REFLECTION SHEET

Without the Papers

A companion reflection for "What the Passport Couldn't Prove."

There is a document somewhere in your life that has been doing the work of proving who you are. A title, a credential, a role, a relationship, a body that cooperated. You did not notice it doing that work until it was questioned, or until you imagined it gone. This sheet is not here to talk you out of it. The paperwork is usually true. It simply is not you, and the difference only becomes visible when the paperwork is unavailable.

A Practice to Begin

Sit for ten minutes somewhere you will not be interrupted. Name one thing you carry as proof of who you are — say it silently, as plainly as you can. Then set it down for the length of the sit. You are not renouncing it or deciding anything about it. You are only finding out who is sitting there without it. If nothing comes, that is information too. Stay the ten minutes.

Reflection Questions

1. What has been doing the work of proving who you are — and when did you last notice it doing that work?
2. If it were taken in an afternoon, what would remain that you could not hand anyone?
3. When has someone received you without requiring you to establish your standing? What did that do in you?
4. Where in your life are you waiting for a "then" that may not arrive?
5. What would you want to be in the middle of?
6. What is the piece you would least like to say out loud?

An Invitation for the Week

Carry one question into one ordinary decision this week — a meeting you are deciding whether to take, an hour you are deciding how to spend, a conversation you have been putting off. Not “what should I do?” but “what would I want to be in the middle of?” Notice whether the answer changes what you choose. Notice, too, whether anyone offers you help, and what happens in you when they do.

“Not being recognized. Being taken in without papers.”

— from “What the Passport Couldn’t Prove”

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