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Heartless partner

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- Man hammers friend dead, burns body, home to destroy evidence
- Chinese, Syrian also linked in murder

Policemen in Abuja have a task in their hands with the gruesome killing of a 54-year-old businessman in Gwarimpa. The deceased, Remigius Nzekwe, was murdered in his house, on 36 Road, B, Close, 3rd Avenue. Thereafter, his body and house were set ablaze by his assailant. The deceased, a dealer in roofing tiles, was until his untimely death, the chairman and chief executive of Remicon Aluminium Product Limited, located at the Idu industrial area of Abuja.

Ironically, his assailant, who is also a close business associate and marketer with Jay Steel Tech Limited, the deceased's major supplier of roofing tiles, could not cover his tracks after the heinous crime as he forgot his car keys, a Chevrolet brand on the floor of the deceased's house when he hurriedly made his escape.

Jay Steel Tech Limited is owned by a Chinese named Yuan Qiyao, where the assailant and accused person worked as marketer.

The accused, Nwaimo Ifeanyi, was introduced to the deceased by a friend who is now at large. Police said he killed the deceased after he failed to supply him the seven container loads of roofing tiles worth N42m, the deceased had paid for.

After several promises to pay back the money failed, Ifeanyi allegedly plotted with his gang members, including the owner of Jay Steel Tech Limited to send the deceased out of circulation permanently and end the debt matter.

Abuja Metro gathered that but for the spiritual intervention of Mrs. Tina Nzekwe, wife of the deceased, her husband would have been killed before June 22, after Ifeanyi together with the managing director of

Jay Steel Tech Limited, Qiyao and a Syrian, who posed as Mr. Fred, allegedly arranged for a meeting in

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Lagos which he attended with some other foreigners.

Mrs. Nzekwe, had premonition of her husband's journey and called to warn him against eating anything offered him by the men and even told him to call his relatives in Lagos to tell them he was in Lagos and give them the address of the hotel he was lodging, which he did.

That simple advice stopped the assailants from carrying out their evil plan in Lagos as Mr. Nzekwe's relatives visited him in the hotel and saw the people that he came with. The meeting was abruptly cancelled and shifted to Abuja for July 22, in the home of the deceased.

The major suspect was the last person to be seen with the deceased after he picked him up from the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Gwarimpa, on June 22, at about 11.00am for the meeting that ended in his death.

The deceased who thought that the meeting was to discuss when his goods was going to be supplied, left his wife and children in church and joined Ifeanyi.

But on their way, the deceased was said to have sighted some people at Jay Steel Tech Limited off-loading roofing tiles from a truck and decided to stop thinking it was his goods.

On entering the premises of the company, he met Mr. Qiyao, who told him the goods were not his.

He left the company premises and headed to his house for the meeting while Ifeanyi, drove behind him along two other persons in his Chevrolet space bus.

On getting to his house, the deceased parked his vehicle in front of his gate, while the suspect parked opposite his house and followed the deceased with the two persons into the compound. But they all came out almost immediately because the deceased forgot to pick the house keys from his wife and decided to go back to the church to get it.

He drove in Ifeanyi's car to the church and picked the key from his wife and left, while the wife remained in church for the rest of the service.

Barely one hour after the deceased left the church with Ifeanyi and his friends, news came to the church that the deceased house was on fire. The incident was immediately announced by the priest, who also ordered his relatives in church and other parishioners to go to the burning house.

But before they got there, it was too late as the deceased had died.

Hammered dead

Police said from their findings that the assailants killed him with a hammer they struck him on the head before setting his body ablaze to make it look like he died from the fire.

But unknown to the assailants, the security man who was washing his clothes outside the compound had seen him with two other persons and his boss but did not stop him because he was a regular visitor to the house.

Moreso, he thought that they had come on inspection visit to the house which was under construction, he never suspected that Ifeanyi and the men with him had come to kill his boss.

After allegedly committing the murder, Ifeanyi and his gang members were unable to leave the scene of the murder as he wrongly picked the deceased car keys and ran out of the house so as not to get burnt. But when he realized he picked the wrong key, he got stranded.

Not knowing what else to do, he then visited one of the tenants of the deceased but was looking very uneasy and before the tenant could offer them drinks he and his partner rushed out and came back in a few minutes to tell the tenant that his landlord's house was on fire.

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The tenant, one Mr. Gabriel Udegbe, immediately put a call to the fire service which responded almost immediately also and put out the fire. By this time, Ifeanyi and his accomplice, Ejike Ogbonna Godwill, had disappeared from the scene.

After putting out the fire, they saw the burnt body of the deceased bent over a chair in the sitting room and called in the police.

