

UNSEEN BATTLES UNSPOKEN STRENGTH

A Journey Of Healing And Self-Discovery

Tanu Shree Sharma



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TO MY DECEASED LOVING FATHER.....

Foreword

I never thought I would write a book—especially not about myself.

But life has a way of breaking you open so deeply that you either stay silent forever... or you speak so others do not feel alone in their silence.

This book was born from the parts of me I once tried to hide—the sadness, the confusion, the pain, and the resilience I did not even know I had. These pages hold stories I never thought I would share. But I knew that if I wanted to truly heal, I had to be honest—not just with the world, but with myself.

Unseen Battles, Unspoken Strength is not just my story. It is the story of anyone who has ever felt invisible. Anyone who was told to “be strong” when they just needed to be held. Anyone who kept fighting battles no one else could see.

This book is for the quiet warriors.

The broken-hearted.

The deeply feeling.

The ones who are still searching for their voice.

If you are reading this, know that your pain is valid. Your story matters. And your healing is possible—

even if it takes time, even if it is messy, even if you do not believe it yet.

I am not an expert. I am just someone who walked through fire and came out softer, not harder.

And I want to walk with you now, even if just for a few pages.

With all my heart,

Tanu Shree Sharma

Preface

When I first sat down to write this book, I was not sure where to begin.

How do you put years of silence, hidden pain, and invisible wounds into words?

For a long time, I kept everything inside. I smiled when I was hurting. I said “I’m fine” when I was falling apart. I became a master of survival—but not of self-love, not of peace.

This book began as a whisper—my truth trying to find a way out.

It became a journal. Then a series of letters to myself.

And finally, it became a voice. My voice.

Every chapter in this book is a step in my journey back to myself.

It is filled with truths I was afraid to say out loud... until now.

I did not write this book because I have it all figured out.

I wrote it because I know what it feels like to feel lost, broken, or invisible.

And I believe that if even one person reads these words and feels seen, heard, or a little less alone—then it was worth it.

Unseen Battles, Unspoken Strength is not a guide. It is a mirror.

It is a reminder that healing is messy, that strength can be soft, and that the quietest voices often carry the loudest truths.

Thank you for picking up this book. Thank you for walking with me.

And most of all, thank you for choosing to keep going.

With love,

Tanu Shree Sharma

Acknowledgements

This book is born from pain, healing, and the quiet strength that kept me going when no one else saw the battle I was fighting.

To my younger self — you were always enough, even when the world told you otherwise. Thank you for holding on. I wrote this for you.

To the people who hurt me — though you caused pain, you also unknowingly sparked the fire that helped me rise. This book is proof that I survived.

To the ones who stood by me, even in silence — your presence mattered more than words ever could.

To every reader holding this book — thank you for honouring my story with your time and attention. I hope these pages help you feel less alone.

And finally, to the quiet voice inside me that said, “Don’t give up”—I am glad I listened.

With deep gratitude,

Tanu Shree Sharma

Prologue

There was a time I could not speak.

Not because I did not have a voice, but because I did not think it mattered.

I was the quiet one.

The obedient one.

The one who smiled on the outside and shattered in silence.

People saw my face, not my fight.

They saw the girl who always managed, not the one who barely held on.

I carried pain like a secret—tucked away in journals, in forced laughter, in sleepless nights.

I learned early on that some wounds do not bleed, they bury.

And I buried mine so deep, even I forgot how much they hurt.

But the body remembers.

The heart remembers.

And eventually, it all rises—aching to be felt, to be freed, to be turned into something more.

This book is the result of that rising.

It is not just a story. It is a reclamation.

Of voice.

Of strength.

Of the girl I used to be... and the woman I am still becoming.

If you have ever fought a battle no one could see,

If you have ever felt invisible in a room full of people,

If you have ever wished someone would simply understand—

This is for you.

You are not alone.

— **Tanu Shree Sharma**

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Chapter 1:

Childhood Shadows

They say childhood should be the safest part of our lives—a place of innocence, laughter, and love. But for some of us, it is where the first cracks form. Where we learn to smile while sinking. Where we become quiet not because we have nothing to say, but because no one is really listening. My childhood was filled with contradictions. There was love in my home, yes—but not the kind that made me feel safe. My parents loved me; I know that now. But back then, their love often felt like something I had to earn, or prove I deserved. They were emotionally distant trapped in their own pain, too caught up in their battles to see the war I was fighting inside. The house was always loud. Arguments echoed through the walls daily, sharp words thrown like weapons, silence that screamed louder than shouting ever could. I watched two people I loved the most tear each other apart, and no matter how hard I tried, I could not fix it. And oh, I tried. When you grow up in chaos, you learn to become small. You try not to make things worse. You become the peacemaker, the good child, the invisible one. I thought if I behaved perfectly, they would stop fighting. The house would finally feel like home. But it never did.

