

THE LAST OF US: MAIDUGURI

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For the survivors of the Boko Haram insurgency — Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.

The world has been emptied of laughter,
stripped of its easy songs.
What remains are shadows,
and the stubborn heartbeat of those who refuse to vanish.

We are not heroes—
we are remnants,
splinters of a story that forgot its ending.
Our voices crack like broken glass,
yet they rise,
daring the silence to swallow them whole.

I carry the memory of faces
(My grandfather was killed on his way home)
that no longer answer when I call.
(My aunt was taken; she died of a heart attack)
Their names are carved into the marrow of my bones,
(My grandmother went blind while fleeing)
their echoes my only inheritance.

Still, I walk.
Still, I fight.
Because despair is greedy,
and I will not let it claim the last of us.

Even in ruins,
a seed waits.
Even in grief,
a flame flickers.
And even if tomorrow comes crawling with teeth,
I will face it—
not as one who survives,
but as one who remains.