

NOKOSE / GERALD L. GUY

HOSTILE TERRITORY #4

NOKOSE

A King's Road legend

A Classic Western Series

By

GERALD L. GUY



WWW.STORIESBYGUY.COM

Palm Coast, FL

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NOKOSE

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ACCLAIM FOR GERALD L. GUY

RUN LIKE THE WIND – “I love Gus McIntyre! Gus, a 14-year-old boy traveling with his father to gold rush territory after they lost everything at home, is ambushed. His father is murdered. All their belongings are stolen. Gus is left for dead. Alone in the Wild West, Gus must depend on his personal strength and skills to survive in this lawless land. “Run Like the Wind” pulls you into this western coming of age story while entertaining and scaring you at the same time. This needs to be a TV show.”

Carol Ann Kauffman, Niles OH

RUN TO DANGER — “I like this kid, Gus McIntyre! I love the way Gerald L. Guy draws you into a story and you can't leave until it's done. Gus stumbles upon a gang of rustlers that threaten the livelihood of the ranch he owes his life to. He sets out to return the cattle to the Circle H Ranch but needs the help of an old Apache Chief who befriends him. Times were tough. Gus has a maturity about him that even the old chief noticed and admired. They begin the journey together. A lot of twists and turns will keep you glued to the pages. A great read for teens and adults alike. I'm reading the third installment in this series and enjoying it every bit as much as the first two books! Thank you, Mr. Guy, for sharing your excellent story with us!”

Juliette Douglas, Benton KY

CHASING GOLD — “I thoroughly enjoyed “Chasing Gold.” It was even more of a page-turner than your previous works, definitely your best offering yet. Some of the twists and turns you put in there reminded me of another one of my favorite authors, Robert Ludlum. I also have read all of his works.

I'm anxiously awaiting continuing the adventures of young Gus. I'll be checking your web site frequently so I can get signed up for pre-ordering as soon as possible."

Charlie Major, Palm Coast FL

CHASING THE PAST — "This is the fourth book I have read from the Gus McIntyre series, and it just keeps getting better. This action-packed, page-turner will keep you entertained from the beginning to the very end. A great story of our forefathers. I highly recommend it to any western fans."

Amazon submission

WOLF PACE: THE NEW ORDER – "Gerald L. Guy had the reputation of a hard-hitting newsman, not a guy who figures out how the appendix can explain his creatures' ability to transform from human to wolf. But he does so with a panache for fun with his novel, "Wolf Pact: The New Order."

Dean Poling, The Valdosta Daily Times

WOLF PACT: ESCAPE FROM CAPTIVITY — "I loved the whole Cossibye clan! I can't wait for the movie version to come out."

Gayla Smith, Flint MI

WOLF PACT: DREAM CATCHERS — "My husband read and re-read this book. It brought back memories of his service aboard the Saratoga. He never talked much about his WWII experiences until "Sara" but then as he read, he explained so much. The book is like an old friend with whom he can relive experiences they shared."

Ami Lane, Palm Coast FL

ACT OF KINDNESS – "I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The characters are well developed, and the connected stories are a

pleasure to read. I hope Guy writes more like this.”

Lynn Myers Freedman, Benicia, CA

TREE OF WONDERS — “A great read. Take an hour or so and read a most uplifting book. You might even come out a little smarter for doing so.”

Richard Thompson, Warren OH

ALTERED LIVES — “Altered Lives by Gerald Guy is a great read. If you love character driven mysteries in the tradition of Agatha Christie, you will love this novel as much as I do. Guy not only unfolds the stories and personalities of the main subjects but also the character of a small innocent town. He shows the impact one heinous crime has on its corporate DNA, resulting in the negative transformation of its history. Add a great twist at the end and voila, a perfect cozy rainy day read.”

