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Landlord dies of heart attack during 7- hour ordeal with robbers

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•We didn't intend to kill him –Suspect

By Christopher Oji

For seven hours,armed robbers recently laid a seige to the apartment of a couple in Ikorodu area of Lagos recently.

The landlord who is simply called John, was ordered to lie face down for the entire period. At the end of the ordeal,and as the hoodlums were about to leave,they found the victim dead,possibly of cardiac arrest.

The suspect, who led the gang, Akin Ayotunde,recalled what happened in the seven-hour siege.

Ayotunde, who was paraded, yesterday by the Commissioner of Police, Mr Fatai Owoseni, said," on the fateful day, about two weeks now. Ahmed brought information that we would get good money and other valuables from a family. I don't know the family's name. We were five who went there.

"We were armed with cutlasses,daggers and iron rods. When we arrived in the house,we scaled through the fence. As we jumped inside the compound,the owner came out and challenged us,but when he saw that we were armed and many,he surrendered himself to us. I told him to cooperate, as we won't hurt him. We marched him to his sitting room, where we met his wife and children watching home video. The family did not wait for instruction from us as they lay face down.

"We took the children to one of the rooms where we locked them up while we marched the wife to her room and collected some jewellery,three phones and some personal effects. When we got to the parlour where the man was lying,he was snoring abnormally I was wondering what was wrong with a man whose house was under attack and he would be sleeping and snoring.

"I searched his pockets, and I collected N20,000. I don't know why he should be having that kind of money in his pocket. Well, we collected the wife's ATM card which one of us used to collect about N60,000 in her account. We came inside the house at about 9 pm, and thought that if we left at about 10pm we may run into the police or vigilance group. We stayed back. We opened the refrigerator, collected some fruits. We ate to our fill.

"The unexpected happened at about 4am as we were about leaving. We packed some items like Plasma television, Laptops, shoes and many other things. We needed the key to his Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). We started waking him up, but the man did not respond.. I suspected danger. I checked his pulse, I did not need a doctor to tell me that the man has died of hypertension.

"I called him a coward,because,we did not harass the family. Why did the man die?Well,we saw the key to the vehicle and we packed the loot and drove off around 4.20am before the wife could discover and raise the alarm.

"I think it was the man's blood that found me out. I took the car to a dealer,Enyojo. He wanted to sell the car and the buyer knew the owner. They called the police. They set me up. I was told to come for the money at Ojota. When I got there,I was arrested.

"I have begged God for forgiveness. God knows that we did not intend to kill the man.I know he will forgive me, because I am an orphan. I lost my parents at the age of two. I am an Igbo man, but my grandmother, a Yoruba, brought me up. That is why I bear Yoruba name." he said.

Owoseni said the suspect was helping the police on how to arrest the rest of the gang.

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