

SUNDAY PARADE

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Death in Swimming Pool Deceased's family alleges foul play

- *Deceased's friend, hotel owner in conspiracy*
- *Accuses police of releasing prime suspect, withholding autopsy result*
- *Autopsy confirmed Olokede drowned — Hotel owner*

The family of late Matthew Olokede, who was recently found dead in a Lagos hotel swimming pool in a mysterious circumstance, are accusing his bosom friend, who allegedly invited him out for a night of fun, of complicity in his death. They are also accusing the hotel owner and the police of attempted cover-up. **Ann Agbi reports.**

MATTHEW Olokede was elated; it was a day of joy and excitement for him and his family, as he had just gotten a motorbike popularly called Okada in the Nigerian parlance, which, to him, was an upgrade from his job as a mason, which he combined with other menial jobs to take care of his family.

It was in this moment of excitement that

his friend Rilwan invited him to join other friends in a hotel, Bedrock Hotel, at the Oko-afio area of Lagos State for some fun. Matthew, who thought that was the best way to celebrate his latest achievement, quickly intimated his wife, and rode off on his newly acquired bike. Unknown to the wife and their son, this would be the last time they would be setting eyes on him alive.

This was how a day that was supposed to be one of joy and merriment, turned out to be one of sadness and torturous pain for Matthew's family.

Narrating what happened, Matthew's father, Mr Akeem Olokede, through his brother who helped him translate in English, said Matthew, on July 14, 2023, had told his wife that he was going to Bedrock Hotel on the invitation of his friend, Rilwan. He said they were there for hours, until Matthews wife decided to put a call through to her husband and it was Rilwan who picked it and told her they were enjoying and he would soon be back.

Corroborating the story, Matthews wife, Temitope Olokede, said, "On that fateful day, July 14 around 5pm, my husband received a call from his friend, Rilwan to come over to the hotel, and then he told me he was going out.

"Around 10.30pm, I got a call from Rilwan; he told me that my husband would not be coming home that night till the next day. He then gave the phone to my husband who also said the same thing. They told me there was an ongoing riot at Ilogbo in Oko-afio where the hotel is located.

"That was the last time I heard from my husband. The next day, I received a call from the Police Station that my husband had been arrested. My husband's phone was used to call me from the police station."

Matthew's father

"My son's wife, Temitope, came to meet me on the 15th around 10am in the morning, explaining that her husband didn't sleep at home the day before. I asked where he went to and she said he went out with his friend for a hangout and the friend later called her around 10:30 pm with Matthew's phone that the police were arresting bike riders around Ilogbo area at that time and that he would be back home in the morning. She said her husband also spoke with her that night, which put her mind at rest.



•Late Olokede

somebody out from his home to enjoy, saw that the person was having stomach upset and he could not look after him."

Matthew's father said, there and then, he concluded that something was fishy.

Police handling case with kid gloves

Mr Akeem Olokede said he noticed that the police were not giving the case the seriousness it deserved, and a relative of his, a retired police officer, intervened. She asked the police what they were doing about the case and they said the family would be compensated with N150,000 for Matthews's burial, which she vehemently rejected, insisting that the matter be taken to Panti.

On getting to Panti, they left the matter hanging and asked both the deceased's father and the owner of the hotel, Mr Taiwo to go and liaise to resolve the matter. They did not involve Rilwan, whom they had released and had started walking freely, because he had been bailed by his father and the owner of the hotel, Mr Taiwo. Mr. Taiwo, in the presence of the family, repeated the promise to give the family N150,000 to cover the burial but the family rejected it. They contended that he should be more worried about the cause of Matthew's death in his hotel, than sending a meagre N150,000 for his burial.

To make matters worse, Rilwan's mother asked us if we had the money to pursue a case with them in court. They never for once came to visit us to pay condolence. Rilwan himself lives in the same area with us at Pipeline Area, which is two bus-stops to our place."

Matthew's uncle

Matthew's uncle, Alhaji Shehu, also gave his account of what transpired. He said when Matthew's dad and the owner of the hotel, Mr Taiwo, held a meeting, he called him aside from the gathering and told him he would give him N500,000 and some more money after the burial.

