

1 Norma Jean Lutz 1
Classic Collection



FLOWERZ HILLZ

NORMA JEAN LUTZ

Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection #1

Flower in the Hills

Norma Jean Lutz

Flower in The Hills

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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 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 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*.

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

PS: *Flower in the Hills* is the first title in the *Classic Collection* – with many more to follow.

Note from the author:

I first wrote *Flower in the Hills* in the 1980s. This version is taken from the original manuscript, the only changes being minor edits.

Living in Oklahoma, I'm only a short drive from the Ozarks and I visit there often. Years ago, I suffered from the miserable malady of car sickness, thus it was easy to imagine Latina's queasiness as she experiences the hills for the first time.

Here's hoping you enjoy this *Norma Jean Lutz Classic Collection* selection.

Norma Jean Lutz

Pease visit me at my website: www.NormaJeanLutz.com

Chapter One

Latina Harmen knew she was going to hate Missouri. "There's nothing in Missouri!" she had told her father when he announced they were to spend the summer there. And now she knew she'd been one hundred and ten percent right.

The Harmen's family car lurched and swayed around each sharp hairpin curve deep in the green-black Ozark Mountains. As the dense stands of trees flew by, Latina had been watching the curving roads and valleys directly beneath the road they were on. But now she was unable to look out the window at all.

The usually sweet fragrance of her father's pipe was making her feel sick. She pressed her forehead against the cool window and squeezed her eyes shut. She couldn't have motion sickness. Latina, the girl who fearlessly rode the wildest rides at the oceanfront park in Periwinkle Cove each and every summer? Impossible.

Her thirteen-year-old brother, Dirk, had finally stopped his nerve-shattering habit of snapping the little rubber bands on his braces and was now gazing out his window at the panoramic view, offering a few intelligent comments such as, "Wow!" and "Gee whiz, would you look at that."

His very excitement over this desolate place was more than enough to nauseate Latina even without the constant, unending rocking of the car.

She clenched her teeth in a determined effort not to be sick in the car like a little kid. As she did, a soft uncontrollable moan escaped her lips.

Dirk turned to look at her. "Hey Mom! Latina's making like Casper the Ghost."

In a sort of haze, she heard her mother saying to her father, "Oh, Ross! She's car sick. How much farther?"

"We turn off the main highway about five miles up ahead, but then it's seven more miles to Zell's Bush."

Her mother looked around at her again, her face filled with concern. "Think you can hold on that long, Latina?"

Latina nodded without unclenching her teeth. The hamburger she'd had for lunch felt as it were hanging somewhere in the halfway spot of her esophagus.

Zell's Bush. Even the name of the town to which they were headed was revolting. Every new lurch of the car took her farther and farther from the beach at Periwinkle Cove. And from Kent Starner.

As far as she could see out across the valleys, there were hills of deep green pine, which looked almost black – black and ominous. It seemed like an eternity before they turned a tight little curve on the dusty back road and saw a huddle of buildings sitting just past a sign announcing: *Zell's Bush. POP 381.*

Her father parked the car, jumped out, and took long strides up the wooden step to the high porch of a store whose faded sign read *Boles' Grocery*. Within minutes he called out to his wife to bring Latina inside.

When Latina thought back to it later, there wasn't much she could remember about being led into the back living quarters of the dusty old store. Her stomach was kinked in little knots and her hair felt pasted to her head.

An old bathtub stood upon four quaint claw legs and the pipes came out of holes in the wooden floor to the faucets. She recalled sitting on the edge of that old tub while her mother held a cold cloth to her burning forehead. Voices coming from

the store drifted back to them as Latina sat there attempting to regain her composure after having lost all her lunch.

She heard an older man saying, "I'm Orville Boles, and this here's my wife, Maude. You folks heading for the Nettle ton place?"

"No," she could hear her father explain in his patient professor voice. "We're looking for the farm that Professor Kirkland owns. He's a friend of mine. He's in Europe for the summer, so we're renting it."

"Yep. That there's the one. It's the Nettleton place. The Nettletons owned it nigh on to fifty years."

When Latina emerged from the back room with her mother, Mr. Boles was drawing her father a map on a brown paper bag that showed how to get to the farm. Thin, frail Maude Boles smiled at her sympathetically and made a *tsking* sound through her dentures. Latina looked away, wishing someone would offer her a place to sit down.

It wasn't until that very moment that she noticed the young man sitting in a straight-backed chair tipped against the wall next to the pop cooler. His arms were folded across his broad chest and his long legs allowed his feet to remain flat on the floor. A shock of sandy curls lay across his forehead and his dancing blue eyes were laughing at her.

"Let's go back to the car, Mom," she whispered as her hand flew to her mussed and matted hair.

"We can wait till you're feeling a little better," her mother suggested. "No need to hurry now. We're almost there."

A few minutes earlier, Latina had never wanted to ride in a car ever again, but now she said. "Let's go to the car *now*, Mother. Please!"

She couldn't bear those laughing eyes on her another second.

The screen door was held by a snaky-looking long black spring that made the door bang shut as they went out.

