

The 50+ Comeback Journey

“because your story isn’t over yet”

“Real stories. Honest conversations. Hope for your next chapter.”

Story Session 2: The Drive Home

The Longest Journey on Familiar Roads

Dear Friend,

If you are reading this while sitting in your own car right now, or if you are remembering the day you did—take your hands off the steering wheel. Let your shoulders drop.

We made it out of the building. That was the first hurdle. But if you’re anything like me, the hardest part isn’t the goodbye in the office. It’s the transition. It’s the space between *who you were* five minutes ago and *who you have to become* tomorrow.

Remember what we said: We aren’t starting over from nothing. We are starting over from decades of experience.

Let’s talk about that drive.

Have you ever driven somewhere...

...and couldn’t remember the drive?

Your hands were on the steering wheel.

Your eyes were on the road.

But your mind was somewhere else.

Well, that was my drive home.



After walking out that cold door for the last time, I sat behind the wheel for what felt like an eternity. I didn’t put the car in gear right away. My hands were still wrapped so tightly around the steering wheel until my palms were slippery with sweat. My mind was a chaotic racetrack of phrases from the meeting: “part ways”... “COBRA”... “give me your phone, laptop, badge.”

Twenty years. Gone in one meeting.

I looked up into the rearview mirror, expecting to see a stranger, but the same fifty-year-old face stared back at me. I had given this place the prime of my physical and professional life. I had chosen late-nights over bedtime, weekend catching up over family barbecues and even church sometimes. I had done it gladly, believing that if I *took care of the brand, and the brand would take care of me. Can you say NAÏVE?*

When I finally hit the automatic starter, the engine of my Ford roared to life. It was a normal sound. A comforting, everyday sound. For years, that start of my car meant one of two things: the beginning of a grueling sales route covering several accounts, or the satisfying conclusion of a hard-won day. Today, it meant neither. Today the ignition was simply the starting bell for the longest drive of my life.

I finally shifted into reverse, backed out of the space, and began the slow crawl toward the exit. As I passed the main lobby glass windows, something inside me began to boil. It was the sting of walking away from twenty years of loyalty as though none of it had ever mattered.

As I reached the edge of the parking lot, I did what we all do. I looked in my rearview mirror one more time. There it was. The building. That's when I realized I had completely wrapped up my identity in that red-and-white logo and I was proud to be the face of that logo. From the outside, it looked completely unchanged. It was strange to watch a place that consumed 20 years of my life simply continue to exist without me in a matter of seconds. I blinked. One last look. Then I then turned onto the main highway, and watched my second home disappear from view.

But I visualized people were still sitting at their desks. Emails were still being sent. Phones were still ringing. But my seat was empty. My name tag, my phone, my laptop was on a desk. My access was gone.

The world outside kept moving-employees entering and exiting the parking lot, people walking, life continuing-but inside my car, time stopped. I didn't cry. I didn't scream. I didn't speak. I just drove, trying to understand how my life shifted so cruelly in minutes.

I turned out of the facility parking lot onto the main highway. The radio was blazing in the background playing my favorite songs but still couldn't fill my void. I reached over and clicked it off. The silence rushed back in, heavy and suffocating.

As I continued driving, I looked at the drivers in the cars next to me. A woman to my left was singing along to the radio. A man in a truck to my right was talking on his Bluetooth headset, gesturing with his hand. Still watching other drivers on the road moving along normally, entirely unaware that the path of my life just drastically changed.

They were living a normal Thursday. They had a job to go to tomorrow. Deadlines to meet. Paychecks coming next Friday. Those were my silent thoughts. The rhythm is stronger.

The exit for my home appeared ahead. Usually this exit brought a sense of relief the feeling of returning home after a long battle in the marketplace, but today the familiar streets felt distant. I didn't remember passing the fast food restaurants, gas stations, or church.

That's when the thought bubbles turned into a roaring waterfall. When you're over 50, a job loss isn't just about an income gap; it's a direct assault on your stability. The questions started firing off like firecrackers:

- What about the health insurance? My family depended on that coverage.
- How do we cover the mortgage without that second income?
- Who hires someone at my age?

If you are experiencing these exact questions right now, let me pause and tell you this: Your panic is valid, but it is not your destiny. It is just the dust kicking up from the collapse in the ceiling. The dust will settle.

