

Unwanted Pursuit / Gerald L. Guy

UNWANTED PURSUIT

The McIntyre Adventures #5

CLASIC WESTERN SERIES

By

GERALD L. GUY



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ISBN: 9798807568298

Printed in the United States of America

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PUBLISHER: www.storiesbyguy.com

DEDICATION

To my good friend David Burcham, who spent much of March and April fighting for his life in a Charlotte hospital. Back in the 1970s, Dave and I were one-man sports staffs in East Liverpool and Salem, Ohio, respectively. Our friendship has remained for almost fifty years. David, in fact, has edited most of the novels in *The McIntyre Adventures*. Get well, buddy. I wish you a speedy recovery.

PROLOGUE

The McIntyre Adventures began when a fourteen-year-old boy was left stranded in the Black Hills in the first of the award-winning series that now spans five books. “Run Like the Wind” and “Run to Danger,” two novellas, kicked off the series that has become a favorite for readers of all ages.

Since the series’ debut, readers of all ages have flocked to the adventures of Gus McIntyre. It has become my best-selling work. “Chasing Gold,” and “Chasing the Past” were recognized for excellence by the prestigious Laramie Award for Western Writing. “Chasing Gold” was a semifinalist.

Early in 2022, “Dangerous Crossings” was released. In Book 4, Kate and Lizzy Sanders were attempting to relocate to Denver, Colorado, where they intended to open a restaurant. They are escorted on the long overland journey by Gus, his good friend Walt “Junior” Hamilton and an ornery trail guide named Cornelius “Corncob” Carter..

Denver, a boiling cauldron of deceit and deception, provide more hardship than welcome for the naïve Texans. His love spurned by Lizzy, Junior loses his way and turns to alcohol and gambling. He disappears into the mountains and eventually reclaims his self-respect in the San Juan Range, southwest of Denver.

William and Jessica Prescott help young Walt turn his life around in a defunct gold mine that produces hundreds of pounds of gold flakes before a cave-in halts its production and kills William.

Walt and Jessie bury their wealth in the mountains and flee to Saguache, Colorado, from where Walt messages his friends in Denver. In a non-descript telegram, he urges them to meet him in Saguache because he needs their help.

Of course, they plan their immediate departure, happy their

long-lost friend is alive. Nothing is simple for McIntyre and his friends, though, as you will discover by reading on.

I hope you enjoy reading “Unwanted Pursuits” as much as I enjoyed writing it.

PREFACE

Gus McIntyre evolved out of a grandfather's desire to write something his grandchildren would enjoy. The first two books — “Run Like the Wind” and “Run to Danger” — were novellas rather than full-fledged novels. He didn't want to write something that would require massive amounts of the young teenagers' time.

Some of his friends told him children don't care about westerns anymore. “That's all a thing of the past. Computer games and real-life animations are the rage now,” some said.

He was undeterred and wrote frantically. He published, and an amazing thing happened. His main character, Gus McIntyre, became popular for readers young and old.

He realized there still was a market for good, wholesome stories about the Old West. It's the fodder the Baby Boomer generation was weaned on. They watched westerns on television every weekend. The Lone Ranger, Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett became their heroes. Then, they went outside and played cowboys and Indians, shot each other with cap guns and pretended to die when struck by an imaginary arrow.

It was pretty violent stuff. But it didn't encourage young Baby Boomers to go out and shoot up their friends at school, rob the neighborhood market or boost an unlocked vehicle. They knew the gunfights they read about and watched on TV were imaginary.

Young people today are bombarded with computer images that are instantaneous and seem to be real. The techno-conflicts in which they are drawn to are extremely violent and lifelike. Their heroes are ghoulish, homicidal and deviant.

What a difference a few years make.

Today, the author encourages parents and grandparents to pull their children and grandchildren from the computer and share with

them the tales of an enterprising, young teen who is determined to find his niche in a new and changing world that was like nothing they can imagine. There were no cars, telephones or even electricity. Early Americans had to be brave innovators to survive.

Finally, the author hoped Gus McIntyre might lead a younger generation to a future filled with love, wholesome possibilities and innovation far beyond what he imagined so many years ago.

(NOTE: “Run Like the Wind” and “Run to Danger” were combined into the boxed edition, entitled “Payback: Eye for an Eye,” with added scenes.)

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*“Before you go into battle,
make sure you have the finger
of God on your shoulder.”*

JAMES OLIVER McINTYRE
Frontiersman

CHAPTER ONE

Kate Sanders put one hundred dollars down to secure a prime location in Denver, Colorado for her new restaurant. She, Gus McIntyre and Cornelius “Corncob” Carter had already started whitewashing the outside of a weather-beaten structure when a stranger demanded to know what they were doing.

