

actually "hollered" at Sis, sank far down in his chair.

A tense silence came over them. Once Chris looked around furtively, to note whether or not Ossie had reached for a broomstick.

The fire burned low. Filmy squares of blue ashes lay like ghosts of grey bark on the length of a glowing red log. Chris's long legs, tipped by huge slippered feet that made two big gaps in the firelight, moved them outward a little, to reach for the warmth of the coals.

His thick body, topped by a head that habitually drooped forward a trifle, was huddled together in a mass so forlorn, that Sis's heart softened.

Bud's lip quivered. His round eyes grew humid with tears. "Ef hit warn't fer my critters," he said, now imploringly, "I could make out to stan' hit all else. Thar's that tame fox o' mine,—the ole white bitch I keers fer. She's jes' had a litter, an' I'm powerful eager in feedin' 'em. An' the spring fun all over the mountings is jes' startin' up. Thar'll be layin-by time befo' we knows hit,—an' a hull day o' singin' an' prayin' over yan to the glen,—an' round thar on the far side o' Painter's Mr. Thigpen is stretchin' a whole hundred hides all to onct. He let me an' 'Lonzo hep him summat. Hit was bully. The hides they smell till they seem to turn ye right into a buzzard,—but 'Lonzo an' me don't min' that. An'——"