The Tears on the Boulevard

For the first few miles, I didn't cry. I was operating on pure adrenaline. I kept my eyes fixed on the brake lights ahead of me, pretending I was just on a regular commute.

But identity was a heavy thing to carry when it had nowhere to go. For 20 years, my identity was wrapped up in being a provider, an expert, a reliable corporate employee. Without the title, I felt useless in the worst way possible.



Then, a familiar song came on the radio. It wasn't even a sad song—just a melody I usually listened to on my route to take care of my customers.

The dam broke.

The tears didn't just trickle; they came from a deep place of unfairness, and injustice. I had given this company my nights and weekends. I had answered calls on vacations. I trusted their processes, and smiled through the "cracks in the ceiling." And my reward was a manila folder and an HR escort to the door.

I let myself cry. I yelled at the windshield. “God, how could **YOU** allow this to happen to good people like me?” And honestly? If you need to do that on your drive home, do it. Let it out on the highway where no one can hear you. It is part of the cleansing process.

The Ultimate Obstacle: The Driveway

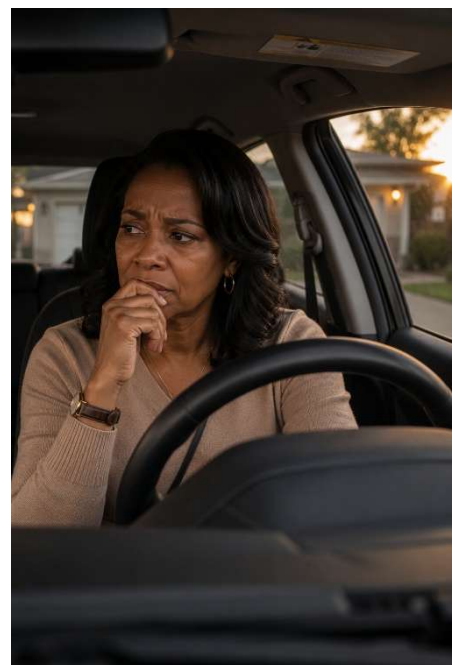
The closer I got to my neighborhood, the slower I drove. For the first time in my life, I wanted to hit every red light, as much as I use to hate stopping at them. I wanted the traffic to stop completely. Because I realized the hardest conversation of my life was waiting for me at the end of my route.

How do I look my husband in the eye and tell him I lost my job?

We were a team. We planned our future based on our combined stability. Telling him felt like I was admitting I was a failure, even though I knew I hadn't done anything wrong.

I pulled in the driveway, staring at the front door before coming to a final stop. For minutes, I hesitated to turn off the engine because doing so meant the drive was over, and the reality of telling my family began. I hit the automatic button to turn off the ignition, and the sudden quiet of the car left only the sound of my own breathing and thoughts inside the car. I grabbed my purse, and keys that had dug into my palm in the parking lot, and realized something.

The company took my title. They took my laptop. They took my badge. They took my phone.



But they didn't take me. They couldn't touch my skills, my wisdom, my work ethic, or my future. They just cleared my schedule so I could build something that actually belonged to me. The road ahead was going to be terrifying, uncertain, and filled with hurdles I couldn't yet see. Rebuilding after 50 wouldn't be easy, but I was not starting from scratch; I was starting from experience and so are you.

I opened the car door, and stepped out into the evening sun. I walked up the driveway, reached for the doorknob, and prepared to tell my family the truth—not as a defeated casualty of a corporate termination, but as a woman ready to figure out what came next.

BEFORE YOU STEP OUT OF THE CAR

If you are sitting in your driveway right now
trying to find the courage to walk inside,
read these words carefully:

- You are not a failure. You are a casualty of a corporate system that didn't value your loyalty.
- Your worth did not decrease because a manager couldn't look you in the eye.
- This drive is over. You made it home.

Walk through that front door.

Hug your people.

Tonight, we grieve.

Tomorrow, we start looking at the blueprint
for the next chapter. We are in this together.

COMING NEXT

I thought walking through that front door would be the hardest part.

I was wrong.

But what happened the next morning when I woke up at 4:00 AM...as usual,

That was the moment I realized the old world was truly dead, and I had to figure out how to reinvent myself from the kitchen table.