

# The First Attempt

by

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## *Scene 1: Still Waters*

Ava stared at the blinking cursor on her laptop screen, her fingers hovering like uncertain birds above the keyboard. The room was quiet, save for the low hum of the space heater and the soft drip of thawing snow outside. A late April kind of day in Toronto, undecided between spring and winter, between sunlight and grey.

She closed the laptop.

The business plan template she had downloaded three days ago still sat untouched in her “New Life” folder. Even the name of the folder made her cringe a little, like she was staging a makeover montage in a movie she didn’t believe in.

She exhaled, stood up, and moved to the kitchen. The kettle clicked off. She poured herself a cup of green tea, something she had grown to prefer over coffee in the years since therapy taught her that caffeine wasn’t her friend when she was already spinning in her head.

She had wanted this. She had *wanted this*. A way to take the skills she had spent years building in teaching, in coaching, in guiding, and shape them into something that was hers. A mentorship studio. A space for deep learning and personal growth. Something real. Something intimate.

But her hands still shook.

She sat back down, curled into the corner of her couch, and opened the old brown notebook where she had written down everything Lian, her therapist, had once asked her to remember on bad days. She flipped through the pages.

**"It's not that you're not ready. It's that you've never been allowed to feel safe while doing something bold."**

She stopped there; her thumb pressed gently against the paper.

That was the thing. It wasn’t the idea that scared her. She *knew* it was good. She knew her work was impactful. People told her that. Students wrote her long messages after the workshops. Colleagues leaned on her. But the moment she tried to own it, to declare something as hers, the ground shifted.

Ava took a sip of her tea, now slightly cooled, and looked around the apartment. It was small but hers. She had moved here two years ago after leaving her ex-partner, a kind man who never truly saw her.

No one ever did, really. Not fully.

She had grown up in a nice enough house, with parents who spoke kindly but said little when it came to emotions. She had been the "mature one," the "good girl," the one who "never caused trouble." And yet, Ava remembered how often her voice had gone unheard. Not in loud, cruel ways, just... ignored. Dismissed. Tolerated, not welcomed.

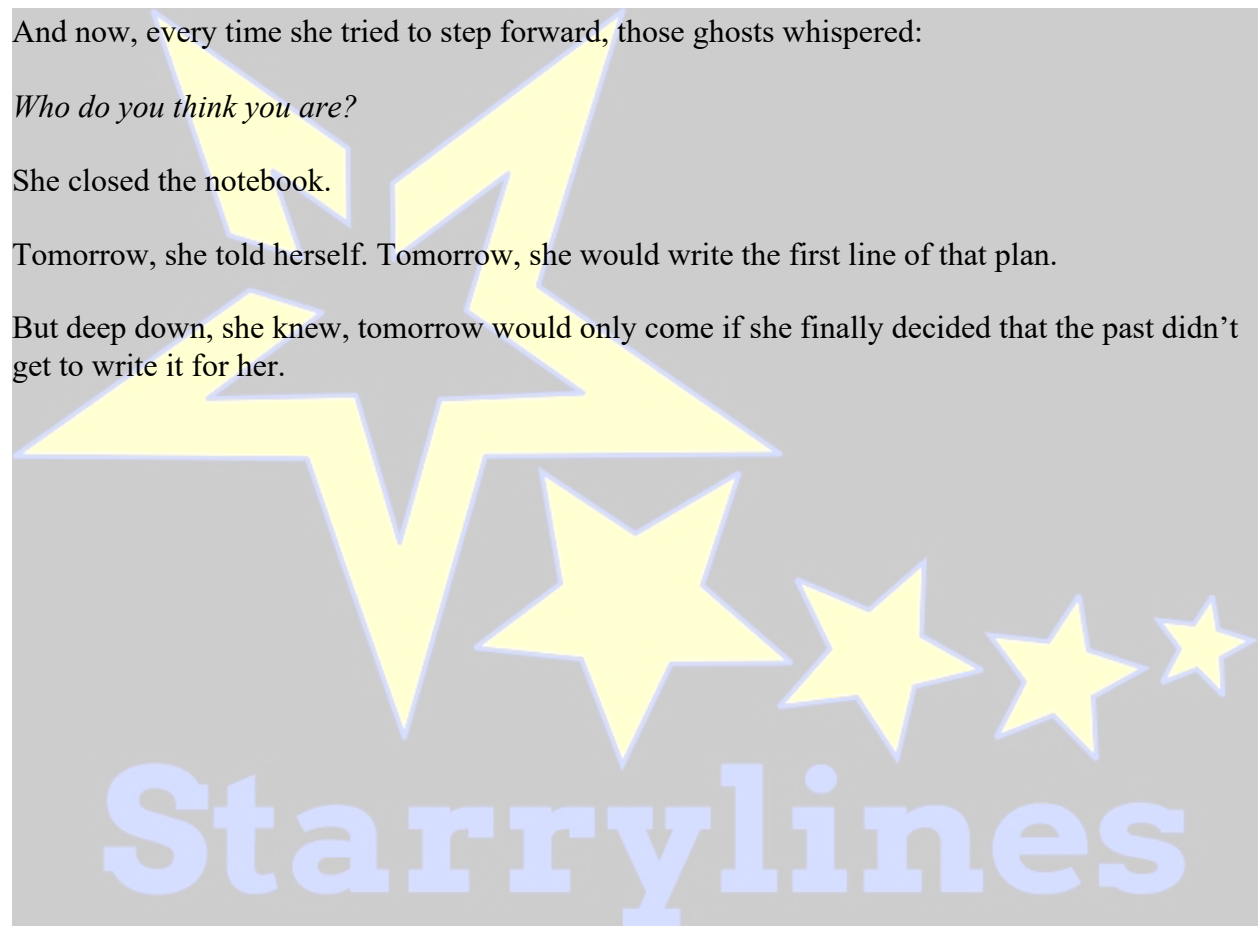
And now, every time she tried to step forward, those ghosts whispered:

