

Evil genius: Schoolboy, 18, abducts, kills landlord's daughter, 4

...In futile bid to extort money for WAEC exam fees



•Suspect

FROM GEORGE ONYEJIUWA AND NGOZI UWUJARE

The people of Amaisi Uvuru, a community in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area, Imo State are in deep shock and agony following the horrible death of four-year-old Adaeze Gloria Eze, who was hanged by 18-year-old Franklin Njoku, a tenant in the home of her father, Martin Eke, a building contractor.

Franklin, a native of Ohekelem, Ngor Okpala, Imo State, hanged the innocent child on a stunted palm tree in a nearby bush, in a futile attempt to extort N100,000 from the girl's parents to register for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. Franklin made the revelation in a confessional statement to the police after he was arrested by men of the State Criminal Investigation Department (Homicide Division) of the Imo State Police Command.

As *Sunday Sun* gathered from the Imo State Commissioner of Police, Mr Abdulmajid Ali and grief-stricken parents and relations of the deceased four-year-old, the

tragic chain of events that led to little Adaeze's death began in the evening of Saturday, April 5, 2014, when her parents could not find her at home. They searched for her within the neighbourhood to no avail. Promptly other neighbours joined the search for the little girl in all the nooks and crannies of the village in vain. Even more curious was the fact that Franklin joined in the search for the missing child.

Incidentally, Eke had received had received an anonymous letter a week before the disappearance of his late daughter. In the letter he was instructed to pay the sum of N100,000 with a warning that if he failed to comply, he should kiss the life of his daughter goodbye. Eke dismissed the letter, which was unsigned as a joke. On the fateful Saturday, Franklin made good the threat to kidnap the little girl. In a chat with *Sunday Sun*, he recounted how he abducted the girl.

He said: "On April 5, I went to the market and on my way I saw my landlord's daughter playing with her age mates. Immediately I called her to follow me. She was used to me. I took her into the bush

and used some clothing items to cover her face. I put a rope around her neck and then suspended her from the top of a short palm tree around noon. From time to time I went into the bush to check on her and see whether she was in good condition.

"When the parents started searching for her, I joined them. Then I told them about a native doctor in my village who can tell them the whereabouts of the child and reveal the identity of the person responsible for the girl's disappearance. The parents agreed and the father gave me N300 for transport to get the herbalist. I actually didn't have any herbalist in mind but I was looking for money to pay for my WASCE which is N100,000. When I got somewhere I wrote a list of fake items, which I said were required by the herbalist. I rented the house from the girl's parents two months ago and I was staying there until the incident happened."

But the bubble burst for Franklin when the girl's father noticed that the handwriting looked similar to the one in the anonymous letter. This discovery made Eke suspicious that his

tenant might be responsible for the disappearance of his four-year-old daughter. Promptly he invited the police to interrogate Franklin. He confessed and eventually took the police to the isolated bush where he hanged the four-year-old on a stunted palm tree. By this time, the girl was dead

as the rope used to suspend her had inched up the neck and choked her to death. The case was instantly transferred to the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police in-charge of the State CID, Owerri, Mr David Folawiyo, who then ordered the officer in-charge of Homicide Unit, Supol Innocent Obi and his team, who moved to recover the body of the dead girl.

Investigation by *Sunday Sun* revealed that Franklin was expelled from the hostel of the Evangel International Academy earlier in the year for allegedly pilfering the items of his roommates. This made him seek alternative accommodation at the residence of Eke, which happened to be within a walking distance to his school.

Reverend Innocent Nwannehiudo, Superintendent of Assemblies of God Church, owners of the school, confirmed to *Sunday Sun* in an interview that the authorities of the school had actually expelled him from the hostel but allowed him to sit for the senior school certificate examination.

Shocked at the alleged deed of his son, Franklin's father, Jude Njoku bluntly said that his son must bear the consequences of his action, stating that Franklin had caused him and the entire Njoku family too many problems. He disclosed that Franklin had earlier had an incestuous relationship with a female member of the extended family, which had cost him N120,000 to cleanse the land in keeping with the tradition of the community to prevent his entire family from being ex-communicated.

The distraught father of the little girl told *Sunday Sun*: "It is unbelievable that Franklin Njoku hanged my four-year-old daughter, Gloria. He is used to our little daughter and we didn't expect him to do what he did. Life is terrible."



•Ali, Imo State CP