Kathi Oates, Mammoth Lake, CA

SECRETS OF THE HEART — “I normally don’t read romance stories, but this book was suggested by a friend, and I was pleasantly surprised. Not only does the story flow smoothly but it is a heart-warming look at the possibilities of happiness late in life. A true story of resurrection and devotion makes this a must-read, especially in times such as these.”

Amazon submission

IROQUOIS AWAKENING — “This book was nothing like I thought it would be and I loved it! This was a true can't put it down book. Please write more like this.”

Michael Kozlick, Amazon

BLOODY & AFFLICTED — An enjoyable western adventure told with enthusiasm for the genre. Violent is spurts but never mean

spirited. If you love westerns, you'll like this one.

Jimmy Espy, Georgia

OLD WAYS DIE HARD — Easily readable, story line is entertaining, and historical research to set the place is good. Just great western fare which deserves to be read.

MacLaugh, Amazon

TUC & POTAK'S WINTER SOLSTICE — This is an engaging tale of two elderly American Indians (one a warrior, the other a shaman) who help two teens from a carnival find their parents. The plot is captivating, the characters are strong and well portrayed, and the depiction of American Indian beliefs is superb. The description of the terrain and weather put me there. The ending is heartwarming and held a taste of wry humor for me. I would recommend this book for anyone who enjoys reading about the old west and American Indian culture.

T.W. Dittmer, Amazon

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NOVELS BY GERALD L. GUY

Gerald L. Guy's novels are available in multiple formats at Amazon and at www.storiesbyguy.com:

2021 Holiday Special
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Coastal Capers
Act of Kindness
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Hostile Territory
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DEDICATION

To all those who are fighting for personal freedom in the modern world..

PROLOGUE

Slavery has been a worldwide plague since the beginning of time. As, history recounts it:

- In 2500 B.C., Egyptians captures slaves by sending special expeditions up the Nile River.

- In 550 B.C., the city-state of Athens used as many as 30,000 slaves to extract silver from its mines.

- In 120 AD, Roman military campaigns captured slaves by the thousands. Some historians estimate half of the population of Rome was enslaved people held against their will.

- In 1000 A.D., slavery was a normal practice in England's agricultural economy. Starving workers willingly placed themselves and their families in a form of debt bondage to landowners in order to survive.

- By 1444, Portuguese traders brought the first large cargo of slaves from West Africa to Europe, establishing the Atlantic Ocean as a corridor for human exploitation.

- In 1526, Spanish explorers arrived in the New World with the first African slaves to help them build their settlements. Early on the Spanish discovered the indigenous people of the Americas were unsuitable and far too hostile for domestic use.

Hence, it is no surprise the practice was continued by the European colonists when they converged on the North American continent to begin new lives in a land that promised prosperity. Land was available at a surplus, but wealthy American entrepreneurs had nowhere to turn for help to settle

the vast wilderness.

Their first choice was white, bonded servants they brought across the Atlantic at great expense. The experiment didn't work, especially in the rural lands of the South. Indentured people quickly saw they could wander off and claim land of their own to farm. It created tension and a labor shortage for which there was no solution.

Early in the seventeenth century, a Dutch ship loaded with African slaves introduced a solution — and yet, paradoxically, a new problem — to the New World. Slaves proved to be economical on large plantations where labor-intensive cash crops, such as tobacco, sugar and rice, could be grown. Early Americans turned a blind eye to the line in the U.S. Constitution that stated, “all men are created equal.”

Slave labor was common in Colonial life and business. It was accepted by shipbuilders in Rhode Island, tobacco farmers in Virginia and cotton growers in the Deep South.

After the American Revolution, slavery was abandoned by many northern businessmen, and in 1808 the United States banned the importation of slaves, setting the stage for internal unrest and the Civil War.

Any way one looks at it, the holding of people against their will is inhumane. Too often it was cruel and sadistic.

This novel, “Nokose,” depicts some of that cruelty but also celebrates the freedom some runaways found when they escaped and were able to embrace freedom in Florida, a land most Americans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries considered too hostile and inhospitable for civilization.

