

GUS

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS



G.S. WILLIS

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BY G. S. WILLIS

“Based on True Events”

From

The Book of Willis

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LOOSE ENDS



Gus began to make his way back to where he set up camp during his stay in town.

He walked in a daydream of sorts, each step giving way to anxious and eager feelings, bringing him closer to the family homecoming that was on his mind.

The space he had chosen to camp was a small open setting surrounded by trees and bushes. Not far away, a small creek streamed that carried fresh water. Surprisingly, he never ran into anyone at the creek during his time there. There was a minor rock crest that housed a small cave, and in the cave, was a large rock, resting atop his savings. The rock required leverage to move, which he did with a fulcrum created by a smaller

rock and a hefty branch. His savings were wrapped in a sturdy old rawhide material to keep the moist ground from damaging it. He would need to pack and head out while he still had some light.

As he continued his way to his campsite, instinctively he glanced about more than usual, casting a cautious eye every few feet or so. He had heard nothing, but he had that creepy tingly feeling that he had come to know as a warning. Yet, after taking another wide slow scan of the area, he saw nothing that might be cause for alarm. The feeling, however, persisted, like a small flickering flame, fighting to come to life. It would not go away. He sensed something was out of place. It put him on edge, and he moved ahead, perched on the balls of his feet and on-guard.

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It was nearing dusk now, and he was losing light. Arriving, he began gathering and packing his belongings. Lastly, he grabbed the sturdy branch used to move the huge rock to unearth and grab his savings. He gave a hard push downward nearly lifting him off his feet. The large boulder moved but was being difficult today. One last push. He jumped up throwing his full weight down on the branch. It snapped propelling him backwards, but it had lasted long enough to move the heavy rock one last time. He scrambled to where his stash lay and scooped it up. Once he had it in hand he sat and added in his most recent earnings to his knapsack. He quickly stitched it closed with the needle and thread he kept for repairing his clothing. Then he rubbed it with dirt to hide the new stitches. *It is too quiet,* he thought. *No birds, no crickets... no nothing. It's as if they took the night off.*

Finally, he was all packed and was ready to set off toward the road for home when he heard a noise.

Crack!

Swerving quickly, his back stiffened and his eyes raced toward the direction of the sound. The faint highlights of a lone dim figure slowly emerged from the bushes into view. Fingers tingling, his head ringing, he strained to see who it was.

The shadow loomed large momentarily and began to take shape. Jeb, stood there emerging into the light, boldly glaring at him, smirking a disdainfully superior grin. The look on his face gave away his bad intentions. He had been clever, waiting for Gus to put all his things together.

“I knew you was out here somewhere, hidin’ something, Sunshine.” Jeb stabbed that last word at him as if it was a knife he wanted to

plunge into his body. "Hand it over, nigger." He spat out. "It's mine now."

With that last pronouncement, he now knew what Jeb's true intent had been from the beginning. Days spent suffering through Jeb's insults, had brought them both here. "You didn't earn this, Jeb," Gus spoke, "I worked awfully hard fo' this money." His shoulders drooped, giving the appearance of air escaping a deflating balloon. "But alright." Slowly, he reached out and handed the sack over towards Jeb.

"Ow! That hurt!" Jeb howled as Gus jabbed the sewing needle deep into his hand and he dropped the knapsack, shaking his hand rapidly as if that might ease the pain.

He glared at Gus. "I'm gonna hurt you, boy." Springing forward, he leapt at Gus and was on top of him in an instant. Being older and larger, he quickly overpowered Gus, pinning both his

hands with his own. He took that moment to gloat. “You mine now, boy,” he said as he grabbed Gus by the face twisting his hand back and forth over it squeezing torturously.

Turning his head quickly and just enough, Gus bit down hard on Jeb’s hand.

“Eeeyow!” Jeb yelped shrieking loudly like a wounded animal, momentarily putting him off balance.

Reaching out Gus grabbed a loose rock and swung it hard at Jeb’s head. The dull thud as the rock connected sent Jeb sprawling awkwardly, grabbing his head and landing on his back.

He looked up at Gus who was now standing, “I’m gonna get you boy, and that their money is mine...” His last word faded as he passed out and keeled over, blood dripped down the side of his head. He lay there quiet, motionless.

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Gus looked bewildered, “Oh, God! Did Ah kill ‘im?” He put his hands to his face. A sick woozy feeling overcame him, and he had to fight the dizzying urge to throw up.

Jeb was not moving. Gus sat there momentarily stunned. The world around him seemed to go still and silent. A black man who killed a white man would have no place to hide in this world. He couldn’t go home now, maybe never! What should he do? As he sat there frozen, contemplating his fate, he heard a noise, a cough. He looked hopefully and then was frightened as Jeb’s body jerked, then flopped briefly like fish out of water. Then his thrashing halted and Jeb took in a deep wheezing lungful of air and began to breathe. He lay there, still unmoving but apparently, alive.

Tearing off a piece of Jeb’s shirt, he wrapped it around his head to control the bleeding. Taking

a moment, he slowly poured water into Jeb's mouth to make sure he was all right. Jeb's unfocused eyes moved slowly.

Jeb reached up, grabbing Gus firmly by the wrist and with a wry smile, said, "Boy!" Finally relaxing and releasing his grip, he lay there, eyes open.

Gus quickly grabbed everything that had scattered during his tussle with Jeb. Still wary, he glanced over his shoulder from time to time, to keep an eye on Jeb. Wanting to leave no trace of himself, he scanned the campsite area. He wasn't much worried that Jeb would tell. He figured Jeb was not the type to admit getting whooped, especially by him. But he did want to make sure he was okay. He was moving about, slowly, but on his own. The wind picked up suddenly, blowing the leaves around him. The surrounding

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trees, plants, bushes, and brush swayed, pointing him in the direction he needed to follow.

Run, the usually small voice in his mind now shouted.

He took one last look and then turned, and ran as fast as he could. His heart pumping fast he stumbled over the uneven terrain, rambling through bush and brush that nicked, scratched and poked him as he made his way toward the highway—the two-lane road that ran to the next town.

It was time to go home!