

A SHORT STORY BASED ON REAL-LIFE EVENTS

**TAKE ME BACK TO THE MOMENT THAT
I KNEW NOTHING OF THE CRAZY
STREETS OF**

Lagos



Olubunmi Sanyaolu

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to everyone going through a difficult time. Your strives and hustles do not go unnoticed, keep fighting and there is surely going to be a bright day behind that dark night.

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THE ONE WITH THE CULTISTS

Earlier this evening, less than 5 hours from the exact moment I'm typing this very line, I was really excited. I had this 2k (Two thousand Naira) that I decided I wanted to blow and didn't have any use for anymore. I thought deep and wide and even posted on my Whatsapp status of the decision to go to Chicken Republic and spoil myself dirty.

The day started beautifully, naturally I detest Mondays but it was a Wednesday, the middle finger of the working week. The weekend was knocking but that wasn't the highlight of my day.

I had a fun and eventful morning off work when I met a friend for the first time, it was short but filled with loads of smiles. Then this miraculous 2k appeared from a cheerful giver and then rice with chicken was the idea for a perfect dinner treat.

Honestly I don't want to delve into too many stories because the remaining few hours of that evening took a perfectly sad

decline. My trip to the fast food restaurant was quick, I went in and out with style, bought the food in a take away pack and headed back to my room with a smile.

After eating and reserving part of my chicken for later, I decided to go for a quick haircut, like I said the day started wonderfully and it wasn't a crime to end it looking fresh for the next day. For a guy that doesn't like going to the barber's shop and hasn't even gone in almost a month, I sure did choose a bad day to want to look fresh.

On my way back I was ambushed by some guys, they surrounded me and challenged me. At first I didn't see any reason to panic as this wasn't the first time I'd be cornered by guys in Ikeja to hail me or ask me for money.

There was no hailing, there was no "alaye give us money", the assurance that I wouldn't be hurt disappeared when they accused me of being a cultist and that I had the guts to put on these colours (the colours of my top and trousers) on their street. Its either it's the colour of a rival gang or it was just a technique to fill me up with fear.

Cultist? Me? I felt danger, I felt fear, I felt my life flash in front of my very eyes, it wasn't funny anymore, these guys weren't joking, they were high and I knew they were out for blood.

The time was around 8:30pm, I didn't plan on staying that late at the barber's shop, it was just the time I got attended to, I was putting on the same dark blue trousers I wore to work that day, the only difference was that I changed my shirt to an ash coloured t-shirt.

I don't know if you have watched the comedy skits of a guy acting as a cultist and using the catch phrase "abi you go collect" and giving out slaps in the process, well in my case I wasn't asked, all I knew was that I was collecting, not just slaps but also punches and threats all because I didn't want to drop my phone at first. Eventually, they ransacked my phone checking through my messages for any sign of cultist quotes, the only thing was that they weren't policemen, they were thieves holding on to their territory terrorizing innocent passer-bys, robbing and beating them blue black.

The leader called himself "Mathew Arrested aka King of Boiz", it was obvious he had been arrested multiple times and he would definitely do anything to avoid it again even if my life depended on it.

There was no escape for me, their gang members were on both sides of the road and all I just wanted was just to be safe. They eventually took my phone and collected the \$500 cash with me to buy alcohol. I was eventually released on a walk of shame back home, regretting my steps and carelessness and thoughts of what I could have done differently to avoid my loss.

The punches and slaps was not the most painful experience, but the trauma that hunted me and the incessant memories that still haunts my dreams and thoughts.

Now I get it why most people do not share their stories, because on sharing mine, I was painted as foolish and dumb for not protecting myself better or screaming for help. When the fear of being stabbed due to a result of mistaken identity overshadows you, you'll know that shouting could only get you to an early grave.

But should I have done something differently? Those thoughts still haunt me as I type these words.

