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Q 1

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... He prevented me from beating my wife, suspect says

If there is reincarnation, and Mr. **Asuquo Akpan Umanah** finds himself again in any part of the world, he would definitely avoid playing the peacemaker. In fact, whenever he sees a husband, battering the wife or he notices that a couple's normal matrimonial games are turning violent and metamorphosing into wife battery, Umanah would no doubt look the other way.

For allegedly trying to play a good brother-in-law and saving a defenceless woman from being beaten to death by her husband, Umanah is now lying stone cold in the mortuary, with his head almost severed from his body. His cousin, Udoh Asuquo, allegedly murdered Umanah, whom he accused of intruding into his family affairs.

Daily Sun learnt that the suspect, a jobless Lagos returnee, had suddenly become violent last Monday in their family compound in Esuk Inwang Okon Eyo, a sleepy coastal community in Uruan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State where everybody's name seems to include Asuquo.

"He started by cutting down plantains and other economic trees while threatening to kill anyone, who tried to stop him with his machete. He later abandoned the machete and went inside and started pummeling his wife till the woman fainted," a family source said.

It was at this point that Umanah, who lived in the next house in the same compound, went to intervene, pleading with him to live the poor woman alone. The source said Umanah even asked the suspect, who is now with the police, to stop beating the wife and that if he was still angry, he (Udoh) should rather beat him (Umanah).

Maybe Umanah thought his peace-seeking gesture was just an innocuous, altruistic offer that no sane human being would accept. But he was mistaken. For, no sooner had he said that than Udoh, who was

seething with uncontrollable fury, wholeheartedly accepted the offer.

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He reportedly picked a bottle, broke it on the wall and immediately proceeded to slash Umanah's throat. He almost severed the head from the body. Umanah fell down, dead, right in the presence of everyone in the compound, on Udoh's veranda. But the suspect, it was gathered, could not be bothered. He reportedly wondered why the deceased would prevent him from dealing with his wife.

The distraught wife of the deceased, Mrs. Patience Asuquo, who is still in deep shock after seeing her husband killed in broad daylight by his cousin and in the presence of everybody, told Daily Sun that there was no prior quarrel between the two family members since she came to know them.

"He used to stay in Lagos but early this year, he came back with a wife. They have one child. He used to say he was a hard man and that he was initiated while in Lagos. But he was never a violent person. When he came back and there was no work to do, he also joined in the fishing business.

"Now, without any reason, he has killed my husband and left me with this child and I'm also pregnant with another child. I have lost two other children before this one survived. Now the one that is coming would not even know the father," Patience lamented and burst into tears.

The stepmother to the deceased, Mrs. Anieti Asuquo said the murder of her stepson by his cousin had thrown the entire family into mourning and confusion.

"We are a very peaceful family; the whole village can attest to that. My son used to take care of me and the wife. Now that he has been violently murdered by his cousin, not an outsider, we don't know who is going to take care of us, who is going to take care of the wife, the child and even the unborn baby. I don't even know what to say. We are asking for justice but we are also pleading with the government to come to our aid, especially to the unemployed wife, who would now be the father and mother to the children," Madam Anieti said.

The youth leader of the community, Ekpe Ette, expressed shock at the dastardly incident, which he described as the first of its kind in the entire community.

"He was not a violent person. He didn't even smoke nor drink. He grew up here among us before he left for Lagos. It has not been long since he came back from Lagos and, having nothing to do, he joined in fishing business. So, we are surprised at what could have influenced him to do that," the youth leader said.

The deputy village head of Esuk Inwang, Chief Ekpe Asuquo, said he was only told what happened but did not witness it because of his ill health which could not allow him to move out of his house.

The suspect, our correspondent learnt, later tried to run away from the village when the import of his action began to dawn on him. He was, however, arrested by the villagers and handed over to the police that same day.

The state police command, through its public relations officer (PPRO), Mr. Etim Dickson (DSP), confirmed the incident. He explained that investigation was being carried out by the homicide department of the command. The police spokesman said the suspect would be taken to court at the conclusion of investigation.

When our visited the compound on Tuesday, the wife of the suspect, whom the deceased had tried to save from being killed by the husband, was said to have taken to her heels after the police had taken her husband away.

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