I hope you enjoy it.

PREFACE

“Writing perhaps is the greatest of human inventions, binding together people, who never knew each other.”

CARL SAGAN

American Scientist & Author

* * *

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck in the last months of 2020 and people around the world locked themselves away, I decided to write a series of short stories that had been bouncing around in my brain for some time. My goal was to unveil them in an anthology that would cast a variety of characters in situations of historical significance.

So, with lots of free time on my hands due to self-imposed quarantine, I sat down and began writing. First came the tale of a modern Ohioan — Jamie Hawkins of “Iroquois Awakening” — who traveled back in time to the Northwest Territory, an intriguing period in Ohio history I had dreamed about in my youth.

It was followed by a farmer — Henry Walker of “Bloody & Afflicted” — who became ensnarled in the violence of pre-Civil War Kansas. His one-armed quest was one of retribution.

Next came a businessman — Moses Conway of “Old Ways Die Hard” — who lost everything in the first head-on train collision in American history. He was transformed by grief and struck out against society.

Last, but not least, two runaway slaves — Jaabir and Lilly of “Nokose” — magically appeared on my computer screen because,

in part, I wanted to tell the story of how my beloved Florida was settled.

As I prepared the four short stories for publication, I realized the characters were rich and enthralling. Each required further development or I would be short-changing readers. Thus, the emergence of the *Hostile Territory* collection of novels that have dominated my work in 2020.

Tragedy, violence, and reformation are the key components that bind the tales together. As in real life, the characters became more than just trailblazers across America's hostile territories; they walked the fine line between love and hate with loving women at their side. In each of the four novels, strong female characters and their male counterparts find the peace they sought.

In "Nokose," it was strong women who paved the way for Lilly and Jaabir to chase freedom. While slavery left a dark blemish on American history, there were those who were able to break the bonds and find freedom. The King's Road provided one pathway, a thought that continuously crosses my mind each time I drive down Old King's Road, now a concrete path that connects St. John's County with the counties of Flagler and Volusia.

While this novel glamorizes the quest for freedom, it is done without diminishing the horrors of enslaved people. For those who were able to achieve autonomy, most had to ascend from the very depths of human degradation. When they finally left the yoke of bondage behind, they discovered the path to liberty was fraught with danger and hardship. Many escapees died, were killed, or recaptured before reaching the Land of Flowers.

"Nokose" was written with the hope our past might never be forgotten. It is a testimony to the human spirit and the freedom we too often take for granted.

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You can read previews of each of the aforementioned novels at www.storiesbyguy.com or click the link below to purchase e-books or paperbacks at Amazon.

HOSTILE TERRITORY

Iroquois Awakening
Bloody & Afflicted
Old Ways Die Hard
Nokose

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“I think slavery is the next thing to hell. If a person would send another into bondage, he would, it appears to me, be bad enough to send him into hell if he could.”

HARRY S. TRUMAN

U.S. President

CHAPTER

1

Everyone said to escape was impossible but, in his heart, Jaabir knew differently. At least he prayed there was a future away from the bondage he had suffered for as long as he could remember.

He had tried to sneak away from his master's plantation when he was a young boy, but he was quickly tracked down and returned to Sugarbush Acres. He paid a heavy price for his disobedience.

Jaabir was a tall, lanky youth who had been working the fields for plantation owner Bartholomew Thaddeus Bush II since he was old enough to look down into the heart of the cotton plant. He was looked upon favorably by his owner because of his size. Bush hoped he would grow to be one of the finest African specimens in all of Georgia. Size and strength were valuable attributes in the slave markets of the South in the eighteenth century. The bigger and stronger the slave, the more value he gleaned on the trading block. Bush, a vile and cunning man, purchased and bred his slaves to achieve that singular purpose.

