

# Murdered at dusk

...Widow narrates gruesome killing of husband

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By **Job Osazuwa**

**Like a scene in a horror movie, the daredevils appeared from nowhere and began to shoot at random into the air. Before anyone could say “Jack”, they accosted the unsuspecting man, dragged him out of his car and descended on him.**

Every passerby scampered for safety, residents hurriedly slammed their doors as others watched from afar imagining what was really amiss. For several minutes, the victim, Patrick Ehijiator Okpunu, who might have been trailed by the assailants, screamed for help, but succour became a scarce commodity at that point in time. They hacked him in different parts and, still not satisfied, they opened shot him in the chest. Convinced that he would die in a matter of minutes, they took his handset, wallet, car and zoomed off, leaving him in a pool of blood. The time was about 7.30pm on March 14, 2021, in the Sapele Road axis in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State.

But the battered man, writhing in excruciating pains, struggled to call out his wife's phone number to some persons who were courageous enough to come to the scene immediately the criminals left. And the Good Samaritans called Okpunu's wife, informing her that her husband had been attacked near Winners' Church in that part of the town.

Like the speed of light, she dashed to the scene. She said that she could not believe that the man on the floor was her husband that left home neatly dressed a few hours before.

What did they really want from him, his life, car, money or all together? This is the poser that the deceased's wife said she has been battling to answer since the demise of her beloved husband. Apparently, she cannot fathom what could have warranted her husband being abruptly cut down, preventing him from, at least, dropping a word for his dear wife and children.

The bereaved wife, Ota Blessing Okpunu, narrated to Daily Sun: "My husband left our home in Bypass area, Sapele Road, at about 3pm on that fateful day. He told me that he was going to quickly get some things done in town. Though he didn't tell me exactly where he was going, I suspected he was not going far from our area.

"I was shocked when I received a telephone call from someone (a young man) at about 8pm that I should start running to a particular spot near Winners' Chapel in Sapele Road that armed robbers had just attacked my husband.

"Immediately, I left the house, running down to the place he described. I was lucky to see a kind-hearted man who helped me with his car. Not quite long after, another person called me. This time around, it was a lady asking me to hurry up that my husband was in critical condition. I almost fainted when I saw my husband's condition.

"We got a tricycle to carry him to a nearby private hospital opposite Winners'. At that point, my husband was already getting weak. The doctors started treating him immediately but I think the damage was just too much.

"The cuts were just too deep all over his body. His chest, right eye and under the armpit were shot. There were also four different cuts on his head. They used a gun and other sharp objects like knives to kill him.

"I asked him what happened, especially who were the people that attacked him. I needed him to hear from him, but he had no strength to say anything. I saw him struggling to say something too but they were inaudible. Then at about 2am, on March 15, he gave up the ghost."

Mrs. Okpunu said that his car, Toyota Camry, with registration number BEN 270MK, handset, wallet and other vital documents that the criminals took away were still missing at the time the reporter spoke with

her.

She said: “We reported at the police station. The policemen came to interrogate me and also went to the scene of the incident but, till this moment, nothing has been heard about those who killed my husband.”

On how the two people who alerted her of her husband’s attack got her number, she explained: “I later traced the lady’s number who called me on that day, and I called her, pleading with her to tell me how she got my phone number. She said the attack happened close to her house and that it lasted for several minutes. She said that my husband was shouting saying, “They want to kill me; help me”.

“She said that there was electricity outage while the attack lasted. So, everybody was scared to come out from their houses or go near the scene. She said they came out when they heard a car speed off from the place and my husband was still screaming for help.

“Some people were already there but were only busy using their phone to video him without any form of rescue. She said my husband struggled to call out my number, which she dialed instantly.”

The bereaved widow, who hails from Uromi town in Edo State, said she has been feeling unsafe, especially as the police were yet to unravel those responsible for her husband’s death.

They had been married for 14 years and were blessed with three girls and a boy.

“It still appears strange and frightening to me. Who knows the next target? My children and I now live in fear of the unknown. His killers might know us but we don’t know them. It is unfortunate that this is the situation we have found ourselves in this country. Someone would be killed and not even a single arrest could be made one month after.

“My husband was a perfect gentleman who loved his family and was ready to sacrifice anything for us. He would not have offended anyone that could attract such a horrific killing. He could not hurt a fly. His colleagues can attest to this.

“He was a staff with Owan West Local Government Council, Sabongida-Ora. He worked with Edo State Local Government Commission as an HOD, Budget, Planning and Statistics. I am cocksure that he didn’t belong to any group that could harm him. He never complained to me that anyone was after his life.

“I have lost hope in Nigeria. Safety is everything in life and it can’t be guaranteed here any longer. My husband was everything to us. We don’t know where to start from or how to move on with life without him. This is too much for my children and I to bear,” she said.

The 49-year-old man, who hailed from Ekpoma in Edo State, was on April 9, amid tears and pain, laid to rest in his house in Ogheghe Community, Benin City.

Mrs. Okpunu said that the news was too heavy for them to break to the deceased's parents. She said, however, his parents have remained inconsolable since they received the sad news of their son's demise.