

A MIRROR FOR WITCHES

*In which is reflected the Life, Machinations,
and Death of Famous DOLL BILBY, who,
with a more than feminine perversity, preferred
a Demon to a Mortal Lover. Here is
also told how and why a Righteous and Most
Awful JUDGEMENT befell her, destroying
both Corporeal Body and Immortal Soul.*

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

Read by Sarah Kay Peters

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CHAPTER I

1

Certain Examples to Show Doll Bilby not alone among Women in her preference for Evil. The Cases of Ry, Goose, Leda, Danaé, etc., cited.

It has long been known that, on occasions, devils in the shape of humanity or in their own shapes (that is, with horns, hoofs, and tails) may fancy mortal women. By dark arts, sly promises of power, flattery, etc., they may prevail even upon Christian women, always to the destruction of these women's souls and often to that of their bodies.

For in Northumberland, Meslie Ry was burned in 1616 because she had taken a fiend to love.

A few years later, Christie Goose, a single woman upwards of forty years, suddenly flew lunatic — and that upon the Lord's Day. Then she did confess that each night and every night the Devil, wickedly assuming the shape of Mr. Oates, God's minister at Crumplehorn, Oxon., came to her through her window. This fact amazed Crumplehorn, for Goose was of all

women most pious, and had sat for years in humble prayerfulness at the feet of Mr. Oates. Some were astonished that even a devil should find need for this same Goose, who was of hideous aspect.

There was a young jade, servant in an alderman's house in London, who, although she confessed nothing and remained obdurate to the end, was hanged and then burned because she bore a creature with horns on its head and a six-inch tail behind. Such a creature the just magistrates determined no mortal man might beget, although the saucy wench suggested that an alderman might. Moreover, certain children in the neighbourhood testified that they had twice or thrice seen 'a burly big black man' sitting on the ridgepole.

Some assume that as the gods of antiquity were in no way gods (being seekers after evil—not after light), they should therefore be considered caco-demons or devils. The Reverend Pyam Plover, of Boston, has written learnedly on this subject, saying, in part, 'For is it not possible that the Lord God of Israel, being those days but the God of *Israel*, may have permitted certain of his Fallen Angels to stray from the vitals of Hell and disport themselves through

Greece and ancient Italy? Here they revealed themselves ...in many ways to heathen people, who falsely worshipped them as gods. If this be true Zeus might better assume his true name of Satan, and let us call Apollo but *Apollyon* and recognize in Mars, Hermes, etc., Beelzebub and Belial. Then may the female “divinities” be true descendants of Lilith.’ So one may learn from antiquity (consider Leda, Io, Danaé, and others) how great is the ardour felt by devils for mortal women.

As is not yet forgotten, in 1662, near three-score years ago, a woman called Greensmith, living at Hartford in New England, confessed the Devil had carnal knowledge of her. For this she was hanged.

More strangely yet, lived, for brief space of years, famous Doll Bilby, best known as ‘Bilby’s Doll.’ She flourished at Cowan Corners, close by the town of Salem, but an afternoon’s journey from my own parish of Sudbury. Of other women devil-ridden, be it Leda or Ry, Greensmith or Danaé, Christie Goose or La Voisin, little can be said, for but little is known. All were witches (if we accept as witches such women as traffic with fiends), but little else is known. Yet of Bilby’s famous Doll, in the end all things were known.

From old wives' tales, court records, and the diaries of certain men, from the sworn affidavits and depositions of others, from the demonologies of Mr. Cotton Mather, and the cipher journal of Mr. Zacharias Zelle, we may know with a nicety what this woman was and how she lived, from whence she came, how she grew to witchcraft, how she felt, thought, and at the last how she died.

2

Mr. Bilby sails far to seek out TROUBLE, and, having found Trouble, nurtures it.

She was born of a wicked witch-woman and begotten by one who was no better, that is, by a warlock. These two devil-worshippers and, they say, two hundred more were burned in one great holocaust at Mont Hoél in Brittany. Black smoke, screams of death, stench of flesh settled down over town and harbour, causing sickness and even vomiting.

On that same day, by evil fortune, a brig manned by Dawlish men stood in the Bouche de Saint-Hoél. These men, seeing that it was fête

day, and curious because of the smoke, the screams, and the stench, went to the holocaust. There they saw a wild child, more animal or goblin than human being. This wild child would have followed her mother, who burned in the heart of the fire, if soldiers had not pushed her back. A priest bade the soldiers let her pass to death, for, being of witch-people, she would undoubtedly burn sooner or later. The Englishmen protested, and Mr. Jared Bilby, captain and owner of the brig, caught and held the wild child, who did not struggle against him as she had against the soldiers. Instead she held fast to him, for even the wicked may recognize goodness. The priest showed his yellow fangs at the Dawlish men. He hated and scorned them. 'Take the child and be gone. She was born of a witch-woman and will grow to witchcraft and do much harm — but in England among the heretics. Be gone.'

