

Classic Collection 4



Oklahoma Exile

Norma Jean Lutz



Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection – Book #4

Oklahoma Exile

Norma Jean Lutz

Oklahoma Exile

ISBN: 978-0-9908037-2-0

Copyright © 2016 by NUWSLink, Inc. and Norma Jean Lutz.

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, NUWSLink, Inc., 8703-R North Owasso Expressway, Ste. 143, Owasso, OK 74055

All of the characters in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

A note from the author:

I love to hear from my readers. You may contact me here:

NormaJean@BeANovelist.com

<http://www.CleanTeenReads.net>

Photo Credit: Wood Fence and Sky

© David M. Schrader | Dreamstime.com

A Word about the *Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection*

During my writing career I've been privileged to have over 50 titles published under my name. Due to the nature of the publishing world in days past, most of these titles were off the shelves and out of print in a short period of time. Sad but true.

Now, a new day has dawned in the world of publishing. Digital publishing has created the opportunity for my past titles to be reintroduced to a whole new generation of readers.

These stories are timeless in spite of the fact they were penned several decades ago. Hence, I have chosen to call them the *Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection*.

Oklahoma Exile is Book #4 in the Classic Collection series.

I'm excited to be able to bring these stories out of the files and into your hands. I hope you enjoy your read.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Norma Jean Lutz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the love, encouragement, and financial support from these businesses, families and individuals. Thank you for helping make the *Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection* become reality.

Johnpaul Moses We Buy Memphis Houses

www.WeBuyMemphisHouses.com

3750 Hacks Cross Rd. Suite 102-117

Memphis, TN 38125



Ashley Colston

On The Corner Gift Shop

106 S Main St

Broken Arrow, OK

[On the Corner Facebook Page](#)



Matt Moore

Heartland Direct Int'l, LLC

401 S Boston Ave, Ste 500

Tulsa, OK

[Heartland Facebook Page](#)



Leonardo Habegger

DaVinci Consulting

<http://www.leonardohabegger.com>

[Leonardo's Facebook Page](#)

#1 Best-Selling Author of *Authority Positioning - How to become the Leader in Your Niche*

Michael Carroll

Michael Carroll Insurance Agency

2211 River Rd

Maumee, OH

[Michael's Facebook Page](#)

<http://www.cigvip.com/fb>

Scott and Brenda Epperson

Cliff and Lesa Smith

Grant and Elizabeth Kramer

Roger and Kandy Sharp

Clark and Debbie Hay

Chris and Charity Tankersley

Norma L. Platt

John and Lolita Nelson

This book is dedicated to:

Kathleen (Sherry) Wilcoxson – 1951-2015

What rocky and tempestuous roads
we've traveled, sweet sister.

Both together and apart.

But we stayed connected;
and I'm thankful.

I miss you.

Chapter 1

The strangest thing about the nightmares was that Serena never knew the screams were hers until Aunt Loula woke her. In the dream, the screams were always Kris's. Always Kris's. Aunt Loula's husky voice would croon as she patted Serena, "There, there. It's all right. It's all a dream. Go back to sleep now."

But it was never all right. And she almost never went back to sleep for fear it would come again. Tonight's had been especially terrifying. Long after Aunt Loula's stout figure, dressed in her long flannel gown, had disappeared from the room, Serena lay there trembling. A nightmare is something you wake up from and the bad is gone. But this was real and the bad would never go away.

It was time then to begin the difficult game of mental gymnastics as she forced her mind to think of other things. Anything other than the accident which had mangled Kris's legs. The accident which she had caused. The sound of the metal hitting metal was always in the nightmare. The awful sounds that a crash makes. A tiny open Moped is no match for a speeding car.

The most difficult part was to substitute good thoughts to drown out the bad memories, because there was so little left in her life that was good. Every fun, challenging, interesting, exciting thing in her life had been removed.