"When the case was transferred to Panti in Yaba, an autopsy was carried out and the results were attached to the file case, but they refused to show it to us. We got a lawyer to

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•Matthew's father (Mr Akeem Olokede)

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help our case, but when the lawyer got to Pantti with Akeem (Matthew's dad), the officers in charge of the case said we the deceased's family and the hotel management should liaise and give them a feedback for them to know the next move.

"Mr Taiwo sent his lawyer to meet with ours following repeated calls to him; the lawyers had a meeting at Stargen Hotel, Okokomaiko and Mr. Taiwo's lawyer said his client had promised to take care of the deceased's children from primary school level to university level. However, the father of the deceased, said he never told them any such thing since they had been calling him. Even the last time we went to his hotel to hold a meeting, he didn't mention such, aside promising to send N500,000, to which the deceased's father gave him his account details. The following day he said he won't be able to send the N500,000 as promised, and that he would send N200,000 upfront, and send the remaining N300,000 after Matthew's burial.

"The family, therefore concluded that the man was paying smart and trying to manipulate them, and that once the corpse was buried, they would not receive any kobo again from him.

"An hour after the deceased's father rejected the N200,000 offer, he received an alert of N500,000 from the same Mr Taiwo. The money is still there up till now. Since then, we have been calling his lawyer but he's not picking up. The deceased's father later had a conversation with him on phone, where he poured out his disapproval over his promises to do things after his son had been buried."

Police denying us access to autopsy report

Continuing, Alhaji Sheu said, "The police have refused to show us the autopsy result; they said they can only show us the result after both parties agree or when the matter is taken to court. For the time being, they said they are waiting to see if we can come to an agreement. However, we have resolved to have the case taken to court; it will help the deceased father to get good judgment."

Was Matthew murdered?

Rilwan's father and the rest of the family are therefore insisting that there is an attempt at a cover-up. Did Matthew drown or was he drowned? Or was he murdered and then made to look like he drowned? They say Rilwan who has been released must be rearrested and further interrogated. They are also wondering why the Bedrock Hotel owner is in a haste to have them bury the deceased, if not to cover-up facts and ensure premature closure. To make matters worse, they say the police has refused to release the autopsy result conducted on the deceased, insisting they would only do so if the matter goes to court. Another question they're asking is 'Why are the police so interested in them settling the matter out of court?'

Deceased jumped in pool unauthorised - Hotel owner

•I was in Abuja when incident happened, says former lawmaker

THE owner of Bedrock Hotel, Mr Taiwo Musibau Kolawole, a former Member of the House of Representatives, has, however, insisted that the late Matthew Olokede indeed drowned in the hotel pool, adding that the autopsy result according to his staff, showed that the deceased drowned and that there was no attempt at cover-up whatsoever.

In an interview with *The Nation*, Mr Taiwo said, "They came in very late around 12am and the security refused to allow them in but there is a girl who sells *Asun* there; it was she who came out and said they were her customers. That was how they let them in."

"We have about four bars in my hotel. We have the swimming pool bar, the white garden, the executive bar and we have a club. They sat at the white garden. We haven't finished work on the white garden, we have not even opened it. We were told it is unsafe. Around 1.20am, the Okada guy (Matthew) told the guy that he brought that he wanted to use the toilet. Because the white garden was not open, they told him he could use the swimming pool side toilet."

"After waiting for him for 20 minutes, they said they went to the swimming pool side, looking for him. There they saw his clothes but not him. And then when they looked in the swimming pool, they saw that he had jumped into the deepest part. That was when they (pulled him out) and rushed him to the hospital. He was declared dead at the hospital. That was when they called me."

"The next day, I sent elderly people to the family because I had never experienced such a thing before. My people went to the police station to report the matter and they arrested four of my workers - three of my workers and the girl that cleared them at the gate. They detained my Operations Manager, my Head of Security and the Pool Guard."