The child clung to Mr. Bilby and he to her. He took her in his arms, and she lay corpse-pale and glass-eyed like one about to die. This men remembered. When he put her down upon the deck of the brig, he was badly sweated as though his burden had been more than he, a strong young man, might bear. He told his men the child weighed as though a child of stone. Some

thought that his heart mistook him, and that he already regretted the acceptance of so dangerous a gift.

Gathering his men about him and having prayed, he gave thanks to Jehovah, Who, although He had never given him a child of his own body, yet had seen fit to send this poor little one to him. Then he bade his men keep their tongues behind their teeth, telling no one from whence was this child (which in the future should be his child), nor the manner of her parents' death, nor the harm which the priest swore she should live to perform. This promise his men kept for years, but in the end, when they were old men, they preferred to serve Gossip and Scandal rather than a kind master, long, longdead.

For days the child lay like death, only occasionally jumping madly from her pallet, screaming 'Le feu! Le feu! Le feu!' then falling back, covering her face with her hands and laughing horribly. The captain coaxed and petted her, urged her to eat, and quieted her with his hands. So by love he restored her to humanity.

Because of her small size he called her 'Doll,' which name she well lived up to, never acquiring the height and weight of other women. No one

ever knew her real age. She may have been seven or perhaps six when she first came to England. Being unable to talk English and at first unable to serve herself, she may have seemed younger than she was. Yet, on the other hand, Fear, Grief, and Sickness often make their Hosts appear older than the fact.

Mr. Bilby believed that the shock of her parents' death (for they were burned before her eyes, her mother crying out to her most piteously from the midst of flame) had broken the reins of memory. He thought she had forgotten everything that lay back of her reawakening to life on board his brig, which was called God's Mercy. Also he comforted himself with the belief that if —as might be — she had learned any little tricks of witchery, or if she had ever been taken to Sabbat or Black Mass, or if she had looked upon the Prince of Hell, or even if (being led on _ by her parents) she had sworn to serve him, she would have forgotten all these things. She was born again and this time of God and to God, whom Mr. Bilby piously swore she should serve — Him and Him alone. The child had been so vehemently frightened she had forgotten all good and needful things, how to dress herself, how to eat with knife and spoon. She had forgotten the language of her birth.

But of evil she remembered everything.

3

He brings the Foundling to his own hearth and to the bosom of his Goodwife. There the goblin-child rewards Kindness and Mercy with Malediction and Evil. She overlooks the Goodwife.

Hannah, wife of Jared Bilby, would not accept her sterility with Christian fortitude. She railed against the wisdom of God, saying, 'Mrs. Such-and-Such is but half so big and fine a woman as I, yet she has three sons. Goody This-and-That, the jade, can find but little favour in the eyes of her Maker, yet, to her He sends more children than she can feed; but I, a pious, godly, praying woman, remain barren.' Which, she wickedly averred, showed the injustice of Divinity. However, by curious chance or mischance, soon after Mr. Bilby set out with his men and brig for the coasts of France and Spain, she found herself with child. Some say the Lord tired of her railing, and, to punish her, first raised up her hopes and then sent Doll to blight them for her.

Summer wore away. The nights grew chill. She was four months with child. Then Mr. Bilby, late one evening, came to Dawlish harbour. ~ With him was his goblin-child, now grown pretty and playful. He arrived home in the black of the night and through pelting rain. The child he carried wrapped in his greatcoat to protect her from the cruel storm. He shook the shutter which he knew was by his wife's bedboard.

“Woman, woman, get up and open to me.”

The woman lay for warmth with her servant wench, Susan Croker. The fury of the night shewed forth the grandeur of God. The wind howled above the beating of the rain. Croker cried to her mistress not to open the door on such a night. It could be no living man who knocked, for it is on such vexed and angry nights as these the sea gives up its dead.