THE ONE WITH THE SPRINTER

As a young boy I had always hated the thought of residing in Lagos. I repeatedly told myself that I'd rather live in a comfortable place than choose to join the heap of people living in the great city.

Well not everyone gets to choose how their life will turn out and nobody obviously knows what tomorrow entails. Asa's song about "no one knows tomorrow" keeps ringing in my head as I type and I'm humming along as the words leave my head to this permanent ink of paper.

It's not going to be a coincidence that someone reading this will probably have had worst experience with the mad people of Lagos. Now, using the word mad isn't me talking about the mentally challenged people in rags that roam the street but the well clothed supposedly normal people that do the most unreasonable and funny things.

Your experience might be worse, more hilarious but the ones I've faced and witnessed have left me in complete awe.

Getting back home after being robbed, I saw my half eaten chicken on the plate. I stared at it with the aim of eating but it's true what they say about pain taking away your appetite. Who knows, maybe you'll know what happened to the chicken as you read on.

Hi, most people call me Bunmi but I actually prefer being called Olubunmi, this is the part where I tell you a story within a story, only this time all the stories are real life experiences. Lagos is a scary place no doubt and this experience made me recount some of the things I've seen.

On the 26th of December 2021, I was at Ikeja under-bridge going to meet a friend when I suddenly heard someone shouting "thief" I looked back and I saw this man running towards me, not that I was the thief but he was the guy that was being chased by another man. Apparently he just snatched someone's phone in broad daylight, that was around 2pm and was running away. My first instinct was to help stop him but the way he was coming and shouting the words "I will kill you" at everyone on the road opened a path for him to freely run.

Honestly no one wants to die, let alone be stabbed in the neck by someone who doesn't value human life, I wasn't ready to be a hero with a knife wound, I and the vast majority of onlookers cleared out of the way like the people of Jerusalem did when they welcomed Jesus on the Donkey. This was a perfect time to give the guy a flying kick but I never took out time to go for any self defence class but because we didn't help stop the guy does not mean we were cowards, we understood that survival is the key and once there is life there is hope.

The moment I saw that happen, I told myself I have to be extra careful on the streets of Lagos, I avoided using my phone on the road, pressing my phone when I'm beside the window or door in a vehicle so it won't be snatched and many others. I had a set of rules I worked with in order to stay protected, not knowing that I would be served my own dish.

THE ONE WITH THE DUPEABLE FACE AND DUO SCAMMERS

Being careful might give you an advantage but being lucky and street smart might just be what saves you.

I learnt not to be greedy at a very young age and it has really helped me, my experience on Lagos island has taught me that I have a face that people want to dupe.

Having a calm and gentle face has shown me favors and also it has brought a lot of unnecessary stress.

I came to the logical conclusion that I have a dupeable face when various scammers kept using the same format unknowingly to think they could get me interested in their ploy.

There is a trick used in Ajah Lagos which will definitely work on you if you are a kind person and at the same time greedy for what doesn't belong to you. Bottom line: don't be greedy. Few months back, an old man came to meet me while I was waiting for a public vehicle to ride home.

He told me that he was heading towards the office of a popular herbal bitter mixture and that I should point him in the direction. Unfortunately I didn't but I gently asked him to ask another person, I noticed that one of his hands was placed tightly in his trousers as if he was protecting something, the man proceeded to tell me that the product in his pocket is what makes the drinks extremely bitter.

Naturally I don't like alcohol because of its bitter taste, not to mention the extremely bitter herbal mixtures that I couldn't care less about. I still politely told the man to ask someone else since I honestly didn't know the place. A few seconds later a younger man was walking towards our direction as if to be minding his business then all of a sudden the old man who was still standing next to me called him for help. The guy obliged and as soon as the old man mentioned the name of the office he was going to, the young guy had a sudden reaction, he told the man not to say it out as the area boys will collect the product from him. The young man then faced me and told me that the product as small as it is costs well over 1.2 million naira.

