

Outlaws of Ravenhurst Study Edition

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Preface

L.M. Wallace wrote and illustrated *Outlaws of Ravenhurst* in 1923 for publication by Franciscan Herald Press. After undergoing considerable editing, Catholic Authors Press republished *Outlaws* in 1950, attributing authorship to the religious name of Sr. M. Imelda Wallace and adding illustrations created by Louis A. Schuster. Subsequently reprinted by several publishers, this exciting work of Catholic historical fiction has become a Catholic children's classic.

This new edition contains the revised story of 1950 in addition to chapter-by-chapter aids designed to assist readers in assimilating the book's strong Catholic elements into their own daily lives. The "Aids to Appreciation" section focuses on critical thinking, integration of Biblical teachings, and the study of the virtuous life to which Christ calls us as mature, confirmed Catholics. With its emphasis on the virtues (theological and moral plus the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit), the spiritual and the corporal works of mercy, and the Beatitudes, this study edition of *Outlaws of Ravenhurst* is an excellent catechetical tool for those preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Use this exciting story as a living book to better understand the personality traits Christ wants us to develop and how we can live the "authentic Christian life" (*Compendium of the Catholic Church* ¶360) that the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus model for us.

About the Authors

LORABEL MARIE WALLACE was born near Forester, Michigan, on September 6, 1884. She graduated from Northern Arizona Teachers College in 1903 and taught in the mining camps of Arizona until joining the Sisters of Loretto in Nerinx, Kentucky, on July 4, 1908. Thereafter, Sr. Mary Imelda taught in various parish schools in Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kentucky. Sr. Mary Imelda received her B.A. degree from Loretto Heights College, Colorado, in 1934. She is the author of *Outlaws of Ravenhurst*, a well-researched historical fiction account of Scottish Catholics in the seventeenth century, and *The Lure of the West*, a western romance published in 1924. She collaborated for eleven years in writing the five-volume *Living My Religion* series for Benziger Brothers in 1942-1951.

JANET P. MCKENZIE graduated from Michigan State University with a B.A. in 1976, majoring in social work. A convert to the Faith in 1981, Janet has over twenty-five years experience in parish religious education. Happily married for over thirty years, she and her husband have five children and five grandchildren. They home educated for twelve years. In 2001, Janet began writing Catholic resources for home educators and has authored thirteen books including study guides for the Mary Fabyan Windeatt biographies, a family First Holy Communion preparation program, *The King of the Golden City Study Edition*, and *Reading the Saints*. A secular Carmelite since 2003, she is a member of the Carmel of the Holy Cross in Iron Mountain, Michigan. In 2008, she obtained her master's degree in religious education from Loyola University, New Orleans. She is currently working on a family preparation program for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

1

THE GRAY-CLOAKED STRANGER

Night lay on the long swelling waves of the Chesapeake Bay: no wind, no star, a murky darkness. The spars¹ of an unlighted ship loomed through the fog and sank into fog again. Stealthily, from the bulky gloom of the deck, a dory² slid on oiled ropes to the somber waters. Two seamen followed. Then down the ropes came an object that seemed to be a man with a bundle, wrapped in a long gray cloak. The dory pulled off and was swallowed by the fog.

For an hour, the ship swung at anchor, still no light aloft or alow, and no sound save the dull lapping of the waves. Then from the stern, a bell began to toll. One slow, booming tone rolled off and died away before the next followed. As if drawn out of the fog by the bell's deep calling, the dory came gliding back again. Two seamen were at the oars. The anchor sobbed up from the sea's grip. The tide

¹ Long poles to which sails are fastened; masts

² Flat-bottomed boat

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was offshore and the ship floated out with the current, unlighted, silent, back into the white smother³ from which it had come.

Keen and marrow-searching, the morning wind rose along the shore of Maryland. Dense fog became a fine, drizzling rain turning to sleet. Breasting it along lonely ways among the sand dunes, hurried a lean, bent man carrying a bundle under his cloak—a long, muddied, thread-bare garment as gray as rain-soaked ashes.

The bundle was hard to manage. It seemed to move of its own accord. Once in a while, a sound came out of it, a wailing cry, “Dunkie Teewee! Take Dordie out.”

“Sh!” the man would whisper. His tone was a stern command, but his eyes glowed with great love. The bundle would snuffle a moment or two, then grow quiet.

After hours of tramping, the man found a nook where the forest met the last sand dunes. Here, crouched between a low bank and a tree, with his own body shielding the bundle from the sleet, the man opened his cloak and loosened the sailcloth and the plaid shawl within. A fat fist slipped out of the opening, then a tousle of brown curls, a gurgling laugh, and a piping voice, “Dood Dunkie Tee-wee! Take it all off!”

