

GRIP: A MEMOIR OF FIERCE ATTRACTIONS BY NINA HAMBERG

EXCERPT - JACKETS

My mother stood and waved from the back of the restaurant... She had transformed her appearance since my wedding. Her chin-length hair was permed, forming a frizz around her face. Her red lipstick was darker than any shade I'd seen her wear and she had on a new black leather jacket, emblazoned with zippered pockets and metal studs. It was an odd get-up that would have looked ridiculous on anyone else, but even at sixty-two she still seemed so youthful, she could pull it off.

The man next to her wore a Greek fisherman's cap, dark blue wool with a matching braided band, the kind of hat I associated with men who wanted to seem cool but weren't, middle-aged guys who hung around Washington Square Park checking out seventeen-year-old girls. But that impression dissipated quickly. There was something in Alvin's large brown eyes and the way he tilted back his chair that declared he didn't take himself too seriously.

... Alvin leaned forward. "Your mother told me you're visiting your father in the hospital. Yeah, well, I was never close to my father. I tried to hang out with my older brother but he didn't like a little kid trailing after him. Then he became a movie producer, a big shot, full of himself, and he didn't want anything to do with me."

... She turned her gaze from me to Alvin and said, "He sounds like a pompous ass, just like my older brother. He didn't want me around either."

They looked at each other and he blew her a kiss. They'd been dating—what, two weeks?—and they'd already bonded on their shared sense of rejection. Then I noticed that the black leather jacket hanging across the back of Alvin's chair had epaulets with silver snaps, identical to my mother's. Matching jackets. Incredible. They'd connected on age as well. They were both teenagers. Suddenly they seemed so cute, it was hard not to grin.