*Who do you think you are?*

She closed the notebook.

Tomorrow, she told herself. Tomorrow, she would write the first line of that plan.

But deep down, she knew, tomorrow would only come if she finally decided that the past didn't get to write it for her.



## ***Scene 2: The Committee***

Ava woke up to the pale light of morning bleeding through the blinds. Her body had rested, but her mind hadn't. She reached for her phone, checked the time, 7:48 AM, and then stared at the ceiling for a while, letting the silence stretch.

The plan was to start the business draft today. For real this time!

Ava slid out of bed, not with determination, but with a kind of quiet ease she hadn't felt in a while. The air was cool against her arms as she moved through the apartment, the silence soft rather than suffocating.

She took a long, warm shower, letting the water run over her face as if rinsing off the tightness she sometimes woke up with. No spiralling thoughts. Just the rhythm of droplets and the steam wrapping around her shoulders.

In the kitchen, she made toast and scrambled eggs. Nothing fancy, but she sat down to eat, actually sat, instead of standing by the counter like she used to on anxious days.

By the time she settled at her desk, there was a steadiness in her chest she hadn't expected.

She sat at her desk, opened the laptop, and pulled up a clean document: *Business Plan: Mentorship Studio*. The cursor blinked like it was daring her to begin.

And that's when the voices came.

Not out loud. Not in a way that could be recorded or explained. But in the quiet corners of her mind, behind the rational thoughts and gentle to-do lists, they gathered like a silent committee.

**"Are you sure this makes sense?"**

It was the logical voice, calm, clipped, very adult. It wore sensible shoes and held spreadsheets like shields.

**"This could fail. What if no one signs up?"**

**"You're not cut out for this."**

That one had a whispering tone. Softer, but colder. Slipping in through cracks when her confidence thinned.

**"You've always been better as a support person. Stay in your lane."**

She sat back, blinked at the screen. It looked harmless, but it felt like standing at the edge of a cliff, toes curled on stone.

**"You can't afford to mess this up."**

**"You'll embarrass yourself."**

**"You think this is passion, but it's delusion."**

Ava placed her palms on the desk, steadying herself.

In therapy, they had called this part of her *the Inner Critic*. But Ava had come to see it more as a shapeshifter, one that wore the voice of *logic* so convincingly, she often mistook it for wisdom.

But it wasn't wisdom. It was **fear** in a tailored suit.

And behind that fear, if she sat long enough, listened hard enough, there was shame. A quieter voice. One that didn't attack but questioned her very right to dream.

**"Who do you think you are?"**

Not accusatory. Just... curious. As if the mere act of wanting something bigger required justification.

She closed the laptop. Not out of defeat, but in defiance.

"Not today," she said aloud, and then corrected herself: "No, today, exactly."

She lit a candle, something she rarely did before noon, and placed it beside her laptop like an offering.

Then she did something she hadn't done in months.

She opened a blank page in her journal and titled it:

**"The Truth Beneath the Fear."**

And she began to write:

"I am allowed to build something from love.