“Hush!” came the man’s low command in a tone that would have been menacing except that it was so deeply kind. “Drink.” He drew a flask from his cloak.

The child drank, but all the while he stared over the bottle’s rim at the man—a wise, wide, baby stare. His eyes were blue and deep as the sea, with a flash in their depths that in the turning of an instant might be fun or fury; just now the eyes shone with a puzzled and half-angry trust.

³ A confused multitude of things

The Gray-Cloaked Stranger

Even in this short time the little fist which guided the flask was growing blue though it gripped with deft strength—a swordsman's right hand still in the making. The stranger hastened to enclose the baby in his warm coverings. He wound the cloak about himself and his bundle, left the shelter, and hurried on through the stinging sleet.

By midafternoon, they had reached the top of a rough knob. Here the man seemed to be expecting someone. Placing himself in a spot well screened by the underbrush, he kept a constant eye on a little path that wound around the base of the hill.

It was almost sundown before the expected one arrived, a gentle old man on a steady-going bay horse. His round, low-crowned hat, sober clothing, and great saddlebags gave him the appearance of a missionary passing from one Mass station to another. If the man of the gray cloak was expecting the meeting, this other person evidently was not; yet the stranger studied the missionary's face with a look of recognition and relief. Then, turning sharply, he slipped off in an opposite direction across the hill and down the other side until he reached the path at a point where the horseman must soon pass.

Here the stranger took his queer bundle from beneath his cloak and propped it up against a stump. He loosened the wrappings from the baby's face and pressed upon the little brow one long, long kiss. The child awoke and cried out to him. The gray-cloaked figure whirled and darted up the hill into a thicket. Perhaps he feared the horseman would come before time. Perhaps he could not trust himself further lest he fail to carry out his plan.

The child, left suddenly alone, cried out at first as if it were some game; then, cross from weariness, he screamed

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and struggled with his coverings. At last, as if too weary to battle longer, his voice dropped to a convulsed sobbing, "Dunkie! Dunkie Teewee!"

Far up the slope, the stranger knelt between a ledge and a twisted mass of brush and vine. His clenched hands were outstretched on the rock, gripped upon each other till the fingernails bit into the lean flesh. His hollow, weather-furrowed face was set by the clenched will behind it, but his eyes were wet with an agony of love and longing.

2

BROWN-HEAD GOES FISHING

Two boys trotted along an old Maryland path. The brown-headed one carried poles and bait. The red-headed one held an old flintlock gun⁴.

“Joel,” grumbled the brown-head, “look at this bait. Not a blessed thing but cabbage worms! We won’t get a fish till the owl knows when.”

“What’s bitin’ on you, George? That’s the best kind. A fish can have white worms any time he wants to nose along the bank, but he doesn’t get green ones every day. Anyhow, I had to clean the cabbage pit this morning.”

“Yah! I thought you had lazy man’s reason.”

“‘Tisn’t either lazy man’s reason.”

“Redhead’s temper’s red. Better run or he’ll kill me dead,” mocked George, leaping over a log and racing downhill.

⁴ A type of gun that has a flint in the hammer to strike a metal plate, causing a spark to ignite the gunpowder

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“You’ll take that back!” panted Joel, scrambling after him with the old gun bouncing up and down on his shoulder.

“Like to see you make me!” But George’s foot caught in a vine and down he went.

Joel sprang astride his back and began bouncing up and down, singing, “Take it back!”

“N-n-n-o-ooo-o, I won’t!”

“Take it back!”

“I-ii-ee-ii-wo-wwo-ww—wo won’t!”

“You’ve got to! I’ll bounce till you do! Ouch! Oh, my foot!” Joel caught his big toe in both hands.

With a wiggle, George was free. “Have to take it back, do I?” He sprang over a log, then paused, for Joel was still hugging his toe. “What’s up?”

“Got a splinter in my toe!”

“Cryin’ for a splinter! Baby!”

“You’d cry if you had it!”

“Let’s see. . . . That’s a bee’s stinger. Sure it hurts. Here, I’ll pull it out for you.”

“Ouch!”

“Mud’ll take the sting out. Here’s some.”

“Was it a honeybee or just an old bumble?”

“Honeybee! See him under the violet? Maybe Daddy will hunt for the bee tree Sunday.”

“Look, I must have stepped right on him. His wing is broken, and a couple of legs. I don’t wonder you stung me back, old buzzer.”

“Say, we’d better be going, or we’ll get what Paddy gave the drum. You know Mother said she didn’t send us to go gallivantin’ in the woods. She sent us to fish.” Then away they went, jumping over logs, dodging under bushes, setting all the blossoming sprays of May dancing in their wake.

Brown-Head Goes Fishing

They paused, out of breath, on the bank of the stream and dropped down on the moss to watch the fish slipping from stone to stone in the pool below.

