

Gunmen kill husband of crippled gold medalist in Abia

Wife of victim's uncle, children fingered for the gruesome slaying

FROM CHUKS ONUOHA,
UMUAHIA.

Night fell at noon on Wednesday for three-time national sports festival gold medalist and power-lifting champion, Mrs Okwuchi Chinedu Nwokonnaya, when her husband was gruesomely murdered by gunmen in her presence in their home in Umuahia, the Abia State capital.

For hapless Nwokonnaya, who lost both legs in infancy to polio, April 29, 2015, the fateful day her loving husband was killed would remain a dark day that she would curse for life just like Job did when unmitigated calamities befell him.

The unique couple who were married for eight years met in 2003 but wedded in 2008. In every sense, theirs was a marriage made in heaven considering how the union came to be and how they carried on. This explains why Okwuchi is inconsolable and has been wailing, calling on God to unmask the killers of her husband, though she suspects some people because of an existing tussle over land.

Fighting hard to hold back tears, Okwuchi narrated to Sunday Sun how her husband was shot and killed in her presence by the gunmen suspected to be assassins as nothing was stolen from the house.

Her words: "We were in the house and our generator was on. At exactly 2.47 am, someone flashed a torch into our sitting room. My husband and I were lying down in the parlour. By then, they had broken and entered our flat through the back door. I tapped my husband who was fast asleep and he woke up. Still sleepy, he shouted at the intruders, 'who are you?' As he parted the curtain to see who had invaded our home at that time of the night, one of them instantly shot him at very close range. I don't know how many they were, but my husband started struggling with them. They kept shooting at him, from his heart region down to his stomach. As they were fighting, the person was busy shooting at him. I was gripped with fear and shivering where I was lying. While they were struggling,

I wanted to crawl to see who he was fighting with but he seemed to sense what I wanted to do, so he shouted, 'Mummy, please don't come.' They shot him six times, before he was overpowered and fell down on the floor and died. It was the police that later said that the gun used to kill him was an AK47 rifle. My husband died without saying a word to me." Okwuchi revealed that on Monday, two days before the murder of her husband, Chinedu, she had a premonition, but could not clearly define what she felt. Against the background of her uneasy feelings, she called him and sought to know if he was indebted to anybody.

She told Sunday Sun: "I don't know what came over me, but I had this premonition on Monday that evil was lurking around the corner, so I called and asked him if he owed money to anybody; he replied that he did not owe money to anybody. Even on Tuesday, I had a dream and woke up. In that dream, we were washing a car and then suddenly his legs began to buckle. I immediately took my phone and called him to tell him about it. Incidentally, at the time I was calling he was washing a car. He reassured me that nobody would kill him because he did not kill anybody; he said that he could not die like that because his God is not dead. My husband was just 38 years old - he was born in February 1977. He was the first son but the second child of the family."

Distraught Okwuchi is at pains to understand why anybody could have harboured strong ill-feelings against her husband as to warrant killing him so gruesomely. Pouring out her grief as she eulogized him and recalled the beautiful time they had together as a couple before the merchants of death visited them, she said: "Even if they had no other reason to spare his life, at least they could have looked at my condition and kept him alive for me. He was a kind man, kind to a fault; he was the kind of person other disabled women on a daily basis pray to God to give them husbands like mine. He was the best; an usher at Christian Pentecostal Ministry. He was always encouraging disabled people. He did



Nwokonnaya

all the house chores in the house. Since I married him, I have never washed clothes; it was him that always washed my clothes.

"I recall that when we got a new accommodation, he went to the place and arranged everything. When he got back around 7 pm, I asked him what he would want to eat, whether garri, Indomie or tea and he said he wanted to eat boiled yam. I was surprised by that because he did not usually like yam. So I asked why he wanted yam, and he said he just felt like eating it. I went into the kitchen to prepare. I sliced it into small pieces and at no time the yam boiled and was ready and I brought the food to him. Upon seeing the food, he screamed with joy and prayed, saying, 'God I thank you for giving me this wonderful wife.' He always told me jokes and made me laugh. We always chatted and did a lot of things together.

"Each time I finished cooking, I would call him and he would come to

the kitchen and take the food to the parlour for us to eat. And after eating, we would not come out again. We would bath and retire to our room and from there sleep till the following morning. He was my legs and my hands. He spent a lot of time listening to Christian messages and watching videos of men of God preaching. He loved the videos of Reverend Uma Ukpai very much. On the particular night that he was killed, he was watching a Christian message till he slept off. I then put off the video player and slept too. At exactly 2.50am I heard that noise in the parlour. That was how I saw my husband alive for the last time. There was no talk, nothing, just the question he asked the intruders, 'who are you' and then gunshots. My husband was not involved in party politics.

"God will punish those who killed my husband, His blood will speak and haunt them for life because he was a nice guy. He didn't drink, smoke or

go out without me. He was always with me. If he had a problem outside, he would come back and tell me, I can swear for him on anything. If what happened to my husband is acceptable in the eyes of God, then it is acceptable to me. But I am convinced that it is not good in the eyes of God, because He knows that my husband served him faithfully. He was an usher in church. If you see him doing his work as an usher, you will bow (i.e, commend him greatly). He was a man of peace, a man of distinction, who never liked anything that was not straightforward. He never ate outside but simply loved the bible and reading newspapers, which was his hobby.

"I don't know why anybody could hate him so much; if you wanted to give the definition, my husband represented the perfect description. He was a brother, a caring human being. Each time he came home and didn't like the look on my face, he would ask, 'Mummy, how are you, why is your face like this?' After his death, I told somebody to pour away the last soup he cooked for me. I could not eat again. Very delicious soup he cooked for me, because he came home and I said I could not cook. He just went into the kitchen and cooked very delicious soup for me. After our wedding, he did not allow anybody to come and disturb us. In fact on the day of the wedding, he carried me on his back. Go and watch the video of our wedding, it was the talk of the town." At this point in the course of the interview, the dam holding back her tears broke and she wept bitterly. It took almost 10 minutes for the throng of women who came to sympathise and keep her company to calm her down before she could resume talking with Sunday Sun.

When she was able to regain composure, she said: "I thank God who has given me a heart to endure this pain and be able to talk about the agony I have passed through since the death of my husband. Since God allowed it to happen, no problem; I know he would give me strength on the day of his burial to bury him like nobody has ever been buried before or would ever be buried after him.

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