I am allowed to lead.

I am not fragile.

My past is a place I lived, not a law I must obey.

The voices that sound like protection are echoes of old cages.

I am not their prisoner."

For the first time in weeks, Ava didn't feel rushed. Or behind. Or like she needed to prove something. Instead, she felt something else, a twinge of understanding, like the first few seconds of a light turning on in a dark room. Maybe this wasn't about a business at all. Not *just* a business.

She turned to a fresh page in her journal and wrote at the top, in a burst of clarity:

**"Entrepreneurship and Me."**

She paused, the words landing with a kind of weight. Then she wrote:

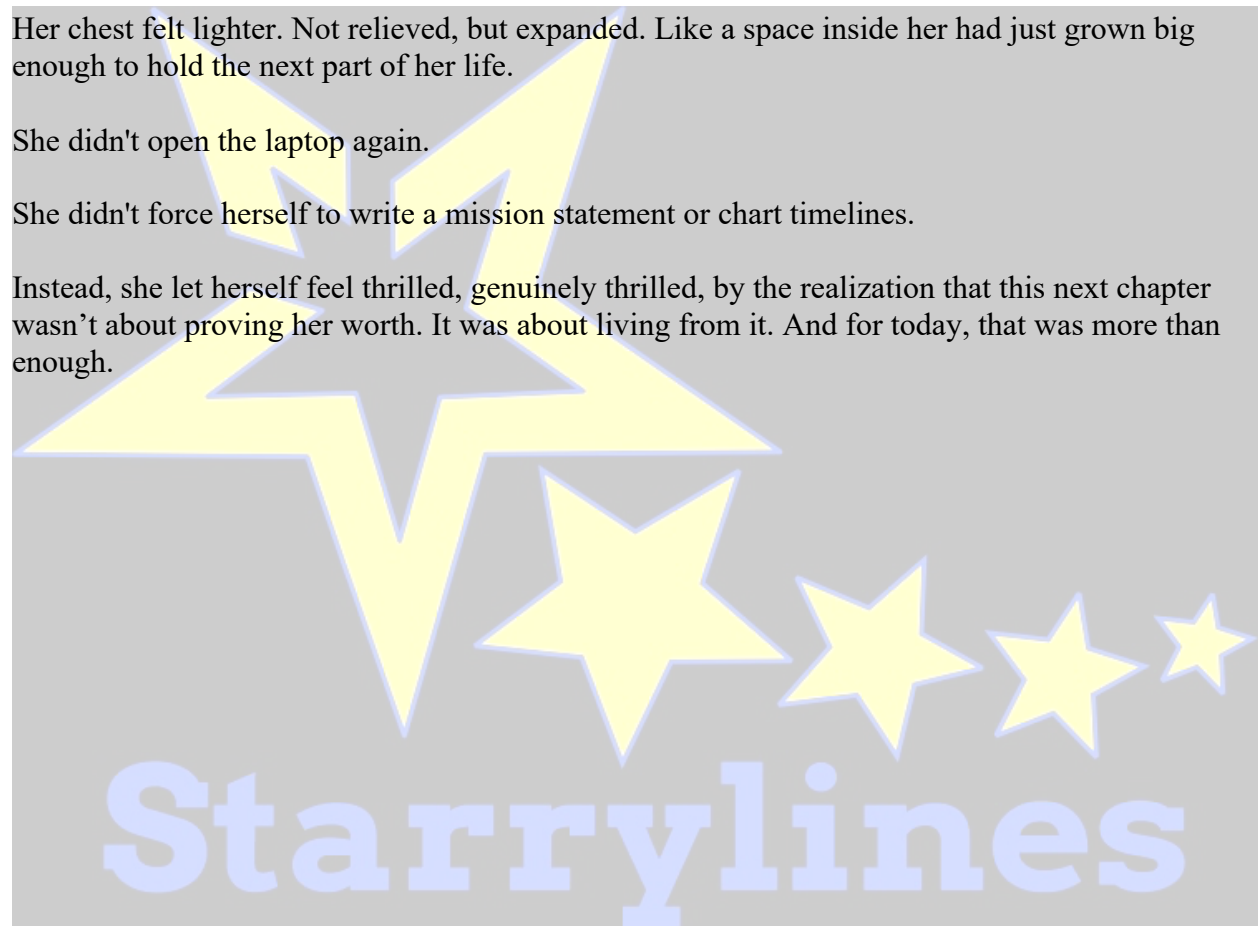
“This isn’t about launching something.  
It’s about becoming someone.  
Writing my business plan isn’t about structure or funding or branding, not yet.  
It’s about commitment.  
To *myself*.  
To my voice.  
To the version of me that used to shrink, who is now learning to stand.  
This is about choosing me, over and over again, even when the inner voices say I shouldn't.  
Even when no one else is watching.  
Even when I’m afraid.”