“Look at that oriole,” whispered George. “He is making a twin for himself in the water.”

“The pool is a good looking glass to make doubles in,” agreed Joel. “Whee, but your face is dirty!”

“So is yours!”

“Nothing else is the same, though. We are the least alike for a pair of twins—”

“Our eyes are the same color.”

“Now, look again. Our eyes are blue, but yours are almost black, and mine are like skim milk. Your nose is long and there is a hump in it. Mine turns up at the end. Your jaws are as square as old Dick’s bulldog’s. Mine—”

“Quack, quack says the crazy duck! I’ll pitch you in the creek for callin’ me a bulldog.” George sat up sharply, turned, and began digging for bait. The subject seemed to irritate him; yet, Brown-head, hunting by a rotted stump for worms, could not have remembered the baby Brown-head propped against that same stump by the gray-cloaked stranger some eight years before.

“I’m glad we’re not as much alike as Which and Tother are. I found Which out behind the woodpile crying this morning. Tother stole the cream to feed his cat. Along came Mother and spanked Which for it. If we were alike. I might get a switchin’ every time you need it.”

“Would you get a lick amiss?” But Joel suddenly had a greater interest. His eyes were on his wooden bob. Under it went. He jerked the line, then drew in. “Quack yourself, old know-it-all! Cabbage worms won’t catch fish! Look at this one, will you? Half as long as my arm!”

“Hsst! What’s over there in those bushes?”

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“Where?”

“The big ones on the other side of those cattails. Watch ‘em wiggle! I bet it’s that old fox. Daddy said to keep an eye out for him.” George reached for the gun. “You won’t steal any more of our chickens, old boy.”

“Ready?” Joel was picking up a stone. “I’ll bring him out for you.”

“Let it fly!”

The stone hit the bushes squarely. There was a snarl. The branches parted and out sprang, not a fox, but a large brown bear. She looked up at them, growled, and put one foot in the water. The boys waited for no more but dashed up the bank.

Joel gave a sharp cry. George turned. “What’s the matter with you? Quick! She’s swimming!”

“I stepped on my fishhook!”

“Pull it out! She’s comin’!”

“Can’t! It’s all the way in!”

“Here! Let me get hold of it!”

“Ow! Don’t!”

“You got to stand it! She’s halfway over! There, it’s out! Come on now!”

“Oh! I can’t step! Ow!”

“You’ve turned your ankle! Lean on me! Hop! She’s almost here! Hop! I’ll help you!”

“Go on, George, save yourself!”

“Do you think I’d leave you? Here, try to climb this tree.”

“Too little! She can climb. Go on! You can run. Go on, George, quick!”

“Quit cryin’! Climb! I’ll boost you!”

At last, Joel was astride a crotch in the tree.

George looked at his white face, jerked off both their belts, buckled them together, slipped one end of the strap

Brown-Head Goes Fishing

around Joel's waist, twisted the rest around the limb a couple of times, and fastened it securely. "You can't fall now. Take the gun. You reload it. Fox-shot won't kill bears. Put in all we've got." The gun was a muzzle-loader⁵. One could put in as much powder and shot as needed.

"The bear hasn't come up the bank yet," whispered Joel. "Maybe she'll go downstream."

"No such luck! I've made a mess of it. There's a cub out on that limb."

"Whee! She'll come all right!"

George cut a branch, lopped off the twigs, and tied his knife to it. Then, reaching out, he poked at the cub's feet. The woolly baby whined, snarled, and backed farther out on the branch.

"His mammy hears him. Wow! She's mad!" warned Joel. "Get him down quick."

George gave a swift jab. The cub sprang back, and down he went squalling as he fell from bough to bough and shaking the branches wildly.

George plunged forward, lost his balance, caught himself again, and climbed into the main fork of the tree.

"She's climbed the bank," whispered Joel. "Do you want the gun?"

"No, wait till she's nearer. I might miss."

"Here she comes!"

The old bear came lumbering toward the tree. Her cub began to crawl to meet her but whimpered and sat down on its woolly haunches. Mother Bruin hurried forward and licked its bruises.

"Maybe she'll go off now."

"No, she won't."

⁵ A gun that is loaded through the open end of the barrel

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“Hang on tight. Here she comes.”

The bear charged the tree with all her force, retreated, and lunged again.

George clung desperately. Joel’s wrenched ankle banged back and forth against the trunk until he moaned with pain, but he held the gun tightly and kept the muzzle pointed away from his brother.

Three times the old bear charged the tree. Then she began to climb.

“Quick, Joel! The gun!”

“Good! I’ve got it.”

“Shoot quick! Look how high she is!”

“Might miss.”

“Shoot, will you! She’s almost up to you!”

“Might miss.”

“She’ll get your foot! Shoot!”

