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HOME / LIFELINE / PATHETIC: AFTER 5 MISCARRIAGES, WOMAN LOSES ONLY CHILD TO ROBBERS



## PATHETIC: AFTER 5 MISCARRIAGES, WOMAN LOSES ONLY CHILD TO ROBBERS

— 21st October 2017

- Husband kicks, says wife used son for rituals

From LINUS OOTA, Lafia

**Mrs.** Judith Agu, 37, is Mada by tribe and hails from Andaha District of Akwanga Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. A 2004 graduate of Economics of the University of Jos, she is married to Thomas Agu, 39, a 2004 graduate of Economics of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. An Eggon by tribe, he hails from Gudi District of the same local government area in the state. The two met at the NYSC orientation camp in Oyo State during the mandatory one-year national

youth service and, there, started a relationship that snowballed into marriage in December 2006, following their completion of service. After 10 years of marriage, characterized by miscarriages and delay in childbearing, Judith, a private schoolteacher and businesswoman based in Abuja before she relocated to her husband's hometown, was, finally delivered of a baby boy, named Emmanuel, on September 20, 2016. But in a strange twist of fate, she lost the baby, last month, to some armed robbers allegedly operating on Akwanga/Kaduna Road.

### Losing baby Emmanuel to armed robbers

Judith who was driving along the road in her Toyota car on September 9, 2017, on her way to visit a friend ran into a group of armed robbers, at about 12 noon, who stopped her and ordered her out of the car. She obeyed. But as she did, they entered and zoomed off, with her baby at the back. All her desperate pleas to them to release the baby boy to her fell on deaf ears.

She sobbed, she cried, and, in desperation, threw her hands up in the air. She ran this way and that way. She cried for help but none came her way. There was nobody around to listen to her cry of agony or to do something about it. That was how Judith's world fell apart and thus began a nightmare she is yet to wake up from, even as you read this. More than a month after the incident the tears are still flowing down her cheeks and only God knows when it will stop.

### Marriage under threat from accusation of ritual murder

Getting her to talk about it, to recall what happened, seems like opening afresh the emotional wound she is nursing. "As you see me, I'm dead internally," she told *Saturday Sun*, in tears. Her pain stems from the fact that she did not only lose her baby, the joy of her life, the child God gave her to wipe away her tears after many years of waiting, but she is now being accused of knowing something about it, of being an accomplice in the evil deed. According to her, her husband and mother-in-law are accusing her of using the baby boy for ritual. "I am crying," she said, "because, despite the fact that a gang of wicked robbers took away my only child given to me by God to comfort me after all these years of waiting, my husband who works in Abuja as a sales representative in a pharmaceutical company, has joined his mother to accuse me of using the child for rituals. All my efforts to explain how it happened fell on deaf ear. My husband has asked me to either produce his son or risk losing the marriage." With this, she began to cry. "Right now, my husband has driven me out of his house after tagging me a *ritualist*", she continued her narration after gaining some measure of self-control from the crying session. "He said that it is not possible for robbers to snatch my car alongside the baby. He said my story is not genuine, but how can I use my only baby for rituals? What do I hope to gain from that kind of deal when my husband is taking good care of me?"

### The unending grief and husband's response

Again, she broke down. You could barely hear her voice as she said: "it is unfortunate this happened to me. I miss my son so much. I love him. It is sheer wickedness to rob me of my joy this way." Watching her, you too could not help it as tears began to well up in your own eyes. Then she looks away from you and looks into the sky as if she was expecting the next answer to her question to fall from there. She is all wrapped in grief. A grief that will never go away soon! "A one-year old boy, what would they have done with him?," she asked rhetorically. "Did they shoot him and dump his body in the bush? Did they use him for ritual as I am now being accused?" Then she returned to the question of what happened to the baby. "I wish him well wherever he is but God knows I did not use my son for rituals and only Him can vindicate me. I may have lost my marriage but God will determine my future," she said as she tried to console herself. If she was willing to speak, not so, Thomas, her husband. The woman is evil, he said, "and her story on the whereabouts of my son and car is unbelievable. She either produces my son or she calls the marriage a quit, thank you." With that, he cut off the conversation. As far as he was concerned, he was in no mood for any long talk over the matter.

### Remembering the past, fearing the future

Though the police is still investigating the case, Judith regrets that her husband is taking side with his mother who she said was in the habit of accusing her of damaging her womb with abortions during her university days before hooking her son in marriage. According to her, her mother-in-law also believes that it was the abortions, something she vehemently denies, that was responsible for the five miscarriages and her inability to conceive. At a point, she even started advising her son to take another wife. But as God would have it, divine justice came Judith's way when she eventually conceived and was delivered of baby Emmanuel. With the baby now gone is such a tragic circumstance, it is back to square one, in a hazy situation that only God knows the final outcome.

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