Jasmine's Story

I used to think strength meant staying.

> **Staying quiet. Staying hopeful. Staying because leaving felt like failure.**

I'm in my thirties, I have a job, friends, a life that looks normal from the outside - and for a long time, that made it harder to admit what was happening behind closed doors. The yelling came first. Then the control. Then the fear that lived in my body even on good days.

The night I left, I didn't have a plan. I had a phone, shaking hands, and a number someone once told me to keep "just in case." When I called the shelter, they didn't ask why I waited so long. They didn't judge me. They just said, "You're not alone. We can keep you safe."

Walking through those doors felt like breathing for the first time in years. The shelter wasn't just a place to hide - it was a place to heal. To sleep without flinching. To remember who I was before fear made all my decisions.

> **Leaving didn't mean I was weak.**
>
> **It meant I chose myself.**