Then came the moment no child should ever face. I was still young—too young to understand, but old enough to feel something was terribly wrong. A family member, someone I should have been safe around, crossed a line that should never be crossed. I did not have the words for it at the time. I just remember freezing. Feeling confused. Ashamed. Dirty. I did not tell anyone for a long time. I did not know if they would believe me. I did not want to cause more trouble in a house already falling apart. So, I carried it alone, buried deep in my heart like a secret seed of pain. As if that was not enough, one day both my parents sat me down. I remember the room, the silence, the way they avoided looking at each other. They told me they wanted a divorce—and then they asked me to choose who I wanted to live with. I was a child being asked to split my world in two. How do you choose between your mother and father? Between guilt and guilt? Between pain and pain? I did not know how to answer. I did not even know who I was yet, let alone who I wanted to build the rest of my life with. That day, something inside me broke—not loudly, but quietly. Like a glass cracking under pressure.

The Unseen Wounds

Most people who knew me back then would have said I was quiet, polite, even “strong.” But that is the thing about children like me—we become experts at

hiding. We smile through pain. We stay silent when we want to scream. We become everything others need, and nothing we are. Looking back, I do not think I ever really got to be a child. I was always bracing for the next fight, the next mood swing, the next wave of emotional coldness. I did not feel held. I did not feel chosen. I did not feel seen. What young Tanu needed the most—but did not receive—was love, attention, freedom, praise, and peace. Not toys. Not perfection. Not lessons. Just safety. Just a gentle hand. Just someone to say, “I see you. You matter. You are enough.” And yet—I survived.

To the Reader

If your childhood was not safe, I want you to know something: it was not your fault. You did not deserve the pain. You did not cause the chaos. And you were never meant to carry it all alone. This chapter is not just a memory. It is a beginning. A reckoning. An honouring of the child I was—and the child you were too. Healing does not erase the past. But it helps us make peace with it. It helps us stop blaming ourselves for things we had no control over. It teaches us to give our younger selves the love and protection we never received. So, to the little girl inside me: I see you. I believe you. And I will never make you choose again.

Chapter 2:

The Mask I Wore

After a while, pretending becomes second nature. You do not even realize you are doing it—it just becomes part of how you survive. That is what happened to me. After all the chaos, pain, and unspoken wounds of my childhood, I developed what I now call “the mask.” It was invisible to everyone else, but I could feel it—tight around my smile, heavy on my shoulders, loud in my silence. It told the world, “I’m fine,” even when I was not. And people believed it. Why wouldn’t they? I smiled, I performed well in school, I said the right things. I was helpful, polite, dependable. The kind of girl who always made sure others were okay—even when she was not. But here is what I know now: being the “strong one” can be the loneliest role in the world.

School, Friends, and Being “Perfect”

At school, I was quiet. Focused. Mature for my age. Teachers liked me. Classmates trusted me. I became the listener, the advice-giver, the one who never said no. But inside, I was always calculating: What do they expect from me? How do I make sure I am not rejected? How can I be loved without being a burden? So, I pushed down my emotions. I did not

cry in front of anyone. I avoided confrontation. I did not speak up when I was hurt. I laughed even when I was breaking inside. I did everything to be “enough”—not because I thought I was, but because I was terrified, I was not. And slowly, I forgot who I was without the mask.

People-Pleasing: The Silent Addiction

If someone needed something, I said yes. If someone hurt me, I forgave them immediately—even when they never apologized. I convinced myself that being kind meant being quiet. That love meant self-sacrifice. That boundaries were selfish. I remember a time when a friend betrayed me—spoke behind my back, used my secrets as gossip. I was crushed. But instead of standing up for myself, I smiled the next day like nothing happened. I was afraid if I confronted her, she would leave. And somehow, that felt worse than being hurt. So, I stayed silent. Again. This is what people-pleasing looks like: You abandon yourself so no one else will abandon you.

Loneliness in Disguise

On the outside, I was surrounded by people. Friends. Family. Social events. But on the inside, I was completely alone. I had no one who truly knew me—not because they did not care, but because I never let them see past the mask. I was too scared they would not love the real me. The sad me. The broken me.

The angry me. So, I kept performing. Laughing. Helping. Achieving. And all the while, I was quietly asking myself, “When will it be my turn to be held?”