“I plan to open a diner at this location as soon as I can order some equipment,” Kate said and offered her hand as a form of introduction. “I’m Kate Sanders. I hope you come by when we open up this winter.”

“I should think not,” said the stranger. “I just rented this place to a gentleman by the name of Charles Cartwright, a shoemaker and leather artisan from back East. He will arrive by train in a week. I’m afraid you’ve been misled, ma’am.”

Immediately, Kate fumed. She had been wrestling with swindlers since she arrived in the growing city that popped up at the foot of the gold and silver-rich Rocky Mountains. Several conmen had fooled Junior Hamilton, one of several friends who agreed to escort Kate and Lizzy Sanders to the mile high city. This was the second time she had been conned out of a location she had chosen for her new restaurant. She hated being taken advantage of by men of little fiber. She reached for the purse that lay at her feet and pulled out her Navy Colt.

“You low down varmint! I don’t know who you think you are, but I put one hundred dollars down on this building and I won’t be swindled,” she said, pointing the gun at the tall, thin man dressed in a fine, brown suit. He had pasty, white skin and a face that was pinched like he had just gotten a whiff of the south end of a northbound skunk.

Flanked by her friends, the men dropped their paint brushes and joined the conversation. Gus placed his hand on Kate’s arm in

an effort to keep her from shooting the man.

“Take it easy, Kate,” Gus said. “Let’s hear what the gentleman has to say.”

“Yeah, tell us more, mister, or this will be that last businesswoman you try to shanghai,” Corncob said. For emphasis, his hand rested on the Colt he carried on his hip.

“My name is Sweeney. Henry Sweeney. I own this building, along with several in this fine city,” he said, looking perilously at the three gun-toting strangers. “I can’t rent you this building but I have others that are available.”

“You got proof you own this property, Mr. Sweeney,” Kate barked, “because I’ve got proof I’ve rented it.”

She handed him a signed note she was given when she handed over one hundred dollars to secure the location for “Kate’s New Diner.”

The man laughed and said, “That note could have been scribbled by anyone, I’m sorry to say. I see it is signed by Jack Nelson. That’s a name used by a well-known conman in these parts. I believe you’ve been snookered, ma’am.”

Kate began spitting expletives beneath her breath and put her gun away.

“I can’t believe it,” she said. “Is there no law in Denver?”

“David Cook is the marshal in these parts,” Sweeney explained. “He’s spread thin. There’s no telling where he might be — Trinidad, Leadville or Glenwood Springs. He spends most his time tracking down murderers and thieves. These pesky conmen are small potatoes for him.”

“In Texas, we take a man for his word,” Corncob said. “And we don’t consider a hundred dollars small potatoes. Where can we find this Nelson fella?”

“I assure you, sir, I would have no idea,” Sweeney said and

took a step back. “These charlatans come and go. I assure you the city fathers are trying to bring it under control, though. I am so sorry you were his latest victims.”

“We know all about these conmen,” Gus said. “One of them got his hooks into our friend, Junior Hamilton. He’s gone missing and we are worried sick about him. You haven’t seen a tall, sandy-haired cowboy in his twenties around these parts lately, have you? I think he’d appear sort of down on his luck.”

“He and so many unfortunate others,” Sweeney said, shaking his head in dismay.

Kate threw her hands up in despair and said, “That’s it, boys. I’m done with Denver. Kate’s New Diner is going to have to find another home in a friendlier location. We just can’t trust anyone in this devil-infested town.”

She handed her paint brush to Sweeney, whose face pinched a little more when he got whitewash on his fingers. She marched off, muttering under her breath.

Kate and daughter, Lizzy, relocated to Denver, Colorado for the specific purpose of opening a fine restaurant in the burgeoning community set in the shadow of the majestic Rocky Mountains.

The short time she spent at the Windsor Hotel, proved to her there was a need for a casual dining establishment in the town that had ebbed and flowed with the discovery of rich minerals in the nearby streams and hillsides.

Denver was growing fast. As many as one hundred people a day were arriving in the city since the Kansas-Pacific Railroad extended its service to the Mile High city. She wanted to open a diner that catered to families without the distasteful presence of saloon girls and gambling. Dozens of those already existed.

“Sorry, Kate,” Gus consoled, stepping quickly behind his disappointed friend. He was followed by Corncob.

“What are we going to do next,” asked Carter, who served as

guide for the Texans as they traveled to the mountains.

