

The Name I Took

I never wanted that name. Not once. Owens meant fists and fear—a legacy soaked in control, silence, and shame. It was a name I wore like a curse, an echo of a man who raised me with bruises instead of blessings. But when the time came—when the barrel was in his mouth, and the silence in that house screamed louder than any memory—I took it.

After the divorce, when Verm walked away from the wreckage she helped build, BJ was left alone. Not just alone—abandoned. His mother had died within the year, his father not long after. His family was never close. Now it was just him, a silent son, and me.

I didn't call to gloat. I called because I knew what it felt like to be surrounded by quiet and still feel like you were screaming into it. Nick can't speak. He probably never will. But he saw what I saw. He lived it beside me. Every bruise. Every echo. Every goddamn ounce of it.

And BJ? He wasn't a monster anymore. He was a man cracked open by regret, sitting in his own silence with a barrel pointed at the last chapter of his life.

So I said what had to be said. Not for me—for him. I told him we were Owens men. Not because I believed it. Because he needed to hear it.

I took the name in that moment—not out of pride, but out of necessity. I wore the tattered coat of arms he never earned but always claimed. Because nothing I said would've mattered unless I carried that name, stood under it, and made it mean something.

I gave him everything I had left. Every drop of fire and grit. I told him to keep going. That we don't quit. That Nick still needed him. That maybe, in spite of everything, there was still a version of him that could be worth a damn.

I still hate what he did to me. I probably always will. But I wasn't going to let him drown. Because if I didn't pull him up, Nick would go down with him. And that? That I couldn't live with.

BJ, fuck you. But you're doing great. And I'm proud of you.

That's the name I took. Not because I wanted it. But because no one else could carry it—and I'll show him what it means to be the man in the fucking arena.