Her clock radio glowed a pink message of four-thirty. Better than two. She could be thankful for that. And thankful that since it was April, dawn came sooner

than if it were, say, the middle of December. The nightmare never came in the daylight. Always in the darkness.

In their apartment in Minneapolis, she'd never dreaded the night or the coming day. Her room was cozy and safe and... She turned over in the wide four-poster bed and tried to shut out all thoughts. Strange how her mind kept stretching out little fingers to find things to think about. Never quiet and still but always reaching and groping.

If she were home and couldn't sleep, she'd just go raid the refrigerator. The noise never bothered her mother. Gayle Iverson slept soundly. And even if she did wake up, she'd know it was only Serena getting a snack and she'd never get up.

But here Uncle Dwight and Aunt Loula weren't used to having another person in the house, let alone a teenager. They seemed to be aware of every sound and movement Serena made. She hated to be a bother.

Her cousin, Amber June, said she and her brother, Scotty, used to spend nights here, but not often, since they lived right down the road and saw their grandparents every day.

With great care not to allow the big bed to squeak, she slipped toward the edge and slowly crept out and stepped over to the window. Pulling back the heavy drapery, she gazed at the barns looming vast and mysterious in the moonlight. The silos which flanked the larger building were silhouetted like rockets set for launching. Behind the barns, alfalfa fields stretched endlessly toward the horizon which was growing a pale pink. If it weren't for the farm machinery parked near the barn, it could have been a scene from an old movie. So out of touch. So desolate. So out of synch with the real world.

Large oak and walnut trees, sporting their new spring leaves, cast soft moon shadows on the yard. No one here said "lawn," but always "yard." Between the house and the barns lay Aunt Loula's large prolific garden. A few neat rows of plants Serena could not identify were showing green sprouts. The henhouse near the garden still housed a few plump chickens. During the day they had free run of the place, spreading their smelly droppings in the most inappropriate and inconvenient places.

The small, black sheltie lay curled in a tight ball near the back porch. Aunt Loula had explained that Rompers was a stray who arrived last winter and adopted the place. It was part of the small-talk conversation that accompanied Serena's arrival five days ago. Those five days equaled an eternity. She'd never known such intense homesickness. But even if she were home again, she only be homesick for the ones who should be there and weren't.

Off to her left was the big farmhouse where the Derricks – Harlan, Iona and Amber June – all lived. Scotty too, but he was away at college. The house was barely visible through the cover of shade trees that surrounded the Derrick house.

Iona was Aunt Loula's daughter. Serena's mother often told the story how when Harlan and Iona were first married, they settled into the smaller house. After Scotty and Amber June came along, rather than build on to the little house, the two families just switched houses. Harlan and Iona moved up to the bigger, two-story house. Aunt Loula and Uncle Dwight moved into the smaller one and it remained that way ever since. Serena's mother said things like that could happen only in a place like Big Mound, Oklahoma.

Serena wondered how the two families had decided which house she would stay in – their most unexpected guest. Maybe they drew straws, or flipped a coin. It didn't matter – and it was much too painful to think about for very long.

Other than a couple of Christmases, which were soft-shadowed memories in Serena's mind, she'd never been around these people who made up her extended family. They were only names on old Christmas cards, which arrived every December with school pictures showing Scotty and Amber June growing and changing.

Serena wasn't sure if her mother had sent pictures of her and Kris in Christmas cards. Perhaps she had before Serena's father died – when life was more leisurely. It would be more like Gayle to pick up the phone on Christmas day and let the call take the place of a card. That was the efficient way Gayle Iverson did things.

Efficient, like last week when they were packing for Serena to come to Big Mound. Her mother made a list of what she should bring and handed it to her. She could bring her clock radio, but not her stereo system; her hair dryer and curling iron, but not her telephone, and so on.

"You're not moving in," her mother had said, "just staying temporarily."

