

**THE LOOK**

**BY MARISOL KOZLOVSKI**

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.