

**My  
Beautiful  
Hippie**

ALSO BY JANET NICHOLS LYNCH

*Messed Up*

*Addicted to Her*

*Racing California*

# My Beautiful Hippie

JANET  
NICHOLS LYNCH



Holiday House / New York

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involved with Martin, a hippie, and various aspects of the late 1960s cultural revolution  
despite her middle-class upbringing.

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To my girlfriends  
Tina, Marsha, Caryl, Jeffra,  
Patricia, and Regina  
because you were there  
for me then





# CHAPTER ONE



I was in a hurry as usual, rushing down the hill on Ashbury Street. Only minutes before Denise's bridal shower was about to start, my mother had sent me to the Sunrise Market for a tub of Cool Whip. I turned the corner on Haight Street and smacked right into him. I looked up into eyes of the palest blue, sparkly with humor, soft with caring. The sun lit up his wavy, honey-brown shoulder-length hair so that its outline appeared like a golden aura. Diagonally across his gauzy shirt was the rainbow strap of the guitar slung on his back.

He was gorgeous, and what did I look like to him? The hem of the turquoise dotted-swiss dress my mother had made hit the middle of my knees, while all around me miniskirts were thigh-high. I wanted to be cool more than anything, but how was that possible with my mother dressing me?

"Spare change?" he asked, palm extended.

"Uh...no." My fingers tightened around two quarters and three pennies, exact change. My mom knew what things cost. My dad had ordered me never to give money to panhandlers. I glanced at the boy's bare feet. If they were clean, he was just some neighborhood kid playing hippie for the weekend, but filthy black and callused meant the real thing. His feet were somewhere in between.

"Sorry," I said.

“Peace.” He splayed two fingers in farewell, about to slip away from me.

“I play the guitar,” I blurted. I was teaching myself.

“Far out.”

“And the piano.” It was my life.

“Ah, a kindred spirit! The soul of a musician.” His gaze searched my eyes. “You’re beautiful.” He removed his strand of love beads and placed them over my head.

Next, I was paying for the Cool Whip and didn’t even remember walking into the market. Heading back on Haight Street, I nearly stumbled over the bodies that were sitting or lying on the sidewalk. It was 1967, the Summer of Love, and I was fifteen. The Haight District, the San Francisco neighborhood I had grown up in, was crowded with hippies, freaks, heads, beautiful people, flower children—they were called all those things—and the straights who gawked at them from cars and tour buses.

I looked for my beautiful hippie, but he had been swallowed up in the mash of humanity and traffic. Hippies called everyone beautiful, I told myself, but I had already plunged headlong into a deep crush.

Trudging up Ashbury, I tucked the love beads inside the neckline of my dress so my mom wouldn’t start asking questions. Two blocks up the hill from commercial Haight Street, I turned left on Frederick, my street, where things were a lot quieter. The hippies tended to swarm over the flatlands: Golden Gate Park to the west, and to the north, Page Street, Oak Street, and the Panhandle, the milelong skinny strip of green jutting out from the park.

I loved our house on its tranquil block. It was a Victorian built in the late 1800s, one of the few that had survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. On the left was an octagonal turret with its third-story window, and on the right were two stacked and gabled bay windows. The facade was covered with scalloped shingles, and the whole structure was painted slate gray with white trim. At the street level was a three-foot retaining wall, topped with a wrought-iron fence enclosing our little yard. I scampered up the concrete steps leading to the gate, let myself



in, and instead of mounting the sixteen steep stairs leading to the front porch, I took the walkway to the back door. As I entered the kitchen, I pressed my fingers to my love beads through my dress.

“Finally, Joanne!” Mom greeted me. “What took you so long? I had expected some help around here.” She was short, with low-slung breasts and a bulging stomach, not particularly fat, but rather a natural product of over forty years of gravitational pull. She was wearing the new pink polyester knit dress she had made and a frilly hostess apron. Her swollen feet oozed out of matching pink high heels and her hair was a lacquered bubble; she had it done every Friday afternoon at the beauty salon.

I set the brown sack of Cool Whip on the counter.

