

Oxen...are steers which are used for work, very much like draft horses. They are much stronger than horses, and usually calmer as well. There are many breeds of cow that can be used as oxen.

The Hex and the Oxen

In the days gone by, when hex women and witch doctors had things their way in Pennsylvania - particularly around the Blue Mountains - there lived in those parts a farmer and his wife who loved gold more than they loved God. Sure, that farmer woman was a witch! There was no question about it, and there wasn't a thing she wouldn't do to add to her pile of gold. She'd short weigh butter and cheese, and she would lie about the age of her chickens; she'd fill the bottom of her apple bushels with straw and lie about the hay - she wouldn't stop for anything to feed the clinking of money in her hands. She and her husband.

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Folks soon found out which way the wind blew, and none would buy or barter with them. None would even speak to them. So they lived by themselves, and no gold was coming in.

One early morning they sat outside on the porch talking. Said Katie, the woman, "I miss the clinking of money in my hands."

"I miss it too," said her husband Ludwig. "But no one will buy anything from us or even speak to us."

"But we fooled them for a long time, didn't we?" said she, and both had a good laugh.



Oxen have been used for many jobs. They can plow fields, pull logs, remove stumps and pull wagons. In fact, the pioneers used oxen to pull their wagons across the country.

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"And I'll fool them more," she added. "I have studied the hexing books I found in the old barn, and I have the devil's power. Soon the yellow gold and white silver will roll again into our hands."

"You always had a smart head on you, Katie." "Well, good husband, I'll show you the kind of head I really have. Before night we'll have plenty of money again."

She mumbled magic words and made circles.

...A wind blew up - and Ludwig, the farmer with the red beard, was a fine, fat, sleek brown ox! Sleek as if he had been fed the finest grain and hay.

Katie ran to neighbors and told everybody she had a fine, strong ox for sale. Before the sun stood in the middle of the sky, farmers and butchers came to look at the beast.

"That ox has lived on the fat of the land," the butcher man said.

"So he has," Katie replied.

"Where is Ludwig?" another one asked.

"Gone to Lebanon to look for more good cattle." A man bought the animal and started home, feeling he had struck a good bargain.

Ox and man walked on the sunny-spotted road high up in the Blue Mountains. They reached the top, and there was a sight fit for paradise. The man stopped to see the broad valleys and the tidy farms, when a wind blew up. He turned around . . . the ox was gone!

He ran up and he ran down and he ran all around, but all his running did him little good that ox was gone. And a man was walking down the road.

He got others to help him search, but no ox could be found. In the end he went home cursing the hour he had bought the beast.

In the evening Katie and Ludwig were sitting by the candlelight, counting the good money paid for the ox.

"It was so easy to fool that fellow," Katie said. "You are a very smart woman, and I don't mind being an ox for a little while," Ludwig said.

Time went by, and then these two thought they'd like to feel some nice hard money in their horny hands again.

"Ludwig, my pet, we'll play the same little trick.

I'll use my hex and fool the fools again."

She mumbled magic words and made circles.

...A wind blew up - and there was the sleekest, fattest white ox you ever did see. As fine an ox as ever there was in all the Blue Mountains of Pennsylvania.

Katie ran around, far and wide, and soon all knew she had a fine white ox for sale.

Men came and looked, and they said they'd never seen a finer animal. Katie asked little, and a sale was quickly made, and the man went off with his ox.

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He went up the mountain.

...A wind blew up ...and the ox was gone!

He searched high, he searched low, and he searched all around, but it did him little good. There was no ox to be seen. But a man was walking down the road.

He told his friends the tale, and folks shook their heads and said it was ill luck to buy anything from the hex woman on the mountain.

Weeks went by, sun and moon rolled around, and one morning Katie and Ludwig missed again the clinking of money in their horny hands.

"We'll make more soon," she cried. She made a circle, mumbled words ...a wind blew up, and there stood a fine, fat, black ox. Then she ran everywhere and told folks she had the finest black ox for sale that was ever seen. Butchers and farmers came to see, but with wary eyes.

It truly was the finest, fattest, black ox ever seen, and a butcher man from Lebanon bought it. He tied a rope around the animal's head and started homeward. But this butcher was smart! He'd brought a

friend with him to keep watch.

The two had gone a ways when the Lebanon butcher man said to his friend:

"I'll drive the ox ahead. You follow a little ways behind. Don't take your eyes off that animal whatever happens. That ox'll not disappear this time."

When they got to the hill, a wild wind blew up and the ox ran off - and the butcher's friend saw, coming from the thicket, red-bearded Ludwig. . . .

"Where did you come from?" the butcher man asked.

Ludwig hemmed and hawed and mumbled and didn't know what to say.

Then the Lebanon man knew the truth.

"Your wife is a hex!" he cried. "She hexed you to become an ox and then changed you back, to cheat me! I'll have her before the judge and see her burn as a witch."

Ludwig ran off, and the butcher man went to court. He accused Katie of hexing her husband into an ox just long enough to sell him, and then changing him back, to cheat folks out of their hard-earned money.

Well, the judge made Katie and Ludwig pay back all the money they had taken. But no one could prove that Katie was a witch, so he had to let her go free. But he warned her against ever hexing in the Blue Mountains again.

Very soon after that, Katie and Ludwig moved away. And for all we know, Katie may still be hexing people somewhere in the mountains today.