Honestly I still didn't give a rat's ass about the price, the young man said we should help the man to the place so that he won't be duped and he then further pointed towards the direction that the vehicle would pass. At that point I told the old man that God has provided his helper and I moved away from the location, coincidentally I got in the public vehicle and headed home.

Yeah this seems like a normal experience right? But then it happened to me again, different Duos but same technique only this time I pointed the elderly man towards the direction I felt that he would get the vehicle that would take him there as directed by the young man during my first experience. My brain clicked when the other man that wanted to help out pointed to a different direction for the man to get a vehicle going to the Herbal mixture office and requested we assisted the man in getting there.

Yeah I'm not greedy and I was able to dodge that, but a lot of people who aren't also greedy have been ripped off with various techniques. If you decide to be kind and lose guard then you don't enter trouble.

Throughout my stay on the island, different Duos used this technique on me and I always ran when I saw their format and steps. I could count over 6 experiences of such a case and it made me notice that I have a dupeable face and you can't trust the average Lagosian walking next to you. Them duping you is their daily job and a lot of people get a slice of their daily cake through your hard earned money.

THE ONE WITH THE VISUALLY CHALLENGED MAN

Not everyone on the streets of Lagos is bad, not everyone that bumps into you is also innocent, that gentle bump can be the last time you see your mobile phone or wallet.

Well this is Lagos, the land of fun and diversity, you'll probably have a beautiful experience if you could afford it, parts of Lagos will make you feel like you are already in another country while some part will put you so deep in the trenches you'll think you are in the middle of a battle between two Somalian warlords.

I hope you still remember that I had a piece of chicken that I was too depressed to eat, well I slept that very night with deep trauma and continuous waking spree over an experience I'd rather forget. I couldn't eat that piece of chicken that very night but when the day came and I needed something to drown away my sorrows, the chicken came through.

In February 2022, I was rushing to a Saturday class of which I was already late for. I was passing this very busy road along Ikeja underbridge with a lot of people and impatient motorists. My whole body system was taking cognisance of what's happening around me and the hundreds of people all walking alongside me, I was being careful not to let an innocent bump be the last time I'd see any of my properties.

Few meters ahead, there was this man that was walking really slow. I could see that he was being avoided by people like the plague, everyone kept walking past him and no one cared or simply didn't care enough to help him. As I got closer to him a speeding car almost hit him and I had to pull him off the road. I'm sure the car left a scratch, well not enough to hurt him.

After pulling him off the road, I noticed his walking cane and noticed that he was visually challenged. I thought to myself what this man could be doing on this very road without someone helping him and where could he possibly be going. I gave in to my curiosity about where he was going

and so I decided to ask him and offered to help. At this point I was already late for my class but I wasn't ready to leave this man without at least helping him get to his destination. He replied in very good English and it was very obvious that he was educated. I held his hand and walked with him to the garage while we exchanged pleasantries and a little bit of communication.

I wished I had caught his name but I'm usually not a conversational starter. I'm not sharing this experience to feel good about myself but as a way of saving a good experience for last and to let you know that no matter how evil the world is or the city of Lagos, it wouldn't hurt if you put some good out there.

Be that piece of chicken that brightened up my morning, a little bit of empathy could calm a troubled mind.

THE END.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Life experiences aren't what you always expect, especially when you're living in the city, you are sure to get life from a whole different angle, it could be full of fun, excitements, pain, thrills and the dangers of everyday life, and if you aren't careful, you go collect.

This book describes a few experiences of the author in the big city of Lagos, how a beautiful morning could turn sour at night time. Every day is one battle or the other over here, but where fiction meets reality, you are sure to get entangled in the book and maybe see parts of Lagos for what it is.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olubunmi Sanyaolu is a Content Creator, UX writer and story writer. He is passionate about developing compelling and brand engaging content for entrepreneurs, brands and startups to upscale their business, he has also repeatedly delved into story writing.

Just like Billions of people around the world, Bumnik is on the verge of self discovery and understanding the true purpose of life.