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# Driver slaughters kinsman over N100,000

w I don’t know how the devil entered my brain, he says

17th April 2021 in **Features**

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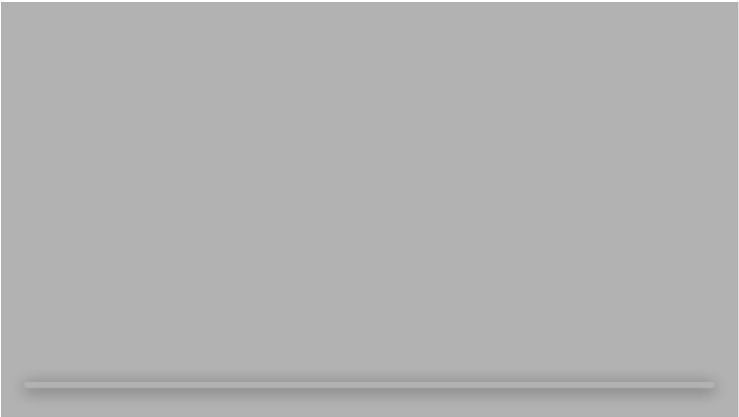
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By **Chioma Okezie-Okeh**

**His Igbo name, Ifeanyi, loosely translates as ‘There-is-nothing-difficult-with-this-one.’ His surname, Ezinwa, means ‘Good Child.’ But when on January 15, 2020, Ifeanyi Paul Ezinwa, 29, drenched in his own blood, ran into the palace of the traditional ruler of Akwete Nneyi Umuleri, a community in Anambra East, to report about armed robbers savagely attacking him and his kinsman called Victor Chukwuebuka Iloegbunam, 19, Ifeanyi was anything but a “good child.”**

As development later revealed, he was playing out a script to cover up his heinous crime. That was after he had allegedly murdered Iloegbunam, a provisions store owner, over a N100, 000 debt. But determined to cover up his evil deed, he sold a dummy to the unsuspecting locals.

“We were attacked by armed robbers; they took everything and gave me several cuts. Help us! Iloegbunam could be in danger,” he told the palace guards while pretending to be exhausted from his long run to the palace.

Deceived by his plausible explanation, the palace guards who felt pity for him made urgent arrangements and took him to the nearest hospital while at the same time alerting the local vigilantes guarding the area. Iloegbunam’s corpse was later found the following day. Initially, fingers pointed at the alleged armed robbers and all seemed to be going well according to Ezinwa’s plan. But an autopsy report would later show that, contrary to assumption, his victim was strangled.

#### **Emerging facts that nailed the suspect**

Based on the stunning find, the deceased’s grieving father wrote a petition to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) pleading with the authorities to wade into the matter and come up with the answer to the mystery of what happened. The IGP directed operatives of the Intelligence Response Team (IRT) led by Mr Abba Kyari, a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), to further investigate the unanswered questions surrounding the death. It was in the course of investigation that

the team discovered that Ezinwa, who had been telling all who cared to listen that he was a victim of an attack by armed robbers, carefully planned and killed Iloegbunam.

Police sources told *Saturday Sun* that the suspect confessed that he decided to kill his victim to stop him from exposing him to danger and ridicule. Iloegbunam, whose Igbo surname translates as 'May enemies not kill me,' was said to have threatened to report Ifeanyi to the elders of the community over the money he was being owed by Ifeanyi, so that the elders could help recover the debt. In an unfortunate irony of fate, Iloegbunam's name amounted to nothing in the end. His enemy succeeded in killing him.

Sensing some danger in his threat, Ezinwa was said to have lured Iloegbunam to a lonely spot near Umuleri Technical School at about 8.30pm, with the excuse that he sold a plot of land and was heading to the house of the buyer to collect the money which he would use to offset the debt. Thereafter, he was said to have held him tightly before stabbing and strangling him.

