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Buried on wedding day

— 22nd October 2016



The late Victoria

Anguish as bride-to-be, mother were interred on the day she was supposed to be married

FROM PAUL ORUDE, BAUCHI

The death of Victoria Hallan, an indigene of Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State in an auto accident on Wednesday October 12, 2016, just four days to her wedding has turned the mood of her family and friends from rejoicing and singing to deep mourning and sober reflection on the uncertainty of life.

The sadness that enveloped the atmosphere following the news of Victoria's death swings from anguish to a state of despair as it was learnt that she died along with her beloved mother in the ill-fated bus that was conveying them from Jalingo in Taraba State to Bauchi to put finishing touches to her wedding preparations.

Victoria, a National Diploma graduate in Science Laboratory Technology from the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, according to her friends who spoke fondly of her, was a beautiful person inside and outside.

She had a pointed nose, a big charming smile, elegance, carriage, and captivating eyes, they told Saturday Sun. She graduated in 2015 after which she and her fiancé, Aminchi David, 34, agreed to tie the nuptial knots. They fixed Saturday October 15, 2016 for their wedding in Bauchi. Before that, Victoria's send forth was slated for Sunday October 9 at Sabon Gari in Jalingo. "I can't believe that my jewel is gone," Aminchi decked in his blue wedding suit with his best man Armstrong decked in suit with same colour and suit, told Saturday Sun after Victoria's funeral, as he fought back tears.

"She was a paragon of beauty. I can't believe she is dead. She was so kind and organised. It is so painful," Aminchi counted his loss.

Friends recalled that the late Victoria, 24 and her mother, Naomi, 50 cut a picture of happiness during the send forth. As other family members and friends shared in their happiness, there was no premonition that mother and daughter were destined to die same day and place in one of the most painful deaths one can imagine.

"She was enjoying one of the happiest days of her life," one of her blossom friends told our correspondent of Victoria's disposition during the send forth. Sadly, it was to be Victoria's last happy moment in life as death came calling after the ceremony.

"It is painful," the friend broke down and cried profusely. "She looked ravishing in her yellow colour lace with blue headgear to match. Victoria was gap-toothed and when she smiled it was so beautiful," said her childhood friend who has not stopped crying.

"Victoria's chief bridesmaid Joan Joshua fell ill when the news reached her that her best friend had died in a motor accident," Armstrong said. After four years of courtship, the intending couple agreed for the wedding to take place at COCIN church in Tudun Maizamani on Bayara road in Bauchi metropolis.

Send forth ceremonies are significant part of the marriage process in northern Nigeria, particularly among Christians. The event is usually brief. While some fix it in the evening, others prefer to have it done at night. Victoria's own was done after church service in the afternoon. Prayers and gifts were showered on her. Pieces of advice on how to build her matrimonial home and enjoy the union came handy from older family members and friends.

Victoria's send forth was an opportunity for her childhood friends to get together to rejoice before she would travel to Bauchi to be joined in matrimony with her fiancé in church.

Her father ASP Hallan Bawah and Naomi, his wife of 29 years, were there to support their daughter. Her elder brother and firstborn who worked in Jigawa State was always there to support while Rejoice, her immediate younger sister and a split image of Victoria was in Bauchi putting finishing touches to preparations. While Rejoice stayed back in Bauchi to help coordinate the wedding plans, Victoria's chief bridesmaid Joan travelled with the bride to Jalingo. Joan and others who attended from Bauchi left Monday morning while Victoria, her mother and Blessing, Rejoice's friend planned to leave Jalingo on Wednesday. That fateful morning of October 13, Victoria and her mother departed Taraba for Bauchi for the wedding on Saturday. Those coming from far had embarked on the journey to Bauchi for the wedding. Hallan said after the send forth, he watched as his wife and daughter left the house in Sabon Gari Jalingo on their way to Bauchi. He said: "I was with them till they left. They boarded a commercial bus around 3:00 that afternoon. After some hours I was expecting that they have reached Bauchi. I called my wife but the line was not going. Later I called my daughter's number and a Federal Road Safety official picked and introduced himself. When I inquired why my wife or daughter could not pick the calls he told me that they were involved in a fatal accident.

He told me that two women and a man died on the spot. He told me the place and I told him I was coming" Hallan said he left Jalingo by 4pm and when he got to the scene he was told that the victims had been admitted at the Cottage Hospital in Bambam, Gombe State. He learnt that the accident was as a result of a burst tyre.

"When I got there I met my wife she was already dead," he recalled. He struggled to stop himself from breaking down, he was anxious to see

his daughter and prayed nothing bad happened to her.

The grieving Hallan said: "When I saw her, she was unconscious. Her hand was broken. There was no treatment being carried out on her. I asked the staff of the hospital why they abandoned my daughter like that and their reply was if they treat her they were not sure whether the money would be paid. This broke my heart. How can someone's life be so cheap. I was crying to know that my daughter could have been saved and yet they refused to save her life because of money"

He said that the officials of the NURTW went to get ambulance that would rush my daughter to the Federal Medical Centre in Gombe for proper medical attention but before they could return his daughter had given up the ghost.

"Another girl who was a friend of my second daughter, Rejoice also died in the accident. Her name was Blessing. She was accompanying my daughter and wife and so they travelled together. Blessing also died on the spot."

David, the groom to be was feeling on top of the world on that Wednesday morning, when he received a phone call from Victoria. "I had gone to Kafin Madaki around 6am and was returning to Bauchi when I received her call at past 8am that they had left Jalingo.

"She asked me where I was and I told her I was in Kafin Madaki in Ganjuwa and she was surprised and asked me what took me there but I laughed and I told her I went to see my aunt and she replied that she was on her way. I was expecting her call around 2pm. I tried her number but it was switched off.

"I became worried and told a friend Bami that her phone was switched off and it was unusual. By 3:30pm, her younger sister Rejoice called me and informed me that she heard that Victoria and their mother were involved in an accident. That her friend Blessing was also with them "I then called their father who told me that he heard and that he was already on his way to the place that the accident happened. It was Bambam in Gombe State. I called my sister who lived there with her husband. She later confirmed that my Victoria and her mother and Blessing had indeed died"

David said he doesn't know how to live with the loss of Victoria.

"She was everything to me. She was beautiful, kind, God-fearing. Her death is a great loss to my life. When my father in law told me what happened on phone, I said I am finished. But I give God the glory. In life you plan but God knows everything. I am still seeing everything as if it is a joke. That Vicky my love will be with me. That is why I am wearing my blue wedding suit. Blue is Victoria's favourite colour. She chose blue as our colour and I am honouring her today by wearing it. I try not to be sad but it is going to be alright"

The funeral of Victoria and her mother on Saturday October 15, 2016 at the Christian Cemetery in Kagadam, Bauchi attracted a large crowd of Sympathisers. As the bodies were lowered into mother earth, the preacher urged everyone present to live a life of service to God and humanity.

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