



After the Family Gathering

the long drive home



You're quiet in the car. Replaying all of it — who said what, the mood you wish you hadn't absorbed, the version of yourself you slipped back into without meaning to.

Family asks a lot of a sensitive nervous system. This is the part nobody plans for: what to do after, before it follows you into the week.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

It's not the event. It's the *drive home*.

The gathering itself, you can do. You smile, you help, you keep the peace, you read the room so no one else has to. You're good at it. That's the problem.

Because somewhere in there, you stopped being a guest and became the manager — of moods, of tension, of everyone's comfort but your own. And now it's hours later and you're still holding all of it. The thing your aunt said. The look between your parents. The feeling you absorbed at the table that was never yours to carry.

This won't undo the day. But it gives you a way to set it down — to peel off the role, hand back the feelings that don't belong to you, and come home to yourself before the week begins.

HOW TO USE THIS

- 1 Do this within a day of getting home — while it's fresh, but no longer loud.
- 2 Run the checklist first. It's small and physical, no thinking required.
- 3 Then the three questions. Short answers; a few words each is plenty.
- 4 Don't turn it into an analysis of everyone. This is about getting you back, not solving them.

Setting It Down

one at a time, no rush

- ☐ Let the drive home be quiet. No debrief, no replaying it out loud.

- ☐ Change out of the clothes you wore there. Warm water on your face and hands.

- ☐ Hand back a mood that wasn't yours. Say it plainly: **that tension was theirs, not mine.**

- ☐ Undo one piece of over-giving — the yes you didn't mean, if it can still be unsaid.

- ☐ Eat something that isn't leftovers from the table. Drink a full glass of water.

- ☐ Do one small thing that belongs only to you. A show, a bath, a walk, silence.

- ☐ Decide nothing important tonight. Anything big can wait for a rested you.

THREE QUIET QUESTIONS

When the checklist is done and the house is finally quiet, sit with these three.
Short answers — a few words each. This is for you, not a report on anyone.

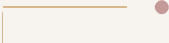
1 What role did I slip into today — without meaning to?

the helper, the peacemaker, the easy one, the listener...

2 Whose feelings did I carry home that were never mine to hold?

3 What do I need now — that no one there thought to offer?

ONE LAST THING



You can love them and still need to recover from them.

Needing a day to come back to yourself doesn't mean the gathering went badly, or that you love them any less. A sensitive nervous system takes in more — and at a table full of history, it takes in a lot.

Recovering from that isn't weakness, and it isn't a sign that something's wrong. It's maintenance. The quiet, ordinary care that lets you show up again next time as yourself.

There's more where this came from — gentle tools made for the specific moments sensitive people actually live in.

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