Hannah was a fearless woman. She got quickly to the door, unbarred it, and, in a deluge of wind and wet, Mr. Bilby entered with his burden. Her heart mistook her. She cried out, ‘Jared, what have you there in that great bundle?’ So he took it to the hearth and, as the women knelt, throwing kindling on the fire, he opened the bundle and out popped the goblin-child. She shuddered

away from the fire (a thing she always feared) and clutched her foster father with her little hands, gazing into his face with round black eyes. Every thread of her spikey hair was tumbled up on end. The women cried in horror that this was no child. This was an imp, a monkey, a pug. But Jared Bilby on his knees protected the foundling, both from the fire and the women's angry glances. He soothed her with his body and kind words, 'Ah, the fire would never devour her.' He was here, and he would never leave her. She was his child, etc. He would always love and cherish her — and the like. The child pushed her tousled head under his chin and froze into stillness.

Susan Croker told many that, from the beginning, the child bewitched him. Nor did the affection which Bilby gave his Doll ever seem like the love which men feel to their children, but rather the darker and often unholy passion which is evoked by mature, or almost mature women — a passion which witches, when young and comely, have often engendered with ferocious intensity. As long as he lived he was forever stroking her shaggy black hair, looking lovingly into those button-round eyes, and kissing a wide hobgoblin mouth which many a Christian would fear to kiss. Hannah was a lusty, jealous woman who

could not abide such mean rivalry as that of a foundling child. The woman, who had always been a gossiping wife, now, under the baleful influence of Doll, seemed like to become a shrew. She was steely set in her hatred of the child, although she fed her, gave her a corner to sleep in, and taught her some small prayers. With her the child seemed dull, indifferent, but with Mr. Bilby she was merry, playful, and loving. So the one thought her a knowing child and the other a zany.

Mr. Bilby would not tell his wife where he had found Doll, but it did trouble him that the woman so cunningly insisted that either she was the child of a witch or the begotten of the Devil. Even Susan Croker, who was kind to the foundling, had horrid suspicions of her. She could not teach Doll the noble, sonorous lines of Our Lord's Prayer, although the imp was quick to learn worthless things, such as, 'This Little Pig Goes to Market' or 'A Cat Comes Fiddling Out of the Barn.'

The child, having been in the house a month, there occurred a chance to show what she could do — that is, what evil she could do.

4.

Doll covets a ship for a toy and the whole of her Foster Father's love. She nefariously gains her ends and slays a Dangerous Rival.

The midwife promised Hannah a great thump- *
ing boy handsome as his mother, strong as his father. He should either wear the bands of the clergy or walk the quarter-deck of the king's navy. Because her husband favoured the nautical life for his unborn son, he made him a rattle in the shape of a ship. In the hull were seven balls which, when the ship was shaken, rattled. Now Doll was forever leaning against his knees and watching him as he carved out this bauble. As one after another of the seven balls were liberated in the heart of the wood, she would laugh and gloat. It was not a toy for her, but for him who should (according to nature) supplant her in her foster father's love. In her evil heart she must have brooded on these things and come to hate this other child that would possess the ship and Bilby's affection. Her hands were always outstretched to the rattle and she cried, 'Give, give, give.'

One day as they were thus — man and child —

Hannah came in from the milk-house. The woman was jealous — not only for her own sake, but for the sake of the unborn. ‘For,’ she thought, ‘what shall he, who gives all to a foundling, have left for his own son? Not only has this wicked girl turned him away from me, but she takes the rightful place of his own child.’ Then she said:

‘It is not well that a woman in my condition should be exposed to contrary and evil influences. Jared, send away your “pretty pet”; give her to the wife of your ship’s cook to keep — at least until I am delivered. Many wiser than I, yes, and wiser than you...’ Her jaw swung loose as though broke. Her teeth stuck out, her eyes bulged, for the goblin-child, through her mat of hair and out of her wild bright eyes, was staring at her. She stared and moved her lips in a whisper, then she skipped across the room, grinning in diabolical glee. Mrs. Hannah felt the curse go through her. The babe in her womb moved in its wretchedness, and was blasted. The woman felt its tiny soul flutter to her lips and escape. She knew that Doll (being of some infernal origin) could see this same soul, and she guessed, from the roving of her eyes, how it clung for a moment to its mother’s lips, how it flew to the Bible upon the stand (in which its name would

never be recorded), how it poised upon the window-sill, then, unborn and frustrated, it departed to whatever Paradise or Hell God prepares for such half-formed souls. Hannah began to screech and wail, then fell back upon the bed in a swoon.

The body of the unborn child shrivelled within her, and, when a male midwife was called from Dawlish, he said she had been but full of air. She never was again with child. Some said (and Captain Bilby among them) that she never had been — even on the ‘bove-related most famous occasion.

