

Fleeing lover surrenders, claims robbers killed girlfriend

January 5, 2016



Monday Hounga

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Samson Folarin

Monday Houna, the 28-year-old-man, who was believed to have killed his live-in lover, Cecelia Joseph, and fled to Benin Republic, has voluntarily submitted himself to the police.

Houna claimed that he and Cecelia were attacked by a three-man gang on Christmas Day, adding that the armed men stabbed 21-year-old Joseph to death and ripped open his stomach.

He said after he was rejected by four hospitals in Nigeria, a relative got a cab which took him to Porto Novo, Benin, on the fateful day, where he underwent a life-saving operation.

Houna said he decided against medical advice to risk his health and submit to the police after he learnt that he had been declared wanted for murder.

The 28-year-old had been declared wanted by the Interpol for allegedly killing Cecelia in Raji Rasaki Estate, in the FESTAC Town area of Lagos State.

Our correspondent had reported that the suspect and Cecelia had had a disagreement on Christmas day which culminated in a bloody fight during which the victim was stabbed to death.

The Lagos State Police Command had contacted Interpol to assist with the arrest of the suspect, after he was said to have escaped to Benin Republic.

The police later released a statement saying it had arrested a woman, Taiye Ganiyu, and one Sodjinou Singbo, for aiding his escape.

However, *PUNCH Metro* was told that Houna surrendered himself to the police in Benin on January 1, 2016, and was transferred to the FESTAC Police Division the next day.

The matter was immediately transferred to the State Department of Criminal Investigation, Yaba.

The suspect told our correspondent he had never had a fight with Cecelia in the house he rented in Raji Rasaki Estate.

While Houna is an *iron bender*, Cecelia worked in a shop in Mile 2 as a hairdresser.

Houna said, "We have known each other for more than 10 years now. We met while in the primary

school. Although we attended different primary schools, we usually met during inter-house competitions and that was when we started dating.

“I rented the apartment where we lived and we had been living together for more than one year. We would have been married, but her parents said she should get pregnant for me first.

“On December 25, around 12.30am, while we were both asleep, she (Cecelia) suddenly shouted, ‘Monday, help me.’ As I opened my eyes, I woke up to see a gun pointed at my head. The intruders were three, but only one carried a gun. He said if I shouted, he would blast my head off.

“They stabbed me in the hand and in the wrist when I tried to struggle with them. They later stabbed me in the stomach. I forced myself to pull out the knife from my stomach. When I checked Cecelia, she was dead.”

He said the landlord of the house and a few other people later arrived and put him in a tricycle which took him to a nearby hospital where he was rejected.

He said he was also taken to the FESTAC Police Station, where he was issued a police report to enable him get quick treatment.

However, around 4am, after being rejected at a general hospital and two other places, a relative was said to have suggested that he should be taken to the Porto Novo Hospital in Benin.

The doctors at the hospital were said to have operated on him, before placing him on admission.

He said, “I was on admission when I heard in the news that I killed Cecelia. Here was somebody I loved so much and would many times kneel to beg whenever we had issues. Why would I kill her?”

Hounga explained that Cecelia had once separated from him after she was impregnated by another man, whom she claimed her family supported.

He said after a few years with the man, she returned to him, adding that she had two stillbirths for the former boyfriend.

“She came back in 2014 and because of the love I had for her, I accepted her. Despite what happened, I

have not stopped loving her and if I get out of this case, I don't think I will ever love any woman like I loved her," he said.

However, the elder sister of the victim, Titilayo Joseph, denied that Houna and Cecelia lived together, saying that her sister was staying with her in Mazamaza.

She said, "Cece (Cecelia) lived with me and not him. She would go to work in the morning and return home at evening.

"I called her on December 24 to know why she was not at home and she said the Yuletide season had kept her busy at work.

"On December 25, she came home to pick something and my neighbours said they saw her. I was sick and couldn't go out.

"I was at home on December 26 when I received a call that she had a fight with her boyfriend and he had stabbed her to death.

"He claimed they were attacked by robbers; were they the only one living in that compound? Why was she the only one that was stabbed to death? Why didn't he raise the alarm?"

Titilayo said the family was not aware of the relationship, urging the police to bring the killer of her sister to justice.

A source said the police would accommodate all witnesses and sieve the evidence to arrive at the truth.

He said, "It was a miracle that he survived because all his entrails were out. One of the doctors in the hospitals he was rushed to has made statement to corroborate Houna's story."

The Deputy Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Command, ASP Aliyu Giwa, confirmed the arrest.

He added that the police would get to the roots of the case and give justice to the deceased.

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