

I was not meant to be silent

I was not meant to be silent
not meant to be swallowed by the suffocating weight of fear,
not meant to fade like a forgotten whisper
in a story carved by cruel hands I did not choose.

I was meant to rise
to rise from the ashes of stolen childhoods,
to piece together the shattered fragments of my soul
and weave them into a crown of unyielding courage.
I was meant to speak for the trembling girl in the shadows,
to echo the muffled cries of the child
whose voice was buried beneath shame.

(Pause. Let the silence deepen the moment.)

I was a bride before I was a dreamer,
a mother before I was even a child.
My laughter
that innocent, golden melody, was snatched away,
my innocence torn like fragile silk in a storm.
But my spirit...
oh, my spirit, like a hidden ember in the dark,
refused to die.
It burned silently,
waiting for the day it would blaze into light.

(Place your hand gently over your heart for emphasis.)

Today, I stand before you
no longer a captive of silence,
but a courageous song of survival.
No longer a broken echo,
but a thunderclap of hope.

Hear me when I say this:
you can break the chains.
You can rewrite the ending
even when the world insists the page is closed.

(Softer tone—almost a whisper, for the girls still trapped.)

To every girl hidden behind locked doors,
to every child whose tears have been dismissed

like they were nothing but rain—
know this:
you are not the names they branded upon you.
You are not the scars they left behind.
You are more.
You are starlight piercing through the endless night.
You are a dawn waiting to be born.

And to the world that dares to look away
look closer.
Child marriage is not culture,
it is the theft of a thousand lifetimes of dreams.
It is an unspoken wound,
a silent funeral of girlhood.
But together,
together we can heal the hurt,
we can shatter this cycle of stolen futures.

I did not come here as a victim.
I came here as a warrior draped in resilience.
I came to remind you
no chain is unbreakable,
no destiny beyond redemption,
no silence too deep to be broken.

So let this book be a lantern in the darkness.
Let my story be a seed of awakening
planted in the soil of justice and change.

For every girl whose voice was stolen,
for every soul still waiting for freedom,
carry this truth like a torch

You are not alone.
You are not powerless.
And you too, can rise.

By Mmathabo Sukati