

Diary Entry Fatou

I cook, clean, and care for people who hardly acknowledge me. I live in their home, but I am not part of their life. They tell others I'm "like family," but I've never been treated like one of them. No one pays me. I have no contract, no rights, no papers of my own. I depend on them for everything — food, shelter, even permission to leave the house.

Before my arrival, I imagined Britain as a place of fairness and opportunity. But since the Derawals took me in, I've been invisible. I can't go to the doctor without their say. I can't save money. I can't plan my future.

On the news, they talk about modern slavery in nail salons, construction and domestic work. I consider if they mean people like me. But I also go swimming sometimes. I walk freely. I'm not locked up. Doesn't that mean I'm free?

And yet, I don't choose my life. I'm just living it.

I think about calling someone for help. But who? There is only Andrew! What if it gets worse? So I stay quiet. I tell myself I'm lucky. I have to. But is survival the same as freedom?

Maybe modern slavery isn't chains and violence anymore. Maybe it's silence, fear — and no way out.