

Norma Jean Lutz

Classic Collection 2

Tiger Beetle
at
Kendallwood

Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection – Book #2

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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:

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A Word about the *Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection*

During my writing career I have 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 word 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*.

Tiger Beetle at Kendallwood is Book #2 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.

Norma Jean Lutz

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Norma Jean Lutz". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'N' and a long, sweeping underline.

Chapter One

Marcy Hankins was carefully skimming the pond with her long-handled dip net when she first heard the sound of motors. It startled her so that she lost the water strider that had been gracefully gliding toward her on the placid water.

It was impossible to think anyone would be driving up the sweeping curved driveway to the deserted Kendallwood estate. No one had lived in the Victorian-styled home for many years. Although empty, it had consistently been kept in good repair and stood as a proud sentinel over the spacious grounds.

Even Bitsy, the mahogany-colored dachshund, lying fat and lazy in the grass nearby, heard the sound. The dog's deep-throated little growl convinced Marcy that it hadn't been her imagination. She arose from where she'd been poised near the water's edge and moved noiselessly to lightly touch Bitsy's head. The touch was comforting, as Marcy's heart had unexplainably sped up its beating.

"Easy, girl," she said softly, "probably someone turning around in the drive. You know how people get turned around in these hills."

Although she'd planned to stay on the grounds for another hour, Marcy lay down her dip net then methodically gathered her belongings, placing them neatly in her blue backpack. She stopped again. It was the sound of yet another vehicle which revved up the drive and cut to a stop.

Bitsy cocked her head as her perceptive ears caught the vibrations of voices coming across the shimmering summer air toward them.

Hurrying now, Marcy grabbed the kill jar in stuffed it into the backpack with her other things. Only a few good specimens were in the jar, but now she must leave. No telling what was going on out front. Perhaps it was thieves, or someone meaning to do harm to the place.

The estate was now owned by a great grand-niece of the original owner, Jason Kendallwood, but no one had ever seen her as far as Marcy knew. Instead, the niece paid Mr. Walsh, the high school custodian, to come out and keep up the place.

Marcy brightened then. It could be Mr. Walsh's pickup she'd heard pull in. Although she couldn't imagine him getting out in the heat of an Oklahoma August afternoon. And she distinctly heard *two* vehicles come to a stop.

The Ambrose County Fair was less than a month away and Marcy planned to enter a complete display of aquatic insects as her 4-H project. But she wasn't making much progress. Even her general display case left much to be desired. She'd hoped to capture a six-spotted tiger beetle soon. She'd even seen one recently with its bright metallic green body scurrying quickly through the grass, but it proved too wily for her. This interruption could hamper her work on finishing the cases on time.

She twisted around to lift the backpack up and slip her arms into the shoulder straps. In her hands she carried the dip net, and also the sweep net used for butterflies and other flying insects which gathered in the tall grass and wildflowers surrounding the pond.

The sloping expanse of land behind the Kendallwood house at one time boasted luxurious gardens, or so Marcy had heard. It wasn't difficult for her vivid imagination to envision formal

walkways, precisely trimmed shrubs and immaculate floral displays being enjoyed by elegantly dressed ladies led about the gardens on the arm of handsome escorts.

As she made her way up the shallow natural stone steps toward the back of the house, there came the sound of harsh grinding of gears which could only be made by a truck – a large truck at that. Now Marcy’s heart was thudding and there came a tightness in her throat.

If all this commotion belonged to people who had a right to be here, it might be very uncomfortable to explain her presence on the property. And if they were intruders, she didn’t want to be seen at all.

Off to the west of the house, between her and the road were several acres of trees, replete with thick underbrush. In a moment’s decision, she left the stone steps and took off across the yard and opted for the trees – far enough away to see, yet not be seen. Actually, it was a shortcut to the winding road in front of the Kendallwood estates, but inconvenient because of the tangle of low-growing weeds and brush.

Parallel with the front of the house now, Marcy could see the driveway through the thick trees. One of the vehicles was a bright orange moving van.

“Oh Bitsy, no,” she gasped under her breath. “It can’t be. They’ll ruin my research projects.” She felt her eyes burning with hot tears. “Someone’s moving into my little haven.”

Her intentions to cross over to the road and leave for home were forgotten. She leaned the nets against a tree and slipped out of her backpack.

“Quiet now, Bitsy,” she whispered, lifting the small dog into her arms to keep her from barking. “Let’s take a look.”

