

Last Name

I never wanted his name.

It's strange how a few syllables can weigh so much. I've carried that last name my whole life, but it never felt like mine. It felt like a mask, something that slipped over my face the moment I said it out loud. Suddenly, I wasn't *me* anymore; I was a reflection of him.

It didn't matter how kind I was. How I smiled at people or how I listened. The moment they heard my full name, something shifted. They treated me differently, like I was tainted by association. Like whatever he did, whatever he became, had already written my story for me.

At first, I tried to fight it. I wanted to be myself, just me. But over time, that resistance wore down. I got tired of explaining. Tired of proving. So slowly, quietly, I gave in. I let the name speak for me. I let it define me. I let his darkness seep in through the cracks I didn't know I had. I stopped being myself, not all at once, but in pieces. Until the person I was became unrecognizable.

I started hurting people. Not with fists, but with silence. With anger I didn't understand. With the bitterness I had inherited from our relations. I wasn't who I used to be. The people around me could feel it. They grieved the version of me that used to reach out, that used to love without question. They didn't understand what happened. Honestly, neither did I.

I built walls. Towering ones. There was no hair long enough to let someone climb in, no window left open for anyone to reach through. I told myself I was protecting something, but all I really did was isolate whatever was left of the real me.

People used to say he was a good man once. That there was light in him. But they also say something changed. They say it happened when he met me. That something in him switched off, like a lightbulb that fizzles before its circuit burns out. After that, he was different. Cold. Quiet. Angry in a way that had no name.

He left. Not in some dramatic, final way. He just... stopped showing up. Emotionally first, then physically. The second I stopped being what he wanted, he was gone. I didn't even know you could drop someone so fast, like they were never there to begin with. But he did. And somehow, I kept hoping he'd come back, say something, explain it all. But he never did.

I moved on or at least, I tried. We stopped talking. Stopped seeing each other. The silence between us became normal. But the questions stayed. I couldn't forget. No matter how much time passed.

The things I would do to be rid of your name to be free from the cage you built and ridiculed me for. I wish I never had your last name, Dad.