“Not there, Joanne, the refrigerator! Haven’t you got any sense?”

I opened the fridge and placed the Cool Whip on top of two other containers of Cool Whip. It was a bad sign. Mom in a panic over Cool Whip. Whenever she entertained, she had to have everything just right, like those pictures of food in *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

The doorbell rang, and she dashed out of the kitchen to answer it. She scurried back in, yanked off her apron, and hurried out again.

Jerry Westfield, the groom-to-be, slunk through the back door. “Oh, hi, Beethoven.”

“You’re not supposed to be here!”

“Hi, Jerry, nice to see you,” he said in a falsetto, then hooked an incisor over his lower lip. He was cute, tall and lanky, with big brown eyes and a single, reluctant dimple. My mother referred to him as a “catch.” He hovered over the hors d’oeuvres platter and began plucking the pickled herring out of Mom’s meticulous arrangement.

“Hey, leave some for somebody else.” I grabbed a dish towel, twisted it from the ends, and snapped it at his butt.

“Hey, you! Gimme that!”

I shrieked as he chased me around the table.

Mom returned to the kitchen, her fingertips pressed into her temples. “Heavens, Joanne! Stop that roughhousing.”

I pointed at Jerry. "He started it."

"Falsely accused!" He was laughing, the sour cream dressing from the herring wedged in the crease of his mouth.

Mom handed him a tray of manly sandwiches, still bearing crusts, and steered him toward the den, where my dad and my brother, Dan, were already glommed onto the boob tube, watching the Giants game. Mom dabbed fondly at Jerry's mouth and reached up behind him to touch a dark brown curl that had inched over the button-down collar of his white Oxford shirt. "You're going to need a haircut before the wedding. We don't want you looking shaggy in the photographs."

"Sure thing, Helen."

She placed a double-decker bowl of chips and dips in his other hand.

"Where's the beer?" he asked.

The doorbell rang.

"Heavens!" Tiny beads of sweat appeared above Mom's lip. "I'll bring it in, Jerry."

As soon as he left, Mom addressed me in a hushed, frantic tone. "Go see what's keeping your sister. I expected some help around here."

"Oh, Mommy! Everything looks perfect!"

As I mounted the stairs, I heard shrieks of greetings and laughter erupt from the foyer and saw our fat black-and-white cat, Snoopy, scurrying beneath the furniture, back slung low and ears flattened. Denise was in our bedroom, seated at her vanity on the gold swivel stool with the furry pink seat, staring vacantly into the mirror. Only one of the orange juice cans that she used as rollers had been removed, the others still bobby-pinned together in neat rows over her head.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "Mom is down there having a cow."

She offered the single long tendril of released hair. "Feel it. I've been wearing these things twenty-eight hours, and my hair is still damp."

"Bummer." I hated sleeping on rollers, and anyway, my plain

brown hair looked cool long, straight, and parted down the middle. “Can’t you hear all those ladies?” I reached for a bobby pin.

“Stop it, Joanne! I’m not going down there with wet hair.” Miss Perfect. A few weeks earlier, she had come home crying because she didn’t weigh enough to be allowed to join Weight Watchers; she went on Dr. Stillman’s Quick-Weight-Loss Diet and nearly floated away on all the water she drank. She used to be smart and witty, a big sister I could look up to, but falling head over heels for Jerry Westfield had turned her into a ninny.

“Is this how you’re going to act on your wedding day?” I goaded her. “Are you sure you want to get married so soon?”

“What a question!” She rolled her eyes around our room with the rosebud wallpaper and the frilly pink homemade curtains that matched the frilly pink homemade bedspreads. “I’ll be getting out of here.” Her voice softened as she looked at me in the mirror with that nauseating glow she’d been wearing through her engagement. “Oh, Joanne, you’ll see! When you find the right guy, nothing but him will matter, and everything in your life will slip away.”

“Not my piano!”

She emitted a little puff of air. “I didn’t expect you to understand.”

