REFLECTION SHEET

The Voice You'll Use on Everyone Else

Whatever you say to yourself when you fail is the voice you will use on another person when you are tired and out of patience.

Under pressure, people do not reach for their values. They reach for what is rehearsed. And the interior voice does not stay interior — it leaks, and it leaks downhill, toward whoever in the room has the least power to object. "Love your neighbor as yourself" read as a sequence has launched a thousand wellness programs. Read as a measure, it is considerably less comfortable: here is the scale you are already using on everyone around you, whether you have examined it or not.

A Practice to Begin

The next time something goes wrong — a silence where you expected a reply, a mistake only you noticed — write down the first sentence you say to yourself. Word for word, including the tone. Do not soften it for the page.

Reflection Questions

1. What was the sentence?
2. Would you say it, in that tone, to someone you love?
3. Where did you learn it, and whose voice is it in?
4. What do you believe you would lose if you stopped saying it?
5. Who in your life has already heard a version of that voice come out of you?
6. Underneath it, is the sentence "I am not enough"? What has that cost, in years?

An Invitation for the Week

When you catch the voice this week, do not argue with it. Just add one sentence after it — the one you would say to a friend in the same position.

It did not come from them. It came from the thing you have been saying to yourself since long before they walked in.

— The Voice You'll Use on Everyone Else