The Cost of Pretending

Pretending takes energy. Emotional energy. Soul energy. And eventually, the cost adds up. I started feeling tired all the time. I would go home from a full day of pretending and collapse on my bed, emotionally drained. I started struggling with sleep, overthinking every interaction, doubting every word I said. Anxiety crept in slowly, like fog. I could not relax. I was always on edge—afraid of making a mistake, of losing someone’s approval, of not being “good enough.” I did not know it back then, but I was experiencing emotional burnout. The kind that does not come from work, but from carrying too much pain in silence.

A Moment of Realization

One night, I stood in front of the mirror and stared at myself for a long time. I looked at my eyes—tired, hollow, distant. I did not recognize the girl looking back at me. And then, a thought came quietly: “What if I stopped pretending?” “What if I let someone see the real me?” “What if I gave myself the love, I keep begging others for?” It was not a breakthrough. It was not dramatic. It was just a seed. But that seed

would later grow into the courage I needed to begin healing

To the Reader

If you have ever worn a mask, I see you. If you have ever smiled to hide your sadness, stayed quiet to keep the peace, or said “I’m fine” when you were breaking—I know how heavy that mask can become. You are allowed to take it off. You are allowed to be real. Messy. Imperfect. Emotional. You are allowed to be you. The people who genuinely love you will not leave when they see your truth. They will come closer. And even if they do not—you will still have you. And that is enough to start.

Chapter 3:

Breaking Down in Silence

Some pain does not scream. It whispers. It lingers. It slowly takes up space in your chest until one day, breathing feels like effort. That is how it started for me. Not with a big, dramatic breakdown. Not with tears in the middle of the night. Just a quiet emptiness that showed up one day and refused to leave. I woke up feeling tired, even after sleep. My chest felt heavy, even though nothing was physically wrong. The world looked the same, but everything inside me felt grey. It was not sadness, exactly. It was numbness—like someone had turned the volume down on life. I did not know it then, but I was slowly breaking down.

The Day I Could not Pretend Anymore

There was one day I will never forget. I had gone to work like always, answered messages, smiled through small talk, met every expectation. But by evening, something cracked. I came home, closed the door, and sat on the floor in my room. I could not move. I could not cry. I just sat there, frozen—heart pounding, hands trembling, staring at nothing. My chest felt tight. My thoughts were racing. I felt like I was disappearing. I wanted to scream, but I could

not make a sound. I wanted to call someone, but I did not know what I would even say. “I’m tired”? “I don’t feel like I’m alive”? “I don’t know who I am anymore”? I did not want to die. But I also did not want to live like this. That night, I broke down—not in front of anyone, but in the quietest way possible. Alone. On a cold floor. With nothing but silence and the ache of everything I had buried.

The Things I Could not Say Out Loud

There were so many things I never said out loud:

- “I’m exhausted from trying to be everything for everyone.”
- “I don’t feel seen, even when I’m surrounded by people.”
- “I’m scared that if I stop pretending, no one will stay.”
- “I don’t feel like I matter.”

I kept these feelings tucked away because I did not want to be a burden. Because I thought others had it worse. Because I did not believe my pain was valid enough to speak out loud. But silence does not protect you. It poisons you from the inside.

Mental Health Isn’t Always Visible

People think mental health struggles look like crying or staying in bed all day. But sometimes it looks like:

- Going to work with a smile and breaking down in the bathroom
- Making jokes while feeling completely hollow
- Helping others through their pain while ignoring your own
- Being the "strong one" until your strength runs out

That was me. Functioning on the outside, falling apart on the inside. And no one knew— because I did not let them.

The Turning Point

I wish I could say I asked for help that night. That I called someone. That I knew what I needed. But I did not. What I did do was write. I opened my notebook and scribbled the words: "I can't do this anymore, but I also can't give up." That sentence became the start of something new. Not healing. Not hope. Just honesty. And sometimes, that is enough. That night, I made a silent promise to myself: No more hiding. No more pretending. I needed to find another way to live. One that did not require me to abandon myself.

To the Reader

If you have ever had a moment like this—where the weight of everything crashes in and you are left with nothing but the sound of your own breath—I want,

you to know: You are not weak. You are not broken. You are not alone. Breaking down is not the end. Sometimes, it's the beginning. The moment we admit we cannot carry it all is the moment we start putting down what was never ours to carry. And in that space—between exhaustion and surrender—something beautiful can begin.

Chapter 4:

The Silent Struggle of Our Generation

I remember one evening vividly. I was sitting in my room, phone in hand, scrolling through social media. Everyone was doing something great—launching businesses, traveling the world, getting married, buying houses. Meanwhile, I was barely keeping myself together. I had just finished a long day of work that did not fulfil me, had unpaid bills on the table, and was carrying a mind full of noise I could not explain.