Gayle had even sublet the apartment to Alecia, the college student who used to babysit Kris. All the while, Gayle was packing her own belongings, and coordinating the transfer of Kris to the children's rehabilitation center in Texas.

Friends often said Serena possessed her mother's businesslike traits. If that was so, where had those traits gone? She had wanted so much to be strong for her mother following the accident, during those endless days when Gayle was away

from the house, away from her job, glued to Kris's bedside. But those four weeks were a blur.

Serena strained to remember what she'd said and done. The sight of Kris's pale, thin body lying there with the IV stand, the tubes, the casts, the needles, along with the hospital smells and sounds was all she could remember. The hours she'd spent sobbing was all she could remember. It was too ghastly to bear. Rather than efficiently helping, she found herself thrashing about in slow motion, like swimming in a sea of sticky molasses. Not only her body, but her brain became sluggish and slow. The memories hurt so much. She pressed her forehead against the cool bedroom window and wished the dawn to hurry.

Eventually, she crawled back into bed and slept a little before she heard footsteps creaking down the hallway. The sounds of breakfast would soon follow. Breakfast was never cereal out of a box at the Burnham's.

Now that morning had arrived, Serena didn't want that either. Today would be her first day at Big Mound High School. If only her friend, Brent, were here. He'd roll with laughter. That is, if it were under different circumstances, she knew he'd roll with laughter. No foreign languages, no drafting class, no drama, no debate club, no computer class. Amber June said there was a school newspaper, but no one ever knew when it was coming out.

If Brent were here and the two of them could look at it all – like they were visiting or something – it would all be hysterically funny. Brent would say something like, "Hey, Serena, get a load of the time warp." Serena imagined the high school was pretty much unchanged from the time when her mother attended. And, as her mother put it, "There was nothing there back then." Suddenly the molasses sensation was back and the bedcovers weighed a ton.

The phone jangled in the kitchen. There was only one phone in the house. At least up at Amber's house there were several phones, cable television, a computer and such. But Aunt Loula was oblivious.

A light knock sounded at her door. In her Okie drawl, Aunt Loula said, "That was Amber June, Serena. She'll be over to fetch you in about forty-five minutes."

Outside her window a rooster crowed as though adding his two cents' worth.

Serena forced her voice up through the molasses and the covers. "Thanks Aunt Loula. I'll be ready."

She'd taken great pains to keep her belongings out of the bathroom. There was only one bathroom in the little house. Back home, her own bathroom adjoined her bedroom. Since arriving last Thursday, she hadn't had to get dressed up for anything. But on that first day, she forgot and left her curling iron turned on in the bathroom and Uncle Dwight burned his arm. He didn't say much, but she decided she'd better do her hair and makeup in her room.

She needed an extension cord for her curling iron to reach from the outlet to the vanity table. She wasn't sure whether to ask for one or just buy one herself in town today. Meanwhile, she used the mirror in her overnight case as she sat in the middle of the floor near the outlet. She could pretend she was on a camping trip. It wasn't much of a solution, but it was the best she could muster at the present. The only difference was that on camping trips, her mother and Kris were always there. Since Daddy died, they'd always done things together.

Breakfast was awkward. She offered to help, but Aunt Loula ushered her to a chair and began setting food before her. More food than she and Mother and Kris would eat in a week. Her stomach was in a series of nervous knots and scrambled

eggs were not going to set well. Nor would a stack of pancakes with sweet syrup. The place smelled like a truck stop diner.

"Better eat now, girl. You can't expect to be tromping all over that schoolhouse today with an empty stomach and get anything done. You'll need your strength and energy to keep up." Aunt Loula seated herself. "That's a right lively bunch up at the high school. You'll want to be able to keep up. Lots of new things to do; lots of new things to think on."

Serena didn't agree. She made an attempt to eat one pancake with a dribble of syrup. Her soccer coaches had preached to her about the dangers of high sugar intake, and her mother as well. Gayle saw to it that Serena and Kris ate healthy foods. Like granola.

