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## Businessman's gruesome murder tears family apart •Slain man's brothers, wife, in-laws trade blames, accusations

AUGUST 10, 2013 BY KUNLE FALAYI 12 COMMENTS



The late Chidi

Exactly one month today (Saturday), two assailants entered the Isashi, Lagos home of a 38-year-old businessman, Chidi Ejimudo, stabbed him several times on the head and allowed him to bleed to death. But his family members have alleged that they suspect his 23-year-old wife arranged the murder.

Ejimudo, who was from Imo State and his wife of five years, Vivian, a native of Anambra State, had no children.

When our correspondent visited the couple's house on 11, Oluwaseyi Street, Isashi, there was no doubt that he was a businessman that was doing well.

"He imports electronics and musical instruments and has stores in Alaba International Market," his brother, Chief John Ejimudo,

explained.

The front of the house gave an impression that a wealthy man must be living within its walls. But floor of the house looked like a scary crime scene in a horror movie.

It has been like that since July 10, 2013 when the victim was killed. No attempt has been made to clean up the house as police investigation is still ongoing.

When our correspondent entered the bedroom, it was clear that was where Chidi must have died.

"He bled and died there," John said as he pointed to the caked blood.

"But why do you suspect his wife?" our correspondent asked the man.

He said, "Chidi has complained to me before he died about the problems he was having with his wife. I don't know the exact issue, but he mentioned it had to do with the wife's father.

"Chidi learnt trading from me for many years before he finally went independent. He was a hard-working and truthful man. But his wife cannot say she does not know anything about his murder because everything she has told us about his death did not add up."

*Saturday PUNCH* learnt that on the day he was killed, Chidi, his wife and a 13-year-old niece of the victim were the ones at home.

John alleged that immediately the victim died, his wife made no attempt to contact him on the telephone or alert neighbours.

He said, "The incident, according to Oge, happened around 2am. I was asleep when I heard noise on my gate. I went to unlock the gate and realised it was my brother's wife.

"She was crying and saying that two people had come into their house and killed her husband. I was furious. I asked why she did not call me on the telephone immediately but had to waste time trekking to my house to tell me."

*Saturday PUNCH* noted that from Chidi's house to that of his brother is about eight minutes' trek.

John said he rushed to his brother's house with the wife, where he saw the lifeless body of the victim on the



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floor of the bedroom.

"I screamed and shouted, 'Why? Why?' I quickly rushed and summoned the neighbours for help. It was clear my brother's wife did not shout for help even after the attackers had left. She did not call the neighbours.

"When I asked her why she did not call me on the telephone, she said her phone battery went off when she was trying to do so.

"With the help of the neighbours, we took the body to the hospital – Kiladejo Hospital, Okokomaiko. He was pronounced dead by the doctor, who attended to us immediately we got there. The doctor said we should notify the police immediately. We went to the Isashi Police Division, thereafter, to report the incident.

"They have a very dangerous dog in the house; so, I am wondering where the dog could be when the men came in. I asked Vivian about the dog, she said she did not know. We later realised the dog was locked in the small security house at the gate."

John said they wrote a statement at the police station and the divisional police officer later gave them a paper to enable them to deposit the body in the hospital mortuary.

*Saturday PUNCH* learnt that before going to the mortuary, they stopped by John's house because he needed to dress up properly.

He alleged that before the body was taken to the hospital, the victim's wife sent for a bottle of anointing water she kept at home.

John said, "When our niece brought the anointing water and Vivian started spraying it on the body of her husband, her phone fell down. I took it so that she does not misplace it in the flurry of the moment.

"Absentmindedly, I pressed the phone and realised the phone's battery was full and she said it was flat, which was why she could not contact me immediately after the attack. I confronted her with this and she said nothing."

*Saturday PUNCH* learnt that after the body was deposited in the mortuary, the DPO of Isashi came to the house and took Vivian and the young girl, who was at home with the couple during the attack, to the station.

It was learnt that Vivian was later released to her father, while the girl was sent back home to John.

On Wednesday, when our correspondent visited the house where the attack took place, he spoke with the little girl, who witnessed the crime.

The girl, Obi Tochi, said, "The two men came into my room, I don't really know how they came in through the main door. They woke me up from the bed and asked how many people were in the house.

"I told them just me, my uncle and aunty. They said I should take them to the room and knock. The two men were holding two knives. They said when I knock on the door and my uncle asked what the problem was, I should say I had stomach ache. I did as they said when we got to the door and my uncle opened the door.

"But he saw one of the men, who were behind me, and quickly attempted to close the door but they forced it open and started stabbing him in the head. He was shouting but they kept stabbing him with the knives.

"I ran inside the room and went to meet aunty. She was hiding inside the wardrobe and I hid there with her too. She asked who the people attacking my uncle were and I said they were armed robbers. The men later brought my uncle into the room. He was bleeding heavily and looked tired when he sat on the edge of the bed."

Tochi said the two assailants were asking, "Where is the money? Where is the money?" But they told the men they had no money in the house.