I got out the hair dryer, released the plastic hood from the nozzle, and blasted hot air over each orange juice can. Denise applied pearly-pink lipstick, rosy-pink blush, blue eye shadow, and thick eyeliner with little check marks at the ends. Together we got all the cans out of her hair. Denise stood, bent over, and brushed her hair forward to add volume. She flipped it back and arranged it in ripples over her shoulders. At last she smiled with self-satisfaction in the vanity mirror.

“Jerry’s here,” I reported matter-of-factly.

“Gerald’s here?” she gasped.

“Uh-huh.” If her hair hadn’t turned out, I wouldn’t have mentioned it. “Maybe he wants to see what presents you get.”

“Very funny. He knows this hen party is only for— Oh, my God! Jerry’s talking to Mother’s *friends* right now?”

“Calm down. He’s in the den, watching the Giants game with Dad and Dan.”

“That’s even worse! Gerald is antiwar and Dan is prowar. Gerald’s major is psychology, and Daddy doesn’t even believe there’s any such thing!”

Denise didn’t get it. Jerry was eventually going to find out all about us unsophisticated Donnellys. It was only a matter of time. “Your bridal shower has been going on without you for a half hour.”

“I need to compose myself,” she said wearily. “Tell Mother I’ll be right down.”

As I passed Mom’s sewing room, I noticed Denise’s massive white wedding gown and four pink empire-waist bridesmaid’s dresses hanging at attention across the closet. Of course my mother had made them all. If she staged an event and it didn’t knock her off her feet for three days afterward, then she hadn’t put enough effort into it. After Denise’s wedding, Mom would have to go to a rest home or the nuthouse in Napa.

Downstairs, Mom was relating her latest favorite story in her loud bray to a circle of her dearest, oldest friends whom she rarely saw. “He was her psychology *professor!* On the first day of class he looked out in that auditorium of three hundred brand-new freshmen, laid eyes on our Denise, and just *had* to have her!”

“Isn’t he still a graduate student?” asked Maxine Fulmer. She had gained quite a bit of weight since her husband had left her for his much younger secretary last year. She wore an African-print kaftan, big jewelry, and no bra, her breasts basking on her front like seal pups.

Mom’s mouth hung slightly open, as if holding her place in her story. “Jerry is getting his PhD, and soon he’ll be a psychoanalyst!”

“He’s a Freudian?” Mrs. Fulmer flopped back on the sofa cushions and slapped her lap. “God help your poor child, Helen.”

“Denise will be right down,” I announced.

Mom drew me near and whispered, “Pass the hors d’oeuvres trays, Joanne.” She made her way to another group of friends and said, “He was her psychology *professor!* On the first day of class

he looked out in that auditorium of three hundred brand-new freshmen, laid eyes on our Denise, and just *had* to have her!”

I rushed over to my best friend, Rena, the one person I had been allowed to invite. Her eyes were done up like Twiggy’s, false eyelashes and two colors of shadow, and her lipstick was Yardley’s pearl white. Her black, waist-length hair was in snarls because it took so long to comb out. We greeted each other with squeals, waving two peace signs at each other and leaping around in circles. Nobody understood me like Rena.

I glanced over my shoulder to be sure my mother wasn’t looking, then flashed Rena my love beads. “I met someone,” I whispered.

“Where? When? Who *is* he?”

“I’ll tell you later. Let’s go get the hors d’oeuvres before my mom has kittens.”

As we passed Mom, she called, “I see you’ve recruited some help, Joanne. Thank you, Serena.”

Rena cringed when she heard her hated complete name. After years of tremendous effort, she had succeeded in getting most people to call her Rena, but my mother had known her since we were in the third grade, and to her, Rena would always be Serena. It only proved that to become the person you wanted to be, you had to move far, far away from everyone who had watched you grow up.

Our kitchen was yellow with barnyard wallpaper. My mom was wild about roosters. They were on our plates, towels, and appliance cozies. Rena eyed the large white sheet cake, which read CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR WEDDING, DENISE, THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

Rena looked at me knowingly and whispered, “The first day of the *end* of her life.”

We howled with laughter. Rena and I had big plans. After college, we were going to live together in New York City, where she would act on Broadway and I would attend Juilliard and play recitals at Carnegie Hall.

