

# Down Home

By Gerald L. Guy

I've been called Glenhatchet my whole damn life, ever since I can remember. Even as a young boy, I rarely was called by the name my mama gave me. Glen is easy enough, too. Except everybody wanted to make it hard. They just run it all together as if two names is one, and, like a fool, I keep answering when I hears it.

It ain't all my fault, neither, now that I thinks it through. I was a troubled child. Well, at least I troubled my mama. She hardly called me Glen either. She always was scolding me or ordering me around. It was "Glenhatchet, stop that!" and "Glenhatchet, come here!"

Of course, daddy had harsher names for me. I won't repeat them here, because they still embarrass me a bunch. He were a nasty old cuss, my daddy. Most of the time I knows him, he was either mad or drunk. And when he got drunk and mad is when he'd try to lay into me. That's when I learned to run. That old man might catch me if he was mad and sober, but he'd no chance when he was mad and drunk. Them was the times I'd thank the Lord for the gift of speed. He blessed me; sure did.

Why, by the time I was eight year old, I could outrun most children twice my age there in Intercourse, Pa. My cousin, Festus, was 12 and I ran past him many a time. Me and him did a lot of runnin' from my daddy. Seems we couldn't do nothin' right for that man. One time we was sitting on the porch tellin' stories when Festus raised his leg and cut the biggest fart I had heard in my life. It riled my daddy something fierce and all I could do was laugh 'cause it was a big, nasty ol' fart. Stunk, too. The madder my daddy got, the funnier it seemed to me. When he came for me, Festus took off runnin. Not me, I was rollin' on the floor of that porch holding my belly 'cause it ached bad from laughin' so hard.

Well, daddy grabbed me by my bibs — that's bib overalls — and commenced to shake me like a rag doll. When Festus heard me stop laughing he turns and sees my daddy holdin' me up off my feet and gettin' ready to pummel me. He was a big boy, that Festus. Therein lies the reason, I suspect, his farts have been heard far and wide. Well, when Festus stopped he kicked up a bunch a dirt and gravel. He turned 'round, grabbed one of them rocks and put it in his slingshot. We all had slingshots back in them days. Ol' Festus had a good eye, too. He put that pebble smack dab on my daddy's ass and he howled like a sick hound dog. That's when daddy dropped me and took on after Festus. I passed them both like they was standin' still. When I zipped by Festus he was breathin' hard. I told him just to keep runnin' 'cause daddy didn't have much wind. Told him to meet me at the hideout down in the Hollow. By the time his big fartin' backside showed up, I'd been there ten minutes. We laughed long and hard about that fart he dropped on the porch, and I told him to stay away from the house for a while 'cause my daddy sure wouldn't forget that slingshot in his britches.

I never forgot it neither. Me and Festus was pretty good buddies the rest of our lives. I still laugh when I thinks about that day. Ain't it funny how the body's most unexpected and loudest noises can forge a lifelong friendship?

Festus died a couple years back at the age of 85. I hadn't seen him in a couple decades, but I went to visitin' with a plan. I stuck a tiny whoopee cushion under his vest and laid his hands gently on top of it. Every time someone came by ol' Festus' casket and

patted his hands, that whoopee cushion let out one more fart for my good buddy. I laughed until my belly hurt again, and I like to think Festus did too