The girl said, "They asked me and aunty to lie down on the floor. They packed some of my uncle's clothes and took his phone. My uncle had become tired and he lay down. The men stomped on his head but he did not shake.

"They shouted at aunty to bring her jewellery too. They kicked her in the head too. She gave them but they did not take her phone or my own. After they left, aunty prayed on my uncle's body and asked me to help her wear his boxers on him. She then left for Uncle John's house."

Our correspondent asked about the security dog in the house and the girl said it was always unleashed in the night.

A police source told *Saturday PUNCH* that the Isashi division had invited Vivian to write a statement but later released her to get treatment since she still might be in shock.

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The case was later transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Panti, Yaba.

Our correspondent learnt that Vivian was arrested when the investigation was taken over by the SCID but later released upon producing a reliable surety.

The family said they were currently battling with how to inform the victim's mother about his death.

John told *Saturday PUNCH*, "We will allow the police to do their job but we cannot deceive ourselves by saying we don't suspect the wife in his killing.

"Our mother asks about us (her children) almost every day. Even if we travel, she calls all the time. So, you can imagine if we tell her now that her son has been killed. We have informed our father but nobody dares inform our mother yet. She is hypertensive."

However, our correspondent tracked down Vivian during one of her appearances at the SCID in company with her father.

The young woman was bitter as she refuted the allegations her in-laws made against her.

"I loved my husband very much because he was a good man. Chidi was not just good to me, he was good to my family," she said.

When our correspondent asked her why she made no attempt to call neighbours for help immediately the assailants who killed her husband left, she said it was not true that she did not call for help.

Vivian said, "I screamed till my voice became hoarse but nobody could come to my aid at the time. I was shouting like a mad woman. What exactly would I hope to gain by organising the killing of my husband? I screamed, cried and banged on doors of neighbours but nobody came out.

"I was shouting like a mad woman. It was when nobody came out to help me that I rushed off to my brother-in-law's house.

"He said I made no attempt to call him. That's simply not true. My BlackBerry was booting when I was trying to call him. I had to fling it into the wardrobe so that the men will not see me use it and kill me because of it. The phone did not come on in time."

Our correspondent asked her who locked their dog up in the security house at the gate that night but Vivian said she did not know.

"I was confused about that because the dog is always unleashed in the night. I have no idea who could have locked the door up," she said.

Vivian said she willingly missed school for two years in order to nurse her husband back to health at a particular time when he took ill.

"When my mates were graduating in Babcock University, I was at home taking care of my husband. That's because I loved him so much and even though I was under pressure to leave him because of the problem I was facing from his siblings, I stayed with him," she said.

Vivian added that her problem with her in-laws might be connected with the fact that the siblings' relationship was not smooth.

She stated, "My husband would come to my father to complain about what his brothers were doing to his business. They nearly ran him aground. He had to sell one of his shops to stay afloat. But they will not tell you all that.


"I ran out of our house barely wearing anything after my husband died. I have not been allowed to return to the house since then. They refused to allow me to change into another clothe as bloodstained as I was at the time. Everything I own has been locked up by my in-laws inside the house.


"Right now, I don't even know where my husband's body is. My in-laws have kept me in the dark. I don't know anything. This is a man I was married to for five years."


Vivian's father, Chief Ezenwa Okonkwo, also said he once visited Chidi's father in the village to let him know his children were engaged in a feud.

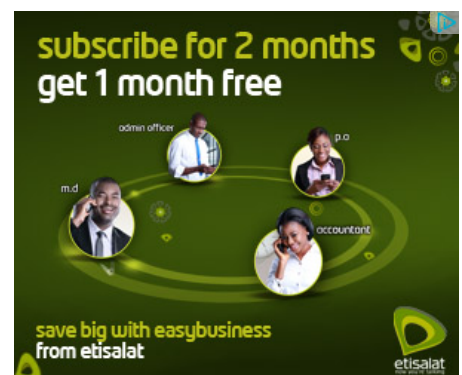
Okonkwo said, "I went to their father because I am an elder and was expected to do what was right. They were fighting on business matters and I thought I should let their father know as an elder. Don't be deceived, things are not what they seem to be between Chidi and his brothers. They were not on good terms. But he is not here now, so they can easily lay the blame of his murder at the feet of his wife.

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"My daughter is just 23, why would she plan the killing her husband, who happened to be a very good boy?

"In 2011, I was kidnapped in Lagos. Chidi was the one who ran around and did everything possible to save my life. There was no law enforcement agency he did not go to just to get them to come to my aid.

"There is no way anyone will be able to unravel the killing of my daughter's husband without looking into the person who locked up the dog in the house before the attack took place."

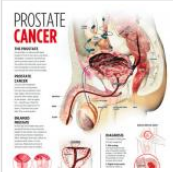
However, the case is still being investigated by the homicide unit of the SCID.

Police Public Relations Officer, Ngozi Braide, said the police would continue their investigation until they get to the root of the matter.


"We are also working hard to apprehend the criminals, who perpetrated the killing," she said.

Meanwhile, Chidi's body remains in the mortuary. The family said they could not bear to bury him at the moment till the investigation into his murder reached a meaningful stage.


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