That night, I asked myself, “Is it just me? Or is everyone silently drowning too?”

The truth is, it is not just me—and it is not just you either. We are part of a generation that is struggling more than anyone talks about. Not because we are weak. Not because we are lazy. But because the world changed faster than we could prepare for, and somehow, we are expected to keep up without falling apart.

The Pressure to Be “Everything”

From childhood, many of us were told we could be anything—and that was empowering. But

somewhere along the line, that turned into having to be everything. Be successful. Be educated. Be financially stable. Be attractive. Be mentally strong. Be socially connected. And do it all gracefully.

I remember a friend, Neha, who was a brilliant student, a part-time artist, and one of the kindest souls I knew. But behind her bright smile was a storm. She once told me, “I feel like I’m always behind. No matter how hard I try, it is not enough.”

Neha is not alone. I have heard that sentence in so many voices—from colleagues, cousins, strangers online. The constant comparison, the never-ending goals, and the feeling that someone out there is doing more, being more—it is exhausting.

Money, Dreams, and Reality

Let us talk about money.

Our parents bought homes in their 20s. They had savings. Stability. Some had government jobs for life.

Now? We have degrees and internships and side hustles—and still, for many of us, financial peace is a fantasy. I know people working 12 hours a day and still living pay check to pay check. I have been one of them. You save a little, and a medical emergency wipes it out. Rent takes half your salary. The dream of owning a home? It is out of reach for most.

A friend once told me, “I make more than my parents did at my age, but I still can’t afford what they could.” That stuck with me.

The Loneliness of a “Connected” World

I have had days where my phone buzzed non-stop—group chats, notifications, messages. And yet, I felt utterly alone.

We are the generation of constant contact and zero connection. We post, we like, we scroll—but we rarely talk. Genuinely. Heart to heart. We have replaced hugs with emojis, and vulnerability with curated stories.

One night, during a low phase, I called five people. No one picked up. Everyone was “busy” or “online later.” That night, I realized how easy it is to feel invisible in a world full of eyes.

Mental Health: The Battle No One Sees

Let us say it: we are in a mental health crisis.

Anxiety is normal now. Depression hides behind makeup and filters. People are functioning while falling apart. Therapy is still taboo in many homes. We smile in public, cry in private.

There was a time I did not want to get out of bed for days. Not because I was lazy. Because I was tired—in my soul. Tired of pretending. Tired of trying. Tired of being okay when I was not.

That is when I realized: struggling does not make you broken. It makes you human.

A Generation That Still Hopes

But here is the beauty of it all—despite the chaos, this generation is resilient. We speak up. We question traditions. We go to therapy. We leave toxic jobs. We choose healing over hiding. We break patterns our parents did not even know were harmful.

We are unlearning shame. We are rewriting stories. We are showing up, even if it is messy.

Yes, we are struggling. But we are also building something better.

If You're Struggling Too...

I want you to know this:

You are not behind. Life is not a race.

You do not have to have it all figured out.

Resting is not laziness. It is survival.

You are allowed to cry, to feel, to ask for help.

You are doing better than you think.

Some days, surviving is enough. And on other days, thriving will come.

From Me to You

If this chapter felt like your story, it is because it is. This is not just my voice—it is our voice. The voice of a generation that refuses to give up, even when everything feels heavy.

We may be struggling, but we are not broken.

We are healing, slowly but surely. And that makes us powerful.

Chapter 5:

The Day Everything Changed

Grief doesn't always come with tears. Sometimes it arrives quietly—like a wave that does not crash but gently pulls you under. That is what happened the day my father died. Cancer took him. Slowly, painfully. Watching someone you love to fade away in front of your eyes, knowing there is nothing you can do to stop it—it changes you. It leaves a hollow space where words used to be. And yet, when it finally happened, I did not cry. Not because I did not care. Not because I was not hurting. But because I had already gone numb.

The Moment Everything Broke

Everyone expected grief to look a certain way—loud, visible, dramatic. But mine was silent. I remember standing in a room full of people after the funeral, everyone mourning in their own way, and I felt... nothing. Just this cold, sinking weight inside me. It was not about losing my father. It was the realization that my life would be even harder from here on. That I'd have to carry everything on my own now. That the one person who might have understood me, even silently, was gone. That day,

something inside me broke completely—but no one saw it. I did not scream. I did not fall. I just... stopped.