Aunt Loula ran other people's lives. That's what Serena's mother always said. Serena guessed that's why her mother left Big Mound and never came back. "It wasn't easy being raised by my older sister," Serena's mother had said many times. "It was frustrating. Especially having a niece my own age who loved to spy and tattle." Serena wished her mother hadn't talked about Aunt Loula and Iona quite so much. It didn't make staying here any easier.

Uncle Dwight was incredibly quiet. Serena wasn't sure if Uncle Dwight was quiet because Aunt Loula talked so much, or if Aunt Loula talked incessantly because Uncle Dwight never said anything. Uncle Dwight's graying hair was combed straight back, and his face was dominated by a large bulbous nose. The glasses he slipped on to read the Big Mound Register, had black plastic across the top and gold wire around the bottom, like something out of the sixties. And the newspaper was only about eight pages thick.

Even though he was nearing seventy, Uncle Dwight stood straight and tall like a soldier. His hands were wide and strong. If Brent saw him, he'd make a crack about Uncle Dwight being a candidate for the Harlem Globetrotters with such wide hands. Of course he'd make the crack aside to Serena so only she could hear. And she would have to stifle the snickers.

A small radio sat on the cabinet near the table blaring out a boring farm report – prices for cattle, feeder calves, pigs, wheat and corn. While Aunt Loula talked on about the weather and her garden, Uncle Dwight listened intently to the radio. He poured coffee into his saucer and sucked at it noisily as it cooled. Good thing Kris wasn't there. He'd sure enough want to start drinking his hot chocolate in the same silly way. But of course Kris couldn't be there.

No one mentioned the nightmare. She'd had it three out of the four nights she'd been there, but no one spoke of it the next morning.

"You'd better eat more'n that, girl," Aunt Loula protested as she finished off a third pancake along with a large helping of scrambled eggs and sausage on her own plate. "You're pretty thin as it is. You need to put a little meat on them bones." Aunt Loula patted Serena's arm. "Such a puny little thing. Just look at that scrawny little elbow."

Serena resisted the temptation to yank her arm away. No one had ever called her puny before. "Thank you, but I've had plenty."

"Lots of eggs left here." Aunt Loula moved the bowl of scrambled eggs closer to Serena's plate. "Sure you can't eat just a little more?"

"No thanks, Aunt Loula. I really am full." She jumped up, taking her plate and glass to the sink, draining the last of her milk on the way. No dishwasher. She rinsed the dishes in hot water and put them in the drain tray.

At home, her mother would have already left for work by now. Serena and Kris ate granola, or granola bars, for breakfast. On rare occasions, Kris would ask for cinnamon toast and if there was time, she'd whip up a couple slices. They might talk about his spelling words, or his math problems. All his second grade work came easy for him. Then she'd walk him to the bus and see him safely on. Some mornings, in nice weather, Brent might come by on his Moped. Ah, the poor Moped. It was so mangled and battered in the accident. Like Kris's little legs... So why, she asked for the millionth time, had she been thrown free?

Uncle Dwight rose from the table. Blue denim bibbed overalls and flannel shirts were all she'd ever seen him wear. He was a big man and his presence filled the room. Now he stepped to the door leading to the enclosed back porch. On the floor of the back porch were trays of spindly, green seedlings awaiting transplanting to the garden. From the coat rack on the wall, Uncle Dwight took down his sheep-lined coat and International Harvester cap. Both were soiled and frayed. He turned to his wife and said, "Did you ever think she might be a mite nervous?" With that, he went out the door.

When he said "Did you ever," it sounded like "Jevver." The words all ran together. Serena's speech teacher would die.

"Is that right, Serena? You nervous? No reason to be nervous about going with Amber June up to the schoolhouse. Nothing there to be a-scared of. It's just a school like any school. I'm sure you're used to schoolhouses." She chuckled a little under her breath as she began clearing dishes.

