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FAQs: Four and The Names We Choose

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***Will Four go by "Tobias" or "Four" in INSURGENT?***

I thought I would address this more generally before the book comes out because I think the answer is interesting (and because I get asked this a couple times a week). Obviously I have a thing about names, or else "Beatrice" would not have become "Tris," and "Four" would have gone by "Tobias" in the beginning. I believe the names we choose on our own can be powerful, and they can embody a new identity for us.

When I was young my mother wanted to call me "Nikki" (a less popular short form of Veronica) and I absolutely *refused* to respond to it. The same thing happened when people tried to call me "Ronnie." I just wasn't having it. The nickname I chose was "V." I think it's because it sounded less cutesy or girly. What I chose for myself was something that fit with my personality-- I'm not exactly cutesy. (Though I am girlier now than I ever used to be-- maybe that's why I don't go by "V" as much anymore?)

Name changing is also interesting from a religion scholar perspective. In the Torah, when a biblical figure has an encounter with God, sometimes he or she is given a new name. Abram to Abraham, for example. Jacob to Israel. Sarai to Sarah. Same thing in the Christian Bible-- Saul becomes Paul, Simon becomes Peter. This usually signals the beginning of some kind of transformation, or indicates that a transformation has already taken place.

If you want a more current example, think "Mr. Anderson" versus "Neo," or "Augustus" versus "Gus" in The Fault In Our Stars (a little different, but interesting to consider, I think), or "Andrew" versus "Ender" in Ender's Game, or "Tom Riddle" versus "Voldemort," or "Anakin" versus "Darth Vader." (Wow, apparently I really AM attracted to this concept, because it's in all the things I like...)

It's like we have some kind of need, once we feel that we have changed, for people to call us something different. Is it for us, to suit the way we see ourselves? Or is it for them, to force them to think of us differently? Or a combination of both?

So now you might be thinking, *whatever, I just think "Four" sounds hotter/cooler/like the lesser evil compared to "Tobias".*Sadly, this is just how the inside of my brain is. Sometimes I get lost in here. Bear with me.

It's these musings about names that led to the Tobias/Four divide in the first place. Four views "Tobias" as the name of a helpless little boy, so he chooses "Four" as the name of his adult self in an attempt to leave the pain behind him. It signifies his strength rather than his weakness. But what he finds is that he can't ignore his past; it keeps creeping up on him, especially in his fear landscape. So in Divergent, he "gives" Tris his old identity-- he trusts her to know his vulnerable side, the side of the child and not the man. She recognizes the significance of this, which is why she starts to call him Tobias. It's the name he gave her, the one he trusted her with, and she begins to treasure it for that reason.

In Insurgent, this name issue becomes a bit more complicated, but for Tris it's the same. "Tobias" is the name she chooses for him, because it represents his secret self, the one he showed her and her alone. She calls him "Four" when she's with other people, to help him keep his secrets, but in her head, he's always Tobias.

Now, I like the name Tobias (I seem to be in the minority, but that's okay!), but I, like most of you, do prefer the name "Four," and honestly, I always intended for him to be called "Four" most of the time. So I tried really, really hard to make some kind of shift in Tris's mind so that it would make sense for her to call him Four in Insurgent. There are plenty of arguments for why she might do that, and I made all of them, I promise you. But what surprised me was that it never felt right; it didn't feel like what Tris would *really* do. So Tobias it is. She's very stubborn, you know.

So the short answer: in Insurgent, he's Tobias 95% of the time, because that's how Tris wanted it. You can feel free to keep calling him "Four," though-- I do!