Her chest felt lighter. Not relieved, but expanded. Like a space inside her had just grown big enough to hold the next part of her life.

She didn't open the laptop again.

She didn't force herself to write a mission statement or chart timelines.

Instead, she let herself feel thrilled, genuinely thrilled, by the realization that this next chapter wasn’t about proving her worth. It was about living from it. And for today, that was more than enough.



### *Scene 3: The First Attempt*

By Thursday, the glow of Ava's journal epiphany had softened, but it hadn't vanished.

It lingered in the way she moved, slower, less apologetically. She wasn't exactly confident, but she was listening to herself more. Trusting the deeper part of her that knew she was on the right track, even when it still felt vague.

That morning, she opened a Canva tab, then Instagram. She stared at the empty caption box beneath a soft, inviting photo of her desk, candle, journal, coffee, and laptop.

She wasn't sure what she wanted to say. Just that she wanted to say something.

**Maybe a soft launch,** she thought.

**Not even a launch. Just... an opening. A whisper. A "hey, I'm building something."**

She let her fingers hover over the keyboard.

Then she typed:

"I've been quietly building something that means a lot to me. A mentorship studio for learners and seekers, especially those who've ever felt small, stuck, or silenced. More soon."

She stared at it. It wasn't bad. It even felt true.

But then, like shadows returning to a room when the sun shifts, the old voices crept in.

**"Why would anyone care?"**

**"You haven't even figured it all out yet."**

**"You sound like you're trying too hard."**

Her shoulders tightened. Her fingers retracted.

She re-read the caption, but now it looked desperate. Empty. Self-important. A tone-deaf whisper into a noisy void.

She clicked *Save Draft*, then closed the window altogether.

The logical part of her brain stepped in quickly, trying to mask the disappointment:

**"Maybe it's too early."**

**"Better to wait until you have a full offer."**

**"You don't want to post prematurely and then change direction."**

But beneath the logic was the real emotion: shame. And fear. Not fear of failure, Ava had made peace with failure before. This was a fear of being **seen**. Seen in a moment of uncertainty, vulnerability, incompleteness.

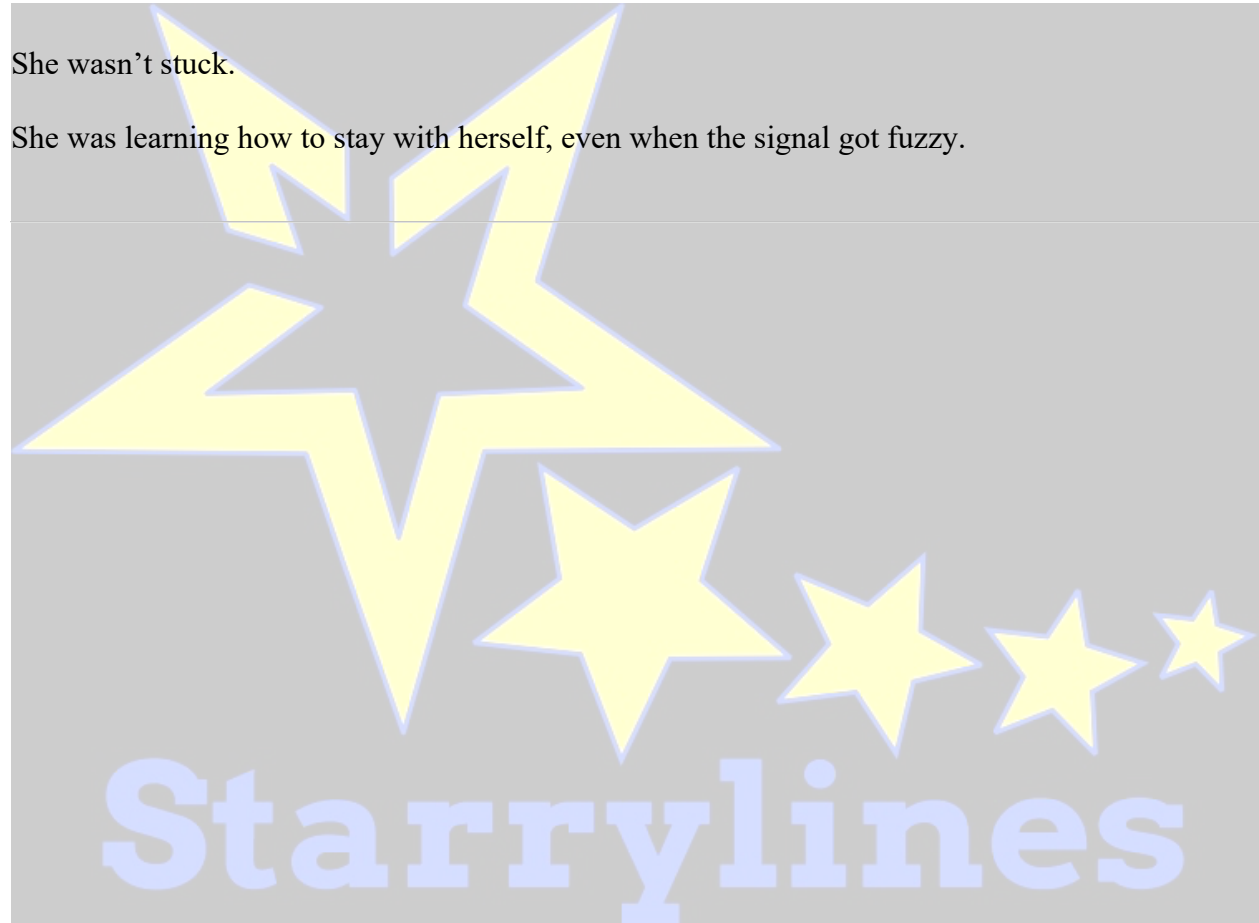
And still, Ava didn't spiral. Instead, she did something new. She opened her journal and wrote:

"I just saved a draft I didn't post. I told myself it wasn't the right time.  
But maybe it's not about the timing.  
Maybe I'm still scared to be visible.  
Scared that people will look at me and say, 'That's not enough.'  
Or worse, say nothing at all.  
But the fear didn't win.  
I didn't post... but I also didn't abandon myself."

She underlined that last sentence.

She wasn't stuck.

She was learning how to stay with herself, even when the signal got fuzzy.





#### ***Scene 4: Quiet Progress***

Ava returned to the business plan on a rainy afternoon, the kind that made the city feel hushed and close. The lamp on her desk cast a warm pool of light over the table, and her tea steamed beside her. This time, she wasn't sitting down to prove anything, not even to herself. She just wanted to be with the work.

She opened the document, scrolled past the blank "Marketing Plan" section, and landed on the page titled *Values and Vision*. The heading blinked at her like an invitation.

She hadn't written a single word under it.

A small smile tugged at her lips. Of course, that's where she'd gotten stuck. It wasn't the pricing or logistics, or software. It was the part where she had to say what she believed in. What she stood for.

And the truth was she stood for things that weren't loud or bold or bullet pointable.

She stood for gentleness.

She stood for deep listening.

She stood for slow, awkward beginnings, the kind most entrepreneurs edited out of their origin stories.

**Could that be a strategy?**

**Could gentleness be part of the business model?**

The idea felt radical. And completely hers.

She started typing, hesitantly at first, then faster:

*This studio is grounded in the belief that growth doesn't have to be aggressive.*

*That confidence is not a performance.*

*That we can build futures not through hustle, but through honesty.*

*This is a space for learners who are tired of pretending to be fine.*

*For those who know what they love but haven't been given permission to lead with it until now.*

She paused, reread the paragraph, and didn't flinch.

There it was: her voice. Not in its loudest form, but in its truest.

She moved to the "Target Audience" section. She didn't fill in demographics or income brackets. She wrote:



*My people are the quiet ones.  
The ones who get underestimated in meetings but light up in 1-on-1s.  
The ones who've been told they're too sensitive, too idealistic, too soft.  
They are not a niche, they are a force.  
They just don't know it yet.*

By the time she closed the laptop, two hours had passed. The rain had stopped. The air smelled like wet pavement and new beginnings.

Ava didn't feel triumphant. She felt... intact.

Not because the business plan was finished. It wasn't.  
But because, for the first time, she wasn't trying to write what she thought the world wanted.

She was writing the kind of business she would have needed maybe ten years ago.