The Silent Breakdown

I stopped caring. I stopped reaching out. I moved through the days like a shadow of myself. I was tired of being strong. I had nothing left to give. And then came the breakdown. It was not loud. It was not public. It was quiet and internal. I became numb to everything— people, pain, joy. I was existing, not living. But even in that darkness, something unexpected happened.

An Unexpected Friend

During that time, when I felt like I had disappeared, a friend I never thought would understand—someone who had always been on the edges of my life—showed up. Not with grand gestures. Not with perfect words. Just presence. He saw what others did not: the silence, the disconnection, the weight I was carrying. And for a moment, I felt seen. Held. Understood. But as quickly as he came, he left. Life moved on for them. And I was left to face the storm alone again. That hurt more than I expected. I had opened a door, only to watch it close again. But even in that heartbreak, a truth began to form: No one is coming to save me. I must become my own rescue.

Choosing Myself

The first real step was terrifying: I decided to get help. Therapy was not a magic fix, but it was the first space where I did not have to pretend. Where I could be messy, emotional, silent—even angry. I started to see that setting boundaries was not selfish—it was survival. I began saying no. I began saying I need. I began saying enough. It felt strange at first. Scary. Confusing. Like learning to walk again after years of crawling. But piece by piece, I was rebuilding myself—not into who I used to be, but into someone stronger, softer, and more self-aware.

Walking Alone—but Not Abandoned

It hurt when everyone vanished. But their absence taught me presence. I started walking alone—not because I wanted to, but because I had to. And slowly, that path became sacred. It became mine. I cried. I wrote. I screamed into pillows. I sat in silence for hours. But I also learned. I grew. I healed. Quietly. Fiercely. In my own time.

To the Reader

You may be carrying pain that has no words. You may be numb, tired, angry, or all the above. You have lost someone. You have lost yourself. Everyone left when you needed them most. I want you to know you are still here. You are still breathing. And that is not a small thing. Healing does not look like joy right away. Sometimes, it just looks like not giving up.

Sometimes, it is just choosing to keep going—even when you do not know where you are headed. If you are walking alone right now, you are not the only one. I have walked that road too. And I promise—even in silence, there is strength.

Chapter 6:

Healing Isn't Pretty

People talk about healing like it is some peaceful, graceful path—quiet music, morning affirmations, long walks, and warm tea. I wish it were like that. But for me, healing looked like this: crying on the floor at 3 a.m. for reasons I could not explain. Cancelling plans because my chest felt too heavy. Smiling at people and then questioning for hours whether I said something wrong. Reliving memories, I thought I had buried. Doubting whether I would ever feel “normal” again. Healing was not beautiful. It was brutal. And lonely. And terrifying. But it was also real. And it was mine.

Starting Again—From Nothing

After the breakdown, after the loss, after the silence—I had to rebuild myself. Not into who I used to be, but into someone I had never been someone free. Someone who did not live to please. Someone who could sit with pain and not run from it. And so, slowly, painfully, I began again. Some days I wrote in a journal. Some days I stared at a wall and let myself feel. Some days I showed up for therapy and said nothing. And on the worst days, just brushing my hair or drinking water felt like a victory. There were

setbacks. Relapses. Days when I thought, “What’s the point?” But I kept going. Even when it was messy. Especially when it was messy.

What Helped (Even a Little)

There was no single magic thing that “healed” me—but some things helped along the way:

- Writing: It became my lifeline. A place where I did not have to be strong, just true.
- Saying no: To people, to pressure, to pain I did not want to carry anymore.
- Breathing deeply: Not for show. For survival.
- Being alone—intentionally: Not out of punishment, but to rediscover who I was without noise.
- Giving myself permission to rest: Because I was not lazy—I was healing. And healing is work.

Some days I still fell apart. But the difference was, I stopped calling that failure. I started calling it part of the process.

The “Ugly” Side of Growth

Healing was not about getting better. It was about getting real. I had to face the version of me I had spent years running from—the angry me, the insecure me, the tired me, the needy me. And instead of judging her, I learned to sit with her. Listen to her.

Care for her. That was the hardest part. Because we are taught to love others, but never ourselves. Especially not the parts of us that are loud, sensitive, angry, emotional. But those are the parts that needed love the most. So, I gave it. Slowly. Awkwardly. Gently. I started whispering to myself: “You are not too much.” “You are not broken.” “You are still healing. And that is enough.”

Healing Isn’t Linear

There were days when I felt strong. Peaceful. Hopeful. Then there were days when it all came crashing down again. And for a while, I thought that meant I was not healing. But healing is not a straight line. It is a spiral. You revisit old wounds, not because you failed—but because you are ready to understand them more deeply. And over time, I realized something beautiful: I was becoming the person I needed when I was younger. That girl who longed for love, for peace, for someone to say, “You’re allowed to feel.” She finally had someone: me.

