

'We housed him, gave him a job but he ended up killing and butchering my sister'



Gboyega Alaka September 10, 2023



- Family demands justice, says culprit must not walk free
- Says police insisting they pay for DNA, get a lawyer

In a typical case of paying good with evil, Justus Ekeh, 33, narrates the sad story of how a friend he took into their Ibeju-lekki family home and even secured employment for, murdered and gruesomely dismembered his beloved sister. He also expressed his fears about the culprit, who has already confessed to the crime walking free, based on some recent developments. Gboyega Alaka reports.

For the Chigemecha Rufus Ekeh family, life can never be harder and harsher. First, it was his daughter, Linda Onyinyechi who was diagnosed with cancer and the family, with homes in Ago-Hausa Street, Ajegunle and Adeba in Ibeju-Lekki axis of [Lagos](#) were trying their best to

manage and nurse her back to health. Little did they know that a worse faith in the form of a sudden disappearance and later gruesome murder and dismembering of another precious daughter, Techla Chinwendu Ekeh was awaiting them.

The story began on March 7, 2023. A day before, Techla, 35, had taken her very sick sister to Ajegunle, to go be with their mum, a nurse, so she could get better care. Her situation was getting worse, with her in serious pains and regular bleeding. On her way back, according to Justus Ekeh, Techla's younger brother, who spoke with The Nation, she opted to branch and sleep over at her friend, Lammy Adamu's place at Crown Estate along the Ibeju-Lekki Expressway.

Lammy corroborated the story. "She came to my place on the 6th of March on her way back from Ajegunle and slept over till the next day 7th, a Tuesday. She arrived around 11.30pm and left past five in the evening. We became friends not too long ago, courtesy of another friend, Udeme, also an AJ guy; and we instantly took to each other, largely because we both share the AJ heritage.

"As had become the case with us, I expected her to call that evening to tell me she had arrived home safely but no call from her came in. I was like maybe her phone was down. The next day, Wednesday, I started trying her number again without success. On Thursday, I tried again, and then I heard a guy's voice, 'hello' and then he hung up. Shortly after, I spotted 'her' online on Whatsapp and tried chatting her up. 'Babe what's up now, you didn't even call me when you got back home, bla, bla, bla...;' and she was like, her phone was having issues and she was trying to fix it. So I said let me call you on Whatsapp, I need to be sure this is really you. There and then, 'she' went off and I couldn't reach her again. Something just told me she was not the person replying my chat.

"Instinctively, I called Udeme and told him: 'Please, I've not heard from Declan since she left my place Tuesday evening. You know her place, can you please help check up on her or come and take me to her place?' Then I didn't know her place; I just knew she stayed in Adebba. She usually came to my own estate; she was actually looking for an accommodation to rent there. She would sometimes come and play with me and even sleep over. Udeme, however, said he was not around, but I kept pestering him, because my instinct kept telling me things were not okay with her. I also did not have her fiancé's number.

"It was my panic and alarm that made Udeme reach-out to his brother, Justus, who worked in Ogun State. I specifically told him to reach any member of her family to know if all was well with her, because then, I didn't know any of them."

Justus story

According to Techla's younger brother, Justus, "I heard the news that she was missing on Friday, the 10th of March; so I called Ediri because I knew he lived in the house with my sister. I actually didn't take it too seriously, hoping it was a phase. "How far, I hear say my sister no dey around? That they're looking for her; that some person was answering her phone and replying her chat? Do you have any idea where she's gone to?"

"He replied that she came back on Wednesday after she had taken my sister to Ajegunle, and then went out. He was talking about my other elder sister, Linda, who was battling with cancer. He said she came back that Wednesday and rushed out again. That she didn't sleep in the house. I then asked if he hadn't heard from her since then and if he had gone to lay a complaint at the police station. He said he was planning on that, that he had spoken with a lawyer who told him he couldn't make any complain unless the family was present.

"I was like which lawyer would tell you that in a case of a missing person? What if the family is not around? So he said he would go and lodge a complaint. I called him later that evening, but he still said he would go the following day, Saturday. I was at work in far away Kajola, Ogun State, where I work with International Breweries Limited; I did night that day, and immediately I got home the next day, I left for Lagos

by 12 noon; I got here by 8.32pm on the 11th of March. On arriving, I saw my sister's fiancé outside the house with three other guys, interrogating Ediri; I dropped my bag and joined them. But he was saying the same thing he told me on phone; how my sister came and left immediately. Where the suspicion should have started was when I noticed that the story he told Oga Sunny Nwanneri (my sister's fiancée) was different. He told him that he went out, only to meet her on her way out by the house gate. He said she was dressed and told her she was coming back. He also told Oga Sunny that she carried her Sure roll-on, her perfume, charger... I was like, how did you know the things she carried when you only met her at the gate? He then said he actually knew so because when she got into the house, he noticed that these things were not on the sitting room table where she kept them. That was also strange because from what I knew of her, she kept her cream and stuff in her room. Even then, we really were not suspecting him at that point.

