

## Confirmation

*1965:*

It had rained the day before. May, glorious in its flower, splattered color everywhere along the boulevards and in front of everyone's houses. Back gardens proudly sported tulips, peonies, daffodils, daisies, and irises—the world smelled fresh. Becky passed a hand along the surface of the dining table, noticing her reflection in the polished wood. Her mother had gone out shopping and the housekeeper Alberta had left a piece of cake on the stove. Open windows brought a mild breeze. Becky looked out the dining room window and saw Tommy, the kid next door and her childhood playmate polishing the red Chevy Impala his father had just bought him. She wore her blue and white dress and a pair of white heels. She thought of going out to show off and talk to Tommy, but changed her mind.

The phone rang.

“Have you got your confirmation dress yet?” Susie Kahn asked her.

“Not yet.”

“My mom's taking me to Green's.”

“I looked at the juniors in Jacobson's but I didn't see anything I liked.”

“You've only got a week, Becky.”

“I know.”

“What are you doing tonight?”

“I have a date with this guy—Hank.”

“Is he Jewish?”

“No, Susie, I don't know what he is. He has a motorcycle and he's twenty-eight.”

“Do your parents know?”

“Are you kidding?”

“You are such a skank, Becky.”

“No I’m not, I’m a bohemian—he’s kind of a Beatnik. He lived in Greenwich Village for a while.”

“That’s sounds horrible.”

“Don’t be ignorant, Susie. People read poetry there. I gotta go.”

Becky hung up the kitchen phone and wandered into the den. She hated to admit to herself how much she lied to Suzy—not that it mattered. Hank was the brother of a friend and he did ride a motorcycle, he did live in California and Greenwich Village for a while, but now he was back from Viet Nam and he tried to kill himself with a razor blade and spent some time on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of St. Lawrence Hospital. He certainly didn’t ask her out for a date and wouldn’t anytime soon. Still, fantasies have a reality of their own.

The door to the back yard patio was open and she figured she’d put on her bikini and catch some sun so she could get a tan before Confirmation. The kid who mowed the lawn had a gorgeous tan and a really beautiful chest. She liked the way he looked over at her when she went out in her bikini, but she could never figure out what to say to him. Hi, what school do you go to? Maybe he didn’t go to school. He looked a little old to be in school. His name was Randy and he lived on the other side of Mt. Hope Avenue.

Randy was picking at something in the lawn mower when she went out with her bottle of Bain de Soleil and a blanket. She spread the blanket where she could get the most sun and still see Randy out of the corner of her eye. She brought her transistor radio and set it on the blanket.

*When the last time I saw you, you wouldn't even kiss me  
 How can you tell me how much you miss me?  
 The rich guy you're seein' must have put you down  
 When the last time I saw you, you wouldn't even kiss me  
 So welcome back, baby, to the poor side of town  
 The rich guy you're seein' must have put you down.*

Johnny Rivers sang as she watched Randy pull on the chain to get the mower started. He glanced over at her and she looked away, but not before she caught his saucy smile and his eyes appraising her in her bikini.

I'm beautiful and brilliant, Becky thought as she lay down, feeling the sun seep into her skin, the warmth piercing her body. Closing her eyes, she got lost in the summer songs from the radio. Percy Sledge singing *When a Man loves a Woman, Good Lovin'* by the Young Rascals. I'm young and sexy and cute, she thought and drifted out into a half-waking sun haze. The sound of the lawn mower, crickets and cicadas, the music from the radio--all this sound melted into her mind, hummed into her consciousness while she allowed the sun to create a glow of golden sheen on her skin. She felt more sophisticated than she was and all the world of non-Jewish boys beckoned her.

But-- (the intrusion of another thought startled her)-- I like Jewish boys better. Then thoughts of Confirmation invaded that thought. Confirmation, originally developed by the Reform movement, was conceived as a way to provide a ceremony for older children, sixteen or so. The Reform Rabbis felt thirteen was too young for a child to truly understand the meaning of Jewish law so they conceived of a ritual that would allow older children to give reverence for their studies in front of their peers, their parents and the congregation. To Becky it meant having a service and having a party and going to the beach. The beach was the best part of it all. Unlike the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, it was less of a religious initiation than a kind of social event—where the Confirmants could 'confirm'

(substantiate, prove, authenticate, validate, back up? the words ran through her mind in non-alphabetical order) their place as young adults without all the terror of reciting a *Haf Torah* in Hebrew. No Hebrew—just a kind of secular gliding through a candlelit sanctuary and maybe a little speech or two (in English) about some part of the Talmud or some other Jewish aspect of philosophy. Becky favored Spinoza but he wasn't on the list. She ended up with Moses Maimonides.