But if, as the most informed and thoughtful have said, the blasting of Hannah’s infant was indeed a fact, then we have to hand, and early in the life history of Doll Bilby, an actual case of witchcraft. And is it likely such monstrous power (blasting unborn life with a glance or at most a muttered curse) should be given to any one who had not already set her name to the Devil’s Book, and compacted herself to Hell?

5

The New Land holds greater promise than the Old. Mr.

Bilby, Ux et filia say fare-you-well to England and take up residence close to Salem and not far from Boston, in the Bay Colony. They prosper. The child grows an evil pace.

In those days England offered little peace to men (like Captain Bilby) who would worship God in their own way, and in accordance with His own holy teachings and the dictates of their own hearts — not according to teachings of bishops or priests. So Mr. Bilby often yearned towards that newer land which lay far west beyond the Atlantic. In time he sold his brig, God's Mercy, and his freehold. The agent of the Bay Colony, in his office at Maiden Lane, London, told him to get to Southampton with his wife, child, and gear. Within the month he should sail.

Mrs. Hannah protested that if the child went she would not. Then he would humour and praise her, so at last she went, although with much bad grace.

In the year 1663 the ship Elizabeth arrived, by the goodness of God, to the colony at Massachusetts Bay, and in her came an hundred souls. There were yeomen, farmers, braziers, wainers, pewterers, etc., indentured servants, apprentices,

etc., and certain gentlemen scholars, etc. But in after years the most famous of all these people was Bilby's Doll, and it is she who has made the name of the ship Elizabeth remembered. There was in the hold a cargo of close to an hundred Bibles, and to this beneficent influence many attributed the quick fair passage which the Elizabeth enjoyed. No one thought it possible that the button-eyed foster child of Mr. Bilby could be a weather breeder. In fact no one thought of the child except to wonder at the foolish fondness which her 'father' continually showed her. They thought of the Bibles below and thanked God for their sunny voyage. Rather should they have thought of the witch-child. For good things, such as fine weather, may spring from evil people.

Also on this ship came one Zacharias Zelle, an Oxford man and a widower. He was no longer young, nor was he an old man. In demeanour he was sad and thoughtful. After some shiftings he, too, like the Bilbys, came to settle at Cowan Corners, and there he preached the Word of God. But in time he fell from God, and of him more hereafter.

The new land prospered the Bilbys and they were well content. The plantation which Mr.

Bilby was able to buy was not only of admirable size, well-set-up with house, barns, sheds, etc., but it was already reduced to good order and its fertility was proved. Yet for many years, down to this present day, Bilby's lands can produce little if anything except that coarse yellow broom which the vulgar call witches' blood.

The cellar hole of this house still stands upon the skirts of Cowan Corners, and but six miles removed from Salem. In those days there was a good road before this house leading from Salem to Newburyport. Beyond this road were salt meadows and the sea. To the north of the house lay fields of maize, English grass, corn, peel-corn, barley, oats, pumpkins, ending only at the waters of the River Inch (as it was called in those days). To the south were the adjoining lands of Deacon Thumb. But to the west, beyond the rough pastures, and too close for a wholesome peace of mind, was a forest of a size and terror such as no Englishman could conceive of unless he should actually see it. It stretched without break farther than man could imagine, and the trees of it were greater than the masts of an admiral or the piers of a cathedral. Yet was it always a green and gloomy night in this forest, and over all was silence, unbreakable.

Many thought the tawny savages who lived within were veritable devils, and that, somewhere within this vastness, Satan himself might be found. To this Mr. Zacharias Zelle, having taken up the ministry at Cowan Corners, would not listen. 'For,' he said, 'we left the Devil behind us in England. Seek God in the heart of this majestic and awful forest — not the Devil. When I was a boy in Shropshire I knew the very niche in the rocks where old women said the Devil lived and had his kitchen. It was there he kept his wife. Every holiday I hid close by the rocks, hoping to see his children. ... Let us leave him there in the Old England, but in the New keep our eyes pure and open against the coming of the Lord.'

Atheism as the good and learned Glanvill, in his 'Sadducismus Triumphatus,' has proved, is begun in Sadducism and those that dare not bluntly say 'there is no God' (for a fair step and introduction) content themselves to deny there are spirits or witches or devils. Yet how sad to see one of the clergy first agree that the Devil could be left behind in England and soon claim there is no Devil, no witches, no spirits. For without these awful presences, who may be sure of God?

CHAPTER II

1

There is a small smell of WITCHCRAFT in and about Boston. A straw doll taken to Meeting throws many into confusion.

In the fall of 1665 two were hanged in Boston for the bedevilment of an elderly woman, her cousin Germain, and her swine.

