

Horror in Anambra

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...Decomposing body of commercial motorcyclist found in cassava farm

From Obinna Odogwu, Ekwulobia

Some farmers in Ifite-Isuaniocha village, Isuaniocha, Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State, visited their farmland in the early hours of Wednesday, November 2, only to behold the horrible sight of a decomposing human body dumped there.

The fear of the dead body, coupled with the suffocating stench from the corpse, drove them from the farms. With their wailing and lamentation on the Okpuno-Isuaniocha-Achalla major road, a crowd soon gathered to ascertain the identity of the dead body that had virtually decayed beyond recognition.

Eventually, it was discovered that the corpse was that of a commercial motorcycle operator who was said to have gone missing for over one week. The deceased, whose identity was given by his relatives as Mr. Onyemaechi Ugado, hailed from Umuogudu, Ndaguluabonyi in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

According to his relatives and colleagues who spoke to Daily Sun, the deceased lived in Umuife village, Urum, in the same local government area. He had gone to work that morning without a premonition of the doom that awaited him. They disclosed that he had, as usual, kissed his beautiful wife and his only child goodbye, hoping to return at the close of work. But he never did.

His wife, waiting for his return, grew more perturbed and impatient as time ticked by and, eventually, raised the alarm that her husband was missing. Their relatives mobilised a search party and set out to look for him.

The deceased's in-law, Mr. Linus Onwe, told Daily Sun that he led a team that visited various native doctors and pastors for enquiries on his whereabouts and how best to bring him home; their efforts were fruitless, he said.

His story: "Members of his club came to me and told me that Onyemaechi had gone missing. Immediately, I joined the search party. The wife was looking for him; I myself was also searching for him. Even, as at the day his corpse was found, we were still looking for him. I visited a native doctor to inquire from the gods. They told me that he was lying face down. They said I should bring his wife but if she refused, I should come alone.

"But I did not relent. Even my wife also joined the search party. She visited police stations, the area command, Criminal Investigation Department and the State Anti-Robbery Squad. I called some policemen I know at the 'B' Division. They kept assuring us that they would see him.

"I was preparing to visit other spiritual centres to find out the situation of things before I received a call to come to Ifite-Isuaniocha, that a dead body was discovered in a farmland. Lo and behold, it was he. He has already decayed completely. In fact, we saw only his skeleton. We were able to identify him using his clothes and his Task Force bangle belonging to the commercial motorcycle transport union.

"We were looking for him for over one week. He has only one child and he was the only son of his parents. His killers took his motorcycle."

He explained that the deceased had quarrelled with another okada rider, an Igalaman from Kogi State. He said that the man had pointed a supposed magic ring at Onyemaechi, vowing to deal with him, even after the police in Mgbakwu Division settled their quarrel on Friday. The deceased went missing on Monday.

"That day, the Igala boy brought out a ring from his pocket and said he would deal with Onyemaechi. They even went to the police over it but the police settled them.

"The guy still threatened to deal with him after the argument was settled by the police that Friday. I think the settlement took place at Mgbakwu Division. On Monday he went to work but never returned. He and the Igala man fought at Ifite-Isuaniocha Junction," Onwe said.

Daily Sun could not speak with the wife, as she had returned to her community in Ebonyi State.

In an account that corroborated Onwe's story, chairman of Winners Club, to which the deceased belonged, Mr. Ezaka Sunday, told this reporter that he had received a distress call from Onyemaechi before he was killed.

He said, "His wife came to my house in tears, lamenting that she had not seen her husband since he left for his okada business on Monday. So, on Tuesday we gathered at the house of Ebonyi residents' chairman to discuss how to look for Onyema. We consulted different native doctors to find out where he was, but they kept telling us that he was being held hostage somewhere. They told us that a certain Igalaman from Kogi State with whom he had some misunderstanding recently was holding him somewhere.

"We later consulted some pastors and they told us that he was alive where he was being held. But before then, a certain number had called me, telling us to come and take our brother at the UNIZIK Junction. We went by 1am in the company of some members of the anti-cult group that we met on the way. But when we got there, we did not see anybody.

"Since then, we didn't see him until when the news filtered in that a dead body was found in the farm. And that number they used in

calling us was no longer connecting and his own was also not connecting.

"That was how we found out that he had been killed. He had decayed completely. We only saw his skeleton. We were able to recognise him using his shirt and the Task Force bangle belonging to the commercial motorcycle transport union. We are now planning how to take him back to his community in Ebonyi State for interment.

"He called me on the telephone with his killers' phone number telling me that he was being held hostage somewhere. He said his hands were tied to his back. He told me that he was blindfolded and as such cannot tell where exactly they were holding him. Shortly after he said that, his abductors took the phone from him and that was the end."

Ezaka appealed to the Anambra State Government and the security agencies to unmask Onyemaechi's killers and punish them in accordance with the law.

The deceased's kinsman, Mr. Joseph Agu, from Iziogo community, Izzi Local Government Area, and another commercial motorcyclist, Mr. Onyebuchi Anatuba, recalled that a commercial tricycle operator whose name was simply given as Mohammed was killed about 10 days ago. The man, they said, was killed in an uncompleted building at the nearby Ezinifite village, Okpuno, in Awka South Local Government Area of the state. They pleaded with the security agencies to beef up security in the area to forestall a recurrence.

Police Public Relations Officer, Anambra State, Nkeiruka Nwode, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, confirmed the incident, saying the police had begun investigation to unmask the perpetrators of the crime and bring them to book