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His Hands and Feet Were Tied; Chemical Substance Poured into His Mouth...

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Late Rasak Adeleke Lukman

Who killed WAMCO Sales Manager in Benue?

Mowed down in his prime, the cruel killing on June 1 of the Benue State Area Sales Manager for West Africa Milk Company (WAMCO) PLC, Mr. Lukman Rasak, is still shrouded in mystery. But as his family and friends continue to ponder his death, finding it too difficult to come to terms with his killing, one question that keeps reverberating is: who could have done it? Olaolu Olusina reports

Though the late Benue State Area Sales Manager for West Africa Milk Company (WAMCO) PLC, a Lagos-based dairy foods company, Mr. Rasak Adeleke Lukman may have been buried, his family and friends are still finding it difficult to come to terms with his death.

Described as a hardworking and humble gentleman, who could not even hurt a fly, the gruesome murder of the 49-year-old man who rose to the top in his career through hard work and perseverance on June 1 at his Makurdi residence is still shrouded in mystery.

Late Lukman Rasak was until his death on Saturday, June 1, 2013, the Benue State Area Sales Manager for West Africa Milk Company (WAMCO) PLC, a Lagos-based dairy foods company. He was posted to the state in 2011 from Osogbo Regional Area Office of the Company. Late Lukman hailed from Iwo in Osun State. His parents are small-time farmers, which accounted for his humble beginning in life.

What makes his death more painful, according to his family and friends, is because he had struggled all the way through to get to the top, only to be mowed down at his prime by yet-to-be-identified assassins for reasons best known to them.

His story, which really elicits pity, is not only that of a man who rose from grass to grace, but also of one whose life was cut short when he and his were supposed to be reaping the fruits of his labour.

The late Lukman, who studied history at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, had bagged a Second Class Upper degree. After his one-year national service, he was said to have spiritedly sought to join the Nigerian Navy and the Air Force twice but was denied enlistment despite his adjudged excellence performance in the interviews, which aided his getting to the final stages. And because he could not get a reference letter from a senior officer in the Nigerian Army, he could be not enlisted. He was also said to have attempted to join the Nigeria Police but, again, fate also denied him of the opportunity because of lack of connection.

After feeling frustrated for being denied the profession he so much admired, the late Lukman came to Lagos in search of greener pastures in 2000. While he was roaming the street of Lagos from his Akute residence in Ogun State, one afternoon, he was said to have walked into the premises of WAMCO Office in Ogba, Lagos, asking for job placement.

His family, friends and colleagues said though he was a graduate, after persistent visits, he was offered the job of a casual labourer working with his West African Examination Council (WAEC) certificate. But determined to conquer poverty and not minding being a graduate, he was said to have worked diligently to the admiration of fellow casual workers then some of whom did not even know that he was a degree holder. His dedication to duty, during day and night duty shifts and public holidays, was said to have caught the attention of his supervisors and senior managers in the company.

After about two years as a casual labourer, the opportunity came for him to write the examination for the post of a Sales Representative in the company. Lukman passed the exams and the interview excellently and he had already registered and passed the Nigerian Institute of Marketing (NIMARK) examination during his days as a casual worker.

His appointment as a Sales Representatives in the South West States therefore did not come as a surprise and he consistently beat sales forecast and targets assigned to his area. Described as a workaholic, he impressed the management with increasing sales returns each time and become a star among his peers and was noted for diligently executing marketing tasks and brought innovations into the sales force of the company.

All these, according to sources, accounted for his speedy promotion to the post of Areas Sales Manager in a short period of time and he was posted to Benue State Area Office in 2011 to turn around the dwindling fortune of the company in the area, which he has skillfully improved significantly before he was killed.

Apparently unaware of his impending death, Lukman was said to have told his family and friends that he would be coming to Ibadan to meet them as he did every month. That was on May 30, two days before he was assassinated, but on Friday, he called to tell his family that he had cancelled his trip and would be coming home a week later because of urgent official assignment he had to do that weekend. This, he never lived to fulfill.

On the evening of Saturday, June 1, he was said to have told one of his neighbours that he wanted to “get something” outside and would soon be back. He was said to have driven out but never returned. His corpse, with hands and feet tied and chemical suspected to be acid poured into his mouth, was discovered in his room only on Monday, June 3 when the police were invited to break into his apartment in Makurdi when he could not be traced. The vehicle he drove out was also recovered in Abuja.

The late Lukman, who has been variously described as a gentleman, transparent and compassionate man, was loved by many and the questions on the lips of people who had contacts with him have been why and who killed a promising Lukman?

Though from Muslim background, the late Lukman converted to Christianity in the mid-80s and was a member of Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Owode, Apata, Ibadan. He was buried on Saturday, June 8 in his residence, Owode, Apata, Ibadan.

His parish pastor, Mr. Jesutoye, described the late Rasak, who left behind five children, siblings and aged parents, as a humble, quiet and unassuming gentleman, who could not hurt anyone.

His father, Pa Ishola Rasaki, in his 80s is yet to come to terms with the death of his first son, whom he described as the apple of his eyes. He has continued to ask why somebody or people would cause him heavy heartache in his old age.

The widow, Mrs. Hannah Lukman, it was learnt, has continued to be induced to sleep each night since the sad incident.

The family has commended the Nigeria Police for their efforts so far in apprehending the suspected hired killers and hoped that justice would be done speedily. It would be recalled that the Benue State Police Command recently parading the suspects at the Command headquarters in Makurdi.

The State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Adams Audu, while parading the suspects, explained that the deceased, a victim robbery, was discovered dead in his room in a house beside the Makurdi Modern Market while his Toyota Corolla car and other items in his compound were also stolen. He said in the course of investigations, his men tracked the stolen vehicle in a hotel in Abuja where negotiations for the sale of the stolen car was ongoing. According to the Commissioner of Police, the arrested suspects who included, Philip David, Owoicho Egwu, Ochai Obegh and Osuga Ezekiel, confessed to the killing of their victim after inflicting severe injuries on him, by tying his hands and legs and locking him in a room. He disclosed that some of the items recovered from the suspects alongside the 2010 model Toyota Corolla included one GSM handset with two SIM cards, one clipper, a printer, six different handsets, and one vehicle plate number, CE 253 AKD.

But Lukman's family is wondering why substance suspected to be acid would be poured into the mouth of a robbery victim, thus calling on the Inspector

General of Police, the judiciary and well-meaning Nigerians not to leave anything undone to ensure that the perpetrators of the heinous killing are brought to justice.

— **Additional report from George Okoh in Makurdi**

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