

**A burglary
and co-tenant's
death land
hair stylist
in police net**

“If I had known that this would land me in police custody, perhaps I would have escaped,” – Nweke, a murder suspect narrates his ordeal to **COMFORT OSEGHAE**

A burglary incident, which occurred during the last *Eid-el-Kabir* celebration at Ikota Housing Estate, Ajah has resulted in the murder of a driver by his co-tenant in the wee hours of Wednesday, November 9, 2011.

The deceased, Paul Michael, 27, was stabbed to death by Cletus Nweke, a hair stylist, who lived in a single-room apartment in the same compound, at about 5.40 am on the fateful day. *CRIME DIGEST* gathered.

Nweke had returned home at about 3 pm only to discover that somebody had broken into his apartment and stolen his television, video CD player, clothes and shoes.

On impulse, he had turned to Michael, who happened to live next-door, to ask who had burgled his room. But the latter was unable to provide a satisfactory response to his questions.

Obviously frustrated, Nweke had lost his cool and an argument ensued between him and Michael.

CRIME DIGEST learnt that other people living in the compound had intervened in the matter before it degenerated into a brawl. But, early on the next day, Nweke met Michael in the bathroom, which they shared, and demanded to know who had burgled his room.

Another argument was said to have ensued, as Michael took offence at Nweke's intrepidity. A fight broke out between them and Nweke allegedly stabbed Michael on his shoulder with a broken bottle.

An hour later, Michael died in a private hospital where he was taken to for treatment. He was said to have lost a lot of blood from the injuries sustained during the fight.

Aremorseful Nweke told our correspondent that he was informed at the hospital that Michael needed blood and while he waited for the transfusion to be done, the latter's kinsmen and friends showed up in company with the neighbourhood Odia Peoples Congress.

He was initially detained and questioned by some members of the OPC in the neighbourhood before they handed him to the police.

He said, "The OPC took me away, manhandled me and questioned me on how Michael sustained the injuries. While they were at it, Michael's kinsmen had gone ahead to make a report at the police station at Ilaje. I was arrested and informed at the police station that Michael had given up the ghost."

Giving his own version of what transpired between him and the deceased, Nweke continued, "I had known Michael for over a year before he died. I have lived in that apartment for about four years. In all that period, there was no case of burglary. There are six single rooms in that bungalow and Michael was my next-door neighbour. Although I cannot say we were best of friends, our relationship was cordial. So there was no hidden grudge."

“On the second day of the Sallah holiday, I went to work as usual. I got back home at about 3pm only to discover that my room had been burgled. The lock on the door was damaged and the door opened. My electronic appliances, my clothes and shoes had been stolen. Meanwhile, Michael stayed at home throughout the public holiday. When I went to him, about five of his friends were chatting with him.

"Although Michael was not the only cotenant of mine who was at home on that day, he lived closest to me and I felt he must have seen whoever broke into my room. Surprisingly, when I asked him, he and his friends started making jest of me. I was angry and the situation degenerated into a quarrel."

Nweke regretted his failure to report the burglary to the police before confronting his co-tenant. He said, "I should have reported it to the police; I realise my mistake now. Instead, I listened to the advice of my

friends, who insisted that Michael was in a position to explain what happened and that he probably knew those responsible."

But he denied intentionally setting out to hurt Michael on the morning of November 9, 2011. He said, "I did not lie in wait for Michael. I actually approached him in the compound while he was brushing his teeth and not in the bathroom. At this time, other tenants in the compound were still asleep. I simply asked him why he was insensitive about the theft and I asked who was responsible for it."

“Like the previous day, Michael’s response was insulting and I felt hurt. I didn’t keep a bottle on me with the purpose of hurting him; he was the person who pulled a broken bottle and attempted to stab me. In my struggle to wrest the weapon from his grip, he lost balance and fell down. He actually fell on the bottle and hurt himself.

"At first, I went back to my room and didn't think about the fight. But when Michael started shouting that he was hurt, I had to go back. He was in pain. I went back to my room and took all the money I had on me, which was N2,000 and rushed him to a nearby private clinic. If I had known that this would land me in a police custody, perhaps I would have escaped."

But the Lagos State Police Commissioner, Mr. Yakubu Alkali, dismissed Nweke's claim that he was innocent of Michael's death.

Alkali said, "Police investigation has shown that the injury Michael sustained was not self-inflicted. A post-mortem, which is still being awaited, will reveal more. Nweke also tried to escape from police custody while at the Ilafe Police Station.

"Although both hands were cuffed, Nweke attempted to escape through the ceiling before the bid was foiled and the case transferred to the SCID, Pantl. He will be charged to court at the conclusion of our investigation."



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