To the Reader

If you are in the middle of your healing, and it does not look like how you imagined—please know this: Healing does not always look like smiling and sunshine. Sometimes it looks like crying in the shower, cancelling a call, saying no to someone you

used to always say yes to. It is not pretty. But it is real. And real healing lasts. So, take your time. Breathe. Unlearn. Rest. Mess up. Begin again. Because healing is not about fixing what is broken. It is about loving yourself enough to believe you were never broken to begin with.

Chapter 7:

Rebuilding Myself, Brick by Brick

Healing did not turn me into someone new. It brought me back to who I was before the world told me I was not enough. But that return did not happen overnight. It happened slowly, painfully, and imperfectly—one small step at a time. Like rebuilding a home that had been torn down by storms, with nothing left but the foundation: my raw self. My true self. And so, brick by brick, I began again.

Step 1: Learning to Say No

I used to think saying “no” made me selfish. That I owed people my time, my energy, my emotional availability—even when I had none left for myself. But healing taught me boundaries are not walls. They are doors I get to open or close, based on how safe I feel. I started saying no to:

- Conversations that left me drained
- People who only remembered me when they needed something
- Obligations that made me betray myself

The first few times, I felt guilty. But then... I felt powerful.

Because for the first time, I was choosing me.

Step 2: Rediscovering Joy in Small Things

I did not suddenly become happy. But I started to notice the soft glimmers again:

- A quiet cup of tea without rushing
- A song that made my chest feel light
- The calm of a morning where no one needed me but me
- Journaling and not editing myself
- Laughing without wondering if it was too loud, too much

These were not big wins—but they were mine.

And they reminded me that healing does not always shout. Sometimes it whispers:

“You are still here. You are still alive. Let us try again today.”

Step 3: Choosing Myself, Daily

Healing is not a one-time choice. It is a daily practice. Some days I did well. Other days I slipped. But I stopped punishing myself for not being perfect. I began asking myself:

- “What do I need today?”
- “Is this kindness or a trauma response?”

- “Is this connection or just me trying not to be alone?”

I stopped ignoring my feelings. I started validating them.

I stopped over-explaining. I started protecting my peace.

I stopped begging for love. I started giving it to myself

Step 4: Becoming My Own Home

I used to believe that love meant being chosen by someone else. Now I know real love begins the moment you choose yourself. That meant:

- Taking responsibility for my healing
- Forgiving myself for not knowing better
- Letting go of people who no longer aligned with my growth
- Being gentle with my inner child, who just wanted to be held
- The more I showed up for myself, the less I needed to prove my worth to others.

I became my own anchor. My own voice of reason.

My own safety.

To the Reader

You do not need to have it all figured out to begin rebuilding. You just need a willing heart. And some patience. Start small. Choose yourself once today—then again tomorrow. It might be messy. It might be lonely at first. But I promise, you are not starting from nothing. You are starting from wisdom, pain, and power. And if you have survived this far, then there is so much more waiting for you than just survival.

Chapter 8:

Finding Purpose in Pain

I used to wonder why I had to go through so much. Why I had to lose, break, numb, pretend. Why I had to survive without being truly seen. Why the people I needed did not stay. Why healing felt like walking barefoot through fire, repeatedly. But now I understand something I could not back then: My pain was not pointless. It had a purpose.

Turning Hurt into Meaning

There was a moment—a quiet one—when I realized I was not alone. Not in the “there are people around me” way, but in the soul-deep way: The truth that so many others had felt what I felt. The silence. The shame. The breakdowns. The weight. The need to be everything while feeling like nothing. And suddenly, something shifted inside me: If my story can help even one person feel less alone... then it matters. That realization did not erase my pain. But it gave it direction.

Sharing the Story I Once Hid

I started writing—not for applause, but for freedom. I wrote the things I was once too afraid to say. I gave a voice to the girl inside me who was never allowed

to speak. At first, it was just for me. Then slowly, I started sharing—quietly, carefully. With friends. In messages. In little posts. And the response was always the same:

- “I feel this too.”
- “Thank you for saying what I couldn’t.”
- “I thought I was the only one.”

That is when I realized: our stories are sacred.

And when we tell the truth about our pain, we help others make peace with theirs.

The Power of Being Vulnerable

I used to think being strong meant staying silent.

Now I know true strength is being seen and soft.

To say, “Yes, this hurt me—and I’m still here.”

