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Robbers strangle driver in Lagos gardens

JULY 2, 2015 : SAMSON FOLARIN 8 COMMENTS

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Operatives of the Anti-Robbery Squad of the State Department of Criminal Investigation, **Yaba, Lagos State, have arrested a five-man gang for allegedly strangling a cab driver, Sonye Chukwudi, aka Zack Friday.**

PUNCH Metro learnt that the robbers — **Anthony Toms (20), Godwin Francis (25), Michael Inyang (21), Evidence David (22), Etuk Tony (23) — tricked the 32-year-old to the Ransome Kuti Gardens, Anthony Village, thinking he had a lot of money.**

They were said to have bound him hands and feet before strangling him, only to discover he had only his phone and N4,750 on him.

Our correspondent was told that the suspects hid the corpse in the gardens.

They were about escaping in the victim's white Mercedes Benz E320 saloon car, when a team of policemen, acting on a tip-off, apprehended them.

The incident happened on Sunday around 9pm.

A police source said the suspects thought Chukwudi was rich because of his car which he usually parked around the Ikeja GRA for hire service.

He said, "They were four that planned the crime. Toms was their informant. He told them the man was rich.

"He told **Chukwudi that he had a job for him.** He said the man would carry some flowers for a customer from Anthony Village to Obanikoro."

It was learnt that Toms, who hails from Cross River State, also arranged with another friend to drive the victim's car after it had been stolen.

A police source said the man, who was to drive Chukwudi's car, alerted the police to the operation.

The policemen reportedly trailed him to the scene.

PUNCH Metro gathered that around 9pm, the victim drove into the gardens and parked his car facing the Gbagada Expressway.

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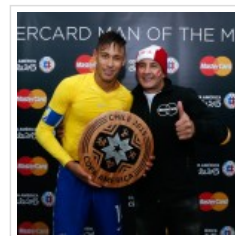


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It was gathered that Toms began to load some bouquet of flowers into the booth of the car.

A source said, "Toms called the victim to assist him. As he stepped out of the car, other members came out of their hiding place and hit him in the head with a plank."

"They bound his legs and hands and used his clothes to cover his mouth. They then strangled him."

Our correspondent was told that the suspects ransacked the deceased's pocket and found his phone and N4,750.

"Soon after, they called their hired driver to pick them because none of them could drive.

"As soon as the driver got to the place, the police surrounded the suspects," the source said.

Our correspondent was told that the police were forced to open fire on two of the gang members who attempted to escape.

They sustained gunshot injuries in the legs.

The police were said to have found the victim's corpse hidden in the gardens and covered with flowers.

Our correspondent was told that Chukwudi lived alone in the Egbeda area of Lagos, while his wife and four children lived in their hometown in Imo State.

It was learnt that none of the suspects had their relatives in Lagos as they came from Cross River, Rivers, Bayelsa and Anambra states.

The prime suspect, Toms, however told our correspondent he never meant to kill the victim.

He said, "I am a gardener. I work in that garden at Anthony. I met the man about two years ago.

"That day, I just wanted to collect the money and steal his car, which we estimated at about N2m. He struggled with us and died in the process."

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Kenneth Nwosu, said he would call back.

But he had yet to do so as of the time of filing this report.

But a police source said the men were arraigned on Wednesday before an Ebute Meta Chief Magistrate's Court.

They were said to have been remanded pending legal advice from the Directorate of Public Prosecutions.

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