The darkened hallways of the synagogue smelled of must and old world depression and something cooking in the kitchen—the black women who made things for the *Shabbat* laughed in the kitchen, clanging pots and pans. Becky found herself wishing she could be in the kitchen with them, singing soul music or just banging things around and making food. She felt foolish being served by people she had more respect for than the people, the group, she was supposed to belong to.

The confirmation group straggled into the dining room, tables clothed and set for the mingling and eating after the service, which would take place at eight o'clock. Their confirmation classes were always held after school and everyone was expected to attend service afterwards—family night. Becky's father Frank Kaplan had dropped her off and gone on to play nine holes of golf with her mother Sylvia. They planned to finish nine holes in time for the service. Becky imagined her mother in her golf shorts, the burnished sheen of a tan over her light freckles; her dark curls glistening with hair spray.

Paul Silverman walked into the room carrying his *talis* like a pretentious child—he looked ludicrous marching around with an authority he hadn't earned. Becky looked at him with disgust.

“Paul, why do you carry that thing around all the time?”

He wouldn't disdain her with an answer.

Rabbi Phillip Frankel and Cantor Bruce Wetzler came from the library. Rabbi carried a sheaf of papers and a pile of books, and Cantor munched on a Danish smeared with butter. Frankel angular, tall and scholarly, Wetzler round with eyes stuffed into the folds of fat cheeks—his body waddled rather than walked. Rabbi had warmth and confidence, bushy hair steel colored, small brown eyes and a graying beard while Cantor smirked with a supercilious grin and had a faint odor of cigar trailing off his body. Both of them avoided looking at one another unless they were on the pulpit doing a service.

“Come sit down, sit down.”

Becky looked at her confirmation mates with a terrible sense of ennui. The same children she attended Sunday School with year after year after year—the boredom of it killed her--she knew them all too well. Whatever excitement life had to offer was outside this room—somewhere else. It came from the Stones or the Beatles—or Leonard Cohn or Jack Kerouac—Alan Ginsberg playing his harmonium and reciting *Howl--I want the orgy of our flesh, orgy of all eyes happy, orgy of the soul kissing and blessing its mortal-grown body/ orgy of tenderness beneath the neck, orgy of kindness to thigh and vaginal/ Desire given with meat hand and cock, desire taken with mouth and ass, desire returned to the last sigh!* not here! This Temple! She could just imagine the Rabbi's face if she recited those lines at some given time. Hah! This dark, dingy, dreary place wafting an odor of past stuff that had all the interest of dry old history books—*who will hold the dry cold hands of a dead man?* Nothing here. Nothing to digest. Philosophy interested her. Who

in the Jewish religion understood the sexual philosophical yearnings of a woman artist like herself?

“Why are we getting confirmed?” Becky asked after everyone had sat down at the table, munching on the Danish and punch one of the black girls from the kitchen had brought out for them.

“We’re talking about Shabbat today, Becky,” Rabbi reminded her as Cantor helped himself to a cherry-filled Danish. (His second, Becky observed).

“Can’t we have some coffee?” David Siegel asked.

“David, you’ll have plenty of time for coffee later on.”

“Later on?” Sally Shanker always wore tight little mini skirts, her thighs rubbing together, some part of her ass showing when the skirt rode up.

“Do you wear underpants?” Mindy Demsky, the one devout child in the group and its self-appointed moral guardian, asked Sally looking with care at the back of Sally’s chair, as if somehow Sally’s ass might crawl up over the table and bite her.

“Shut up, Mindy. If you had an ass you’d know the answer.”

“Children! Mein Gott! Your language! Who taught you these things?”

“No one has to teach us,” Becky informed him.

Paul fingered the tassels of the *talis* and cast a lascivious glance over at Becky. *He’s wondering what my breasts look like*, she thought with disgust. Paul was repellent like a black beetle she could squash with her foot.

