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 whir 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 whir 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.