

The People We Don't See

It was a bright morning on Coastal Road. The sun was already strong, and the road was full of life. Cars moved slowly through traffic, vendors called out their prices, and people rushed in every direction as if everyone had somewhere urgent to be.

Musa walked beside his aunt on their way to the market. He liked mornings like this: busy, noisy and normal. They made him feel safe. But as they got closer to the roadside, Musa slowed down. A blind man stood carefully near the flyover, holding a small plastic cup in his hand. He turned slightly whenever he heard footsteps, hoping someone would notice him. His face looked calm but tired in a way Musa could not explain.

Beside him sat a woman with a baby on her back. The baby was quiet, almost sleeping. The woman's eyes moved from person to person passing by, waiting patiently for help that didn't always come. A young boy, not much older than Musa, walked slowly between people. "Please help me. Anything you can give," he repeated softly, over and over again.

Some people stopped and gave small coins. Others walked past without looking. A few avoided eye contact completely, as if not seeing them made it easier. Musa didn't say anything at first. But something inside him shifted. He slowed down even more. His aunt noticed. "You're very quiet today," she said gently.

Musa looked at her, then back at the roadside. "Aunty, are they here every day?" he asked softly.

"Yes," she replied.

Musa watched the blind man carefully stretch out his hand again. He saw the boy continue walking, his voice tired but steady. He saw the woman adjust her baby under the hot sun. Musa swallowed. "And do they eat every day?" he asked.

His aunt paused before answering. "Some days, yes. Some days, no. It depends on what people are able to give."

That answer stayed with Musa for the rest of the day. At the market, he tried to focus, but his mind kept returning to what he had seen: the open hands, the quiet voices and the waiting eyes. That night, Musa couldn't sleep. Every time he closed his eyes, he saw the same scene again: the blind man turning toward footsteps, the boy repeating his words and the woman sitting under the heat, waiting.

Musa turned in bed. "What if that was me?" he thought quietly. "What if I stood there every day, just hoping someone would notice me, just so I could eat?" He felt something heavy in his chest. Not just sadness but awareness. A feeling that he had seen something real for the first time. The next morning, Musa spoke to his aunt. "Can we help them?" he asked. His aunt looked at him for a moment, then nodded. "We can try."

That evening, they prepared small food packets and water. Nothing big, just what they could afford. When they returned to Coastal Road, Musa felt nervous. His hands were clenched as they walked closer. But when they started giving out the food, something changed. The blind man held the packet carefully. He paused for a moment before speaking. "Thank you," he said softly. The woman smiled with relief. The boy looked at the food as if he could not believe it was real.

Musa didn't say much. He just stood there quietly, watching. But inside him, something had changed. Not happiness like laughter but something deeper. Something steady. Understanding. As they walked away, Musa looked back at the road one last time: the noise, the movement, the people passing by and those still waiting. He spoke softly, almost to himself. "The world we share is not always equal, but it should always be kind."

Fatou Sowe