Serena hesitated, wondering if she should offer to lend a hand. At that moment Amber pulled into the front drive in the Derrick's family car. Gravel popped and crunched beneath the tires.

"Whoa, there's Amber June now. Better hurry and get your things, girl," Aunt Loula directed. "And be sure you wear a jacket. It's still pretty nippy out there yet. Not quite warm enough to go without any wrap."

Serena went back down the hall to her bedroom without answering. She couldn't remember the last time her mother even remotely suggested what she should or shouldn't wear to school. She hadn't really planned what to take with her to school. As she unzipped the book bag she'd brought along, she could hear Amber's giggling out in the kitchen. From the book bag she pulled a spiral and several pens. That would suffice for the first day.

Amber June seemed to giggle a lot. That was Serena's first impression of her – giggling. Serena did grab her jacket from the closet, but she'd planned to wear it anyway. Her cream-colored linen slacks, topped by a tailored blouse, seemed like a safe first-day choice. She took another glance at herself in the vanity mirror. What did it matter what she looked like? She wished she had more time to steel herself. To prepare against this day. Against this moment. She looked longingly at the big four-poster bed. If only she could crawl back in and escape.

"Serena! Shake a leg, girl. You're gonna make Amber June late if you don't come on."

"Oh Serena," Amber greeted her with a gush. "There you are." She stepped closer to give Serena a hug. Amber seemed to be into hugging people. "Gosh you look so pretty. Pretty enough for church or something. Don't she, Grandma?"

"Sure enough," Aunt Loula agreed, though previously she'd not commented on anything except how puny Serena was. "Pretty as a picture. Both my girls are growing up into young ladies. Growing faster'n a thistleweed."

"And guess what?" Amber interrupted. "Momma give me permission to take the car, so's you wouldn't have to ride our rickety old school bus. It's a mess, believe me. You can be thankful Momma let me take the car. I just kept asking till she said yes." Amber pushed back the unmanageable fluff of auburn curls that surrounded her fair face.

As they stepped out the front door, there was Rompers jumping about and wagging her tail. Serena kicked at her as the sheltie came dangerously close to her cream-colored slacks. The dog's black fur was terribly matted and dirty. "Get away!" she ordered. "Get back!" She dashed for the car quickly before the claws could do a number on her.

"She acts like she likes you," Amber said as she slid behind the wheel.

"Who? The dog?"

"Rompers. Yeah. I've watched her. She seems to get excited every time she sees you."

Amber spoke with the same twang as her parents and grandparents. "Every time," sounded like "ever' tahm." It grated on Serena's ears. Serena had no answer for the notion that a dirty stray liked her. Unless it would be the fact she was lucky somebody did.

"I just got my driver's permit a couple of months ago," Amber explained as they pulled out of the drive onto the dusty section line road.

"Doesn't a permit mean you have to have a licensed driver ride in the car?"

Another giggle. "Not out here. Farm kids can drive to school with a permit and it's okay. It's the law, honest. I wouldn't break no law." She gave a little shrug. "Well, I guess I wouldn't anyway. Not really knowingly."

The car rattled over a one-lane wooden bridge with rusty metal girders that clanged and clattered. Probably built eons ago. Surely someday the thing would just crumble and cave in. Serena shivered.

She looked out across the vast flat land. Brent would probably say something about Pizza Hut coming on horseback for a home delivery. "Gallop across the vast prairies with one mission in mind – to get the pizza to you hot and fresh in spite of prickly sage, striking rattlers, lurking Indians..."

No pizza delivery out here, Brent. No health club. No central library. No museum. She swallowed back the pain of homesickness and of missing Brent. He'd hardly even spoken to her in the ensuing weeks before she left. He must hate her now. Her mother too. And what about precious Kris? What must Kris think of his own sister after what she'd done to him?

[For the rest of Serena's Story Click HERE](#)