Her father and Dirk followed shortly, chattering about their first glimpse of Zell's Bush. "Paulie," the professor said, "did you ever see the likes of that store? Just like a scene from Ma and Pa Kettle wasn't it?"

"Somewhat, I suppose." Her mother's voice was non committal.

"That tall guy was really cool," Dirk was saying in his usual breathless way. "Did you see the muscles on that dude? What'd they say his name was, Dad?"

"Clouse. Tully Clouse, I think. They drawl their words so that I can barely make out what they're saying."

Clouse! Latina seethed inwardly. Should have been *Louse*. That clod, who looked like he was wearing his little brother's jeans, had laughed at her! As if coming to this miserable place and then getting sick weren't degrading enough, that hillbilly had had the audacity to laugh at her.

Gray clouds gathered in the sky as they traveled the winding road from Boles' Grocery to the farm. Twice, their car bumped over metal bridges that rattled beneath them in protest. Her mother remarked that the road must wind and turn more than the streams did.

Latina mutely agreed.

The fact that the two-story farmhouse was in better repair than Latina thought it might be did nothing to cheer her. It was nothing in comparison to their

charming cottage at the cove on the East Coast where they had stayed every summer for as long as she could remember.

A few drops of rain had begun to fall as her father brought the last of their luggage into the cavernous house. After the long tedious hours traveling from their home in Eagleton, Ohio, Dirk now exploded into a missile, shooting from room to room. His insatiable curiosity about the big old house made it impossible for their father to get any help out of him.

Dirk reported that there were four *humongous* bedrooms upstairs and immediately staked his claim on the southeast room that overlooked the meandering driveway and the expanse of the valley. He wanted to see the sun come up, he announced to all who would listen as he leaned precariously over the balcony railing at the head of the stairs.

The musty smells of the old house – which had recently been opened up and aired out by one of the local women – didn't do much for Latina's queasy stomach.

"As soon as I locate the teakettle, Latina," her mother said as they carried boxes into the kitchen, "I'll heat you some soup and make a cup of tea."

Latina set the box she was carrying on the kitchen table which was spread with a worn, flower-print oilcloth. She watched as her mother gazed about the room. "This place smells like my Grandma's old farmhouse."

The statement surprised Latina. She hadn't heard her mother speak much about her family, all of whom had lived in Kansas and had long since passed away before Latina was born.

The air in the house was cool and clammy. As soon as Latina located the right suitcase, she pulled out her bulky blue cardigan and slipped its warmth over

her bare arms. She then grabbed her transistor radio from the same suitcase and tuned in her favorite music to chase the formidable silence out of the house.

Now raindrops pelted more persistently. Her father planted his tall frame before a window in the front room and looked out across the wide front porch. He tamped his unlit pipe with his forefinger. "It's a bit cool," he commented. "Wonder if we could find enough dry wood to start a fire."

The room was flanked on the north by a massive stone fireplace situated between two bay windows.

Dirk was banging out a painful rendition of "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater" on an old upright piano he had discovered. Hitting a final note, he jumped up at his father's suggestion. "All right! Lead me to the woodpile. I brought my trusty hatchet."

Latina marveled at the two of them as they walked into the deepening darkness as though it were their well-lit yard in Eagleton. Although she knew her mother needed help in the kitchen, Latina sank into one of the overstuffed chairs in front of the fireplace and closed her eyes.

Presently, her father and Dirk brought in some sickly looking sticks of wood and made an effort to start a fire. "Jim told me about the remodeling they'd done on this place," her father was saying, his head inside the fireplace's black cavity. "He seemed to be particularly proud of this fireplace." He placed the kindling on top of pieces of wadded up newspapers. "I can see why now. This is a beaut."

Good old Professor Kirkland, Latina thought. She wished he'd never come on staff at Eagleton State College where her father was dean of the history department. That way they would never have heard of Zell's Bush, Missouri. She

thought again of that awful moment at supper two weeks ago when her father had announced to the family that they were not going to the cove for the summer. Latina had nearly choked.

"Your mother and I have been discussing this off and on for some time," he told them in his slow, methodical way. "As you know, the cove has become increasingly crowded and commercialized each year. It's not the quiet summer retreat it once was. Now it's glutted with disco dance joints, pawn shops, bars, and tourist traps everywhere. I'm finding it more and more difficult to complete the research I set out to do each summer. Not enough peace and quiet."

Latina had sat there frozen as she heard about Jim Kirkland's sabbatical in Europe and his offer to rent out the quiet farm in the Ozarks. "And I've decided to take him up on his offer," her dad said with finality.

The commercialization, as her father called it, consisted of wonderful fun places to be. Especially the dinner club with a dance floor out over the sparkling water where she and Kent Starner danced in a dream world last summer.

A few days ago, before they left Eagleton, she'd received a note from Kent explaining that he would be in Mexico for a week at the beginning of the summer, but then would be meeting her again at Periwinkle Cove later in June. Painfully, she wrote back to explain to him of her sudden change of plans, and gave him the Zell's Bush address.