To say, “Yes, I broke—and I rebuilt myself anyway.”

People do not connect through perfection.

They connect through truth. Through cracks.

Through honesty. Through “me too.”

And every time I shared something real—no matter how small—I watched the shame loosen its grip on me.

Helping Others Helped Me Heal

I do not have all the answers. I am not fully healed.

But I have been through enough to turn around and say to others:

“I have walked that path too. You are not alone.”

- Sometimes, I have helped just by listening.
- Sometimes, by writing.
- Sometimes, just by being real.

And with every person I have reached—even quietly—I have felt another layer of my own healing deepen.

Pain isolated me.

But purpose reconnected me—to myself and to others.

To the Reader

You do not need to become a public speaker, therapist, or activist to find purpose in your pain. Sometimes, it is in the smallest moments:

- Listening without judgment
- Sharing your truth with a friend
- Writing something honest and letting it live
- Choosing not to pass on the same pain that hurt you

Your survival is already a story.

Your healing is already a light.

Your honesty is already a gift.

If you are wondering whether your journey matters—let me, say this:

It does. You do. And someone, somewhere, is waiting for your voice. [OBJ]

Chapter 9:

Learning to Love Myself

For most of my life, I thought love was something you earned. That it came when you were good enough, quiet enough, useful enough. That it had to come from someone else.

So, I chased it.

In people. In approval. In being needed.

I gave love freely to others but never thought to keep any for myself.

But healing showed me something I never learned as a child:

- **Self-love is not selfish.**
- **Self-love is survival.**

Unlearning the Lies

The hardest part about learning to love myself was unlearning what love was.

I believed:

- Love meant being chosen—even if it cost me my voice.
- Love meant forgiving everything—even if it broke me.

- Love meant shrinking—so others could feel comfortable.

I had to be small, soft, silent

But love, I now know, is not about shrinking. Real love—especially self-love—is about **expansion**.

It is about saying: ***“I am allowed to take up space. I am allowed to be full, flawed, and still enough.”***

The First Signs of Love

Self-love did not come to me like lightning.

It came quietly, in small choices:

- Not texting someone who only reached out when they were lonely
- Wearing what I liked instead of what I thought I “should”
- Not apologizing for crying
- Letting myself rest without guilt
- Looking in the mirror and, for the first time, not criticizing myself.

These were not grand moments. But they were *honest*. And healing lives in honesty.

Learning to Hold Myself

When no one else was there to comfort me, ***I began comforting myself.***

When others overlooked my needs, I started asking,
“What do I need right now?”

When I doubted myself, I whispered, *“It is okay. I am still proud of you.”*

I became the voice I never had.

The parent I needed.

The friend I longed for.

And slowly, I stopped begging others for scraps of love—because I was feeding myself full meals.

Looking Back with Compassion

There was a time I hated the version of me who begged to be loved, who tolerated less, who stayed silent. Now, I see her with softness

- She was not weak. She was surviving.
- She did what she knew.
- She just did not know she deserved more.

Now, I love her too. I thank her. *Because she is the reason I made it here.*

To the Reader

Loving yourself does not mean you always feel confident, calm, or glowing.

- It means ***showing up***, even when you feel like a mess.

- It means ***choosing your peace*** over pleasing people.
- It means ***being kind to yourself***, even on the days when you do not feel lovable.

You do not have to earn your worth. You do not have to prove your value.

You are worthy of love—especially your own—simply because you exist.

And if no one else has told you today, let me be the one:

***You are enough. You have always been enough.
And you do not need to shrink anymore.***

Chapter 10:

Becoming Who I Was Meant to Be

I spent so many years trying to become what others needed:

- The good daughter.
- The quiet girl. The strong friend.
- The one who never asked for too much.

But somewhere in the middle of all that pretending, I lost sight of me.

And now?

Now I am finally becoming the woman I was always meant to be—not perfect, not always healed—but whole.

And that is everything.

I Am No Longer Who I Was

I no longer silence myself to keep the peace.

I no longer chase people who do not choose me.

I no longer prove my worth through pain.

Instead, I speak up. I protect my peace. I choose myself—every single day.

I am no longer afraid of being too much.

I am more afraid of living too small.

I Know My Patterns—and I Pause

Healing did not erase my triggers, my old wounds, or the parts of me that still feel fragile. But it gave me awareness.

Now, when old fears come up, I do not abandon myself.

When I feel the urge to people-please, I pause.

When I feel unworthy, I remind myself:

“That is the old story. I do not live there anymore.”

Growth does not mean you stop falling. It means you learn how to rise, softer and smarter each time.