When the police came, they ordered everyone in the compound out and searched the compound and found a very big hammer hidden in the flower bed and a gallon of kerosene. The hammer, according to the police had bloodstains which had been hurriedly scrubbed with sand.

They took these as evidence and still went inside to examine the body of the deceased which was burnt beyond recognition and found a big cut on his head and suspected foul play but all the same, removed the body to the hospital and requested for an autopsy to clear their doubts

While all these was going on, the deceased wife, arrived the house but was prevented from entering the compound by the police even though she told them she was the wife of the deceased and pleaded with them to let her in. The police refused to allow her in because of what they had seen of the remains of her husband.

As she waited outside crying and wailing with her church members gathered in their hundreds and she sighted Ifeanyi, ran after him and grabbed him and shouted to the crowd to hold him responsible for the husband's death as he was the last person the husband was seen in his company.

Nemesis

Ifeanyi, pretended he did not know what the widow was talking, but she cried the more saying Ifeanyi, had killed her husband because of N42m goods which he had refused to supply and that they had scheduled for a meeting that day and how Ifeanyi brought her husband back to church to pick the house keys from her. Her shouts attracted the police that arrested Ifeanyi, based on Mrs. Nzekwe's story and interrogated him at the scene.

During interrogation, Ifeanyi, denied ever knowing the deceased and ever holding a meeting with him in his house that his wife was lying against him as he has never met her. But he later told the police that he actually met the deceased at Jay Steel Tech Limited where he used to buy goods on that fateful day and invited him to know his house which he obliged but that on getting to the house, the deceased told him he forgot his keys in church and went back to get it while he (Ifeanyi) left because he could not wait and that by the time he came back, he saw the deceased house on fire and he alerted the neighbours.

The police found that he was incoherent in his story and arrested and took him to the station.

Cock and bull

At the station, Ifeanyi, continued with his long tales not knowing that the police had the keys to his car which they found at the scene of the crime in their possession. After he had was through with his stories, the police asked him for his car keys since the car was still parked at the scene of the incident and he tried to cook up some stories which prompted the police to bring the keys in their possession. They confirmed to him the key actually belonged to him by using it to start his car.

With these initial proofs of culpability, police detained him for further investigation. And while the investigation was on, the autopsy result was released showing that deceased had fractured skull before the body was set ablaze and that there was no inhalation of smoke in his lungs, meaning that he died before the fire on his house, to cover the murder.

Other suspects

Police sources hinted Abuja Metro of how Ejike, second accused person rushed to the church to pick Ifeanyi's wife after the victim had been killed and told her that Mr. Remigius was dead and the two immediately drove to the home of Qiyao, owner of Jay Steel Limited to break the news to him.

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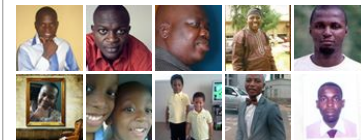
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The police became more suspicious and arrested Qiyao, and took him to the station and while the suspect was undergoing interrogation, there was pressure from some highly placed Nigerians on the Gwarimpa police to release the Chinese man from detention.

Sources say when the pressure became unbearable, the Commissioner of Police in charge of the Federal Capital Territory, Joseph Mbu ordered that the case be transferred to Department of Criminal Investigation, where all the suspects including the Chinese were taken. Qiyao was said to have spent five days in police custody before he was released

Business goes awry

Abuja Metro was informed that the deceased who had been doing business with Jay Steel Tech over the years, had no problem until he ordered for the supply of seven container loads of the roofing tiles.

Rather than giving the bank account number of Jay Steel to the deceased, Ifeanyi, the accused murderer conspired with a Syrian, George Youssef Jarrouj, to pose as the distributor of the roofing tiles to Jay Steel with fake name Mr Fred, and promised to supply the product at cheaper rate.

To convince the deceased that the transaction was smooth, the Syrian kept calling him on the phone to boost Ifeanyi's profile as a reliable person and assured him he would supply the goods.

After gaining the confidence of the deceased, Ifeanyi, went ahead to conspire with some people the police have found to be questionable in the frosty deal. They include Abayomi Esieke, Ogunbodede Segun Damilola, Adeyemi Samuel, and opened an account with Zenith Bank, account number 1013750108, which had Abayomi Esieke, as sole signatory and asked the deceased to pay the money into the account.

Gang deal

The deceased paid an initial N12m into the account on June 3. But instead of supplying the goods, the parties shared the money among themselves with each of them getting N4m, N2.85m, N2.62m, N1.5m and N1m respectively, and began to dribble him on when they were going to supply the goods.

Police sources told Abuja Metro that when the deceased could no longer bear what was happening about the business, he decided to tell his wife. As if he knew he was going to be killed, he also confided in his brother, Oguejiofor Nzekwe and his younger sister, Genevieve Ngozi Nzekwe about the problem, when Ifeanyi, Mr. Juan and Fred, arranged for them to meet in Lagos to resolve the matter.

