

FIGURE 3.6 Brigitte's Name Story

The Story of My Name

Brigitte,

It's a mouthful to look at and a handful to say.

It is intimidating.

As if it is the Mount Everest of names.

They either make the attempt of stumbling through it,

or they make no attempt at all.

Instead they ask, "How do you say it?" "Could you remind me?" "Where is it from?"

There is a third option too.

It is one where they are too afraid to even look at it.

Instead, they pretend it is just a normal "American" name.

Why they say it out loud, it becomes plain, generic.

It loses a syllable too; there is an E at the end of it for a reason.

It wasn't put there just to make it look pretty.

It transforms into a stern word.

One that sounds like I am in trouble or have done something wrong. It becomes short but not sweet,

just how they like it,

and of course easy to speak.

It loses its grammar, its history, its purpose.

In its mother tongue, it is graceful, elegant, and has a slight *je ne sais quoi* that accompanies it wherever it is sung.

When I hear it out loud, it reminds me of an old forgotten song that lives on in my heart, one that drifts through the air as I look out my window into the night.

How does it sound? you ask. Well let me show you,

You are in Paris, it is summer, sometime in the 1960s. You look around and find yourself sitting outside at your favorite local café about to finish your dinner, don't worry, it's not one of the touristy ones, in fact, it is anything but. As it grows late, the street begins to quiet, and time seems to slow, you can feel the heat of the night encompass you like a warm embrace while you slowly sip on your nightcap, carefully watching the jazz trio that performs on the street corner. As you leave and begin to walk home for the night, the *maître d'* calls out "*bonne soirée Brigitte*."

He says the name as though it is a small boat rolling over the waves of a stormy sea, bobbing up and down with each syllable.

It sounds like home, a home I have not visited in awhile, but home nonetheless. My name means strength, power, vigor, and virtue,

but it can also mean that you are a little stubborn.

It means that you believe in yourself, in all parts of yourself, even when you are out of tune. But don't worry, as soon as you hear its song drifting through the warm summer's breeze, you will once more believe.