“Today we are telling our Hebrew names so that we will choose what name to be confirmed in,” Rabbi said. Cantor nodded enthusiastically. “As you know, in the Jewish tradition a child is named only after a deceased relative. The parents take the initial of the

first name of the deceased and use that as the beginning initial of the child's name. My name is Phillip and I was named after my grandfather Phillip, who died several years before I was born. All of your parents had a certificate made, with your Jewish name in Hebrew, when you were born. So now I would like you to write that name down on this pad." He handed the pad to Mindy who passed it around the table. Cantor took another Danish. (*His third?*)

Becky wrote down *Avram* on the little stenographers pad. When the pad reached Cantor he looked a moment at the list, lit his cigar that had gone out in the ashtray at his right elbow and handed the steno pad to Rabbi.

"You cannot be confirmed in the name of *Avram*," the Cantor intoned, looking at Becky with his usual disdainful sneer. "I have to go out and have my cigar," he added and both Cantor and Rabbi rose from the table. Cantor waddled out, his fat thighs encased in what Becky thought were the ugliest pair of suit pants she'd ever seen, Rabbi following close behind. Thank God her father never dressed like that, she thought. At least he had a sense of style. But Wetzler was too fat for any of that, and his nasal, whining tenor voice made her feel as if someone had jabbed a poker up her spine. He can read music but he can't sing, she thought.

"Why?" she shouted after the men.

"Because Abraham was the Father of the Jewish people, Becky and you are no father!" Wetzler shouted back from the hallway and left Confirmation class alone.

"God, this whole thing is idiotic." Her fellow Confirmation classmates, especially Paul, whose father had been her family doctor until her Cousin Bernie took over, sneered

at her. Paul had shoved her face in the snow when they were seven and his father had to treat her for snow burn.

“How did this happen?” Irving Silverman had asked.

“Paul shoved me into the snow,” Becky told him.

“Paul did this?”

“Why do you always have to cause trouble?” Paul asked her.

“My Hebrew name is *Avram*. My parents told me so.”

“So what?”

Rabbi Frankel ambled back in, smiling as usual.

“What’s the problem?” his soft, modulated pragmatic voice instantly soothed the crackling animosity that had hit the room when he and Cantor had walked out.

“Becky? Have you prepared your reading for today?”

“Yes, Rabbi, but—“

“But what—Becky?” Sally asked. Her father owned a soda pop distributing business.

“I want to know—do the Jews have some kind of ethical system or something? I read that book on ethics and—“

“Did you read Moses Maimonides as I suggested?” Frankel asked her gently.

“I’m reading it.”

“Good. But that book on ethics--forget it.”

“My name. My confirmation name. It has to be *Avram*, Rabbi.”

“We’ll talk about that later Becky.”



“*The Queen* wants to be confirmed as *Avram*.” Paul sneered.

“So what?” Becky shouted.

“Children, let’s not get riled up. *Avram*—Becky—it’s just not done. You’re a girl.”

“Hardly,” Michael Blumenthal chimed in, his dark curly hair falling over his eyes, making him look like a kind of Jewish James Dean.

“Hardly? What the hell does that mean?”

“Becky said hell!” Sally laughed, popping her gum.

“I was named after my grandfather Abraham! He died before I was born. I have the certificate!” Becky calmed down suddenly. Why waste desperation on people too stupid for words?

“We’ve got to get on with class,” Rabbi suggested. Sally wore a blue angora sweater accentuating very provocative breasts that Becky noticed distracted Michael for some minutes. Becky had some breasts on her too, but Michael refused to look at them and it made her exceedingly mad. Just one more thing to stir up all those forces inside of her that she couldn’t control anyway. Rabbi opened the Talmud translation and began explaining the meaning of Shabbat.

“So, how was confirmation class, Becky?” Frank Kaplan sat in the library looking at a Modern Library copy of Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*.

“*Ah what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive,*” Frank droned as she walked into the library. He sat in the rocking chair by the window staring out at the Crab Apple tree whose blossoms had departed in April and the Birch tree with

its Indian carvings. “You ought to read this.” He motioned for her to sit on the couch across from the chair.

“I will, someday. Right now—“

“What’s the problem?” Frank put a finger in the book and looked at her with what Becky called ‘the pragmatic look,’ the look that said he would solve her problems with intelligent, thoughtful wisdom as he always did.

