

"I don't want'er go, an' ye knows hit," he said in a very small voice. "Hit's a-jerkin' my heart by the roots fer to leave here."

As Ossie kept silent, the boy turned around in the old hickory chair that had been Paw's, and looked into her fire-lit face, with round humble eyes, that had a disturbing resemblance to those of a sheep about to be slaughtered.

"We hev'n't no call, as I kin make out," he went on, vaguely heartened by his sister's thoughtful expression, "tryin' ter mix up with them fine folk way down in the valley. We ain't o' their breed, an' don't b'long ermongst 'em. We don't fit,—leastways," he corrected hastily, warned by a twitch of thin shoulders, "I don't fit."

"You kin fit anywhar that ye minds to," said Ossie. "Yo' trouble is that ye don't mind. Oh!" she cried in a sudden accession of anger, "why ain't ye got backbone, or any ambition like me? It's a funny world nohow," she went on, her voice shrill and vibrant with feeling. "Hit's a plumb crazy world, to bring ye here a man-chile, an' me jes' a shrivelled old maid. Ef I could be *you*, an' you be the 'ooman——"

"An' by thundah I'm willin' to be," roared out Chris in his anguish. "Ef you'd leave me in peace on the mountings I'd be a sow, or a hen-hawk, or a tabby,—ef'n only ye'd jes' leave me be!" and then, startled to realize that he had