

She came home on December 20 and was killed on December 23: BIODUN OYELEYE relates the tale of the gruesome murder that has left a family in Ilorin in turmoil while the world celebrates the yuletide.

# Puzzle as gunmen kill student

• Bandits visit family twice in five weeks

**A**UGUSTINA Titilayo Idowu, 20, must have dreamt of a blissful Christmas when she returned to her parents on December 20, five days to the annual celebration that is on record as the most widely observed globally. But the dream of celebrating Christmas was shattered by the bullet of an intruder who came to her residence on December 23, 2006 and took away her life and her aspirations.

Instead of a merry Christmas, the household are having a bleary season; a spell of woes and despair, a time of questioning without any answer: Why did Augustina have to die? "Perhaps and ifs" are common refrains in times like this. When our correspondent visited the family residence at Orisunbare Village in the Oke-Oyun area of Ilorin, the questions and sobs were yet to subside.

Unknown gunmen broke into the Idowus' house on the night of December 23 and before anyone could think of opening the door for the intruders, a shot went out through the main door, pierced the glass surface of a portion of the door and shattered the curtain and other items on its way, making straight for the 200-Level Political Science undergraduate of the University of Ibadan. It was a fatal shot which at once ended her once bright and promising life.

With the assistance of a cleric who brokered the interaction between the bereaved family and the media, the family head, Dr. Idowu Simeon, spoke on what

has become one of the most harrowing experiences in parenting: to see one born of his flesh die in his presence is unable to do anything, notwithstanding his knowledge or exposure and wealth.

According to the medical practitioner who heads the Health Department of Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara, the December 23 attack was the second in less than two months.

Augustina's father shared his agony as he called for help in apprehending those who carried out the attack. "It was about eight o'clock in the evening. We were in our rooms and suddenly we heard a very loud bang on the door, which really terrified the entire neighbourhood and us. We began to shout for help because we had a similar experience about five weeks back. Then we heard a shot. It was a single shot but very loud. Later, we heard my daughter calling out that she had been shot. We noticed that the people were still around, so we called the police but the network signal was not good.

"It was later that neighbours came to say the place was safe and we rushed the girl to a private hospital but the doctor there referred her to the Teaching Hospital where she was pronounced dead. They did not even ask us to open the door; the assailants could also have come in through the widow but they just shot through the door."

When the hoodlum fired the shot, Augustina was sitting near the dining area at an angle adjacent to the entrance door. She



• The late Miss Augustina

was the only one and the shot hit her direct. Before the family realised she had been hit, her mother was pleading for mercy and forgiveness from the men who seemed to have given a particular focus to the house, arguably one of the finest in the area, which is just developing on the outskirts of the state capital. They did not hear the plea. They shot and went away, leaving behind trails of tears and sorrow.

The family had played host to a set of six unwanted guests on November 16, 2006. They came with guns, according to the

grieving father, still swaddled in a big towel while narrating the incident. The six-man crew of evil men took away the family's available cash and phone sets and said goodbye. They were said to have later taken away a car near the Kwara Television (KWTV) House at Apata Yakuba area, some few metres from the Idowus' house. No one was killed in that operation. Police made some arrests thereafter but Simeon said since no one was allowed to see the face of the marauders when they came, the family backed out of an attempt to make them identify any of those arrested as

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the suspects.

"She was an obedient child," he said in an eulogy in memory of the deceased. "She listened to our advice, she was very hardworking and diligent. She was very quiet and patient, very religious and prayerful. She was a praying Christian. She was not used to going out; always staying indoors."

Until her death, Augustina was a member of the chorister unit of St. Bridget Catholic Church. The family said Augustina's ambition was to become a lecturer. She was about going to the third year of her studies and had told her parents she would not stop until she had bagged a postgraduate certificate in her kitty.

That dream, and the expectations of her family concerning her ambition, was buried at a cemetery on December 24, a day after the robbers bullet tore through her flesh and killed her soul.

Dr Idowu said the police first made an arrest that sounded almost comical: two members of the church choir who were on a condolence visit were said to have been whisked away to the consternation of everybody. But with some relief, the family said the duo had been released while investigation continues into the murder. Dr. Idowu pleaded with anyone with information that could assist the police not to hesitate in forwarding such to them.