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# **Haight Street**

rachel corday



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Haight Street is an adventure. It is a story that centers around the life of Stella Durand-Ruell, owner of a women's bar just a block away from the famed Haight-Ashbury district in 1967. Like most people who were part of the hippie subculture at that time, Stella's life centers around where she is going to get her next drink or whether she has enough dope to last the day. Stella finds joy and meaning through her relationship with her lover Joanne, an Italian teacher at the University of San Francisco. She is also enamored of Joanne's little girl Sofie, who in the end is the catalyst for Stella's startling reflection of her own life as spiraling downward, \*enmired in self-destruction and denial of the very life that she wants. But Stella is a strong and powerful figure, filled with vitality and wit and humor. She looks out for her friend since childhood Gary, rescuing him from a bar fight with Elko, a drag queen holding a grudge. She looks forward to her morning conversations with Claire, a groundskeeper who works in the Golden Gate Park who, stoned as she is most days, runs over a dead body with her riding lawn mower. Stella finds excitement too in her friend T.C., an eccentric lawyer working for the San Francisco D.A.'s office. The Vietnam War is raging and Stella and Joanne and Sofie makes signs and go to the demonstration at People's Park in Berkeley at which hundreds of people are rushed and clubbed by the National Guard, and Joanne and Sofie end up in the hospital. Stella is know all over town, on Haight Street, in the Mission District, and Castro Street, not only the owner of her famed bar, but as a survivor, someone who seems to be impervious to the ravages of the times. But it is not so, and in the end she must either change or accept her fate as yet another casualty.

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