"When I got to the police station, I as Olokede : we have done the autopsy, we should what the offence of the pool guard was. I saw the place had already been shut down because nobody wanted to swim at 1a.m. I told them the pool guard is not a spirit and that he has to sleep. Besides, our pool is not even for free, it's not open to outsiders. And when outsiders want to swim there, they pay money."

"This man took permission to go and use the toilet and then dived into the pool. I sent people to appeal to the family, but when they got to the police station, they called me to bring money for the burial. I was in Abuja. I told them, and that I had only N100,000. I said I would send N150,000 but they said no. When I came back, I went to Pantti to bail my people and they said we should meet with the

family of the deceased. The police there told me to follow this case to the end. The family started demanding N6,000,000 from me. I said for what, that this is a hotel that we just opened, and where would I get that amount from? I asked that is it because I'm an honourable member, and that it was unfair! The police then said they would do an autopsy, which they did. The police said we should have another meeting; I wasn't at the previous meeting. We held another meeting again with the family, where Mr Akeem, the deceased's father accused me again."

"I then requested and had a one-on-one meeting with him. I told him no amount of money we give him would bring the boy back and that even I was not happy that this happened to somebody that came to our hotel. I then promised him five hundred thousand naira, which I gave to him two days later. The money is with him as we speak. Then I said I would give Matthew's wife some money because I was told he had a wife and a son, and also look for a way to give succour to the family because they had lost their bread winner."

"Immediately I gave the man the money, they got a lawyer and I said I couldn't speak with the lawyer, then I called my lawyer. They said I should give them N1.5 million but I told them I wanted to give money to the wife for the child not to the deceased's father. This man called me and thanked me, saying that they like what I said. Then I also told them I didn't have that kind of amount to give to them but the pressure was so much on me, so I said I would give them."

"As I speak, I haven't made one kobo from this hotel and I'm going to use my personal money to sort it. I then told Mr Akeem that we should go and bury Matthew because a message came to me from the morgue that they are just punishing the boy. They said they have done the autopsy, we should take to the police to release the body for burial. I spoke with the father about it and he agreed. Then the lawyer came and started saying something else, but I told him he couldn't talk to me rudely because I wasn't even in Lagos when the incident happened. I also told him that contrary to what they were saying, it was the deceased who brought the other fellow."

But Mr Akeem said it was his friend that brought him, we asked.

"Don't mind them, they are even accusing the boy of using Matthew for rituals. We had an agreement that I would give them one million naira by middle of December but I didn't see the lawyer again; and then he called me on January 11 this year and I told him I had exhausted my funds for end of the year



•Taiwo

expenses.

I was a former Deputy Speaker in Lagos, I was former member of the House of Representatives. I normally host a party every December 24th and I have spent money on it. I told him I waited for his call throughout December but I didn't hear from him. I said we would talk later. He then said he lost his younger brother."

About the autopsy

"As for the autopsy, the police said they have sent it to the Director of Public Prosecution. As they were delaying, telling me to send money, the case was progressing. I'm a politician and a gentleman, and I don't like people toying with my name because that is the definition of who I am. I am not from a rich background but God has given me a name that is so strong and which I cherish a lot. That is why if I promise a person something, I always hold on to my word. Immediately I told them I would give them one million naira, I had even given the hotel N500,000 to hold, that when they are ready, I would just balance the money."

Rilwan initially took to his heels

"I first met Rilwan at the Police Station the day I went to see my staff. I was told he ran away when the incident occurred, and in order to get him arrested, they told him Matthew had woken up and he should come back. Since then, I didn't hear from Rilwan's father. When Matthew's family said we should bring one million naira, I told Rilwan's father to bring N300,000, that the hotel should bring N200,000 and I would add N500,000. But the man told me he didn't have money, and I told him no problem that I have not even heard from Matthews family recently, not until their lawyer called me."

"Though I'm the owner of the hotel, I'm not the person running it. It was the hotel management that told me the autopsy showed the boy drowned. I'm a politician from Badagry Division, tomorrow I may contest for the Senate; I don't want a situation where tomorrow they would start using this incident against me in the future. If the police call us today, we will go there."