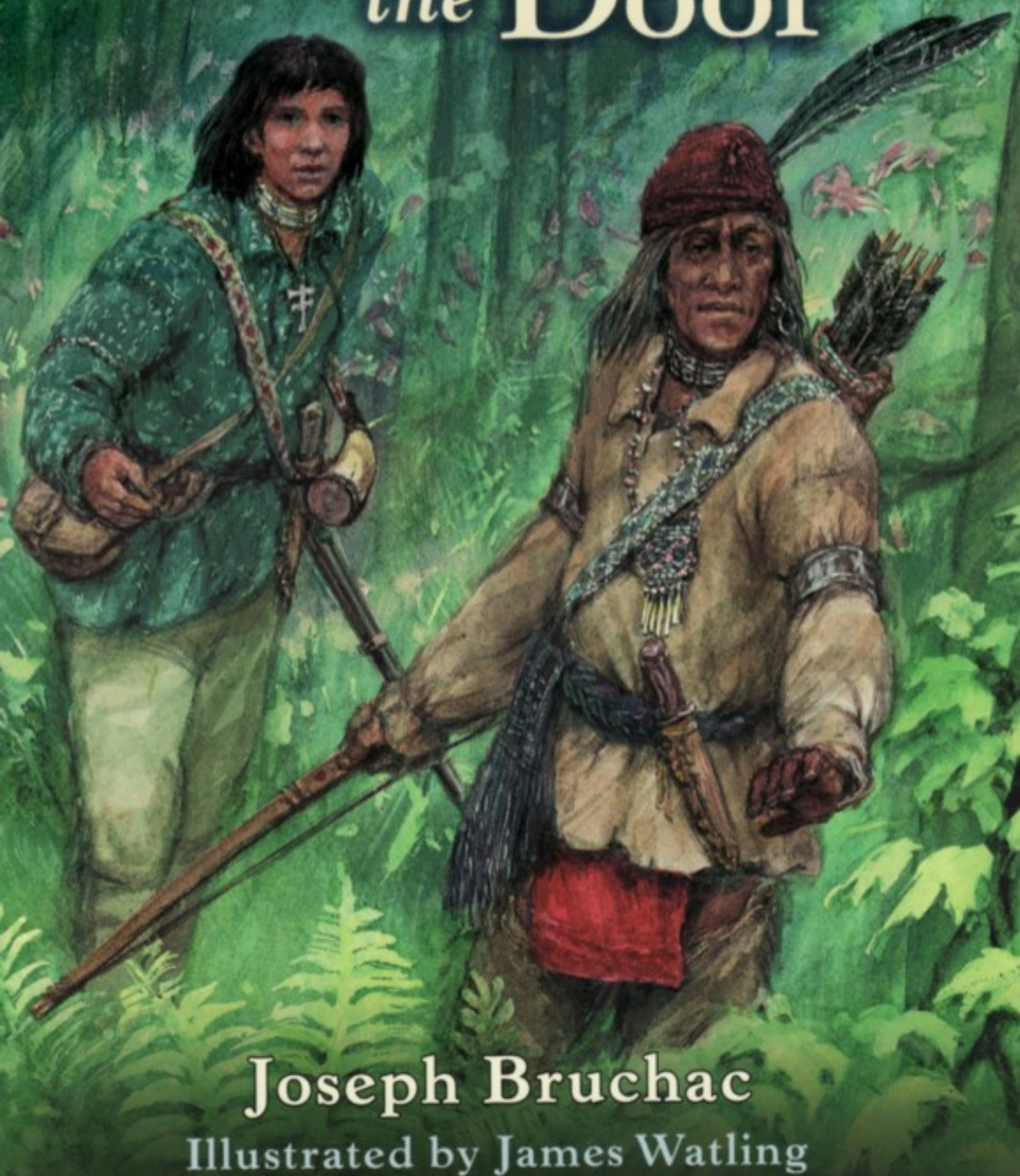


PUFFIN CHAPTERS



The Arrow Over *the* Door



Joseph Bruchac

Illustrated by James Watling

1

COWARDS



Samuel

“There they go,” a voice said. “There are the cowards.”

Samuel Russell clenched his fists so tightly that his knuckles turned white, but he did not look around. He continued walking down the unpaved street with Father and Mother and Jonathan. The August sun was hot. Beads of sweat formed on Samuel’s brow and upper lip, but he did not reach his hand up to wipe them away.

He knew that voice. It belonged to Nathaniel Moon. Only three years ago, when they were both boys, Nathaniel had played with him whenever his family came to this settlement to buy their supplies. They had made boats together out of pieces of wood from the mill and floated them down the swift-running Fish Creek at the edge of the town,

watching them rush into the wide Hudson River. Now, though, it was different. Nathaniel was no longer his friend.

Nathaniel was going to be a drummer for Schuyler's regiment, taking the place of a boy who was shot in the retreat from Fort Edward. Nathaniel would go to fight against the British. He would march with the men and play his drum. He'd come home a hero.

But Samuel was not Nathaniel Moon. He'd never go to war. "Cowards," that was what many people called him and his father and all his people.

"Fighting is not our way," Father said, resting one hand on Samuel's muscular arm. "Love thine enemies. Thou must understand this."

Samuel said nothing, even though he clenched his teeth so tightly that his temples throbbed. But Jonathan, his brother, seemed to understand.

"To be a Friend is to be a friend to peace," Jonathan said. His tone was so much like that of Father that Samuel sometimes felt as if he were the little brother and Jonathan, though six years younger, the older one.

It was Jonathan who always remembered the stories Mother told of those Friends who had died for their beliefs. There had been a time when Friends had had to hide from those who would

jail or kill them. Once, in England, when several Quaker parents were all taken away to jail, their children had faith so great that they continued to hold Meetings on their own. Jonathan would have been one of those children, Samuel thought.

He tried to recall those stories. It was no use. He could still hear Nathaniel's voice. It hurt so much to be called a coward, to have people look at you that way.

It had never been easy for his people to be accepted, but it had gotten worse since the war had begun. The Quakers made up only a few of the families settled on the east side of the Hudson at Saratoga in New York. Most of the settlers were Dutch, English, or German. Before the war began, there had been those who disliked the Friends, but there were at least as many who had treated them well enough. Perhaps they would not accept the hand of friendship held out to them—the shaking of hands was a Quaker custom that few wished to copy, for it implied equality on both sides. But there had once been many who would smile at them or engage in conversation. It was not that way any longer.

Things were so confused now, in the summer of 1777. Samuel knew there were some families besides the Friends who were neutral. Yet at times it



Is it possible to be peaceful during a time of war?



For young Samuel Russell, the summer of 1777 is a time of fear. The British army is approaching, and the Indians in the area seem ready to attack. To Stands Straight, a young Abenaki Indian scouting for King George, Americans are dangerous enemies and a threat to his family and home. When Stands Straight's party enters the Quaker Meetinghouse where Samuel worships, the two boys share an encounter that neither will ever forget. Told in alternating viewpoints, *The Arrow Over the Door* is based on a true story.

"A truly excellent example of historical fiction for the middle-grade/junior-high audience." —*Booklist*



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U.S.A. \$4.99
CAN. \$7.50
0812

ISBN 0-14-130571-1



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