

# Mother Crewe

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North American

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*Easy*  
*2 min read*

Mother Crewe was of evil repute in Plymouth in the last century. It was said that she had taken pay for luring a girl into her old farm-house, where a man lay dead of small-pox, with intent to harm her beauty; she was accused of blighting land and driving ships ashore with spells; in brief, she was called a witch, and people, even those who affected to ignore the craft of wizardry, were content to keep away from her. When the Revolution ended, Southward Howland demanded Dame Crewe's house and acre, claiming under law of entail, though primogeniture had been little enforced in America, where there was room and to spare for all. But Howland was stubborn and the woman's house had good situation, so one day he rode to her door and summoned her with a tap of his whip.

"What do you here on my land?" said he.

"I live on land that is my own. I cleared it, built my house here, and no other has claim to it."

"Then I lay claim. The place is mine. I shall tear your cabin down on Friday."

"On Friday they'll dig your grave on Burying Hill. I see the shadow closing round you. You draw it in with every breath. Quick! Home and make your peace!" The hag's withered face was touched with spots of red and her eyes glared in their sunken sockets.

“Bandy no witch words with me, woman. On Friday I will return.” And he swung himself into his saddle. As he did so a black cat leaped on Mother Crewe’s shoulder and stood there, squalling. The woman listened to its cries as if they were words. Her look of hate deepened. Raising her hand, she cried, “Your day is near its end. Repent!”

“Bah! You have heard what I have said. If on Friday you are not elsewhere, I’ll tear the timbers down and bury you in the ruins.”

“Enough!” cried the woman, her form straightening, her voice grown shrill. “My curse is on you here and hereafter. Die! Then go down to hell!”

As she said this the cat leaped from her shoulder to the flank of the horse, spitting and clawing, and the frightened steed set off at a furious pace. As he disappeared in the scrub oaks his master was seen vainly trying to stop him. The evening closed in with fog and chill, and before the light waned a man faring homeward came upon the corpse of Southward Howland stretched along the ground.

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