

Namesake

My mother hasn't called me by my real name for as long as I can remember. I know this isn't intentional, as she, with the rest of my family, have always told me how much they love my name. When I read the name I hear it in my mom's voice rather than my own. However, it's rare that I hear this name anymore. Countless nicknames that are easier to slip into a sentence have been crafted among my family and friends, and I've discovered that a tiny part of me is in each one. Every nickname feels like a piece of a whole self, but I feel intimidated by the fact that I feel the need to mold to each one.

Mimi: I view this name through a thick glass panel as if I'm looking at an exhibit in a museum. Whenever I hear this name for somebody else, it's like seeing a younger version of me. I see a little girl with a huge grin on her face, dirt and bruises on her knees, and grass in her messy braids running through the trees in her backyard. This one was only ever used by my family, and by close friends as a joke, but it still holds an important place in my heart. I miss Mimi. I miss her ignorance that came with childhood.

Meme: For lack of a better spelling, this one sounds exactly the same as its counterpart; the internet meme. I like to think that this one is for my mother and grandmother only. When I was young, I believed moms to be immortal; I thought that as tall as we grew and as many water bottles as I lost, she stayed the same height, always taller than me, and kept the same laugh. This proves partially true with the fact that she still calls me this. I like seeing the confusion on my friends faces when a text lights up on my phone saying "Have a good day, Meme :)", and I smile, feeling like that word is a language only spoken between us two.

Lia: In elementary school, I watched a movie where the main character shared my name, but she went by "Mia". I was tired of my name being mispronounced and loved this, but there was already another girl in my class with this title. My mom proposed that I asked my teachers to be called Lia if I wanted. The only one who used it was my chorus teacher, but I always appreciated it.

Meels: I need you to listen carefully for this one. You can't be nasally when saying this and ruin it by making it sound like the "eeeew" exercises that vocal teachers have you do. It must be said carefree-ly, with good intention, just as the version of myself is who this one's dedicated to. Meels is summertime, fresh juice from a clementine dripping down my chin, shamelessly tackling friends into a hug, losing my voice from cheering at sports games.

Amelia: My name. From German, it means “hard-working”. Spiritually, it means “complete.” Sometimes I catch myself repeating the name in my head over and over until it becomes mush. Sometimes I imagine it as a woman with a pink fluffy Victorian dress and pearls, but with roused hair and grinning teeth unfit for someone as sophisticated as her. Sometimes I fear it’s far too elegant for me, that I’m letting it down.

As an actor, I’ve learned how to make up a pretty convincing persona by feeding on the energy of those around me. I’ve become obsessed with leaving a little part of me on a stage for the audience, and in turn taking the lessons and stories from the character with me. The same is true with my nicknames. To name something is to love it, and how lucky I am to be named again and again in one lifetime by those I love.