Jaabir was large as a seven-year-old when he was purchased by the slave trader who represented the Bush interests in the Atlanta Slave Market. He and his mother were seized from their island home off the coast of Africa, but his mother did not survive the hard passage to the New World. Master Bush made sure the boy was cared for during his adolescence. Bush's most trusted female slave, a woman named Barbury, raised him and taught him obedience and perfect English. She was a stern taskmaster and provided loving care for another of his young slaves, Lilly, her own daughter, a light-skinned child.

Master Bush made sure both children had food and clothing.

When they were old enough to work, they were trained alongside his most trusted servants. His overseers were ordered to spare the lash when it came to Jaabir and Lilly, but to report to him any disobedience or defiance.

The matronly Barbury also had a special place in the slave community. She lived apart because she served as a healer, midwife, and consort for her owner.

Whatever coddling Jaabir was afforded during his early years was lost when he ran off, barely fourteen years old and too naïve to understand the ramifications of his actions. When Bartholomew learned he had escaped, he swore to teach the young slave a lesson that would reverberate to every black servant who worked on his plantation. He demanded Jaabir be returned in yoke and chain and ordered his punishment be an example for all who might consider fleeing.

He did not renege on his promise.

When Jaabir was dragged back to South Georgia, the only home he had known, he was treated like a rabid dog. He was bound hand and foot to two posts that were buried into the yard in front of the slaves' living quarters. They were there for the sole purpose of punishment. The blood that stained the sun-dried hickory posts was there to remind the Africans that disobedience would not be tolerated, and escape was futile.

Bound, spreadeagle, Jaabir was left to bake in the hot Georgia sun for two days as his master wanted to teach him a lesson. The weight of his body made the restraints tighten, and his hands quickly went numb. It was a prelude to the torture that was to come. When the overseer had completed his twentieth lash, fourteen-year-old Jaabir was unconscious, and his back was a mass of flayed flesh.

“Let this be a lesson to anyone who tries to run away,” his master growled to the gathering of slaves who were called to witness the punishment. All were horrified that a boy so young would be beaten so viciously.

When the overseer released his bindings, Jaabir collapsed into

the dirt, and Barbury rushed to his aid.

“Your pain rips at my heart, boy,” she said. “Promise you will never run away again, or I’ll let you die in the dirt.”

Jaabir had no other choice but to promise; he wasn’t ready to die.

So, he bade his time.

And he grew.

And he grew.

And he grew.

At age twenty-one, Jaabir was the largest Negro slave in all of South Georgia. He could run faster, jump higher and carry more weight than any slave owned by his red-haired and hot-tempered owner.

Because of his size — six-foot and eight inches tall and seventeen stone — his master forgave him of his youthful indiscretion and again provided him with privileges. His prized field hand was assigned the monthly task of providing his master with more slaves of his size.

So, when the moon shined its fullest, Jaabir was dismissed from his field duties and ordered to go to his “planting shed!” Every Negro maiden was paraded to Jaabir’s quarters, and he was ordered to sow his seed — the human variety.

Bartholomew Bush was determined to have the largest and mightiest slave community in all of the South, and Jaabir was ordered to supply the fertilizer, a chore most men would cherish. Not Jaabir. Barbury had schooled he and Lilly to speak perfect English and in the message of the Good Book, which foretold the sanctity of fatherhood and marriage. Jaabir could not read the Scriptures, but Barbury had indoctrinated he and Lilly with the words that were the foundation of their religious beliefs. Jaabir knew having relations with more than one woman was wrong, and he prayed to be forgiven for the carnal acts required of him each month.

Though, there was no end to his master's depravity. Month after month, he was forced to sin or fall under the overseer's lash. Finally, with Barbury's help, he designed a plan to deceive his master.

He and the maidens brought to him feigned fornication. The screaming and hollering that came from the small shed where Jaabir, nicknamed Jumbo by the overseer, plied his special talents as loud and arousing. Sometimes it sounded as if two wild animals were in a struggle for life itself. It was music to his master's ears, but horrific for the slave community.