She opened her journal before bed and wrote:

"I don't need to be louder. I need to be clearer.  
Gentleness isn't weakness, it's a way of holding power with care.

This business isn't my big break.  
It's my quiet return."



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## ***Scene 5: The Business Plan is Done***

It was a Tuesday afternoon, and Ava had no meetings, no classes, no excuses. The sky was pale, the light diffused. A mild wind tapped the windowpane, and she felt unusually calm, like something had settled inside her. A hush after the storm.

She opened the document again, *Business Plan: Mentorship Studio*, now with pages filled in. Her cursor sat expectantly below the final section: *Implementation Timeline*. She stared at the blinking line and thought, *When does anything really begin?*

She sketched out a loose plan. Month one: beta sessions. Month two: feedback loops. Month three: revise, refine, rest.

She added reminders to pace herself. To keep journaling. To leave room for her nervous system to adjust, because this was not just a business rollout; this was emotional repatterning.

When she finished typing, she leaned back in her chair, took a sip of water, and exhaled slowly. The plan was done.

No fireworks. No finish line. But the quiet inside her chest felt like peace.

Ava printed the document, clipped the pages together, and placed it beside her on the desk. Then she opened her journal, and without hesitation, began to write:

“I thought finishing this plan would feel like a launch.  
But it feels more like an arrival. A homecoming.

It’s not about success. It’s about truth.

Every section I wrote, values, audience, and goals, was a way of listening to the version of me I had once silenced.

The shy girl who wasn’t loud enough to lead.

The intuitive one who thought too much.’

The one who used to dream in metaphors and get laughed at for it.

I’m no longer writing *for* them. I’m writing *from* her.

The plan is complete, but it’s not for the world.

It’s a document of self-love. Of commitment to self.

Of saying I believe in the life I can build, even if no one claps for it yet.

Ava closed the journal and looked out the window. The light had shifted. A golden edge had crept into the late afternoon, casting a soft glow on the rim of her desk.

She felt ready, not to *post* anything, but to live with more intention.

Tomorrow, she would record the presentation. Not to impress. Just to witness herself speaking her truth out loud.

Not for validation. For clarity.

Not for an audience. For Ava.



## ***Scene 6: The Mock Presentation (Revised)***

Ava spent the morning tidying the corner of her room where the light felt soft and even. She adjusted a few books, repositioned a small plant, and draped a folded throw across the arm of the chair behind her. Not for perfection, just for warmth. She wasn't building a stage. She was making a space where her voice could feel safe.

She wore a navy blouse and jeans. Nothing curated. Just real.

She set up her phone on a small tripod, centred the frame, and sat down. Then she hit "record."

Her voice quivered at first, but she didn't stop. She introduced the *Mentorship Studio*, described her vision, her why. She spoke from her chest, not her notes. About values like gentleness, clarity, and dignity. About the learners she wanted to support, the ones who never fit the mould, who had something real to say, but no one was listening closely enough.

When it was done, she clicked "stop" and sat still. There was no adrenaline high. No crash. Just a clean, steady silence.

Later that evening, she watched the video once. Trimmed a few awkward pauses. Left most of it untouched. It was enough.

She hovered over the "Post" button.

And that's when it came, not a loud voice, but a cold current inside. That faint, familiar flicker: *You're not ready. People will see right through you. Who do you think you are?*

Shame. Fear. Not gone. Just subtler now. But still alive in her nervous system, still fluent in the old tongue of doubt.

She didn't flinch this time. She simply opened her journal and wrote:

"I feel shame. I feel fear.  
You're here again. I recognize your weight, low in my gut, hot behind my eyes.  
But I also see you now. And no, this isn't about you 'winning' again.

I'm not posting this video *yet*, not because I'm paralyzed, but because I'm finally aware enough to know you live in me and I want to deal with you, not ignore you.

I want to sit with you. Feel you. Let your grip loosen without force.

You are part of me, and I want to help myself, over time, making your voice neutral, not toxic.

That's why I'm not posting tonight.

But I will. I know I will.

This video, this plan, is a testimony.  
A living record of my commitment to myself.  
Not just as an entrepreneur.  
As a whole human being.

She closed the journal gently. No dramatic exhale. No heroic music in the background. Just peace curling at the edges of her mind.

The video was saved. The plan was done. The next step would come when she was ready. When it felt like the truth, not performance.

She turned off the light, let the evening hold her, and whispered inwardly:

*I'm doing this my way. And that's more than enough.*

As the writer of this piece, I acknowledge using OpenAI for revising and editing.