I Am Rooted in Self-Respect

I used to love in ways that hurt me—

giving too much, waiting too long, settling for less.

Now, I love in ways that **protect me**.

- I know what I deserve
- I ask for what I need
- I walk away when my peace is disturbed
- no longer see boundaries as rejection—but as a form of love.

And I respect myself enough to never go back to a version of life that made me feel small.

I Am Still Becoming

I am not done growing. I am not finished healing. But I do not need to be.

What matters is: ***I am no longer surviving—I am living.***

I am not hiding—***I am revealing. I am not shrinking—I am expanding.***

And every day, I am showing up for myself with more love, more presence, more truth.

I do not need to become someone else to be worthy. I just needed to come home to myself.

To the Reader

You're still in the storm. You're still in the silence. You're just starting to find your way back to you.

Please know this: ***You are not behind. You are not broken. You are not lost. You are becoming.***

And no matter where you are on that journey, I hope you know: ***There is something beautiful waiting on the other side of your pain.***

Not perfection. Not answers. But freedom. Peace. Wholeness.

And a version of you that feels finally, deeply, ***beautifully*** true.

Chapter 11:

Letters to My Younger Self

To the girl I used to be—

The one who cried silently under her blanket at night,

The one who smiled through pain to keep others comfortable,

The one who never felt chosen— This is for you.

Dear Little Tanu,

You were never too much. You were never too emotional. You were never too sensitive, too quiet, or too needy.

You were a child, asking for the things every child deserves:

- ***Love.***
- ***Attention.***
- ***Freedom.***
- ***Praise.***
- ***Peace.***

And I am so sorry no one gave them to you when you needed them most.

I am sorry you had to grow up so fast. That you had to carry feelings too big for your tiny heart. That you learned to shrink yourself just to feel safe.

You did not deserve the silence.

You did not deserve the emotional absence.

You did not deserve to feel invisible.

But you made it, baby girl.

You made it.

You Were Always Enough

I know how hard you tried—to be perfect, to be pleasing, to be good.

I saw the way you sat quietly when you wanted to scream.

I remember how you hoped someone would notice your sadness, but they never did.

But please hear me now:

It was never your fault. You were always worthy. You were always enough.

- Even when they did not see you.
- Even when they did not listen.
- Even when they left.

You Were Brave

Bravery is not loud.

Sometimes, *it is just waking up when you do not want to.*

Sometimes, *it is keeping a secret because you are scared no one will understand.*

Sometimes, *it is holding yourself together when you are falling apart inside.*

And you did that—over and over again. You kept going, even with a heart full of cracks.

You survived things no one ever apologized for.

You kept love alive in a world that didn't give it back to you. *That is not weakness. That is courage.*

You Are Safe Now

You do not have to perform anymore.

You do not have to hide your tears.

You do not have to make yourself small to be loved.

You are safe now. I am here. I will protect you. I will listen to you. I will love you in all the ways they did not. You do not have to chase love anymore—I will never leave you again.

To Every Reader with a Little Version of Themselves Inside

If you are carrying a younger version of you in your heart—

one that still flinches, still doubts, still aches—this letter is for them too.

They were never broken. They were just hurt. And you are the one they have been waiting for.

Let them cry. Let them speak. And then hold them with the tenderness you always needed.

Because healing does not just change your future—it rescues your past.

Epilogue:

To My Reader

If You've Made It To This Page, Thank You.

Truly. Thank you for walking with me through the darkest corners of my past.

Thank you for listening to the parts of my story that were once too painful to speak.

Thank you for holding space for the little girl I used to be... and the woman I have become.

But more than that— Thank you for showing up for yourself.

Whether you saw parts of your story in mine, or whether you are still searching for your way through, please remember this:

- ***You are not alone.***
- ***You are not behind.***
- ***You are not too broken to be whole again.***

This world will try to harden you, to silence you, to make you believe that healing is impossible.

But I promise you—healing is real. Not perfect. Not pretty. But real.

And it begins the moment you decide you deserve more than survival.

If No One Else Tells You—Let Me Be the First to Say:

- *You are enough.*
- *You are worthy.*
- *You are lovable.*
- *You are powerful. You are allowed to rest, to speak, to take up space.*
- *You are allowed to begin again, as many times as it takes.*
- *Your story matters. Your pain is valid. Your healing is holy.*

So, wherever life takes you next, walk boldly in the direction of your truth.

There is no shame in falling apart. There is only courage in rising again. You have done that already—just by reading this.

And for that, ***I am proud of you.***

With all my heart,

– Tanu Shree Sharma