

THE LOOK

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The Look
Four foot ten, curvy built
for hugs frame
Raised in a world of
silence and secrets,
the matriarch of a line of
strong women
To stop you in your tracks
All it took
Was the Look

Child me remembers how
hard she fought
to straighten and tame her
mop of gray curls
As she reluctantly took me
in her arms, those
rebellious curls
were soft against my
cheek and smelled of roses
She loved her roses
Grandma. Mama.
The embodiment of small
but mighty
Her limited formal
education never hindering
her from learning multiple
languages
To communicate with her
neighbors and customers
Yet, She fought in silence.

Before sunrise every
morning,
I would get the list.
Por favor, si puedes...
Please, if you can...
Those were the first
chores I would always
tackle.
I didn't want The Look.

It was not a look of anger
It was not a look of
harmful intent.
It was a look of
disappointment.
In a mere glance, "I had
hope for you. I fight for
you. You let me down."
It would slash at your soul.

She fought in silence
Waking first to prepare for
the day.
Long hours on her feet at
the Bodega.
Dinner at home – always.
Family together and all
pitching in with our
assembly line of setup and
cleanup.
Then, many hours at the
sewing machine,
doing her best work
always for her extra gig
customers.
The whirl of her machine
lulling me to sleep each
night.
No look. Good Day.
She fought on in silence.

The Name.
Please don't say the
middle name...
Oh no, the more syllables
the more trouble you were
in
If she made it to your
surname, there was no
hope
Syllable count mattered.



For her petite, five foot 2
she could fill a room with
her presence
The Look was mastered
differently in her
and meant LISTEN
But she also mastered her
words and wanted you to
Listen.

First to graduate High
School
First to get white collar
work
While having a family and
having it all
New age Wonder Woman,
Mom
Power suit armor
Perfect makeup and hair
at any hour
Never forget who you are
and that you can do it all.

Show them
Show them what you can
do and where you come
from
And that Name is power.
Make them remember
your name.

The daughter of the silent
generation found a voice
And yet
Held on to the code and
put family first.

Hear the heels click down
the hallway

As she chanted out the list
of Don't Forgets.
I would smile at the
second list of tasks that
never changed.
The preparations for the
battle
The arm up, do your best,
be your best
And, don't make me say
the full NAME
To remind you who you
are

I would watch from the
window
As the silk-stockings clad
gam would slip into the
car
Behind the driver's seat
Roar of the engine
Away flies the chariot
If only her clients knew
how she changed herself
with every wardrobe
change

Suits for work with perfect
makeup
Jeans and t-shirts with
tennis shoes for home
chores
And tending the roses
Dinner with the family
And then, the quilted robe
with the zipper up the
front and the soft soled
slippers
Turn off the light
Its late
Stop reading, I see that
light
Don't make me say the
Name.

And the whirl of the sewing
machine.

The Touch
Always on the move the
Five Foot 4 flower child lit
up the room
Long loose waves of
strawberry blonde
The necklaces would jingle
and the earrings were
always cool.

In and out of my life came
the teacher
The Youngest, the first to
go to college
The Traveler, the Reader,
the Rebel

She chose education and
career
She fights for ALL her kids,
That she has adopted in
the womb of her
classroom
She creates with her hands
and whatever she touches
becomes magic.
And she fights proudly,
with her HANDS.

Touch of the arm
To get your attention.
Point to the board
To get the lesson
Knit, crochet, paint, write
Use your hands and your
head to win the fight
No man needed to get a
Credit Card
Burn the bra, travel the
world
March the March

Raise Your Hands
And keep fighting hard

She laughs when I
recognize her as the Hero
Or when folks say I'm like
her
Her Education is her
strength
But her power is her heart.
In and out of my life, but
always there when I need
her.

That touch on my arm
The Youngest Sister
The one who cries in the
night with me
The one who reaches out a
hand
With comfort when the
battles are lost
The thriver and the
survivor

Five foot six
Built for comfort and not
for speed, Hugs welcome
or the Wall to protect
Ojos Claro
I got the Look down, in
most of its various forms
I learned to speak in
silence
although I am raising my
children in an assault of
noise
My Name has meaning
and strength and history
I won't forget that.
I won't let my daughters
forget their names and
their history and their
strength.
There is power in touch

There is power in empathy
There is power in care.
There is love in creating.
But the war wages on...

I am my Mother's Savage
Daughter
I am the Storm that Rages
When I've raised my voice,
displayed my heart, and
opened my arms to
embrace you,
Be aware of the gift.
But remember, Silence
does not mean we have
lost the war.
We are most dangerous
with a Look.