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Fake DSS officer murders lover in hotel

— 17th April 2016

From PAUL OSUYI, Asaba

DETECTIVES from the homicide department of the Delta State Police Command are now investigating the gruesome murder of a 27-year old graduate, Miss Ifeanyi Utu, who was allegedly killed by her lover, one Valentine Ala, who is now on the run.

The suspect allegedly lured his lover from her family house in Asaba, Delta State, to far away Minna, the Niger State capital, where he allegedly murdered her in a hotel room.

Although, a case of ritual killing was suspected on account of the mutilation of one of the eyes, autopsy reports, however, indicated that no part of the body was removed.

The incident took place on January 28 but the family did not get to know until February 6, when the alleged murderer confessed through a text message that he killed her.

Ifeanyi was buried last month, the tears of her mother, Mrs. Patience Utu, have not ceased to flow, as she has been finding the loss of the last of her four children, unbearable. In great grief, she pleads with security operatives to smoke out Valentine from his hiding place.

Late Ifeanyi, a fresh graduate of Chemistry from Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, Edo State, was said to have met Valentine in July last year and a romantic relationship blossomed between them. But it was relationship built on lies, and it appeared Ify, as she was fondly called by her siblings, was too naive to read between the lines until the unexpected happened.

Sunday Sun learnt that her family members had warned her to quit the relationship because of Valentine's suspicious character but he succeeded in bamboozling and regaling her with tales of his undying love for her.

He was said to have told Ify that he was a gallant officer of the Department of State Service (DSS), who had burst several criminal syndicates particularly those engaged in kidnapping in Delta State. To convince his unsuspecting lover, Valentine acted a scene where he called while pretending to be on the trail of kidnappers who abducted a woman in Warri.

Although, Ifeanyi's family demonstrated cold feet towards him, he never relented as he continued to plot how to elope with the girl, to carry out his evil intention.

His first failed plot, was when he wanted to take her to Port Harcourt where he claimed that his father had secured a plum job for him in an oil company on the ground that he was simply fed up with the security job.

But the family resisted, and he later left Asaba in November last year and never came back till January, this year. While he was away, according to Ifeanyi's elder sister, Awele, he was always in contact with the deceased, apparently to keep the flames of love burning while he perfected his plot.

Continuing the tale Awele told *Sunday Sun*: "On January 11, Valentine called me and said he was coming to our house. We know him; he is not a stranger to us because he resided at the back of our street.

"He said that he had been trying to reach my sister on the phone, but her number was not connecting. I told him that I had gone to work and suggested that he should try and call my mum's number.

"When I came back that night, my family told me that my sister had gone to Ekpoma. I told them that Valentine had told me that both of them would be leaving for Ekpoma that morning. I continued to talk on the phone with my sister. Two days after, she called and said she needed money and recharge cards. We sent her money, and my mother also sent her a recharge card."

On January 26, Ifeanyi put a call through to her family, but which was not clear as she told her family that the network was poor where she was at the time, and promised to call again when the network improved, and implored her relatives not to panic, assuring them that everything was in order.

That was the last time her family heard from her as several calls to her cellphone failed to connect. This naturally made the family members agitated, and they began contacting her friends at Ekpoma to assist in locating her whereabouts.

Hear Awele: "I checked her contact notebook, and also checked my mummy's phone because whenever the battery of Ifeanyi's phone ran out, she usually inserted her SIM card in my mummy's phone and the handset would automatically copy some of the contacts into its memory. So when I checked my mummy's phone, I saw the number of Osazu, her school son."

"I called him and he told me that he was angry with Ifeanyi because she came to Ekpoma without bothering to contact him which was very unusual. Osazu now volunteered to go to her former hostel and ask her friends about her. Meanwhile, Valentine kept calling me asking about Ifeanyi, I told him that her number had not been going through. After two days, he called that he was worried about her whereabouts. He said he was going to Ekpoma and I told him that he should go to Ivie, my sister's friend who works at a laboratory. I gave him the address of the laboratory.

"But he said he went to the laboratory, and learnt that there was nobody known by that name working at the place. So I gave him Osazu's contact. Later, he called and said that he and Osazu had been moving round Ekpoma in search of Ifeanyi. He later called that he was going to his village, saying that he had searched everywhere without seeing her.

"On a hunch, I decided to call Osazu to confirm that Valentine was in Ekpoma in search of Ifeanyi, and he said nobody came. Instantly I called Valentine and told him what Osazu said; he denied ever seeing Osazu but claimed that he spoke with him on the phone.

"I told him that he was contradicting himself; he got angry and ended the call. After some days, he sent a text that he was angry because of the argument, and said that there was no basis for such argument. Then he said he would be going offshore and that his number would be switched off.

"He had forgotten that he once sent all his contact to me which I forwarded to my uncle who warned him to leave Ifeanyi alone because he was not a straight forward person. I asked my uncle to send the contacts back to me, which he did.

"I called the GLO line because he had also told me that whenever he was going offshore, only through his GLO line that he could be reached. When I called him the first time, he picked but refused to speak. On the second trial, he picked and I requested to speak with him, he responded that it was wrong number."

However, Awele said it was the same Valentine, who sent a text message on February 6 and confessed that he killed Ifeanyi. According to her, when she woke about 4am, her phone was blinking, indicating that there were unread messages.

Awele narrated the shocking tale this way: "The second message was from Valentine where he narrated how he killed my sister, where they went to. He told my sister to follow him to Minna where he was processing his M.Sc degree. When they got there, he did not know what happened but all he could remember was that he was the one that murdered my sister. That he had tried taking pills to terminate his own life without success.

"I showed the message to my brother, who broke down in tears after reading it. I forwarded the message to a friend. At dawn, I hurried to the police headquarters and they asked me to go to the Division.

"Before leaving for Division, the officer in charge of operations radioed the control room and requested for the direct phone number of the Minna control room, which was given to him. In my presence, he called Minna control room and they confirmed a case of murder, which they were investigating. That was how we got to know. Two days after, my uncle went to Minna, where he was shown a picture of Ifeanyi. He was taken to the hotel where Ifeanyi and Valentine lodged."

Awele said the family had already petitioned the Delta State Commissioner of Police over the incident, adding that the homicide department of the command in Asaba was handling the investigation.

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