

Mysterious murder

Ifeanyi Elom Ugadu was alone in their home on Sunday morning, with the entrance of their three-bedroom flat firmly locked. By the time, the other members of the family returned from church few hours later, they met her in a pool of her own blood, butchered with deep machete cuts by unknown persons. **TUNBOSUN OGUNDARE** reports that the death remains a mystery to her family



Ifeyinwa's body in the pool of her blood

THE family of Joseph Elom woke up on Sunday, September 16, with no premonition of danger. Being the day of worship, the family members after having their morning devotion, started preparing for church service at the family local church which would take them about 15 minutes walk.

Joseph Elom, the head of the family was not in town, having travelled to their home village in Ebonyi State for a visit which would last him five days.

So, Elom's wife and two of his children left for church service that day. The other members of the family, including Ifeyinwa Ugadu, a 22-year-old lady decided to stay at home to watch clothes and tidy up the house.

Shortly after the mother of the house left for church, two out of the three people left behind at home also decided to go to shop, where the family's breadwinner sells foodstuffs. Ifeyinwa, who was brought to Lagos only last year was the only one left at home.

"And when we were going, she asked us to come back home for our breakfast in about one hour later, promising that the meal must have been prepared by then," says Gabriel, Ifeyinwa's younger brother, who stressed that: "She followed us to the entrance door, and locked it against herself and went in while we went to shop."

This was the last moment between Ifeyinwa and the rest of the family, who live in a three-bedroom flat at 11, Oyeniji Close, Odokoya Estate, Egbe, a suburb of Lagos.

Before any of the family members returned, Ifeanyiwa, a fashion designer had died in the hands of unknown killers.

"It was my wife and the two little children who went to church that

returned home first to meet Ifeyinwa dead in the pool of her own blood," Chief Elom popularly known as *Abble Jossy* noted.

"When I got home and found out that the entrance door was not locked, I was furious and from outside started yelling at Ifeyinwa to ask her why she didn't lock the door, says Mrs. Elom, also a petty trader.

When I opened the door and saw the lifeless body of Ifeyinwa in the pool of her blood, I was scared," recalls Mrs. Elom amidst sobs. "I could not believe my eyes. All her body was with several deep cuts which suggested that she was stabbed to death."

It was gathered that at this point, Mrs. Elom screamed and collapsed and she didn't know what happened next as she was rushed to the hospital where she recuperated for three days.

"Because of the shock, I didn't hear the news through my wife. It was a neighbour that called me on phone and informed me," says Chief Elom. "But within two minutes thereafter, I received another phone call, now from one of my children telling me the same story."

"I was terrified by the news and I began to enquire from them what could have led to her killing and who would have been responsible, but nobody was able to give me a clear answer as that they were telling me was 'I don't know repeatedly' recalls this 55-year-old Chief Elom, who suspended every other activity in Ebonyi State and returned to Lagos.

I was terrified on seeing her body battered with several cuts all over," says Chief Elom, a businessman.

"I cannot imagine who might have killed her and for what reason. But what I am convinced of is that she



Mr Elom, the deceased elder brother

was attacked by somebody or group of people."

Worried Chief Elom said his late sister's body was found alone in the sitting room of their three-bedroom apartment.

"Nothing incriminating was found around her: There was no knife and no dangerous object found around her, and in the whole apartment. The only knife that the family uses was met where it is usually kept. We ransacked everywhere in the house whether we could find a strange object, but there was none. No item was found missing in the house either and nobody lost any money among the family members."

On whether Ifeyinwa might have been raped before being murdered? Chief Elom said: "There was nothing that suggested that. I was told that her body was examined thoroughly before it was moved to the mortuary, and there was no indication that any of such thing happened to her."

The only strange thing noticed on her body, *Daily Champion* gathered was that her two eyes balls remained widely opened like somebody who had slugged it out hard with death but never prevailed. And coupled with this were the blood stains all over the place in the living room.

It was not only that Ifeyinwa died

mysteriously, what baffled family members as well as every other person that heard of the news was the fact that nobody in the entire premises that occupies one-storey building of four flats was available or claimed to be available when the incident took place.

"Nobody told me he/she was around when the incident took place. You know it was a Sunday and people have gone for church service. The deceased also ought to have gone to church that day, but she decided to stay back without knowing that she was waiting for her death. And we didn't see any man with her since last year that she came to Lagos from the village to suspect whether or not, she was waiting at home for her boyfriend."

"That is why the family is calling on the police and most importantly the higher authority to investigate and get to the root of the matter," says Chief Elom.

The murder, which was earlier reported at the Gowon police station, is presently being investigated by the homicide section of the State Criminal Investigations Department (SCID), Panti Street, Yaba, Lagos.

Ifeyinwa's body has been deposited at Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) Ikeja mortuary for autopsy.