Of course, Jaabir wasn't always able to fake his performance. Sometimes, the overseer, Horace Muckley, supervised the act. Muckley was a brutally horrible man. He had been known to apply the whip to any maiden who was reluctant to abide by the master's orders. He smiled only when he saw Jaabir and one of the maidens locked in a carnal embrace. He cheered and applauded when each planting reached climax.

Jaabir sulked for days before and after "planting time." He hated the act, himself, and the man who ordered his compliance. Soon, he became shunned by the other slaves because of the favor heaped upon him by the white owner.

Aside from his monthly duties, Jaabir relished working in the fields, where he could toil faster and harder than anyone else. It was the only way he knew to gain the respect of other slaves. It was to no avail, though. Every thirty days or so, Muckley always called out, "It's planting time, Jumbo!" The sneers of his co-workers returned as the overseer snickered and led the giant slave to his den of immorality.

All but Barbury and Lilly were brought before Jaabir to perform the maiden ritual. Lilly, light-complected and beautiful, was granted leniency because she was the sole heir to the slave community's only caregiver. Many suspected her father might have been Master Bush because she had her mother's beauty but the fair skin that foretold a racial mix. The healer, however, never spoke of

Lilly's father, and others knew not to ask.

Two decades earlier, Barbury had worked in the house when Master Bush was a young man and had become a favorite servant of the red-haired teenager of privilege. When she suddenly became pregnant, she was banished from the house and returned to her mother, where she had studied the use of herbs and healing concoctions. When her mother suddenly passed, the soon-to-be-mother took her place as healer and midwife.

Barbury was the only slave Muckley feared. He'd heard the slaves talk of her dark magic, and he wanted nothing to do with her. The overseer had seen her suck snake venom from a man's leg and laugh afterward. Barbury could quiet babies with the touch of her hand. And when Charlie, the master's houseman, chopped his finger instead of a chicken's neck, Barbury sewed it back on as if it were a hem that had fallen in disarray. She chanted over it and wrapped it in bandages made of cornhusks. It healed within a month. Charlie's finger was as green as the husks she wrapped it in, but it was still functional.

CHAPTER

2

It was the eve of a full moon and another maiden ritual approached. Jaabir, now twenty-two years old and a mountain of a man, informed the woman who had become a mother to him that he was going to run again. The heat of summer had abated a bit, and autumn's breath could be felt in the night air. Barbury gasped when her towering, adopted son informed her he was taking nineteen-year-old Lilly with him. Raised side by side by the healer, the two were inseparable. As young adults, their friendship had turned to love.

"This place is evil, and you know it, Barb," Jaabir said. "I no longer will abide by our master's wishes. I would rather die than go on. We could not leave, though, without telling you."

"Why must you take my daughter with you, Jaabir?" she asked. "She is all I have in this world."

"This is a life none of us want, mother," Lilly said. "You know I love Jaabir. When he told me of his plans to escape, I begged him to take me with him."

"Where will you flee?" she asked.

"We will go to Florida, where it is said people like us live freely," Jaabir explained. "It is not so far away. I have seen it in my dreams. It is a paradise similar to the homeland the old ones talk about."

"You are Master Bush's prized breeder, Jaabir. He will not take this lightly. If you run, he will stop at nothing to find you. Have you forgotten the last time you tried to escape? You still wear the marks of the overseer's lash on your back. I saved you once. If you are caught again, the master will not be merciful."

“And you, daughter, have lived under my protection for all of your years. If you go with this boy, you risk your life, too. For what?”

“We want to live free, mother. The master’s hounds live under better conditions than we do. Jaabir and I share the dream of planting our own crops and raising a family that does not fear an overseer’s wrath.”

“Hrumph! You think you will find this freedom in Florida?” her mother asked, her disappointment and sorrow turning to anger.

“They say it is Land of Flowers, Barb,” Jaabir said. “Our kind are welcomed there. We have no future here. There, we can live and prosper as we wish.”