Filthy house full of flies

"When I entered the house, I noticed flies everywhere; then I asked him, 'Guy, you no dey clean here, this place is too dirty. How do you manage to sleep?' He said he was tired of the house, and was packing out. I said 'But you slept here. How do you cope?' Anyway, I slept on the couch in the sitting room. The following morning, I began cleaning the place. He cooked for me, but I told him I had eaten. I had bought some bananas, which I even offered him and he collected and ate. I went into my room, and the flies that greeted me were massive, probably about 50 if I was to count. I was like 'how does a human being sleep in a house like this?'"

Did that raise your suspicion?

Justus said: "No, I was still thinking it was the dog and the fact that he couldn't keep it clean. If a house was messy, then you can't rule out flies breeding. So I started packing the dog's poo, mopping the floor with dettol; I saw an air freshener and the insecticide he had bought. By 10am that Sunday 12th of March, I was at the station to make an entry. I filed for a missing person, and they told me to come the following day with her picture. I returned home and invited Ediri out for a drink. We had a bottle each and returned home. I started asking him more questions. I also asked around the neighbourhood. A guy, Ogbonna Godwin, who works at a nearby bar, told me he saw her and that he had been looking for a family member. He asked to speak with me privately, so I went to meet him inside his shop. There, he told me that my sister had been complaining about that boy, Ediri stealing her money, not giving accurate account; that people coming into her POS shop would collect N20,000, N30,000, N50,000; and instead of them paying into the POS account, he would tell them to pay into his personal account. He told me when he last heard from my sister, that she told him she was at her friend's place at Crown Estate. He said Techla came back home that Tuesday evening around 7pm to his shop, and even spent time chatting and laughing with them; and that she later told them she was tired and was going home to sleep."

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That ruled out her friend, Lammy, this reporter chipped in.

"Yes", Justus acquiesced.

At this point, Lammy, who was present at this interview, said one of Techla's friends, Rita, had been going about, saying she had made new friends at Crown Estate and that they should go and arrest her. Meanwhile, Lammy was insisting that Techla had been complaining about this cousin of hers, whom she said was stealing from her. Then, Lammy said she thought they were cousins. She said the deceased even contemplated arresting him, but put it off to attend to her sick sister.

Justus continues: "When I told him I needed to take my sister's picture to the station, and if he would follow me, he started acting sluggish, so I left him to go and print the picture. About an hour later, he called and I told him I was still at the cafe. Then he came and joined me and

we went to Elemoro Police Station together.

“First thing in the morning, I had gone to the station to brief the police on my findings regarding Ediri, because the inconsistencies were becoming too numerous.

“So, when we got there, we both wrote our statements. Immediately he finished writing his story, they told him, “You are our first suspect, and they took him in. Mr Adekunle, our IPO at the time, was asking him questions, but he was still saying the same thing. He didn’t know we had evidence against him, based on the contradictions in his stories. On Thursday, the 16th of March, the day he was to be transferred to Panti, the DPO called all of us into his office: me, my sister’s fiancé, Ediri in handcuff, the IPO; and said to him: “Tell us what you know. If you have kept her somewhere or killed her, let us know; so that we can settle it here because Panti is a very tough place. There, they would rough handle you and all that, but he insisted on his same story. Then the DPO asked him: “Did you by any chance go to Moniepoint office with the deceased?”

“He said no, but that they had plans to go. They now asked her why? He said they didn’t go because they had to print out statement of account from the POS machine. The DPO now told him, ‘You see, you have contradicted yourself. If you say you didn’t see her on Monday, you didn’t see her on Tuesday, and on Wednesday there was no chat at all; what time did you now print the POS statement of account with her?’ He then told him, ‘you are a prime suspect; you know something about her disappearance. Take him to Panti.”

The confession

“On the Friday after he was transferred, I was about going to Panti, but encountered a lot of people on the street; I thought there had been an incident which I missed, so I made to ask, but I just found that the same people were telling me ‘sorry’. I thought it was the usual sympathy over my sister’s disappearance, then somebody told me, ‘We heard he has confessed.’ This was on the 17th, Friday. I said, who confessed? They said the boy. But I was the only one who had the IPO’s number, and he didn’t call to tell me; so how did they get such information? I dismissed it as speculation or rumour. I thought that may also be because the story the woman at the shop next to our house narrated, about seeing him going back and forth on a bike around 7/8pm, carrying dirty sack bags the night my sister went missing. She had said, every ten minutes or so, he came back to pick up another dirty sack bag. And that she later saw him buying a big hypo bleach; that he also bought a can of air freshener from her. I took it that they must have put these details together to conclude that he killed and butchered her.

