Esmarella the Witchkin

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And it will go on 'til the ravening hounds
Swallow sun and Moon.
And, writhing, Earth
To chaos returns.

For Hild has passed,
Grimly grieving,
Lifespells weaving,
Winning wan warriors
Away...
From peace!

Esmarella The Witchkin
by
Lee Beasley

Once, there was a witchkin named Esmarella who always rushed through her witchery. Because she did not practice, at times her broom would slip when she rode it and lop off several treetops. When she called a weather chant, more often than not, snow showered down instead of the rain she had asked for.

But this day, Essie finished boiling the hoggett powder for their sheep without a single mistake. With a sigh of relief, she divided the mixture in six smaller pots and added a flavored dye to each -- cherry red, butter yellow, blueberry blue, mint green, grape violet, and orange orange. She loved the colors the wool turned after the sheep ate the grain mixed with the hoggett powder. After she stored the pots, she turned and stroked the long white fur of her cat, Drammie, as it lay on the sunny window ledge.

"Hmm-m-m-m. What if I had a blue cat, or a green one, or maybe a violet one?" She giggled at the thought. "Well," she told Drammie, "let's see how you look after you eat this." She mixed a bit of the blue powder in the cat's food, and set the dish on the floor. She forgot the warning that her mother, Belda, had given her -- that magic had its dangers and its price.

At that moment, Belda called from outside, "Esmarella, I need some more water, please."

"Oh, bats, not now. Just when I want to see what happens!" Essie said to herself. Maybe, she thought, I can get back before Drammie finished her food. So she jumped up and called, "Coming, Beldamom," and grabbed the bucket. She ran down to the creek, filled it, and rushed back, spilling a little on the way.

"Thank you, you were quick." Her mother turned to smile at the girl but saw Essie already disappearing into the hut.

Inside, Essie paused to catch her breath as she looked at the bowl, now empty. Drammie was nowhere to be seen.

"Now that's odd," Essie said to herself. "No Drammie sunning herself, or sleeping by the fire, or chasing butterflies."

She looked around but saw only a small blue treefrog. Something about it looked familiar. It batted one of its front legs at a butterfly just like Drammie always did.

"Drammie? Oh, my poor Drammie. The powder didn't work right on you. What can I do?" Slowly she bent over and offered her hand. The little treefrog promptly hopped onto it, purring. Yes, it was Drammie.

Suddenly, she thought, I can't let Beldamom see what I did. She says I do things too fast. Essie peeked through the open door and saw that Beldamom was still busy.

"What am I going to do?" The little treefrog, now on the table, stared at her and licked its foot. Essie sat down and propped her head in her hands.

After a moment, she spoke to the catfrog, "With magic, what can be done, can also be undone. That's what Beldamom always says. Now, how to turn you back into a cat?" She looked about and noticed an old book on the shelf.


She took the book down and blew the dust off its cover. She turned several of its worn and tattered pages before she stopped. This one she read then sighed. "It would take hours before it could work, Drammie." The frog mewed and hopped around.

Essie turned to the section on spells. "Now, here are the color spells."

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With a loud clap and a puff of silver smoke, the big white frog blurred into a big white --- Drammie! Essie hugged her as Beldamom came running in.

The first about how to change the sky to yellow, she knew, would not do. The second one was too faded to read. She flipped through the others and picked one.

Essie glanced out the door and saw her mother still working. Now, staring at Drammie, she clasped her hands and rushed through the chant, stumbling over the long words.

"Ahde kirinini, ahde lumbasine.
Over skin, over size, over green Creep and crawl and do it all."

The little frog's blue skin darkened to dark green and her body grew to half her cat size. Drammie stared at Essie with gold-flecked eyes. She gently held the frog's large front legs with both hands.

"Oh, Drammie, what have I done? It should have worked! Now you're green! Oh, I didn't pay attention." Essie's voice trembled and tears came. She wiped them away fiercely.

The next one she tried was a white spell although its directions were faded in spots. "Oh, this is it. I'll just skip over the faded spots," she told the frog. Quickly she stepped around the table. She chanted, garbling the unfamiliar words.

"Pallatur monome omagus,
Step right, step left, step up, step down.
Go in a circle round a light,
Once that is done, all will be white."

She watched Drammie grow to cat size, a white, longhaired frog with a fluffy cat's tail! Drammie crouched and mewed softly.

Essie bit her lips and squeezed her eyes tight for a long minute. Then, she reached for the book again. "Maybe the next spell, Drammie." She patted the white frog head.

On the next one she concentrated hard. She practiced the odd words first. Then she followed each step as best she could. Slowly she chanted:

"Drambad, endad, iloac,
Hop nine times up and nine times back.
With your blood and bones, your skin and eyes,
Show your true color and your true size."

With a loud clap and a puff of silver smoke, the big white frog blurred into a big white --- Drammie! Essie hugged her as Beldamom came running in.
"Esmarella! What is going on? What have you been doing?" She saw the book open on the table. "My old magic book! Did you use one of the spells in it? I've told you not to touch it."

"Esmie nodded. "I know, but I had to, and I did it, Beldamom." She snuggled the cat in her arms while she told her mother what happened. "And I was so scared," she ratted on. "I'm going to be extra careful after this. I don't want anything to happen to my Drammie ever again."

Beldamom drew a deep breath. "I'm glad Drammie is all right, and that you are, too. But, Esmarella, magic becomes dangerous when it isn't used right. Do you want a storm or fire to destroy our place and maybe all of us? Do you want our sheep scattered or our crops ruined?"

Essie's eyes widened and she shook her head. Then she stroked Drammie's fur with her cheek as her mother continued, "Magic works best when it is needed. Even then, you must follow each step carefully just as you did with the hoggett powder. You must learn your witchery thoroughly. Only then can you take your place at my side.

"Now, I'm proud you could work a spell from my old book. Some are so faded that I'm never sure about them. You can help me work on them."

Abruptly, Drammie leaped out of Essie's arms and hopped across the floor. She croaked, "Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit."