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Angry thief kills villager at dawn

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...For raising alarm over stolen chickens

From JOHN ADAMS, Minna

Twenty-six-year-old Ibrahim Gyagyah of Babako village in Wushishi Local Government Area of Niger State, woke up on July 14, 2017, oblivious that danger was lurking, as he set out to harvest some maize from his farm at the bank of a river not far away from the community.

A few metres to his farm, he saw a farmer also said to be a native of his community, moving briskly with two chickens inside a polythene bag, a situation that aroused his curiosity. He confronted the suspected thief later identified as Sunday Jamilu Abubakar, on the ownership of the chickens, but that turned out to be his worst mistake.

It was evident the man was angered over his probe, and he did not mince words in expressing his displeasure, as he told Ibrahim he was not in a position to interrogate him, more so, as his chickens were not missing. But Ibrahim insisted that there was the need to interrogate him, especially in view of daily complaints by members of the community of missing fowls.

Police sources said investigations revealed that tempers rose to a boiling point during which the suspected thief attacked Ibrahim with a machete, hitting him twice on the head, and killing him instantly. In an attempt to conceal the act, Sunday allegedly dragged the lifeless body of his victim to the nearby river and dumped him to be washed away.

After a quick glance around the scene and convinced there were no prying eyes, he abandoned the stolen chickens and took to his heels. Unknown to him, a farmer (names withheld) who heard the heated argument between them while working in his farm nearby, witnessed what had transpired and promptly alerted the police, leading to his arrest after a search party was organized by the deceased's family, when he did not return from his farm at dusk.

Our correspondent learnt that upon his arrest, it did not take long before he confessed to the crime, which he blamed on the devil, as he sang like a canary in police custody. "He saw me with chickens and started calling me a thief; I told him I did not steal his chicken but he shouted and told me he would deal with me. He grabbed a big stick and wanted to hit me before I hit him with my machete and as he fell down, blood gushed out from his head. He stood up and wanted to hit me with the stick again, I then hit him hard on the head; he fell down and died. I became afraid and I didn't know what to do; so, I dragged his body into the river for the water to wash him away so that nobody would know what happened; it was devil that pushed me," he reportedly told homicide detectives of the Niger State Police Command, Minna, the state capital.

Yakubu Gyagyah, a brother to the deceased tearfully narrated how Ibrahim set out of his home at dawn on that ill-fated Friday, on a journey to the great beyond. "Ibrahim left home that day and said he was going to the farm but the next thing we heard was that he had been killed and his body thrown into the river.

"Initially, we thought it was Fulani herdsmen, but it was later we were told that the police had arrested the suspect and it turned out to be Sunday, who everybody in the community knew is a criminal. This boy has been committing crime in the community; they will arrest him and the next thing, we will see him back in the village. Each time he was arrested and charged to court, he would just be given a fine and after a while, would go back to his crime; I think it was that anger that made my brother to confront him which led to his death. We as a family have resolved to follow the matter to its end, especially now that life is involved. If we had wanted to take the law into our hands, we would have killed him but we want the law to take its course," he said.

Bala Elkana, a Deputy Superintendent of Police and spokesman for the police in Niger, described Sunday as a serial offender, but lamented how he regained freedom whenever he was arrested and arraigned for the acts committed. "Our part as law enforcement agents is to arrest a suspect, as we have done now and charge the person to court; whatever happens after that is not police business. This current case involving him which is culpable homicide has already been charged to court; it is now left to the court to decide his fate," he emphasized.

Meanwhile, the accused person has been remanded in Minna prison by a magistrate court presided over by Hauwa Baba Yusuf, pending the completion of police investigation and continuation of hearing on September 27, 2017.