But while he was at it, Iloegbunam who was engaged in a fight for his life, was said to have managed to seize the knife and given him several cuts with it before breathing his last. To cover up his crime, Ezinwa was said to have run to the Eze's palace to fabricate the story about armed robbers attacking him and Iloegbunam. He said his kinsman was mortally wounded while he managed to narrowly escape death. Since he was with the deceased when the incident happened, the police invited him to give a statement to clear all possible doubts. He still maintained his armed robbery attack story until he got to the IRT interrogation room. It was there that some inconsistencies were pointed out in his story. Moreover, the local vigilantes claimed not to have caught any armed robber on the night of the incident. They also wondered how many people attacked them and what was stolen from them when the motorbike they used for the said trip to the house of the alleged land buyer came home intact. And, to make matters worse, there was nothing to show that any land deal took place. When he found out that the content of his earlier script did not quite add up with the available facts on ground concerning the gruesome murder, Ezinwa realized that the game was up. He thereafter confessed to the crime.

#### **The suspect's account and recollection of incident**

Recounting how he perfected the plan, Ifeanyi confessed to *Saturday Sun* that he was scared of losing his only source of income if the community leaders should get to know about the N100, 000 debt.

Hear his story: "I was born and raised in Akwuete Nneyi Umuleri in Anambra East, Anambra State and I'm married with three children. I dropped out of school while in senior secondary, months after my father died. The little money we could generate was used to feed my siblings and me. I learnt how to drive and started driving commercial buses. I made money and got married but when we started having children, the money was no longer enough.

"About two years ago, some of our kinsmen invited me to come and work for the community. My duty was to serve as a revenue collector for the elderly men in the community. We have markets, community farms that were rented out by the community to individuals. I was one of those assigned to collect the agreed fees from those using our markets and farms. I was doing well but became greedy and spent part of the money I collected. I knew that I would lose my job if they noticed a shortage. It was out of desperation that I approached Victor Ebuka Iroegbunam (deceased) who owns a provision store in our village. Victor is my relative; we are from the same 'kindred' in Umuleri. Sometime, in December 2020, I borrowed N100, 000 from him and promised to pay back in January. I could not meet up with the deadline, which was January 10. After the deadline, Victor kept putting pressure on me and threatened to report me to the Igwe. I knew that if he did that, they would know why I borrowed the money.

"And, that's why I made up my mind to silence him. I bought a big, long loaf of 'unsliced bread', created a hole in it and hid a sharp knife in it. I called him to come and meet me at Aguleri junction around 8pm. The excuse was that I just sold a plot of land and the buyer asked me to come to Aguleri and collect the money. I asked him to come along so that I would pay him immediately. He came with an okada man and I requested that the driver who is known to me should go home. I simply told him that we want to use his motorcycle and return it soon. I wanted to be alone, that was why I gave that excuse. As soon as we got to the technical school at Aguleri, I told him that I wanted to urinate. So we stopped. There are a lot of bushes around the school. I chose the part where people hardly pass through. I immediately opened the bread and brought out the knife. He saw me on time and started fighting. He took the knife and stabbed me severally before I could grab his neck and strangled him to death.

“Our area is well-guarded and I was bleeding. There was no way I would have met with the private security people on the way as it was already dark. That’s why I quickly decided to claim that we were attacked by armed robbers. I ran to the palace but the Igwe of Nneyi Umuleri was not around. I told the security men at the palace that we were attacked by armed robbers. I was bleeding from the knife stabs that I received. So the security men asked me to go the hospital for treatment. The following day, the chairman of the security in our community came with the police and arrested me. They also found the body of Iloegbunam with many stab wounds. I maintained my statement that we were attacked but that I narrowly escaped death. My wife and family members visited me and I told them that I am an innocent victim.

“They were about to charge the case to court when I was told that the family wrote another petition against me. This was how I ended up inside the IRT cell. I had no choice than to tell the truth. I cannot explain how the devil entered my brain. I don’t know what to tell his parents and kindred. I plead that they should forgive me; it is the handiwork of the devil.”

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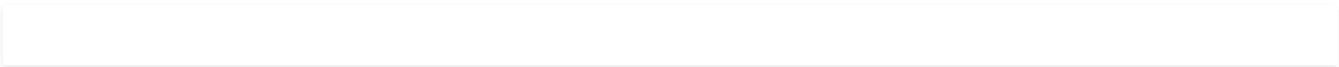
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