“I called Godspower, the IPO in charge at Panti to inquire if what I was hearing was true, but he told me ‘no’. I called my sister’s fiancé, because he has been a strong pillar behind us both morally and financially; he also said he had not heard anything like that, and dismissed it as a rumour. I got to Panti and everything was normal. They said they were still trying to get words out of him. On Sunday, the IPO called us and told us that he had confessed. So they said they would transfer the case to the homicide section. He gave me somebody’s number, Rotimi, whom he said I would be talking to. Later I met SUPOL Masta, Rotimi’s superior, who told us to write a new entry. Of course it was now getting longer. I wrote that he came to Panti on the 16th and confessed on Sunday the 19th, but they said I should write the correct date. I insisted I had written the correct date, but they said no, that he confessed on the 17th. That was the day the rumour was circulating in my neighbourhood. That left me wondering how the information got to my neighbourhood, even when the IPO was telling me he had not confessed.

“In between, we had instructed our last born who was Techla’s next of kin, to go check at GT Bank if there had been any recent transactions in her account. We were still holding onto the possibility that she was being kept somewhere in order to withdraw all her money. Expectedly, the bank declined, so I asked to speak with the manager and explained that my sister, the owner of the account, had been missing and we just needed to know if there had been any transactions since she went missing, to aid an ongoing investigation. So he checked and said there were transactions on the 7th, 8th and 9th and 10th; from her GT account to that of one Ediri Melvin Igbudu (Palmpay).

"This further convinced me of his involvement in my sister's disappearance."

Enemy within

Following his confession, expectations were that the culprit would be charged to court. The police however insisted they couldn't, due to the fact that he had still not told them where he dumped the body.

As part of his confession, he said they had an argument and he shoved her and she fell and hit her head. The question, as far as Justus and Lammy, were concerned was how no-one overheard their argument, since Techla had a very loud voice. Even in a phone conversation, neighbours would hear her, except when she deliberately opts for a quiet conversation.

Even the blood stains all over the apartment should be enough evidence, they thought.

Justus insisted that the story of 'shoving and falling' by the TV side in the sitting room still did not hold water because there was no sign of blood anywhere there but all over the room, bathroom and on curtains. What's more! He even locked Techla's room and it had to be broken open. According to Justus, the bed sheet was removed and they couldn't find it anywhere in the entire apartment.

"We had also noticed that he paid N350,000 through his girlfriend for his new apartment that same March 7. This was somebody being paid just 15k a month. Of course he ate in the house and also lived there. My sister also gave him a Samsung phone. This may have been what precipitated the murder.

"This was somebody we brought over from Ajegunle to help his situation. We grew up in the same neighbourhood at Ago Hausa Street, their house was adjacent to ours and we interacted a lot, even sleeping in each other's house. I used to work with Oga Sunny, my sister's fiancé, who was into building, but I needed to go back to school for my final year, so I invited him to come and take over the vacant post, since he wasn't doing anything, which Oga Sunny willingly accepted on my recommendation. He even gave him a comfortable accommodation. After like five months, I heard he had been sacked like five times. I asked him what happened and he dismissively said, 'You know your oga now, he likes shouting.'

"Oga Sunny, however, told me how he lied too often, that there was nothing he did well, and that he suspected he was selling his company's materials. He said he also saw credit transactions in his account and when he confronted him, he said his friends sent him the money. He said he then asked him if these were the same friends who could not help him when he had no job. So he sacked him and asked him to vacate the apartment he gave him, and stay away from any of his family members."

How come he ended up living with them again?

"When he left Oga Sunny, he was staying at Sangotedo, while my sister stayed in our family house in Adeba, both in the Ibeju-Lekki axis. It was I who invited him over in 2022. Everybody was happy to receive him, even my dad and my sister. Because it was Oga Sunny who rented the apartment for us, we didn't initially let him know, so when he later found out, he was furious and it caused a serious rift between him and my sister. It was so bad that whenever he came around, he avoided entering the house. To make matters worse, my sister now needed a helping hand and offered the same boy a job. He was like the ready hand around her. Also there was something like a bond; he had become like family.

"Later my younger brother went back to Calabar and my dad went back to the village around January; so it remained only Ediri, Linda my sister who had cancer and Techla in the house. My mother was in Ajegunle. It is so sad that he killed my sister the only chance he had to be

with her alone. That means he had nursed and planned it for some time.”

Body has to be found, Police insist

However, the police insisted they had to see the body to have a strong case in court.

In a telephone chat in April with SUPOL Masta, who took charge of the case at the Homicide Section in Panti, he admitted that the culprit had confessed but there is a lot of lies in the confession.

