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Landlady's son kills tenant over handset

By Comfort Oseghale

Saturday, 5 Mar 2011

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Sodiq's body

At 54, Idi Street, Ajegunle, Lagos, a couple, Ajibola (a commercial motorcycle operator) and his wife, are contending with the harsh reality of the murder of their son, Sodiq. The young Ajibola was allegedly stabbed to death by Jide Atane, their landlady's son.

Occupying a two-bedroom bungalow, which is only one of the numerous buildings that make up house No. 54, Ajibola and his wife are still trying to come to terms with their loss.

"The whole thing started like a joke," Ajibola said when CRIME DIGEST visited his home. "I used to live at Tolu Street before I moved here with my family. My former landlord wanted to renovate his house and so we had to relocate." The family's new abode is a family house consisting of three bungalows that form a courtyard and owned by the Atane family.

Insisting that his new landlord was a kind and humane person, Ajibola said, "This house is owned by Atane (Jide's father). Though the man is late, Atane's uncle manages the buildings. The only person from that family who has brought me grief is Jide."

Atane, a 23-year-old man, is alleged to have become a terror to the tenants, as he was reportedly involved in theft and other

social vices. "My son (Sodiq) started having problems with Jide when a Nokia handset that I bought for him was stolen. My late son claimed that Jide stole his phone, which he was charging by a window when he was taking his bath," the distressed father recalled.

To prevent any form of altercation, Ajibola was said to have bought his son a replacement. He said, "I bought Sodiq a Samsung handset, which he did not like. He eventually sold it and bought a flip phone. He was so obsessed with the phone."

Within a short while, the new phone again changed owners. "I was ill that very Sunday when that new phone was stolen again. I was on the couch with a running stomach when Sodiq came in to tell me that

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his phone had been stolen," he said. Reluctant to confront his landlord's nephew, Ajibola again assured his son that the stolen phone would be replaced.

"Unknown to me, Sodiq went out to confront Jide. The whole thing eventually degenerated into a quarrel and Jide's mum came out to support her son. She ordered Sodiq not to come into the house again for daring to accuse Jide of stealing his phone," he added. The father recalled that his son was stabbed in his presence while he was trying to persuade him to get back into his house.

Jide, the bereaved father alleged, was emboldened by his mother's support. He was said to have dashed into his room and emerged with a bottle of Guinness Stout. Ajibola said, "Even at that, I didn't take him seriously. I just thought he wanted to frighten Sodiq. Right before our eyes, Jide smashed the bottle and mutilated Sodiq's right arm with it."

The bleeding Sodiq was said to have been rushed to a nearby hospital, where medical staff spent nine days battling to save his life. "We spent over N100,000 to save him; he had lost a lot of blood. Unfortunately, he died on February 16," his mother said, cradling the deceased's sister.

Jide, who was subsequently arrested, is currently in police custody, although the Ajibolas are not quite optimistic of getting justice from the legal process. "Jide's mother loves him very much. I know she will do all in her power to ensure he doesn't go to prison. She has the money," Ajibola said. The Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos Police Command, Samuel Jinadu told CRIME DIGEST that he had no information regarding the incident. "I have not been informed by the DPO in charge of that area. When I have the necessary information, I will get back to you" Jinadu said.



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