“Reckon I’m done with Denver,” Kate said. “I’m ready to get out of here. I can look for opportunity in friendly towns. We have encountered nothing but disappointment since arriving in Denver.”

“I’m more than ready to get back to the Circle H, but I can’t go back without Junior,” Gus said. “We’ve got to locate him first. I can’t face Walter and Gert without some news of his whereabouts.”

“And I’ve got to do something with Lizzy,” Kate said. “I’m going to lose her if I let her stay here unchaperoned. When it comes to the men who are pursuing her romantically, she’s like a moth drawn to a bright light. She’s never had so much male attention and it’s gone to her head.”

“Most those men are after her money, Kate,” Gus said.

“The boy’s right, Kate. There are more comen chasing that sweet rose of a daughter than grasshoppers on the Kansas prairie,” Corncob added.

“I know it,” she replied. “It’s time I put a stop to it before she ends up lost like Junior. And I agree, Gus. We’ve got to find him, before we can travel back to Texas.”

It was just about a year ago, Gus, Kate and Lizzy returned to Texas with a fortune in gold and jewelry, thought to be Maximilian’s lost treasury. Rich for the first time in their lives, Gus and Walter Hamilton Jr. offered to accompany the women to Denver, where they hoped to start new lives. On the long journey from Dallas to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, romance blossomed between Lizzy and Gus’ best friend, twenty-one-year-old Junior. They spent endless hours together and talked about traveling to Europe together.

That all changed when the party arrived in Denver, and Lizzy was besieged by suitors, who recognized her as an heir to a vast fortune. The blonde beauty turned her back on the cowboy and emersed herself in the attention of a dozen or more ne’er-do-wells.

Junior was heartbroken. It was his first trip away from Texas that did not involve Longhorn steers, and he had never been in love before. He turned to gambling and alcohol, both of which were readily available on every street and corner of Denver. He descended into an inebriated fog and simply disappeared.

Gus and Corncob searched every saloon, gambling house and brothel in the city and found no sign of him.

His friends had no idea what had happened to young Hamilton, and Kate felt somewhat responsible, being she was the matriarch of the group. She was determined to solve the mystery and she didn't care what it cost.

Kate hired a private detective to find Junior. She paid him twenty-five dollars per week, plus expenses, to search the outlying mining towns for the tall Texan. Junior stood well above six feet. He had blue eyes and sandy hair that dangled at the back of his tan Stetson. His square jaw gave him a boyish smile; characteristics Kate thought should make him easy for the PI to spot among a bunch of drab and dirty miners.

The investigator's name was Milford "Trash" Golden, who was well known throughout the Denver region. Of course, who wouldn't be with a name like Golden? His claim to fame was finding the kidnapped daughter of a wealthy Leadville businessman in the dead of winter. He not only returned the 14-year-old to her parents unharmed but killed all three of the kidnappers in the process. He thought nothing of the murders, referring to it as "simply disposing of the trash." The nickname stuck.

While Golden searched the nearby hills, Gus and Corncob continued making regular rounds of all the brothels and gambling parlors in the city. They questioned every panhandler and conman they came across and a few barmen and saloon girls with whom Corncob was familiar. As the snow deepened in the mountain passes, so did their concerns. It seemed Junior wasn't anywhere to be found. They thought maybe he was ashamed of his behavior and had gone into hiding.

CHAPTER TWO

When Junior was jostled and robbed by one of the security guards at the plush Windsor Hotel, Kate abandoned the finest facility of its kind west of the Missouri River and joined Gus and Corncob at Maggie Longmire's boarding house. She left her daughter behind to entertain the young men who pursued her. She figured she was a grown woman and needed to learn how to fend for herself. Her mother knew sooner or later Lizzy would come running to her with a marriage proposal or a broken heart. She would deal with her daughter's foolishness then.

In the meantime, she took a job working in a small diner on the western edge of town, primarily for the purpose of learning what happened to Junior Hamilton.

Jack's Country Table sat in the shadow of the Rockies and catered mainly to miners and travelers. Jack Waterman was one of the lucky men who came to the mountains, secured a tiny nest egg and invested it in a business instead of gambling it away.

He got his fill of mining when two toughs tried to jump his claim, which hadn't produced an ounce of ore in six months. Nonetheless, it was his mine. Nobody was going to take what belonged to him after he had invested a year's worth of sweat and hard labor.

Jack was wounded in the melee that followed. So were the two toughs — Jake and John Brody. Their wounds were fatal. His stand earned Jack a reputation among the mining community as a guy who stood up for what was right. He wisely used what little gold he had dug from the earth to open a diner that catered to the needs of the hard-working community he knew so well.

