

I October will remain memorable in their minds for a very long time to come. Indeed, those who have lived on the street for over 30 years insist they have never witnessed an occurrence of that nature. A murder, so gruesome; so pathetic; so illogical that it left everyone in shock. For the victim, Funbi, did not fit the profile of one such an evil could befall, even had the oracle predicted it. Neither could anyone have guessed that the perpetrator of the dastardly act, Ali, capable of such evil. And to Funbi, his friend and confidant of many years too! As I write, most residents still gather in groups discussing the unfortunate incidence, an ill wind that has blown no good, especially Funbi's poor aged mother and family. What happened to Funbi: Unknown to everyone, the drama that led to the final discovery of Funbi's body that Friday morning, began unfolding late Thursday evening when he received a call from someone who was later identified as Ali, his bosom friend. Funbi who ran a retail neighbourhood shop selling provisions informed his neighbour that he wanted to dash out for a while and simply locked the Iron Gate, leaving the main gate open and his generator running, an indication that he was not going far. No one knew that he only walked across the street to Ali's house and into a death trap. One of those who stopped by to ask after Funbi at about 10pm that night was Ali. By 11.00pm when other shop owners were retiring for the night, Funbi had still not returned, so they helped him turn off his generator and shut the main gate with the belief that he would lock up properly later when he returned. By dawn, he was still nowhere to be found, and not known for such irresponsible acts. His neighbours became worried that Funbi must have fallen victim of some foul play. They notified his older brother who lives streets away and by 6am they were at the Oworonsoki Police Station to lodge a complaint about missing Funbi. Police procedure requires a period of 48 hours before a person can be officially declared

could return anytime. On returning to Funbi's residence, his aged mother had arrived from her abode in Somolu area. They were all still gathered outside, deliberating on the strange development, when his friend, Ali, came to announce that he'd heard some people shouting at the back street that they've found a dead body somewhere. Tufiakwa! It cannot be Funbi, everyone chorused. But still, a few young guys went to verify, just to be sure. Alas! It was indeed Funbi. Time was 7.35am, many workers had left home. School children were just setting off and the women and other artisans were about opening their shops for the day's activities. I had an 11.15am flight to Abuja to catch too, and was preparing for my trip, but everything and everyone came to a halt. Time stood still. Not Funbi! Why Funbi? What happened? Who could have done this?

Although, I can count the number of times I've spoken with Funbi on my finger tips. His was a household name. He was a friend to my children, especially my little daughter who would always come home clutching wrappers of sweets or gum in her tiny hands, gifts from Uncle Funbi. So, he did for many other children in the neighbourhood. Everyone simply loved him. A very respectful chap, he was a devout Christian and Redeemed church member. Easy going and generous even

to a fault as many acknowledged. At 32, he was still single but had stabilised himself financially through his dedication and devotion to hardwork. He was the darling of many elderly residents who were always eager to offer him advice and assistance. Funbi had been brought to Lagos from Ago-Iwoye in Ogun State about 12 years ago by his older brother who handed him over to a female acquaintance who needed a shop attendant at the time. The deal was that after a stipulated period, she would set him up with his own provision store. She kept her promise after 6 years, handing over the shop at Olorunfunmi and relocating to another area of Lagos. Now his own boss, he rented a room

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when part. Having confirmed that the body was indeed Funbi's, neighbours remembered that Ali's compound stretched across the two streets and it had a gate on both sides, so they asked him to open the gate, in order to pass through the compound. Alarmed, Ali rushed back inside and locked the gate. Everyone initially thought he was concerned about the house being linked to a murder under his watch. Even so, should that supersede his friendship and love for his dead friend? So, they prevailed on him and forced him to open the door. Before long, evidence that led to the murder laid bare before everyone. Ali and his brother had earlier fetched gallons of water from Funbi's compound in an attempt to wash away his spilled blood that morning. The prints from their bloodied hands were seen all over the compound, leaving a trail to the back gate. Broken pieces of glass from their struggling littered the hallway to the back flat. Ali's bloodied clothes were also found in a bucket of water, same for the murder weapon. What happened to Funbi: Unknown to Ali, though Funbi had always insisted that everything that transpired between them be kept secret as he did not want his relatives who also lived in the neighbourhood to know, he was also updating a few older friends. These people would later reveal all these information, including the fact that he just collected a loan of N300.000 from a MicroFinance on Tuesday and gave it to Ali to keep. What happened to Funbi: Like me, you might be wondering why Funbi would confide in strangers rather than his brother who brought him to Lagos? The gist is that at some point, they have also had conflicts bothering on financial matters. So, Funbi might not really be at fault. If you can't trust blood relatives, you turn to outsiders. Perhaps, if Funbi had told someone his destination that night, Ali might not have killed him that easily. Many have asked what Funbi and Ali had in common to warrant such trust and magnitude of business between them. They ought to be like day and night, being of different worlds. An uneven yoke, as they say. Hmm! Now Ali who everyone knew was from Kano State has announced that he is from Niger. For a man who has lived in the community for over 10 years, even the Hausa community have denounced him, insisting he is not Nigerian. Yet, he has committed this grave evil against the community. Olorunfunmi is still mourning over what happened to Funbi! Nothing but justice will pacify them and they are depending on the Police to grant them this! Do have a peaceful weekend!