



A Gambian Woman

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With a child wrapped on her hips and back
she arrives

She has come to our clinic
at the urging of her village midwife
to learn her fate

Her exam was not normal
a growth seen on the opening to her womb
She has not yet fallen ill but her eyes see the future—
women of her village have made the same journey

The cancer will grow
the cervix will succumb

Perhaps she will return to us, seeking support and comfort
yet she knows

In this country of few resources
there is no surgeon trained for her needs
there is no medicine nor therapy here

A long travel north to Dakar could provide care and hope
if she can pass entry to this foreign land without papers
if she can understand a language not her own
a path she cannot fathom nor fund on her wages

I hold her baby to me and only think what I cannot utter aloud
my love, I am sorry, I cannot save your mother.

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