Lunge Out of Hell
By Reg Kahney

I MUST NOT ROCK. By Linda Marie. Daughters, Inc.

Linda Marie Pillay is outrageous, illegitimate, profane, uneducated, cynical, funny, gruff, and at times, just plain ornery. I Must Not Rock is the autobiography of her first 30 years as an uncivilized incorrigible in the hands of a sexually frenzied mother, a pedophilic stepfather, hostile court psychiatrists, sadistic nuns, assorted foster parents, and a husband who, she says, married her solely to maintain his immigrant's visa.

At first I thought "Linda Marie" was a composite portrait of every candidate who's ever appeared on Queen for a Day—how could one person have lived such a wretched life? Her mother whipped her and kept her hungry and tied in bed all day. She spent two years in "protective custody"—jail—before she was four. By age eight she was a bully, a thief, an arsonist, and a hooker; neighbors complained that she was sexually attacking their children. She spent most of her ninth year in a body cast after falling from a tree; a pin was put into her hip. Through all this, Lester, her stepfather, kept molesting her.

But Linda Marie is a real live person, one of thousands of accidental children automatically disfranchised by their lack of family. She is a working-class woman who writes in working-class terms and makes no attempt to be literary or even tasteful, particularly when describing Lester's "parental devotion." When Linda was 12, Heida, her mother, left town for a few days, and Linda became Lester's maid and mistress. "He decided we should get married as soon as I was old enough. Whenever Heida wasn't around, Lester would have me blow him or he'd ball me in the ass or just jerk off in front of me or have me jerk him off. He'd whisper sweet things to me while he was doing this."

Lester was finally hauled into court, tried, and "punished": he was put on probation and ordered to stay away from parks, movie matinees, and small children for a year. Since he was needed at home to support his wife, Linda was sacrificed to what she has archly renamed "The Convent of the Holy Terror." "If you weren't tough when you went in, bychrist you were when you left." Doors and windows were locked and barred; the girls made a fad of carving their names on the broken glass. Linda was forever on remand.

Her mother tied her in bed. Her stepfather forced her into sex. "I had enough hate for men to lead an army of women to perform massive castrations."

When she was 19 and had exhausted several foster homes, Linda moved to a Catholic residence for women and met Pat, a lesbian. As chronic outsiders, both appreciated the irony of their living situation. "How about that?" says Pat. "You're a whore and I'm a queer, and we both live in that nice residence for young ladies."

Linda was also a lesbian at this point, but she then met and married Raman, a foreign student, and later left for India with their daughter. (The author never explains why the trip was made, and the book is frustrating here because she describes their visit in a series of paragraphs that seem to be building up to make a point but never do.)

Back in California, Linda bore a second child and then began drinking all day with the women in her new neighborhood. "I could hardly wait for my kids to grow up and run away," she writes. When Raman was transferred to Connecticut, Linda suddenly faced PTA, garden clubs, charity drives, and a "nearly uncontrollable urge to lift up my dress and masturbate in front of everyone. Raman and I did not fit in. I hope to hell I never do."

She began attending women's meetings at a nearby college, but even feminism made her skeptical. "After listening to the statements women made about husbands and the media, my anger began to surface. I had enough hate for men to lead an army of women to perform massive castrations. Once, I asked a woman sitting next to me when we were going to start doing something. It seemed we hadn't talked long enough yet. I had; and I hardly ever said anything. I wanted to blow up buildings, hijack battleships, and lead huge groups of women to government facilities to throw the men out and take over. No one felt the same as I did. I wanted to go to war. Everyone else seemed to want to work it out." Even her affairs with women were bitter disappointments. "One morning I woke up bisexual; I hated women as much as I hated men."

The story ends abruptly, however, with another of Raman's transfers and suffers from too much directionless narrative. It is more of a documentary than literature perse, and I would have liked more information about the author's present life; is she still with Raman? What happened to her two children?

Daughters, Inc., is a feminist publishing company formed to give women a place to go with books that the more established houses will not handle. I Must Not Rock is just such a book. They call it one of their more "risky" titles, perhaps because the author is so intimate and her language so unconsciously unfeminist and natural. Behind it is an earned hatred of all things acceptable and expected.