

Children of Destiny: A Tribute

By Members of the Creative Writing and Spoken Word Association, The Gambia

Today, in a shared van heading to the University, I heard an old man speaking in Mandinka. His voice was calm, deep, as if carried by experience. He said: "There are truly no good or bad choices in life. The most important thing is to be able to take responsibility for the choices you make."

That sentence echoed in me all along the ride. And then another question came, heavier, quieter: What if I never got to choose, and yet I'm still paying the price?

Let me explain.
I have been motherless since the age of 3.
Since that day, I have grown up with a void that no one asked me to carry, but that I had to learn to carry.
Today, as a student at the University of Education of The Gambia, I am still hurting. And I am not the only one.

There are those who are fatherless.
There are those who have lost both.
There are those whose parents separated, breaking the home in two without ever asking them.
We chose nothing.
And yet, every morning, we pay the price of a choice that life made for us.

Paradoxically, perhaps it is this lack of choice that shaped us.
Every day, we fight. We wake up early. We grit our teeth. We give our best in lecture halls, in notebooks, in evening prayers.
Not just to succeed.
But to fill, a little, the void we never chose.
To honor names we never had the chance to know.
To make proud those who are no longer here.

They call us "orphans".
But we are also living proof that the dead are not truly dead.
They live in the way we stand tall.
They live in the degrees we will go and collect for them.
They live in the silent pride with which we carry a destiny we were not allowed to choose.

So to all orphans, to all children wounded by absence:
Your story does not begin with a lack. It begins with resilience.
You did not choose the pain.
But every day, you choose to turn it into courage, into hard work, into light.

And you whose parents are still alive, who are still with you,
this is the time, now or never, to make them proud and to cherish every second you spend
with them.
For we fight to honor a memory.
And you, fight so that you will never have regrets.

Life is hard, yes.
But we are the children of those who endured.
And we will endure.