“They won’t let me be confirmed in my Hebrew name.”

“Oh, and why not?”

“Because it’s *Avram* and they said I am a girl and girls can’t be confirmed in the name of the Father of the Jewish people or something.”

“Oh, I see. Well we named you after your mother’s father Abraham Smookler, honey, and I gave you *Avram*. I see no problem with that.”

“Neither do I.”

“Yes. What do you want me to do? You have to be confirmed.”

“Yes, I have to. Why do I have to?”

“Because I want you to.”

“Well, how can I when they won’t let me? Do I have to pick a different name?”

“No, honey, you don’t. One of us will go and talk to the Rabbi and take care of it.”

“It’s the Cantor who objects.”

“Fine. Just let me or your mother handle Bruce.”

Frank smiled and opened the book again.

“Thanks Dad.”

“Give me a kiss.” Becky walked over to her father and kissed him on the cheek, smelling his aftershave (*Mennen*) feeling the soft down of the evening’s beard growth and the yielding, pliant cheek underneath.

“I love you,” she said and closed the library door softly behind her.

Sylvia Kaplan wore her incredible bottle green Channel suit when she drove to temple in the baby blue Thunderbird that Frank had given her for Chanukah a year before. She had green alligator shoes and an alligator purse to match. Her hair was perfect—she had the entitlement of the wife of the man who donated the land the temple sat on and the look of Elizabeth Taylor. Her heels clicked militaristically on the polished floor as she marched into the foyer ready to do battle with the Rabbi, Cantor and anyone else she needed to.

“Sylvia! What a surprise.” Wetzler, cigar in hand, waddled out of his office.

“What brings you to temple? —Sisterhood isn’t having a special meeting are they? And Hadassah meets tomorrow, if I’m not mistaken.”

“I missed a stock club meeting to come here and talk to you, Bruce,” Sylvia spoke, her authoritative voice echoing off the walls of the foyer, large windows bringing the slanted harsh sunlight of a brilliant day to bounce off her vigorous auburn curls and the green suit.

“You look wonderful.”

“Thank you Bruce.”

“Would you like to come into my office?”

She followed his fat little form out of the foyer down the hallway to the plush carpeted office with the deep mahogany desk and a wall filled with pictures and placards.

“Bruce, let’s not be ceremonious.”

“Of course not,” he said, stubbing his cigar into the ashtray to his right.

“Becky was named for my father, Abraham Smookler.”

“How wonderful, Sylvia.”

Wetzler got up and closed the door.

“I see no reason to change her Hebrew name now. It is *Avram*, after my father Abraham and has been since she was born.”

“But Sylvia, Abraham was the father of the Jewish people and—and it’s a male name and Becky is a girl!”

“Bruce, I know that.”

“Confirmation is a coming of age ritual, Sylvia—perhaps not quite with as much weight as a *Bat* or *Bar Mitzvah* but, nevertheless, quite important—especially here at *Shaarey Zedek*. We’ve got a mixed congregation you know—reform, conservative and orthodox and we need to provide something for all our members.”

“I didn’t give Becky a *Bat Mitzvah* Bruce because that’s a reform tradition—a new one I might add. In my day, girls didn’t have *Bat Mitzvahs*. So things have changed, haven’t they? Girls can now get up and recite the *Haf Torah* with the boys!”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“And girls ought to be confirmed in the Hebrew name they’ve been given at birth.” Sylvia above the Cantor’s head to the wall where a picture of Frank’s father and

mother stood outside the grounds that were to later become the Temple, shovels in their hands, smiling next to Cantor and Rabbi.

“We’ve been here since the start,” Sylvia concluded.

“Yes, you have. And no question—generous donors—Frank’s tireless work raising money for UJA—“

“We were given a state visit to Israel last year—“

“Yes—“

“Where we met Ben Gurian and Moshe Dyan and—“

“All right, Sylvia.”

“Bruce, this means so much to me. And it will mean a lot to Becky later in her life.”

“Yes, of course,” Cantor said, voice laced with a *soucon* of defeat.

Sylvia smiled a winning smile and rose to leave.

“I’ll see you out, Sylvia.”

“Don’t bother. I parked in front.”

Bruce Wetzler stood as Sylvia left his office, looking at his half-burned cigar with a mixture of feelings, most of them just below the surface of his professional smile.

