

Man's death pits four friends against two landlords



ONLY Femi Odufa knows the truth. Unfortunately, the dead don't talk. While the Odufa family claim that four of their son's friends killed him, the suspects, Idowu Ishola, Azeez Odewole, David Alashe and Segun Oyelakin say that two landlords in the area killed Odufa.

The deceased's family say that the animosity between Odufa and his friends started when their late son stabbed Ishola a month ago and refused to pay the hospital bill. According to them, Ishola told Odewole, Alashe and Oyelakin about what Odufa did to him and they allegedly decided that revenge would not be out of place.

Odufa's elder brother told the police at the State Criminal Investigations Department, Panti, Lagos, that his brother stopped sleeping at home because his friends were after his life for what he did to Ishola and they did not stop looking for him until they killed him.

Ishola, who is at the centre of the storm, says that though Odufa disfigured his face with a broken bottle, he was never on a revenge mission.

"Odufa used to drink a lot of ogogoro (local gin)," says Ishola. "Almost a month ago, we were all in an open space relaxing when Odufa went to pick a fight with one guy called Ope. After he left Ope, he came to me and tore my clothes."

"Other guys that were with us asked me to go and sit somewhere else because Odufa liked looking for trouble. I listened to them, but Odufa still came after me from behind and stabbed my arm and mouth with a broken bottle. My mouth and arm were stitched and I didn't recover until after two weeks. His elder brother called both of us

Four best friends allegedly killed their friend while on a revenge mission. TOYOSI OGUNSEYE who spoke to them, writes that the suspects say that they had no hand in Femi Odufa's death

and called a truce. I forgave him after the peace meeting."

The Public Relations Officer of the Lagos State Police Command, Frank Mba, however, says that Ishola may not be telling the whole truth.

He says, "According to the report we got, Odufa was not at peace after he stabbed Ishola in a drunken state. He was sleeping in different places to avoid Ishola and his friends whom he knew had not forgiven him for stabbing their friend and refusing to pay his hospital bill. We learnt that they attacked Odufa on the decking of an uncompleted building when he was sleeping, beat him mercilessly and threw him down from the building."

The four men, who have very little education, live together and are all below 26 years of age, however deny this allegation.

Odewole says, "Two weeks before Odufa died, we returned from Ijebu-Ode and parked

a motorcycle outside our house. When we woke up in the morning, we did not see the motorcycle the following day; it was stolen. The Friday after the day the motorcycle was stolen, two new motorcycles were stolen from the compound of our neighbour.

"The landlords in the area alleged that it was one of us that stole the motorcycles. We then decided to catch the thief ourselves. Moreover, we had gone to consult a native doctor in Ikorodu who told us that one of our friends was the one stealing the motorcycles.

Alashe was quick to chip in, "On July 26, 2010, we woke up in the midnight to catch the people or person stealing the motorcycles. We were walking down the street when we saw someone on a fence. Immediately, he saw us, he jumped into another person's compound."

"We switched on our torchlight and ran after him. The person jumped back again and ran to the top of an uncompleted building. We

caught him and saw that it was our friend Odufa. We asked him why he was running away from us if he did not know anything about the stolen motorcycles.

"He also could not tell us what he was doing outside at that time of the night. We then took him to meet two landlords: Oji and Motonla."

The suspects alleged that Motonla went into his house and brought out an axe. Alashe adds, "He started beating Odufa with the axe and wanted to cut off his legs, but we prevented him from doing that. Oji on his part hit Odufa on the head with a stone twice and kicked him. It was Oji's wife that stopped him from hitting Odufa any further. We told the landlords that they should allow us take Odufa to the police station. They refused and said they were going to sort out the matter because Odufa's father is also a landlord in the area."

They claimed that they left Odufa with the landlords and went back to their home. "The following day, we learnt that he was in the hospital. We went there to see him and saw that he was receiving drips. The police arrested us there. After Oji and Motonla beat Odufa to a pulp, they released him but he fell down on the way and was taken to the clinic. He later died," says Ishola.

The landlords denied having a hand in Odufa's death. They told the police at the SCID that they were the ones that rescued the deceased from his friends and took him to the hospital after he was thrown down from the high rise building around 3.30 in the morning.

One of the suspects, Odewole, 25, who was the one that contacted the native doctor, says that there is no iota of truth in the statements of the landlords.

"I was the one that went to see a native doctor at Majidun, Ikorodu, and was told that it was one of us that stole the motorcycle but that I will find it," he says. "I reported at the Owutu Police Station, Ikorodu that my motorcycle was stolen and I showed the police the documents."

"The day we caught Odufa, even though we did not find any motorcycle with him, his movement was suspicious. Another friend of ours, Ramoni, wanted to beat Odufa with a wooden cane, but we stopped him and agreed that the police station was our best option."

"We only decided to tell the landlords, Oji and Motonla, about what happened because Odufa's father is also a landlord in the area. We did all that to prove to the landlords in the area that we are not thieves because they said we were the ones stealing in the neighbourhood."

Mba however says that investigations are not conclusive yet.

"Odewole says that he reported that his motorcycle was stolen, but we don't have the record at the Owutu Police Station that his motorcycle was stolen. We went to where the four suspects live in Ikorodu and the owner of the house, who is a woman, could not vouch for their integrity."

"We have just started this investigation. We hope to talk to more people in the neighbourhood and invite the persons who claimed that their motorcycles were stolen in the neighbourhood."

“Motonla went into his house and brought out an axe. He started beating Odufa with the axe and wanted to cut off his legs, but we prevented him from doing that. Oji on his part hit Odufa on the head with a stone twice and kicked him”