He was doing a good business, even though he couldn't find help that was worth anything. When Kate showed up, he hired her on the spot, and it was probably the second-best decision he ever

made. Kate knew the food business and she soon became a favorite of his customers.

Kate Sanders was an attractive thirty-six-year-old with blonde hair and blue eyes. When men heard her sweet, Tennessee drawl they were more than willing to talk, especially after spending long weeks in the isolation of the tapped-out mines of the region.

In time, some of the men who frequented the diner, came simply to engage the blonde waitress in conversation. Others tried to lure her away to the glitzy saloons and gambling halls, where attractive, single women could pry real gold from the lovelorn and naïve saps who spent long days in the bowels of the earth.

Few, including Jack, knew she probably was one of the wealthiest women in Denver. That was a secret she kept hidden as she asked everyone she could if they had spotted a tall, yellow-haired Texan with square jaw and fetching smile. Junior rode a black palomino and always wore a tan-colored Stetson and his father's silver belt buckle, a one-of-a-kind heirloom.

Of course, hundreds of men drifted in and out of Denver every day. The odds of someone spotting Junior was slim and none. But Kate was undeterred.

In her first month on the job, only one snobbish customer admitted to seeing young Hamilton. It was Thomas Gaffney, a dandy and grifter who would do anything to separate man from money or gold. He ran all kinds of cons — bait-and-switch, shell games and other outlandish flimflams.

Gaffney's current con had him nesting in one vacant shanty after another in different locations around town. He put a sign in the window that said he would send a telegraph message home to loved ones for five dollars or a single gold nugget. Most of the poor souls who lost everything in the streams and mountain cavities, were willing to spend their last dollar to send a messages home. All their pleas were grave and desperate:

"Broke. Send money."

“No luck. Ready to come home. Need funds.”

“Busted. Need cash now.”

Gaffney collected five dollars from desperate customers all day long and his telegraph key sang a rhythmic tune that was nonstop. The only problem was the key was connected to no wire and the messages were a hoax. When the poor souls returned in two days, looking for a reply to their urgent telegram, Gaffney was nowhere to be found. He had moved on to another location, where more lost souls would be fooled into squandering the last of their funds and sink deeper into desperation.

Gaffney was a parasite. He preyed on the misfortune of others and thought highly of his achievements. His impeccable attire showed his pride in his profession. Dressed in a black suit, white shirt and top hat, Kate treated him like any other customer. When she described young Hamilton to the grifter, he piped up immediately and admitted he had seen the boy.

“Sure, I saw the young man,” he said. “He thought he had a keen eye, but I showed him the hand can be much quicker than he realized.”

“What are you talking about? Where and when did you see Junior?” Kate asked.

“I had engaged a group of unfortunate souls in a game of chance on the corner of Main and Colorado streets several weeks ago. I believe the cowboy you have described stepped up and tried to take advantage of me. I run a fair game, and he was very observant.”

“What kind of game?” Kate asked.

“That day I was offering my customers the opportunity to double their money if they could simply select the correct shell, under which I placed a tiny pea. It’s a quite simple game, but so many become confused,” Gaffney said pompously.

Two men seated nearby overheard the conversation and scoffed loud enough for Kate to hear and shot daggers at Gaffney.

Gaffney paid little attention to their sneer. Kate pressed on.

“All accept my friend, I bet. He is one who is not easily fooled,” Kate said, quickly realizing the man was one of the shysters who bamboozled Hamilton.

“Quite the contrary, ma’am,” he replied smugly. “Nobody outsmarts Thomas Gaffney, not in this miserable town.”

“I cannot believe you outsmarted Walter Hamilton, Jr., sir,” Kate said, baiting him for more information.

“You are quite right! He won one of maybe a dozen games. He was so pleased he began shooting his pistol in the air. I simply despise firearms and closed up shop immediately.”

He should have shot you first. You are a no-good swindler.

“Did you see where he went after you shut down your game?” Kate asked.

“No, he was a ruffian, and I pay little attention to his kind.”

“Well thank you for the information, I’ll be out with your order in just few minutes,” she added.

Fuming mad, Kate stewed with every step she took toward the kitchen. Gaffney might have been one of the last men to see Junior, and he took advantage of him. It was time to get even.

When she retrieved his meal, she covered his meat and mashed potatoes with thick, redeye gravy and added pepper to the mix — the hot, red flakes Jack reserved for his special customers. She mixed them in with gusto.

When she approached Gaffney’s table with his meal in hand, she allowed a bit of gravy to soil the crown of his top hat, much to Gaffney’s distress, and placed his plate in front of him with a smile.