Sad widow's tale

Abuja Metro visited the home of the deceased where his wife, Tina, a mother of five who said their marriage just clocked 25 years recently, said Ifeanyi, was a familiar person to the entire family. She also said that Ifeanyi, didn't know that she saw her husband boarding his car when he came back to pick the keys from her having forgotten to take his car along to the church.

Mrs. Nzekwe, now totally shattered by the incident wept as she recalled the incident that led to the untimely death of her husband.

"Before the incident, on June 22, my husband told me that he would have a meeting with Ifeanyi and the white man over the N42m debt they owe him, and that the meeting will hold at noon. Because of that, we decided to attend the 8.00am Mass, instead of 10.00am, the usual Mass they attend.

We went together to the church that morning and after the mass I waited behind because of another programme we had.

But at about ten o'clock, while the mass was on, my husband came back and said that he came to collect keys from me that I locked the house because I thought he took his own keys. So I came out of the church, opened my bag and gave him the keys. As he was going, I asked him where he was going and he said he was going back to hold the meeting with Ifeanyi, and I looked as he walked towards the car park

until I saw him and Ifeanyi drive off.

While the service was still on, the catchiest announced that home of Remicon was on fire that anybody that knows the place should rush home.

On getting to my house, I saw a crowd of people, police, the firemen, but they restrained me from having access to the building even when I explained that that was my home.

Being sure

While I stood waiting for the police to allow me in, I saw Ifeanyi driving towards the house, and thought he was with my husband since they left together.

But when he pulled up, my husband was not there. So I asked him where my husband he left with was.

When I insisted even though he acted like he didn't understand me that he must tell me where my husband I saw him leave with was, he said that he only came in the morning to see my husband that he doesn't know anything more about him and came around because he heard their home was on fire.

I was already confused then, so I left Ifeanyi and turned to the policemen insisting they allow me have access to the burnt home and know what became of my husband since his car was parked in the compound.

One of the policemen then asked me to wait a little and they will allow me see my husband. When he took me to his superior, he was the one that informed me since I insisted on seeing him, that he was dead. He died in the fire.

They still did not allow me to see his body, but directed me to call relatives and family members

While I tried I couldn't call anyone as I kept scrolling through my phone not knowing what I was doing. But I finally got myself together and called one of his uncles who came and assisted in taking the charred remain away.

But before that, people gathered and covered by eyes so I will not see the burnt corpse. It was when we went for his burial that I saw the corpse while he was lying in state.

Coping alone

So far, I am doing my best to take care of the family alone. We are only praying to God to help us. My husband is dead and I am praying that God will be a father to us because up till now I tell you, I don't know where to start from because my husband was always helping in everything. He will do something even when you do not ask for it even in his larger family without asking for support.

Yes, my husband is dead, but his death also means that a lot of people died with him, because many people depended on his for livelihood and sustenance.

Abuja Metro, also spoke with the eldest child of the deceased, an engineering graduate of the Madonna University who is on his one year National Youth Service in Edo State.

Chinonso admitted that his dad told him about a business meeting he was to attend in Lagos to resolve the N42m debt incurred from goods he paid for that were never supplied by Jay Steel Tech Limited.

Late that day he told me the meeting was to hold, I called to inquire how they resolved the matter, and he said he didn't see the partners, therefore the meeting was cancelled. So on the fateful day, I called back to find out how the whole thing went and got the breaking news that my dad was dead.

he described Ifeanyi, the major suspect as a very cunning and dubious person. I know him to be questionable, but I never knew he could go to the extent of killing my father.

I talked to my dad about the traits I saw in Ifeanyi, but he would not listen, it rather created a rift between him and myself that led to my posting to Edo for my NYSC, because he didn't want me to serve in Abuja, so I would not create problem between him and his business partner.

Like I said, I was expecting the meeting to hold that Sunday, so I told him I will call him in the night to know about the outcome. But when I came back from church, I became very restless and feeling unease, but didn't know why. So I called my younger brother to ask how he was faring in school. But he told me that mum had called and asked him to come home immediately.

When I heard that, I then remembered the last time my mum told me about a friend of hers that died and how they called the son in Abuja to start coming home without explaining why. So my mind raced straight to my dad.

But instead of calling my mum, I called my dad. I called all his four lines and none rang.

At that point I started getting worried, and called my mum, but she didn't respond. After several calls she didn't pick, I had to call my uncle in Kaduna, who just said he would call me back.

Because he said he was on the way, I suspected he was on his way to Abuja and that means something should be wrong, especially with my father, but I never guessed it was death.

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