Three days before the service Sylvia took Becky to Saks Fifth Avenue in Southfield where they found a fabulous dress. In the foyer of the temple, just before the service began, the girls in their formal dresses and heels mingled with the boys in suits and ties. Excitement, awkward feelings and nervousness filled the air and Michael even looked at her for a second.

“Is that a new dress Becky?”

“Yeah.”

Michael looked heavenly in his suit. Becky looked at his dark hair and felt a pang-something knotted and exciting in her belly. *Sixteen is not too young for sex!* She just wondered how to get Michael alone for an hour. Maybe at The Jack Tarr hotel where the party was being held after the service? She imagined she could somehow trick him to coming in the elevator with her and they could find an open room. These kinds of thoughts never scared her. Life was meant to live dangerously! The moon was gold outside matching the soft golden glow of the candlelight in the sanctuary; her father and mother, with all the other parents and family, sat near the front waiting for the Confirmation group to come down the aisle.

Sally got confirmed as Sarah, Paul got confirmed as something or other, and Becky received her copy of the Talmud and a tassel as *Avram*, Father of the Jewish people. When Rabbi said, Becky Kaplan, I confirm you in the temple as *Avram*, Becky glowed. She heard no trace of mockery in his voice. Something lit the inside of her heart—she was bursting with a power that could not be contained. When she looked over at Michael he turned away from her gaze.

She rode with her parents to the Jack Tarr where a ballroom had been decorated to the hilt for the party. A long table with food and a punchbowl occupied one side of the room. There was a dance band (her father’s kind of music) and a dance floor, tables set with plates. The adults had a cash bar and Frank went immediately over to shake hands with other fathers and bring two Old Fashions to Sylvia, who stood with several women around the stage.

Michael positioned himself with the other boys on one side of the room—the girls huddled together exclaiming over each other’s dresses on the other side. The lights dimmed, the band began to play awful covers of Beatles tunes, Becky cast a glance at Michael, whose back was to her across the room. She stood inside the light, the yellow hue reflecting something of her hope, her body filled with a burst of energy; Michael’s eyes shot past her standing in her new white Saks Fifth Avenue dress and settled on Sally Shanker laughing at someone over at the punch bowl. When Becky looked up Michael had already crossed the room to talk to Sally.

She glimmered alone with the spirit of *Avram*; ethics hardly mattered in the world. What were ethics anyway when no one lived as if they existed? She felt angry and cheated—how dare Michael take away the moment of her triumph and her joy! It was as if he wanted to punish her for succeeding. And yet, what had she succeeded at? A moment of pride when the Rabbi announced she could be confirmed as *Avram*? Who would know or care about this in the future? Now was all that mattered and now she wanted Michael to see her, to notice her, to revel in her triumph, in her power, in her beauty. But then she realized something else—perhaps it was not so much a coherent thought as just a fleeting moment of dread. Something told her that in her life all her greatest moments would be accompanied by an equal measure of shame, embarrassment and rejection. *Must we be rejected because we are women, different, bold—grasping for the same turf as the men? My Moon is just as brilliant as theirs*, but then, she looked over at Michael and saw him leaning ever so close to Sally. He was the Sun, not the Moon and could a girl be another kind of Sun? Could a woman be as brilliant as all that? She stood

in her triumph alone, it seemed: rejected, angry and betrayed. Maybe even vengeful, but without a clue how to enact it.

It wasn't hard to imagine striding across the floor, saying Michael's name, taking his hand and leading him onto the floor into a dance. She knew he must feel something toward her. It wasn't that hard to do the very thing she imagined. She walked across the floor, colored lights playing on the wooden, polished surface, and stood in front of Michael, whose cool, smooth expression trained on Sally's supercilious mouth.

"Hi Michael."

He did not answer her, but a flicker in his cheek muscles showed Becky that he heard.

Sally looked away, suppressing a sarcastic grin.

"Michael, I said hi."

Michael did not turn to look at her, but tilted his face somewhat to the side.

"All right," he said as if to dismiss her.

"All right, what?"

Sally giggled.

"I just wanted to say hi."

"So—you said it."

"How did you—wasn't the service grand?"

"Grand?" Sally said in a nasty tone. "What kind of expression is that?"

"It's not an expression!"

"Sally," Michael warned, as if he and Sally held some secret information only they knew.



