black eyes, a long, bony nose, and a wide, thin-lipped mouth. She hunched over as she walked, leaning on her broom as if it were a cane.

Morwen put the paint can on the window ledge next to Trouble, set her broom against the wall, and said, “Good morning, Arachniz.”

“Good morning, Morwen,” Chairwitch Arachniz croaked. “What’s this I hear about you growing lilacs in your garden?”

“Since I don’t know what you’ve heard, I can’t answer you,” Morwen replied. “Come in and have some cider.”

Arachniz pounded the end of her broom against the porch floor, breaking some of the twigs and scattering bits of dust and bark in all directions.

“Don’t be provoking, Morwen. You’re a witch. You’re supposed to grow poison oak and snakeroot and wolfsbane, not lilacs. You’ll get thrown out of the Deadly Nightshade Gardening Club if you aren’t careful.”

“Nonsense. Where in the rules does it say that I can’t grow what I please in my own garden?”

“It doesn’t,” Arachniz admitted. “And I’ll tell you right away that you aren’t the only one who puts a few lilacs and daylilies in with the rampion and henbane. Why, I’ve got a perfectly ordinary patch of daisies in the corner myself. But I’ve been getting complaints, and I have to do something about them.”

“What sort of complaints?”

“That the Deadly Nightshade Gardening Club is too normal for witches. That all we grow are everyday plants like cabbages and apples.”

“Apples are a basic necessity for witches,” Morwen said. “And everyday plants don’t turn the people who eat them into donkeys. Who’s complaining?”

“Some fellow with an impossible name—Arona Mc-something-or-other.”

“Arona Michaelear Grinogion Vamst?”

The Chairwitch nodded. “That’s the one. I’ve gotten six regular letters and two by Eagle Express in the past month. He says he’s going to write a letter to the *Times* next.”

~from *Calling on Dragons*, by Patricia C. Wrede