By the time we returned to the living room with the hors d’oeuvres trays, Denise had made her entrance.

“Where will you live?” asked our cousin, Beth, one of the bridesmaids.

“In an apartment near campus. A darling place on Shattuck.”

“What’s your major?” asked Judy, one of Denise’s neighborhood friends.

“Art history, but...well...” Denise gave a brave smile. “I won’t be returning to classes in the fall.” Usually the docile, obedient daughter, Denise had fought Mom tooth and nail to allow her to cross the Bay Bridge every day, alone, by bus to attend the University of California in Berkeley instead of going to local San Francisco State College. Now she was giving it all up after one year to marry Jerry.

“Why would she continue?” asked Thelma Newman, my mother’s best friend. She was a small woman and, like my mom, wore a polyester double-knit dress and kept her hair in a lacquered bubble. “She’s getting her M.R.S. That’s really the only reason a girl needs to go to a university.”

“It isn’t *that*,” said Denise, flustered. “Gerald’s stipend just isn’t enough for us to live on. I’ll be working as a secretary here in the city, on Market, while he finishes his doctorate. Then we’ll be set.”

“What if you get pregnant?” asked Beth.

Denise blushed beneath her blusher as if all the ladies were imagining her doing what it took to get pregnant. “Oh, we aren’t planning to start a family for several years.”

“Thank God for the Pill,” said Judy.

“Oh, Denise would never take such a thing!” said Mom, but I knew Denise already was taking it, having timed it precisely so that its effectiveness would kick in on her wedding night.

“You’re getting a prenuptial agreement, I hope,” said Mrs. Fulmer.

Denise cleared her throat and said in a whiny, indignant tone, “Oh, I don’t believe that’s necessary.”

“No blushing bride ever did,” said Mrs. Fulmer. “Until now. Times are changing, Denise. Women are demanding their rights. Suppose you work for several years, your husband finishes his

doctorate, sets up a thriving practice, and then dumps you for the prettiest patient with the biggest emotional problems. At least you would be assured of financial compensation, an opportunity to complete your education.” Recently Mrs. Fulmer had shocked all her friends by returning to the university herself to complete the degree she had started over twenty years ago. She wagged her finger at Denise. “I’d look into it if I were you, dear, for peace of mind.”

The awkward silence in the room was pierced by Denise’s silvery laugh. “I trust Gerald implicitly.”

“Look at that mound of presents, Denise!” exclaimed Mom, clapping her hands together. “Hadn’t you better get started?” She handed me the telephone notepad and a pen. “Joanne, you be recording secretary for Denise’s thank-you notes.” She handed Rena a paper plate with slits cut into it. “Here, Serena, you make the ribbon bouquet for the wedding rehearsal. Slip the ends in like so, the bows on top.”

Denise unwrapped an olive-green fondue pot. Then an orange one. After the fourth fondue pot, she glanced across the room at Mom’s worried face. The two of them had fought over Denise’s choice of silver pattern, and the fact that she hadn’t gotten a single dessert fork only proved that Mom had been right in warning her against registering something so expensive.

A male voice erupted from the den. “Honey? Honey?”

The women’s conversation died down.

“Honey, could you get us some beers?” called Jerry.

Mom’s palms flew to her cheeks. “Those poor men! I completely forgot about their beer.”

Mrs. Newman patted Denise’s knee. “Hop to it, dear. You want him to keep thinking he’s one lucky fellow.”

“Hmph,” said Mrs. Fulmer, crossing her arms over her unrestrained bosom, her eyes following Denise’s progress out of the room.

After the cake was cut, Rena and I escaped with our pieces into the privacy of the bedroom, which would soon be all mine.

“Out with it,” said Rena. “Tell me every juicy detail.”

I tried to make my encounter with the beautiful hippie as

thrilling as possible, but at the end of my story, Rena merely raised one side of her upper lip. “That’s it? He asked for spare change and gave you love beads? You don’t know a thing about him.”

