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Matter, or What They Name You

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Matter, or What They Name You

J.D. Isip

Ho-zay was too brown. Whore-hay, too. Keep
the José losing the zay, dishwasher safe, Joe,
nodding his head for each word he can't say
that he's not even Mexican, but Spanish is close
enough to Tagalog and nobody cares José—
What the f is "a Philippines" anyway?

Tell you what, I'll call you George
Which stuck, but he kept the Jay so José lives on
in one letter and the lesser son of Jorge, the gay
one he split with his first wife, not an even split
there was always more of her which made him
that way

Margaret was Mexican but I didn't know that
until she died and suddenly I wasn't Italian, or
any more special than every other wetback
praying to Mother Mary, crossing myself, head
bent low before every other ass asking
Do you speak English?

Tell you what, it doesn't matter, José
Or whatever you call yourself. It's not José or
Margie—dancing to Disco Italiano, teaching me
each move and stories about my family that
never existed, descendants of a noble Roman
lieutenant who fought for some war, there are
so many, besides, we're dancing

Joe was a bartender at Don the Beachcomber,
Margie ordered sweet Seagram's 7 on ice, they
named me for their union, which lasted eight
years—leaving me to explain that the Jay is not
silent, that the Oh is long, that it's not ethnic—
Tell you what, call me J.D. It doesn't matter.

Anna TX I Lance M. Pender

