

There was a third child, a boy named Christopher, a heavy and amiable being, with a large head that seemed to be thatched with dry corn-shucks, and round innocent orbs the colour of blue mountain skies.

Mr. Laird was not proud of his son. "Hain't got as much sense in his hull corn-fed body as Ossie has got in one toe."

At this statement, the reclining Mrs. Laird lifted up the old stocking now bound around a particularly trying attack of neuralgy.

"How come you spen' ha'sh words like them on yo' son, Amos Laird?" she demanded. "He's as kine-hearted a chile as ever dug sassafras-root fer his po' suff'rin' Maw's tea, an' I loves him. Mebbe he hain't got the peartness of Ossie, or the bubblin' sunshine of Leezer. And hit mebbe, likewise," she went on with deeper intention, her one keen, grey, uncovered eye impaling her husband, "that he hain't got all the sense his Paw mought hev had, ef'n the devil in Bat's Cave hadn't grabbed him. But Chris is willin' an' good as a angel, an' I spit ye outen my mouth, Amos Laird," she continued on a shrill note of pain, "fer shamin' yo' own flesh an' blood as ye's doin'."

Ossie was just seventeen when the degenerate "Paw" came reeling and stumbling home late one night through the dark dripping bushes, his jeans shirt as wet and as dripping.

There had been, at Bat's Cave, some sort of a