“I have heard Florida is overrun by wild savages,” the mother and caregiver said indignantly. “They are people cast out by their own native tribes and forced to settle in lands where unimaginable danger lurks.”

“We have made our choice, mother,” Lilly said. “We came here seeking your blessing. I love you and refuse to leave in secrecy. I told Jaabir I would not leave without informing you. Can you not find it in your heart to grant us safe travel?”

Tears began to flow down Barbury’s cheeks as her dark eyes studied the two young people she loved more than anything on earth. After a long moment of silence, she said, “As you wish, but you shall not leave until I tell you it is safe.

“In the meantime, Jaabir, you must bring me the left hind foot of two rabbits. You must capture the rabbits alive and sacrifice them in the courtyard where we worship each Sunday. You must do this under a crescent moon and bring the severed feet to me. When the next crescent moon lightens the night, it will be time for you to go.

“I warn you, though, your journey will be long, and your flight will not be without hardship.”

* * *

TWO MONTHS LATER, under a crescent moon, Jaabir and Lilly were prepared to flee from the tiny shack that was Barbury's home. Lilly carried a tiny bundle of their meager belongings. Jaabir carried an oak staff and a sack of food that would provide sustenance along the way.

The sorrow of saying goodbye whittled at the couple's resolve as they hugged the woman who shared the only love the pair had known in their brief lives.

"I love you, mother," Lilly tearfully admitted.

"And I to you, daughter," she replied.

"I will never forget you, Barb," Jaabir added. "You have been the only mother I have known. I promise I will allow no harm to come to your daughter."

"Do not promise that which you have no control over, Jaabir. Your size and strength will not always be your friend. You will face many trials before you find the freedom you seek. How will you protect my daughter with a mere staff?"

"Did not the Bible say a staff helped Moses lead his people from bondage?" he asked. "It will serve me well, too."

"You will need more than a wooden stick to sustain yourselves," Barbury said.

She walked slowly to the straw mattress on which she slept, reached under it, and pulled out the largest knife Jaabir had ever seen. Encased in a leather sheath, the knife's bronze handle sparkled in the candlelight. She handed it to him and said, "Where you go, this will be useful."

Jaabir set his staff aside and marveled at the magnificent weapon. It was smaller than a sword but larger than the knife the overseer wore on his hip. A leather strap was attached to its sheath so it could be carried over the shoulder.

"What is this?" he asked.

“It is called a machete. (Barb pronounced it mash-eet),” she said. “I found it in a cave many years ago. I believe it belonged to an ancient explorer of some sort. They arrived aboard the same ships that were used to steal us from our homelands and doom us to a life of servitude.

“Take it! Learn to use it so my daughter will be safe under your care.”

“Thank you. It is a gift I will cherish for as long as I live,” the towering man said.

Then, she looked at her daughter with loving eyes and said, “For you, Lilly, I also have a parting gift.”

She reached into the pocket of the sack-like dress she wore and removed a rabbit’s foot. It was dried, cured, and attached to a leather band she slipped over her daughter’s head.

“This will provide you with good fortune, my love,” she explained. “Wear it at all times, even after you reach your destination.”

“Thank you, mother.”

She pulled a second rabbit’s foot from her pocket and motioned for the Jaabir to kneel so she could place it around his neck.

“You especially will need the luck this rabbit’s foot provides,” she said. “The path you have chosen will be difficult. Every decision you make may have dire consequences. Hopefully, you will choose correctly and find safe harbor.”

“I will wear it always in your honor, mother,” he replied and stood. He wrapped his arm around the matronly woman and added, “Thanks to you, I know we will not fail.”

“Then go! Travel fast and without detection. Seek the shadows and not the light. And may this place of flowers greet you with open arms.”

Barbury embraced the young couple one last time and sent

them on their way in the inky darkness. She offered one final word as they exited: “Don’t ever return!”

