

## O'Shaughnessy Outtakes

When Harold Thorpe set out to fictionalize his mother's memoir, he originally envisioned one book. It was ultimately split into the two *O'Shaughnessy Chronicles* novels -- *Giddyap Tin Lizzie* and *Bittersweet Harvest*. In both published novels, the story is told through the eyes of Will O'Shaughnessy. Removed in the editing process was a second point of view, that of Will's daughter, Catherine. Those unpublished outtakes, seen through Catherine's eyes, are offered here for the first time. They are sure to be treasured by O'Shaughnessy Chronicles fans! Over the next few months, in serial format, we'll regularly post more outtakes on Harold's website. We hope you enjoy them all!

### **Ruby Battles the St. Mary's Boys**

#### **(O'Shaughnessy Chronicles Outtakes #2)**

January, 1934

I was nine years old and Ruby was eleven. Ruby always had a plan. "Now Catherine, you wait here and I'll walk alone past St. Mary's. They'll be waiting behind the shrubs, but, when they pop out, I'll outrun them and head down Davis Street. Then when all's clear, you run past the school. But run fast 'cause they'll be back soon."

"But, Ruby, what if they catch you?"

"They never have yet. Count to fifty, then run fast." Ruby thrust her lunch into my hands. "Here, take my sack. It'll only slow me down. Meet me in front of the Methodist Church."

Twice a day we had to get past those terrible boys at St. Mary's school. Sometimes they put rocks in the snowballs, and those hurt. But I knew that Ruby could outrun them. So I waited until I heard shouting in the distance and knew they were after her, so I counted. I counted faster

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when I heard Ruby's loud voice. And when I reached fifty I ran my fastest, and I didn't stop when I heard screams from far down Davis Street.

Usually Ruby beat me there, but when I got to the Methodist Church, I didn't see her. I waited and worried. If they caught her, what would those awful boys do? I remembered the circus and that nasty man. I walked around the church twice because I didn't know what else to do. She should have been here by now. I was just about to go inside to find Reverend Leonard when I saw her coming. She looked awful: her hair hung loose, her coat was covered with snow, and she had scratches on her face. I shouted, "What did those boys do to you?" But she didn't even answer. I could see that she was as mad as a wet hen. "Ruby, are you okay?"

"You think I look bad, you should see that Rodney Clagmire. I bloodied his nose and tore the buttons off his coat. And Billy Langdon ran back toward St. Mary's crying. They'll think twice before they tackle me again."

"But, Ruby, how'd they ever catch you?"

"I slipped on a patch of ice."

"Why are boys so nasty?"

"You know what they say," Ruby said. "Snakes and snails and puppy dogs tails—that's what little boys are made of."

"I'd rather have the puppy dog."

I liked third grade. Ruby said that she liked fifth grade, too, but her teacher didn't read poetry like our teacher did for us. Every morning, first thing, Mrs. Day read a poem, and today she read one of my favorites, "The Village Blacksmith" by Longfellow. It reminded me of the muscles in Daddy's arms when he wrenched a wheel hub off an old Tin Lizzie.

*Under a spreading chestnut tree  
The village smithy stands;*

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*The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands.*

The morning speeded by until we got to math class, but then it slowed a little. I didn't much like math.

All the grade school students got together in the basement lunchroom at noon, so I sat with Ruby. Mom had filled my bag with more than I wanted to eat: a ham sandwich, watermelon pickles, a piece of apple pie, and a jar of plum preserves. She said we needed to store energy for these cold days. I thought that I already had enough, but maybe she was right. Maybe I'd run faster if I ate it all. Ruby ate hers.

I noticed that Esther Wainwright sat alone in the corner, and she wasn't eating. But I could see that she'd been crying. Esther was kind of shy, and she didn't have many friends, so I felt sorry for her. "Ruby, I'm going to sit with Esther," I said. "She's all alone and she looks sad." But Ruby was so busy telling Nancy Cramer about her fight with the boys that she didn't even notice me leaving.

Esther smiled as I approached. "May I sit with you?" I said.

She didn't say anything, but she nodded, so I thought it was okay. "Esther, where's your lunch?"

At first, she didn't answer.

"Did you eat it already?"

And when she began to cry, I knew she didn't have a lunch.

"Oh, Esther, would you like some of mine? Mom makes way too much, and I can never finish it all. She gets upset when I bring it back home, and I hate to throw food away. Would you help me?"

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“We don’t have any food in the house, not until Dad gets paid next week. I get so hungry.”

I broke my sandwich into two pieces. “Here, you eat these.” I shoved half a sandwich, a pickle, and my apple pie across the table. But I kept my plum preserves; I really liked plum preserves. “You’ll be helping me out. Mom’ll be happy that I finished everything today.”

I could see that Esther appreciated my food. She hardly took a breath between bites.

At supper that night I told Mom and Dad, “The Wainwrights don’t have any food in their house. Esther would have gone hungry today if I hadn’t shared my lunch with her.”

“Oh, that poor family,” Mom said. “They have two children younger than Esther. Will, I’ll pull a basket of food from the root cellar. You run it right over there so they can have some supper. And I’ll get another basket together for tomorrow.”

I knew that Mother would be happy when she heard I’d shared my lunch.

“We may not have a lot,” Dad said, “but so many people have nothing these days. We have much to be thankful for.”

Ruby came to me after supper and said, “It was nice what you did for Esther today. I was so busy bragging that I didn’t even see her. I’m ashamed.”

Ruby was like that. Her heart was big, but sometimes she just didn’t notice things. And I wished she wasn’t so bossy.

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