She watched from the kitchen as the conman began to devour his supper. It took him three bites to realize his mouth was on fire. He cried out for relief from the waitress, “Water! Water! I need water!”

Kate hung behind the kitchen door and snickered.

That's what you get for disrespecting Junior Hamilton, you piece of human waste.

She watched with pleasure as he leaped from his seat and fled the diner in search of relief for his enflamed tastebuds. His top hat fell to the floor in his haste to depart. A customer from another table stood and promptly crushed it with a muddy boot. The entire restaurant applauded.

* * *

KATE GENERALLY WALKED the four or five blocks from Jack's Table to Maggie's two-story rooming house each day. Seldom did she walk it alone after dark, though. She generally worked the breakfast and lunch crowd and either Gus or Corncob accompanied her on dark mornings because Denver was crawling with down-on-their-luck miners and unsavory characters who would rob their own mother for a few coins.

Regardless, she carried her father's Navy Colt in her purse and knew how to use it. She believed in facing danger head-on. Shying away didn't make it go the other way. Kate had killed men before. Although she didn't seek confrontation, she rarely was intimidated.

It was something instilled by her no-nonsense father, who struggled to provide for her and four hungry brothers in the foothills of Tennessee.

Kate was Daddy's little girl, but he raised her like he did his boys, "Take no lip and offer no leniency."

At five years old she could shoot her father's pistol, and her brothers were not allowed to touch it. At ten, she could shoot as sure as her siblings and often brought home supper for the evening meal.

Kate had mellowed over the years; book-learning and single motherhood will do that. Still, she seldom backed down from a threat, whether it be from man or beast.

She had worked late at Jack's Table one night and was walking home at dusk without an escort, something respectable women would never do in Denver. Her mind was carefree on a cold, starry night. The ground was covered with fresh snow and the air was brisk and fresh.

Suddenly, she was yanked almost out of her boots when she passed a dark alley without giving caution. She yelped when a big paw seized her arm and pulled her into the darkness.

"I've been looking for a chance to meet you, missy," the ruffian growled. "You've been walking by here every morning and never give me a mind. Tonight, you're gonna."

Kate was five-foot-seven and the drifter was a head taller. He was scruffy, full-bearded and stunk to high heaven. When he leaned down to speak to her, she didn't know what was worse, his body odor or his breath.

She immediately tried to pull free, but he was too strong. When she fought back, he just wrapped a burly arm around her waist and carried her deeper into the dungeon-like alleyway. The brigand had no idea what he had gotten himself into; there was more honey badger in Kate Sanders than graceful swan.

She stopped struggling and waited for the right moment and slammed the back of her head into the man's nose. As bones snapped and blood spurted, he released his grip on the waitress-turned-gladiator.

Kate spun around, squared up and landed a fist to his splattered nose and a haymaker to his gut. When he doubled over in pain, she clasped all ten fingers into one sizeable fist and hammered the back of his bullish neck. He grunted and fell face first into the dirt. He was moaning and groaning in the dirt when she pulled out her Colt and ordered him to roll over so she could see his face.

He was coiled in a fetal position and didn't respond to her command. So, she drove the toe of her boot into his kidney, just like her father had taught her, and yelled, "I said roll over!"

He rolled over all right, because the pain in his back was worse than the discomfort of his smashed nose. He sat up and let his backside hopscotch through the dirt until his back was against a building and he could face the honey badger. Covered in the river of blood flowing from his sizeable beak, he held his hands out in front to ward off the next attack.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” he begged. “Don’t hurt me no more!”

“Why should I heed what you say?” Kate snarled and cocked the hammer of her Navy Colt. “When I told you to put me down, you didn’t accommodate me. You just drug me back here where nobody could see or hear us. What did you think you were going to do?”

“I was just trying to be friendly. That’s all!” he replied.

“I ain’t feeling friendly. In fact, I’m feeling deadly. I just might put a bullet between your eyes, you worthless reprobate.”

“Please don’t kill me!” he said, looking up at her sorrowfully. The flesh around his eyes already was turning purple. His nose was broken and so was his spirit.

“Oh, so you’d prefer I be friendly instead?” she asked with a smile on her face.

“Yes! Yes!”

“Well, this is about as friendly as I get, mister,” Kate said and let the pistol drop to her side. Before he had a chance to let out a sigh of relief, all one hundred and twenty-five pounds of her kicked him so hard between his massive thighs, his legs lifted in the air and his head banged against the brick wall at his back.

He crumpled into painless oblivion, and Kate stormed out of the ally. She was cursing under her breath and wishing she had never left Texas.

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