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## PALACE MURDER

— 26th August 2017

- How masked men strangled traditional ruler to death at dawn in Plateau

From **GYANG BERE**, Jos

It's been agony and pain for the three children of Miskoom Francis Didi, a chief and ward head of Longvel, Shendam Local Government Area of Plateau State,

as after they watched a gang of masked men viciously strangle their father to death.

They are burdened by memories of the horrific incident, which they say would remain evergreen, just as peace will elude them until the law catches up with those who murdered their father. The children, Moses, aged 16, Patience, 13 and 10-year-old Samuel, had gone to a farm located few kilometres away from the community with their father at 6.30 am on Saturday, July 8, 2017, when the assailants who, unknown to them, had laid ambush, pounced on the traditional ruler and killed him in cold blood.

As they strangled him to death, the men from the pit of hell were unmoved by his plea for mercy; not even a flood of tears and shrill cries of teenage children could propel them to have a change of mind; they were on a mission to snuff out his life, and only left their victim after it had been accomplished. Then, they ordered the children to vacate the scene; a directive promptly complied with by fear-gripped Moses and his sister, Patience.

### Brave little Samuel

But Samuel, their younger sibling dared the harbingers of death, and declared his resolve to remain at the spot with the body of his father, even if it meant paying the supreme price. Piqued by his insistence, they descended on the 10-year-old primary six pupil, inflicting injuries on him, but he was resolute in his decision.

One hour later, Moses, who had fled earlier along with his elder sister, returned to the scene with an uncle, Elvis, to behold Samuel wailing as he laid on the lifeless body of their father. They promptly rushed to report the incident at the Shendam divisional police headquarters, where policemen were drafted to recover the corpse and thereafter deposited it at the morgue of the General Hospital in the town.

Later, medical examination was conducted on the remains of the 67-year-old traditional ruler at the Jos University Teaching Hospital, before it was released for burial on Friday July, 21, 2017, at Longvel, his village in Shendam Local Government Area of the state. Until his gruesome death, he was a prosperous farmer before being crowned Kana Nkur in 2009, after the controversial dethronement of his predecessor, Sule Sabo, by a first-class paramount ruler, late Long-Gomia of Shendam, Hubert Shaidas.

"For me, the incident will remain evergreen, and I don't know how to get over it; the more I try to overcome, the images of the scene appear to me in my sleep, even in the afternoon. If it were possible, I would have stopped those murderers; I don't know why they took a kind, innocent soul", Samuel lamented in an encounter with our correspondent.

He added: "We were relocated from the village to Jos by one of my uncles for security reasons, but I can identify those who killed my father. My uncle believed a change of environment would switch off images of the incident from our memories, but my father keeps appearing to me in my dreams since he was murdered."

### Manhunt for killers

Meanwhile, homicide detectives at the Criminal Investigation Department of the Plateau State police command are said to have extracted clues from the three children of the deceased who witnessed the incident, as the police launched a manhunt for the killers.

But Samuel desires to return home to live with Rahila Francis, his mother. When attempts to dissuade him failed, he was taken, first, to the palace of Long-Geomai of Shendam, where he spent few days before eventually arriving home, consumed by grief, pain and sorrow, which has become the lot of his mother, and siblings.

Faced with a grim future, they fear their ambitions might perish with the demise of their father. While Moses had dreamt of becoming a pharmacist, Patience desired venturing into the legal profession, and Samuel, a military officer. No wonder, his uncommon display of bravery at the scene where his father was murdered.

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