Latina turned toward what was left of the dying fire. She could see Dirk's initial excitement over the prospect of a glowing fire was waning. The wood they had found was too wet. "What are we going to do tonight with no television?" His voice was flat.

Latina sank further back into the chair. "Let me stay in Eagleton with Grandma Stanton and get a job," she had begged her mother privately in her room after hearing her father's news. "At least I'll be with my friends all summer."

But her mother shook her head. "Next year you'll be graduating, Latina. Let's let this be a together-summer for our family. We'll have a different kind of good time. You'll see."

Latina had seen all she wanted to see of this *different kind of good time*. The chill of the room permeated her very bones.

Her father leaned back on his heels where he sat crouched in front of the fireplace. Weariness was taking the edge off his enthusiasm as well. He sighed. "It'd be best for all of us, I suppose, to go to bed early tonight. We're all exhausted from the trip."

"To bed?" Dirk's groan of disbelief was followed by a call from their mother in the kitchen.

The three of them were thankful to see the kitchen table set about with thick ham sandwiches and mugs of steaming tea. Pauline had closed off the kitchen doors and the gas cooking stove's oven door was open, warming the room.

Latina's father laughed. "Paulie, you outsmarted these two Boy Scouts in getting a fire started." He gave his wife a grateful hug while Dirk plowed into his sandwich.

Latina chose to sip alternately from her steaming tea, then her bowl of soup, letting the warmth trickle down to her insides.

"What a blessing," her mother said, "that the Kirklands called ahead to have a lady open the house for us." She rubbed her fingers across the oilcloth thoughtfully. "I think they said her name was Garwood."

"Garwood?" Dirk's interest was suddenly sparked. "I saw a sign just up from the grocery store that said, *Garwood's Sawmill*. Maybe that's where the lady lives.

"I don't know, son." The professor leaned back in his chair and lit his after-dinner pipe. "In such a small town, everyone is related to everyone else. There could be fifty families of Garwoods."

I doubt there are fifty families in the whole county," Latina commented dryly. She hadn't meant it as a joke, but everyone laughed.

Latina thought of her best friend, Camille Dawson, who was leaving to spend two weeks in the Bahamas. Before school was out, the two of them talked often of the awesome tans they would have next fall as they began their senior year together at Eagleton High. Now the thought of Cammie lying on the deck of a luxurious cruise ship while she sat in the kitchen of a dank old farmhouse was unbearable. How could her parent have done this to her?

"The screened-in porch is perfect to catch the afternoon sun," her mother was saying in an irritatingly casual voice. "I think I'll put some hanging planters out there."

Her mother, who at first seemed to be Latina's only ally, was sounding terribly settled in. It was worrisome for Latina, who was now dreading going up the stairs into the darkened bedroom.

Her parents had chosen the east bedroom adjacent to Dirk's and her father mentioned that he preferred the room overlooking the backyard for his study. The room adjoining the study was the one left for Latina.

The wind came up and whistled in the windows as Latina scurried quickly into the strange bed. Her radio lay on the pillow next to her ear, but the rattling windows gave stiff competition to its soothing sounds.

She fumbled with the dial on the transistor before realizing that the batteries had given out. She was such a dummy. Why hadn't she thought to replace them?

It was a wretched beginning to what she knew was going to be a wretched summer.

[For the rest of Latina's story of her wretched summer, click HERE!](#)

Norma Jean Lutz Bio



Norma Jean Lutz's writing career began professionally in 1977 when she enrolled in a writing correspondence course. Since then, she has had over 250 short stories and articles published in both secular and Christian publications. The full-time writer is also the author of over 50 published books under her own name and many ghostwritten books. Her books have been favorably reviewed in *Affair de Coeur*, *Coffee Time Romance*, *Romance Reader at Heart*, and *The Romance Studio* magazines, and her short fiction has garnered a number of first prizes in local writing contests.

Norma Jean is the founder of the Professionalism In Writing School, which was held annually in Tulsa for fourteen years. This writers' conference, which closed its doors in 1996, gave many writers their start in the publishing world.

A gifted teacher, Norma Jean has taught a variety of writing courses at local colleges and community schools, and is a frequent speaker at writers' seminars around the country. For eight years, she taught on staff for the Institute of Children's Literature. She has served as artist-in-residence at grade schools, and for two years taught a staff development workshop for language arts teachers in schools in Northeastern Oklahoma.

As co-host for the Tulsa KNYD Road Show, she shared the microphone with Kim Spence to present the Road Show Book Club, a feature presented by the station for more than a year. She has also appeared in numerous interviews on KDOR-TV.

Presently (in addition to her own writing endeavors) Norma Jean is actively reaching out to other writers via the Internet and social media.

If you are a newbie author and need help. Look no further. Helpful information can be found on the Be A Novelist blog site:

<http://www.BeANovelist.com>. Why struggle out there all alone when you can benefit from Norma Jean's many decades of experience in the writing/publishing industry? Contact Norma Jean: **normajeane@beanovelist.com**