



The Crow and Cat of Hopkinshill

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In a wood near Hopkins Hill, Rhode Island, is a boulder, four feet in diameter, scored with a peculiar furrow. Witch Rock, as it is called, gained its name two centuries ago, when an old woman abode in a deserted cabin close by and made the forest dreaded. Figures were seen flitting through its shadows; articles left out o' nights in neighboring settlements were missing in the morning, though tramps were unknown; cattle were afflicted with diseases; stones were flung in at windows by unseen hands; crops were blighted by hail and frost; and in stormy weather the old woman was seen to rise out of the woods and stir and push the clouds before her with a broom. For a hundred yards around Witch Rock the ground is still accursed, and any attempt to break it up is unavailing. Nearly a century ago a scoffer named Reynolds declared that he would run his plough through the enchanted boundary, and the neighbors watched the attempt from a distance.

He started well, but on arriving at the magic circle the plough shied and the wooden landside—or chip, as it was called—came off. It was replaced and the team started again. In a moment the oxen stood unyoked, while the chip jumped off and whirled away out of sight. On this, most of the people edged away in the direction of home, and directly there came from the north a crow that perched on a dead tree and cawed. John Hopkins,

owner of the land, cried to the bird, "Squawk, you damned old Pat Jenkins!" and the crow took flight, dropping the chip at Reynolds's feet, at the same moment turning into a beldam with a cocked hat, who descended upon the rock. Before the men could reach her she changed into a black cat and disappeared in the ground. Hunting and digging came to naught, though the pursuers were so earnest and excited that one of them made the furrow in the rock with a welt from his shovel. After that few people cared to go near the place, and it became overgrown with weeds and trees and bushes.

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