George was very still. He was looking straight into that great red mouth. He thrust the muzzle against the shining teeth and fired.

There was a roar, a snapping and recoil of branches, and a great thud at the base of the tree. Clutching the swaying branches, Joel twisted in his strap to see down through the leaves.

“George! O George!”

No sound came from below.

“Are you hurt?”

Then Joel saw the bleeding pile at the foot of the tree. The bear was on top of George. Both were still.

“George! Wiggle your foot if you hear me.”

The bare foot lay still.

“He’s dead!” sobbed Joel in helpless misery: the rebound of the tree had left him almost suspended by the straps, and the strain on his waist was making him faint. He struggled

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back into the crotch again and began searching for the buckles, but they were out of his reach and behind the limb.

“George!” he pleaded. “Wiggle your foot, even your toes, just a little bit.”

No movement below.

The silence of the forest closed in upon him, that silence which the noises of the wood-folk make only the more intense: a catbird calling his mate, a woodpecker tapping somewhere across the creek.

Joel struggled with the strap, trying to break it, but the rawhide was too tough.

Helplessness began to numb him. Would help . . . could help ever come? The folks at home would not think of searching till after supper, and by then. . .

“O George, wiggle! Kick! Do anything! I can’t stand this. You’re dead and I’m a-dyin’! I know I am.

“Things are so black and swimmy and I’m so queer inside. There is no one to help us. No one can even hear us. But God, God can hear us. I forgot.”

Then he prayed as he had never dreamed of praying. There was a strange, sweet sense of One unseen but very near. The numbing loneliness was gone.

“That woodpecker keeps tapping all the time. It’s such a queer one, too. It goes click-a-clack. Maybe it’s a cricket. No. A frog? They don’t go like that either. It sounds like chopping. Could it be Daddy out in the new clearing?”

Joel made a horn of his hands and called, “Dad! O Daddy!” His voice was pitiful and weak.

The sound of the chopping went on steadily.

“He can’t hear me.” The boy drew a long breath. “O D-a-a-a-d!”

The chopping ceased for a moment, then went on.

Brown-Head Goes Fishing

“Dad! O-o-o Dad!”

Clear above the voices of the woodland came an answering hello. There was silence a while, then a call somewhat nearer. Another call, and then a giant, red-bearded horseman came in sight on the bank beyond the creek.

“Who’s there? What’s wrong?”

“A bear. It’s killed George.”

There was a splashing in the creek bottom, a rattle of stones on the bank, and John Abell came crashing through the alders⁶. He sprang from the saddle, threw the body of the bear backward, and passed his hand over the boy’s body.

“Heart’s still beating! Thank God! No bones broken.

“Just stunned, I think. Small thanks to you, Joel. Why didn’t you pull the bear off? He’s nearly smothered.”

“I couldn’t, Daddy,” came Joel’s voice weakly. “I couldn’t reach the buckles.”

John Abell looked up and saw the swollen, blood-stained foot and the white face. “Well, Son, are you hurt, too? Did the bear bite you?”

“No, Daddy, I hurt my foot.”

“Well, you’ll have to be a man and stand it a while longer. George needs me more.” There was nothing in his tone to show which boy was his son.

Abell lifted Brown-head in his powerful arms and carried him to the pool. As he plunged him into the water, the lad gasped and opened his eyes.

“O Dad!” he cried as he caught sight of the red-bearded face. “The bear! She’ll get Joel. He can’t run.”

“That bear won’t hurt anybody now.”

“Is she dead? Did I hit her?”

⁶ Small, rapidly growing trees; members of the birch family

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“Hit her? You about blew the gizzard out of her. You don’t need to fill a gun chockfull even to kill a bear. You blew the gun up, boy.”

“Oh, did I break it? And they cost so much!”

“Never mind the cost this time, Son. It’s the boy I’m thinking about. ‘Twas by the mercy of the Lord you didn’t blow your own head off, but there’s only a small powder burn. We’ll say a rosary this night in thanksgiving.”

Abell laid the boy on the moss. “I am going back to get Joel now,” he said.

The wounded foot and wrenched ankle were soon bathed and bound.

“What is your old daddy going to do?” laughed Abell. “One dead bear, one live cub, one wounded hunter, and one dead one—they must go home right now. There is only one horse. We’ll put the bear across the saddle. Joel can ride behind. Maybe the cub will follow. I’ll carry George.”

“No, no, Daddy, I can walk,” announced the “dead” hunter, suddenly sitting up. “I’m not hurt, I just feel shaky inside.”

“All the same, I’m going to carry you for a piece. Sure, you think you’re as big as a man since you killed a bear all by yourself. I’ll carry you with small trouble, but next time you go hunting I’ll send to the fort for the army surgeon and the hospital corps to care for the dead and the wounded.”