“His eyes, Rena. He has dreamy eyes. He plays guitar! And you shoulda seen the cool way his jeans sorta hung off his hipbones.”

“How old?”

“Dunno. Seventeen, eighteen.” I gulped. “Maybe older.”

“Too old for you. Long hair?”

I tapped my shoulders with my fingertips. “Groovy.”

Rena rolled her eyes. “We weren’t gonna do this ever again. ’Member? No teenybopper crushes. We aren’t gonna fall for a guy just cuz he’s cute. We’re gonna get to know him first. He’s gonna call all the time, take us out on dates, then maybe, just maybe we might get interested.”

I winced. “I thought that just meant for the boys at school.”

“Nope. *All* boys.”

“You’re right,” I said grudgingly. “I spent so many lunch periods hanging around playing guitars with Dave. Then he goes and asks me for Terry Schumacher’s number.”

“Terry Schumacher is a nothing,” said Rena. Terry had actually been sophomore homecoming princess. Rena and I had a better chance of being the first women on the moon than of being homecoming princesses.

“Sure, Terry’s cute and sweet,” said Rena, “but she hardly ever says a word.”

“Guys don’t like smart girls.”

“Or ones with opinions. ’Member when Rusty asked me to the movies? He goes, ‘What do ya want to see?’ and I go, ‘*The Graduate*, *Cool Hand Luke*, or *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*. You pick from those.’ After that one date, when I asked him why he was ignoring me, he goes, ‘When I ask a girl what she wants to see, I expect her to say whatever I want to see.’”

I had never been asked on a date, just kissed once at music camp. It was a slimy, teeth-knocking kiss, and I had hid from the



boy the rest of camp, afraid he would try it again, even though I had liked him before the kiss.

Rena was rummaging through her huge suede bag bordered with long fringe. She withdrew a 45 RPM record, exclaiming, "Hey! Look what I scored!" It was "Evolution! Revolution!" by a new San Francisco group, the Purple Cockroach, which was quickly becoming known simply as Roach. The hit single had soared up the Bay Area chart past the Jefferson Airplane's "Somebody to Love" and the Doors' "Light my Fire," and had been number one for three weeks.

"Far out!" I exclaimed, lifting the lid of my record player.

On the record's paper sleeve were four hairy guys sitting in a tree, glaring vacantly into the camera. Rena pointed to the guy front and center, who had a white man's light brown Afro, a wiry black beard, and penetrating eyes. "Gus Abbott is so out of sight."

I put the record on the turntable and placed the needle on it, and a blast of psychedelic rock erupted: loud drums, warbling reverb, and shouts of "Evolution! Revolution! We gotta be free, free, free! Break those chains of society!"

Rena and I bobbed our heads and shook our bodies until Mom shouted up the stairs, "Turn that racket down!"

"I saw some auditions posted for this play the Buena Vista Players are putting on," said Rena. "Will you come with me?"

"To the Buena Vista? I guess." The previous month, the theater had been shut down on an obscenity charge because it staged a reading of Michael McClure's *The Beard*. "What's the play?"

"It's called *The Blacks*. I don't know anything about it."

"Are you worried about foul language?"

"My mom won't care." Rena was kind of a rebel, and her mom backed her up. In junior high, when she was suspended three times for wearing slacks to school, Mrs. Thompson insisted they were more modest than miniskirts and warmer. In our freshman year the principal gave in and let girls wear pants to school.

The record ended, and I shifted the arm of the phonograph to the edge to play it again.

“What’s this?” Rena picked up a newspaper clipping propped on my desk:

### **Hitchhiker Check Is Revealing**

The California Highway Patrol checked out 100 hitchhikers over a three-month period on a stretch of Highway 101. Consider this: exactly 84 had criminal records. And 12 either were runaways or servicemen absent without official leave. That left four, just four, who hadn’t been crossways with the law, or were about to be.

“My mom—she’s always using scare tactics to try to get me to behave. She and Dad never worried about Denise doing anything wrong, and they let Dan do stuff cuz he’s a boy.”

“Does Jerry know Denise is super-smart? She seems too young to get married.”