Nervously, she moved through the unwieldy brush, stroking Bitsy's silken ear. Her mind wrestled with the fact that someone was actually taking over the place where she'd enjoyed such wonderful privacy these past few months.

Presently, she was standing directly behind the privet hedge bordering the drive. A breeze, which ruffled her short hair, felt cool against her perspiring forehead. She swiped damp strands from her face with the back of her hand and peered through the tracery of green to view the scene. The moving van was backed up to the portico fronting the large double doors at the entrance of the house. Some distance away was parked a late model station wagon and behind it sat a delightful Corvette painted candy apple red.

Muscular movers were at work bustling in and out with their cargoes. Presently, an elderly man and lady stepped out the front door. The gentleman, appearing well dressed and rather distinguished with graying hair and trim mustache, addressed a worker.

"Can you tell us of a restaurant nearby? It's been a while since breakfast."

"Back down the road near Beltonville is Clyde's Steakhouse. Great place. Best homemade pies in the county." The worker indicated the direction with a jerk of his head as he maneuvered a large box toward the door.

"Thanks so much." The lady spoke in a soft, kind voice. "We'll try to get back as quickly as possible. How long do you think it will take to unload?"

"Greased lightning, lady," said another worker who walked up behind her carrying one end of a stunning brocade couch of emerald green. "We move like greased lightning." The remark caused a twitter of laughter among the men.

At that moment another person came through the ornate double doors, nearly colliding with the couch. A young man – tall, broad-shoulders – whose laugh rang out as he sprinted sideways out of the path of the oncoming furniture.

“Whoa! You nearly got me there!” he said. His pale blond hair shone in the summer sunshine, and from Marcy’s vantage point she could see that his face was graced by a set of deep dimples.

Although she was embarrassed to be eavesdropping, she felt almost smug to be viewing the newcomers without being detected.

“Spence,” the older man said, “hop in the station wagon with us. We certainly can’t all fit into that cracker box of yours.”

“Cracker box?” the boy named Spence (she now knew) gave a mocked pained expression. “You hear that, Aunt Daisy?” He turned to the lady, but she was keeping a close eye on how her couch was being taken care of.

“What?” she asked. “Oh sure. Anyplace is fine with me, just as long as we get something soon. I’m starved.”

Once again, Spence’s hearty laugh rang out. “We’re talking about transportation, Aunt Daisy. We’re taking the station wagon.”

Now the aunt laughed as well. “Oh, I’m sorry, Spence. It’s just that I’ve never watched my brocade couch being transported before. It’s nerve wracking. The station wagon’s fine. But let’s hurry so I can get back and superintend this job.”

News in Marcy’s home town of Andonburg spread like wildfire. So why had she not been told that someone planned to buy the Kendallwood estate? Resentment slowly smoldered as she

regarded these intruders who were spoiling all her plans for the grand championship in entomology at the county fair. No other spot in the area was so perfect and as accessible as the deserted grounds around the estate.

It had been old Mr. Walsh who first suggested she come to the estate to collect insects. She'd been waiting customers in her father's drugstore, scrubbing the malt machine, when Mr. Walsh described to her the profusion of butterflies there. "Looks like it'd be a right good place for you to find those bugs you been a-needing."

Marcy forgot about her work as she listened to him describe the grounds. "Do you really think I could, Mr. Walsh? I mean, you don't think the owners would mind?"

The old man rubbed the gray stubble on his chin and peered at her through squinty eyes. "I don't see how it'd hurt a thing. Nobody's been around it but me for a long time now."

It was all the encouragement she'd needed. After several months, the trysting spot had grown to mean a great deal to her – more than a place to secure needed insects. It became a sanctuary of solitude where she could dream and think out her problems without the intrusion of her twin, Cissy, and her younger brother, Bernie.

"Now my special place is being overtaken," she whispered to the struggling Bitsy in her arms.

If only she'd had the good sense at that moment to turn and leave, the most embarrassing moment of her life might never have happened. But she clamped her arms tighter around the dog, who wriggled all the more against her grip, then broke loose and slipped through the hedge, bounding toward the strangers with all the fierceness of a trained watchdog.

“Bitsy! No!” she called to the wayward pooch without so much as a thought for herself.
“Come back, Bitsy! Come here now!”

Bitsy, however, was fully convinced she was the only source of protection for Marcy against these strangers, and gave no heed to the calls. She bounded within a few feet of the trio as though to keep them at bay with her chain of piercing yaps.

[For the REST of Marcy’s story CLICK HERE](#)

There are **SIX titles in the *Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection***

Watch for ALL **SIX**