In that same year Mr: Saul Peterham, a godly, decent man, refused some small rotten apples to an ancient and malicious hag. For this the old crone muttered at him, making an evil sign by her thumb and her nose, and took herself off in great bad humour. Mr. Peterham, on returning to his house, found that his wife — an estimable church woman — had fallen from a ladder she had put to the loft for the purpose of observing the conduct of her servant wench and the indentured male servant, the exact moment the crone had made her evil sign. The elders of the Church had at the old woman and forced her, weeping and on her knees, to forswear the Devil, his imps, and his ways, and to continue more strictly in the ways of God. It being observed that she could both weep and say the Lord's Prayer, many be-

lieved the accusation of witchcraft to be a false one, such as is often launched against disagreeable and impotent old women.

By spring there was yet another suspicion of witchcraft in the Bay Colony, and this at Cowan Corners. In a hut close by the seashore, and in great misery, lived an old pauper called Greene and his wife. He was a tinker, but there were better tinkers than he, and he got little work to do. His wife was a proud woman, born in Kent of high rank, yet, by turn of fortune, she was so reduced as to have become the wife of a tinker. Her craft in herbs got her some money and more ill fame, nor was she content to raise and sell the honest herbs of England, but she must continually associate herself with the heathen tawny savages and thus learn arts — doubtless often evil arts — from them. The Indians venerated her, calling her ‘White Mother’ and ‘Moon-Woman.’ She went even into the great forest with more safety than any man. She was loving towards these peoples and had much traffic with them, in spite of the fact the Church elders had warned her twice, saying it is better for a woman to keep her own house than to go abroad through the woods alone and no one knew on what errand.

One Sabbath in the midst of the House of the Lord a poppet contrived of straw and maize, with a leather head and a grinning face on it, fell from below her skirts. None at the moment questioned her boldly as to what purpose she contrived this poppet, yet all thought of those dollies witches make but to destroy again, that their enemies may dwindle with the dwindling dolly.

Later in the week three deacons called upon her and demanded explanation. She was distrain, cried out upon them in anger because of their suspicions, and said she had but made a toy for Bilby's poor little Doll, who, she said, was beaten and cruelly used by that shrew Hannah. The incident was then dismissed except for a public reprimand for a woman so depraved as to put into the hand of a child a toy upon the Lord's Day and in the Lord's House. After this the Greenes lost what friends they had, and no one came commonly to their hut upon the salt marsh but Bilby's wicked Doll.

On a February night Hannah Bilby woke overcome with retching and vomiting. In the morning Mr. Kleaver, the surgeon, being called, took away two ounces of blood from the forearm; still she continued in wretched state three days.

By the oppression on her chest and especially because of certain night sweatings and terrors, she became convinced she was bewitched and frankly accused Goodwife Greene. Mr. Zelley roughly bade her hold her tongue (this being but one of many times when he befriended a witch) and declared there was no reason why Greene should wish her harm. At which statement many were amazed, for they thought every one knew that Greene loved little Doll and hated the foster mother because of her cruelty. Through all the clustering villages—Salem, Ipswich, Cowan Corners, etc. — it was whispered how Doll had surrendered to Greene either parings from Mrs. Hannah's nails or hair from her body, and had thus given Greene the wherewithal to work magic.

Within a year all suspicion seemed to have passed away from Goody Greene, but in a hundred ways more doubts gathered about the child and she was whispered of. Mrs. Bilby told many, here one and there two, usually with entreaties for prayers and commands for secrecy, that the girl was born and bred a witch. She told how her own unborn son (that thumping boy) had been blasted. She told them to watch — was not Mr. Bilby himself bewitched by her? So it seemed to many. There were no clothes fine

enough in Boston for his dear Doll — he needs must send to England for them. Sometimes he held her on his knee — and she a girl of thirteen or fourteen. Even when the elders and the minister came to call on him, and Hannah, as befitted her gender, withdrew from the room, Bilby would keep his ridiculous hobgoblin squatting at his feet. As he talked, he patted her shaggy, spikey, hair.

The child had nothing to do with children of her own age, nor did godly parents wish their children to play with her. For the most part she was a silent thing, stealing about on feet as quiet as cats' paws. To her foster father she was pretty and frolicsome. To Goodwife Greene she was loving, and stole from the Bilby larder food for the wretched paupers. With her mouth she said little to any one, but her eyes spoke — those round button eyes, and they spoke secret and evil things.

2

Monstrous facts regarding Doll's earliest youth which Mr. Zelley repeated almost twenty years after her death. How she attended Black Sabbath, etc. How she saw the Devil in Brittany and probably swore to serve him, etc.