“I know, but Jerry’s *old*—twenty-three. She probably just wants to give it up and be done with it.”

“You mean, like, her *virginity*?” Rena squealed, rolling her eyes. “We’re living in a sexual revolution!”

“Not Denise. I hear her fighting Jerry off downstairs late at night, when they come in from dates. Jerry lives with his aunt in Orinda, and they have no place to go to be alone together.”

“Bummer. Well, at least as a married lady she can use tampons.”

We both hated those big old smelly sanitary napkins, which hooked on the metal stays of an elastic belt and felt like wearing a diaper.

I looked straight into Rena's Twiggy eyes. "Will you help me find him?"

She knew I meant my beautiful hippie. "Where will we look?"

"Around. He's probably roaming the street right now." I gazed up at the wall hanging I had sewn with yarn on burlap: music notes, a turquoise guitar, and the saying, "Out of my loneliness I will fashion a song, and when I find someone who understands, we will sing it together." I looked back at Rena and said, "He's perfect for me."

"How could he be perfect if your dad won't let him in the house?"

That evening after the shower guests left and Jerry and Denise slipped away for a dinner date, my parents, Mrs. Newman, Dan, and I sat among the ruins of the party and scarfed leftovers. Ladies' party food—clam-stuffed marinated mushrooms, surprise meatballs (raspberry preserves was the surprise), curried deviled eggs, rolled watercress and blue cheese sandwiches, and the floating islands of melted rainbow sherbet in the bride's punch—was a rare treat for Dad and Dan, but I was stuffed from eating all afternoon.

"Pass me the deviled eggs, Dick," Mom said.

"Sure, sure," said Dad. I wondered why anyone named Richard would want to go by Dick. Didn't Dad know what it meant? It embarrassed me every time my mom used it.

I gazed forlornly at my upright piano in the corner of the room, my Beethoven sonata open on the music rack. I usually practiced at least two hours a day, but with all the frantic preparations for the shower, I hadn't gotten around to it yet and craved the feel of the smooth keys.

Snoopy emerged from his hiding place and rubbed against our legs, purring loudly, and when Dad wasn't looking, I fed him bits of clam stuffing. I leafed through the July 7 issue of *Time* magazine, as if I were not the least bit interested in the cover story "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture," which I would pore over in private, hoping to glean something I didn't

already know. The words “Haight-Ashbury” seemed to fly off the page. Amazing! Our little neighborhood—the hub of a cultural revolution!

It was warm, and all the windows were open. A trolley rumbled by and made a wide, sweeping turn up the block onto Masonic Avenue. Next, the Gray Line Tour bus roared past, farting nauseous diesel fumes on its Hippie Hop, advertised as “a safari through psychedelphia, and the only foreign tour within the continental limits of the United States.” Apparently the hippies had blocked off traffic on Haight Street, with their chants of “The streets belong to the people,” “We are free,” and “Haight is love.” An overflow of pedestrians roamed our street, and strains of songs, conversation, laughter, flutes, bells, tambourines, and drums wafted into our living room. Hippies had begun moving into the Haight in 1965, and it looked like the party was only getting started. I loved all the excitement, but my parents were fed up and threatened to move.

Looking over the sofa back, out the bay window, my dad scowled at a long-haired couple ambling by arm in arm. “You can’t tell the girl from the boy.”

“Hippies are a social disease,” scoffed Dan, the only boy in the Haight sporting a crew cut. In the news, the city’s health director, Ellis D. (“LSD”) Sox, had warned that there was a danger in the Haight of epidemic hepatitis, venereal disease, typhus, and malnutrition, but after inspecting dozens of hippie pads and establishments, the health department hadn’t found anything wrong. “Hippies are always looking for a free handout,” continued Dan. “They should get a job.”

“*You* should get a job,” I retorted.

Dad slapped his knee. He had a paunch and a bald dome, with a ring of black-and-gray hair curling around it. He was a sales rep for a produce company and made his calls to the grocery stores of the city dressed in a business suit. “You fell right into that one, son.”

Dan scowled at me. “I’m looking for work. I’m not a hippie hypocrite.”