

## **Kindness is Free**

(Original)

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No one noticed or even cared when the richest man in my community died. Everyone went about their normal way of life. It was as if nothing had happened at all.

On the day of his wake, there were only nine people in the ornate hall rented for the event, even his sons and the clergy of the community failed to show up. He was a man feared for his ruthlessness, and once boasted that: 'Kindness is shown by the weak, to the weakest folks.'

He left a terrible legacy and people were happy after his passing.

Interestingly, two months later, another man died in the same town and I remember getting back from school and it was as if the world was ending. I've never seen such a crowd of mourners. Hundreds of people gathered in the heavy rain wailing, and it was the darkest day in my town.

Okafor was a wretched man who had lost his legs to a disease as a child but what the man couldn't make up with his legs, he did with his sunny smile. He pivoted his weight on a skating board on which he hurtled around with his popular broom and cutlass. Okafor swept the entire streets of the community for free and cut the grasses, and all he cared about was a little alms or gifts from the people. He was always there cheering school children, encouraging and telling them jokes. Wherever Okafor was there was so much joy and laughter. He was the man without legs who helped school children cross the roads and the one who assisted the elderly with their loads. He was the guy without legs who inspired the young footballers to work harder so they can bring the state trophy back home.

Even when he was dying from tuberculosis, he showed so much life, and spoke glowingly to people, encouraging and assisting them. He was a pennilessness man who gave more than any millionaire in the town. Okafor wasn't really noticed when he was alive but his importance was discovered after his demise. His burial was attended by thousands. Even the king of the community came and so did some politicians. They were puzzled and

thought Okafor was a wealthy man but were shocked when they realized they'd come to the funeral of a homeless man who possessed nothing.

Few months after his death, the bushes along the roads grew back. The snakes terrorizing the people returned. During a heated debate in the community hall which was often cleaned by Okafor, a snake fell on the head of the market leader, making everyone flee. An elderly woman who Okafor often help cross the road was killed by an overspeeding motorcycle popularly called 'Okada' in my country. Okafor had left a big vacuum that needed to be urgently filled. And I was one of the people who volunteered to help. A half-day of cutting at grasses made me realize that Okafor did what he did out of sheer love and kindness and not for the offerings given by few people. His effort was well beyond the pittance he received. And it was as if the death of a man without legs threw the entire community into total chaos and breakdown.

Since I'm too young and don't have the extreme physical energy possessed by Okafor, I started an 'Okafor Memorial Group: OMG' whose sole job is to replicate the kindness of the late cripple. Made of thirty-one children, we delegate ourselves to handle choirs according to our ability and energy during the weekends. We've also raised some little donations and are working with the community leaders to build a library in the honour of this unlettered man. And we've been so successful that I know Okafor where ever he is will be extremely proud of himself and us.

Asked why he showed kindness to everyone around him, Okafar would say:  
*"I shaw kaindnas to da pepl, coz even a lion shows kindness to its kind."*

And these are words written on the library walls; a reminder of the kindness of a man who'd lost everything yet gave the world so much kindness.