“For instance, he has taken us to two locations (by the Lagoon around NEPA plant), where he said he dumped the body, but we found no body there. Neighbours told me he moved some things out in bags that night, but we learnt he rented a house somewhere, so he could have been moving his things. You know, human body could not be easily put in a sack.”

The SUPOL said even the bloodstains all over the house were not enough, arguing that they could have been from their sister who had cancer and was said to be bleeding. He argued that even the fact that he confessed to killing her wasn't enough confirmation that he had indeed killed her.

He cited another case he handled in which a criminal only truly confessed in 2022 on an incident that happened in 2018, saying it sometimes took long to get the truth from criminals.

Asked if he had given any reason for the crime, Masta said, “No, that he only said he was just being selfish. You know he was stealing her money, so she threatened that she would tell the neighbours and report to the police. But that's not enough reason to kill somebody.

“We want to get the facts well established; we have to prove it beyond reasonable doubt, so we don't take a bad case to court,” Masta had said.

Body found/Family's grouse

Further attempts to speak with SUPOL Masta more recently was abortive, as he picked this reporter's call once and immediately switched off, and never picked thereafter. Body has been found. He said the accused eventually took the police to a thick bush somewhere in Lakowe, a nearby town, also along Ibeju-Lekki axis, where he dumped the body parts already cut into pieces.

“All the while, he was lying when he said he dumped the body at Costain. The police tracked his line and it turned out he never went to Costain; so they questioned him more. He eventually took them to where he dumped the body in Lakowe. You need to see what he turned my sister into. It was mutilated, the hand and leg and head were removed. We only saw one leg, one hand and a few parts. If I show you the images, you would be appalled. She was totally not recognisable.

“So now the police are asking us to do a DNA test to affirm it's her body parts, but I supposed murder is a crime against the state and it is the state that should do the DNA. They are also telling us to get a lawyer. We don't have the resources for all these. From the little I know, I thought it is the police that should prosecute, since they have his confession and the body parts as evidence now. If anyone needs a lawyer, it should be the accused. I need a lawyer to explain this part to me. I also need the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take special interest in the case. It must not be rubbished or thrown out. Not after coming this far. I want justice for my sister I am also calling on Governor Sanwo-Olu to take special interest in this case. They're telling us the accused could walk free if care is not taken. How can he walk free?

“Already they've taken the case to court, Yaba Magistrate Court on July 13; I wasn't in court on that day, and since then I've been calling SUPOL Masta to at least communicate the date of the next hearing to me, but he has not been forthcoming. He is not even picking my calls anymore.” Joy Gulokumo's intercession

Already, Justus says a certain woman, Joy Gulokumo, who claims she runs an orphanage, Joyful Kids Orphanage Home, has been pestering him, aided partly by her husband, to let go of the case.

“She claimed she met Ediri in police custody and has since fallen in love with him. She even smuggled in a phone to him, with which he was calling the outside world before he was discovered and phone seized.

Initially, Justus said she approached him in the guise of someone who wanted to see justice done, but who suddenly turned around to start pleading for him, even claiming she had fallen in love with him and could even marry him.

The good thing, however, Justus said, is that the police have allayed his fears, telling him to ignore her, and that even she had come into the station as a suspect on a certain case.

It's responsibility of state carry out investigation – Human rights lawyer



Speaking on the matter, Human rights lawyer and convener of Access to Justice, Joseph Otteh said as a homicide and criminal case, “It is unquestionably the responsibility of the State to carry out the investigation. The criminal justice system being practised in Nigeria gives the Police the substantive responsibility of investigating crimes, but it is common knowledge that the Police suffers from either resource availability or resource budgeting/utilisation challenges. Victims of crimes should never be burdened with the responsibility of funding investigation of crimes, especially serious crimes like murder since that is why the State collects taxes, but the chronic policing problems we have, often means that crime victims and their families bear a significant burden of underwriting investigation costs, which, by the way collaterally confers some monetary advantages to investigating officers.”

On the request of the police that the family bears the cost of the DNA, Otteh said: “I do not know whether there are arrangements the Lagos government has made towards making its forensic facilities and services available to the Police for crime investigation purpose. As a practical matter, I’m predisposed to think that there will be some arrangements with health departments along this line, where by the State funds the cost of forensic analysis required for criminal justice purposes. So the Police Unit or department handling the matter should know how to access State supported forensic facilities for- this purpose

About the family getting a lawyer, he said, “A lawyer can help possibly push the issues to the attention of relevant people and add a bit of additional pressure. Not more than these I imagine. When the case is filed before the appropriate court, the lawyer can then hold what is called a “watching brief.”

And as regards the police not communicating the next hearing date to the family, Otteh said “they can go to the court to find out the next hearing date