“It was wonderful. I was so proud of you,” Becky said, looking at the side of Michael’s face.

“What for?”

“Well, you looked--”

Sally spit out a burst of a laugh that ended in a cough.

“I mean—I just thought—you looked like you were enjoying yourself.”

“I’m glad it’s over.”

“Were you proud of me?”

“I think you’re weird, Becky, what can I say?”

“I don’t understand.”

Sally smiled a knowing smile at Michael and laughed.

“Want some more punch, Michael? I’ll get you some.” Sally sang it like a song.

“Sure.” He handed Sally his glass and turned to Becky looking her full in the face.

Sally wondered why all her sophistication fell away among Jewish guys. Maybe she was better off with the Randy guy who mowed the lawn. The world of Jewish men was just too hard to take! They always spoiled her triumph—they hated her, they thought she too stupid, too smart or both. She could never convince them that a rebellious girl could be a good Jewish mother! And who cared about that right now? *I’m not going to be a mother. I’m not going to be his Jewish mother, anyway.* But it wasn’t about mothers. What was it? All these gorgeous, beautiful, intelligent Jewish guys and they always looked at her with such—contempt! Like, she wasn’t good enough for them or something! Or too good. Or different. Or not controllable. Oh, why did she want their approval so much?

Why did she want Michael's so much—right now? Didn't he find her- "I don't know what you want from me, Becky." Michael interrupted her thoughts.

"I just want you to be proud of me like I am of you."

"For what? For making the whole thing stupid? You're not a man, you know."

"I never said I was!"

*Why can't I be witty when I need to be?* She wished she could find some sarcastic, nasty retort to put him down and shut him up but the fact was, she feared him and she loved him at the same time, and his coldness froze her heart so deeply she felt as if it would be better to die. The shame of being ignored!

Sally came back with the punch, touching Michael's arm lightly and closing the circle off from Becky.

"Let's go out. I've got my dad's car--" —she glanced over at Becky, "we're going to the lake."

"The lake? Are you guys going to the lake?" Becky looked directly at Sally who returned her stare with a haughtiness that was older than her years. "I didn't think your parents would let you go, Becky, so we didn't ask you."

"I'm sorry," Michael said to Becky.

Was he really sorry? Did he really feel something? Becky wanted to believe Michael was hiding his real feelings for her because of the social issues. But if he were hiding his real feelings, what were his real feelings? And what were the social issues? Couldn't he show that he understood her triumph?

"I guess you just don't appreciate me, do you Michael?" Becky spat at Michael, turned on her heel and walked away.

Now what? She'd made her exit from the party and there was no turning back. She almost wished Tommy was there but he wasn't Jewish. Again—she always struck out with Jewish guys. Maybe she'd been born into the wrong tribe. What was the use of staying there and watching everyone sneak off to the lake without her? She'd be left alone with all the other outcasts—milling around trying to look happy, knowing they were the pariahs and all the cool crowd had gone to the lake, aware that all the excitement had already left the room. I bet even Paul is going, she thought with bitterness.

Walking out into the hotel lobby she saw Rabbi talking to her mother and father.

“Becky!” Frank Kaplan reached his arm out to include her in the circle.

“Hi dad.”

“Why aren't you in the party with the other kids?”

“Oh, I was.”

Frank looked at his skinny blond daughter and felt her confusion, but he beamed his pride to the top of her head. She did nothing to dispel his admiration. A meek person cannot take a perilous path, Frank reflected and Becky would never be meek.

The Rabbi smiled at Becky. Sylvia standing next to Frank in her dark gray Chanel suit with her Louis Vuitton bag and Prada shoes looked proud, impossibly elegant and haughty—she brought up fear in Becky. She knew deep inside that she was another kind of girl, would be another kind of woman—she could never use her mother, as cold as ice and as arctic as the Russian tundra, as a role model. She had no idea how Sylvia had paved the way for her initiation as *Avram*, it never occurred to her that maybe, in her own way, Sylvia had tried to pass the baton. She could only see fear of the future--finding her

own way through the maze of womanhood. The thought of leaving Sylvia behind, with her purses and matching shoes and designer suits, made her feel lonely as hell.

“So—now you are *Avram*.”

Becky’s sullen look dispelled the joy.

“I am not anything,” she replied and caught her mother’s frozen smile for just a second.