

“My Name” by Sandra Cisneros from *The House on Mango Street*

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female--but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least-- can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

“My Name” by Ryan Schey

Where I used to work, my name was a bread, with a bitter taste and a bite. It's supposed to go with ham and cheese, but I've never been a fan. Seeds cover the crust and fall to the floor with every bite, swept up with a minimum wage broom. I wonder what will be sown now. What will grow in the classroom?

In Cleveland, they say my name with their noses. It reverberates in the sinuses instead of rolling off a tongue. In Columbus, in Texas, in California, in Turkey, in Ireland, in Mexico, they didn't get that. They pronounced the sounds of the letters, but they didn't say my name. Traveling, I met so many people, but they never really knew me.

At school, my name is formal. It sounds like my dad, or maybe my grandpa, but not me yet.. So stiff and sharp with its foreign syllables, an odd title stolen from an office door plaque. At home, my name has room to breath, to sprawl on the couch and kick its feet up. Picked up by others, tossed around, cut down to size or exaggerated beyond belief.

My name makes noise. It can even have a certain music, depending on my mood. Sometimes loud and sometimes soft. At times, dissonant while at others melodic, with chords and current crashing together.

My name is short and simple. Direct and maybe impersonal. A deep full color that soaks up what's left behind. I don't wish for another name, because this one is me. I'd only like if I could have others around still to share what it's come to mean.