

LIFELINE

BY JOB OSAZUWA

For the parents of six-year-old Boluwatife Davies, these are no happy times. The family is still in grief, mourning the loss of the little girl three months after she was despatched to her early grave by fire from a lit candle.

Her family members, especially her grandmother, Mrs. Omolola Ighomitedo, have remained inconsolable till date.

The grandmother's pain is particularly deep because she was the one that raised the deceased right from birth till the moment death came calling. Ironically, it was a candle - the symbol of light - that plunged her entire life into darkness with the death of the girl.

On June 19, 2014, Boluwatife's clothes were ignited by the flame from a burning candle, and she was consequently set ablaze. The fire inflicted severe injuries on her. She was moved from one hospital to another for medical care. Unfortunately, after five months of battling and enduring the untold pain, Boluwatife gave up the ghost on November 24, last year, at Gbagada General Hospital, Lagos.

On the day the evil fire struck, Boluwatife was too young and, perhaps, too scared to do anything to put out the fire. The little girl was only left screaming and calling the attention of her grandmother for help.

As soon as she heard Boluwatife's cries, Mrs. Ighomitedo dashed to the scene only to meet the little girl in pain, wreathing in agony in a strange fire. She said that she was too shocked that she temporarily lost her senses, wondering how the evil fire crept into the room.

She was, however, quick to recover from the shock and with the help of neighbours, the burning girl - an only child - was rescued. Her clothes were removed and the fire was put out. But the help came rather too late, as the fire had inflicted severe injuries on the poor girl.

According to the grieving family members, there were puzzles surrounding their daughter's death that appeared impossible for them to solve till date. They described the circumstances that led to Boluwatife's death as nothing but a mystery.

A member of the bereaved family, Ufoma, told our correspondent that the candle of death was mistakenly brought to Mrs. Ighomitedo's apartment by her own son - Michael. The candle was to be delivered to a neighbour but the bearer misunderstood the message, and Boluwatife paid with her life for the blunder.

In fact, it was learnt that candles were as good as forbidden in the elderly woman's home. Unfortunately, cruel fate succeeded in sneaking one into her home, and it abruptly cut short Boluwatife's dream to become an astrologer in future. The aspiration has since been buried at Yaba Cemetery, where the deceased, who was a shining nursery two pupil of Santos Group of Schools, was committed to mother earth, amid tears.

According to the family source, a neighbour had asked Michael - an uncle to Boluwatife - to help deliver two candles to someone in the neighbourhood, but Michael wrongly gave them to his mum, informing her that the candles were a gift from her neighbour.

The grandma prayed for the cheerful giver and immediately lit one of the candles in her room. It was just when she was about sending an appreciation message to her benefactor that the original owner of the candles came to retrieve her candles from the wrong address. Mrs. Ighomitedo apologised on behalf of her son. She went into her room, put out the already lit candle, retrieved the other candle that was

How mystery fire sent six-year-old girl to early grave

• Three months after, this wound hasn't healed, says family



The late Boluwatife



Late Boluwatife on hospital bed before her death

immediately she was born and raised her till the day she died. She can't forget in a hurry, I am sure of that."

Another factor, which the family said contributed to Boluwatife's death, was last year's medical workers' strike, which began at a point the little girl's health was gradually getting stable. The strike aided the girl's painful demise.

As she recalled the pain Boluwatife went through, Ufoma intermittently wiped the tears from her eyes. According to her, the little girl was academically gifted, bubbling and jovial. She added that she was a child to behold.

Said Ufoma: "The doctors' strike around August last year did not help matters. When they began their strike, we had to relocate her to a private hospital; that was after she was left unattended to for some days. It was a painful experience for all of us that were watching her, which tells the kind of pains she must have gone through before she passed on."

"Her school missed her because she always represented the school in competitions. She was a star and she always maintained the first position in her class. Whoever saw her would take a liking to her immediately."

Daily Sun learnt that her mother gave birth to the deceased at the age of 15. The labour almost took her mother's life. In order to save the mother's life, Boluwatife was delivered through a caesarean section. She said Boluwatife's father had since disappeared into thin air, leaving the elderly woman to bear the burden of raising the child alone.

still intact and gave them to the owner. But the neighbour only took the unlit candle and left the other for the elderly woman. She thanked the neighbour and again tendered an apology for her son's mistake. The woman then asked one of her children to light the candle again and return it to its original position.

After some minutes, Boluwatife left where other members of the family were relaxing outside and went into the room. After some few minutes, the girl ran out of the room, claiming she had seen a cat. The family members went into the room and threw the cat out. The girl went back inside the room, and after some minutes, she screamed, forcing the old woman to rush inside the room. By the time she got there, Boluwatife was on fire.

Time heals all wounds, so goes the saying. It's been three months since Boluwatife's demise, but Mrs. Ighomitedo said the wound her granddaughter's death left in her soul had remained as fresh as ever. Daily Sun gathered that the elderly woman always sorrowfully relates the story to anyone that comes her way.

The ugly incident, which happened at Abule Alfa Quarters, Agric Bus Stop, Ikorodu, Lagos, has forced Mrs. Ighomitedo to relocate from that area to another part of the city.

Ufoma recalled the ugly incident: "When the incident happened, we immediately rushed her to a nearby private hospital, and having spent about four days there, we took her to the Gbagada General Hospital for better care. She was actually taken to so many hospitals before she eventually died."

"Everything still looks like a mystery to all of us in the family. We don't use candles at home and a candle was mistakenly brought in, and it led to death. It is still surprising and shocking. It is even more shocking because no one knows how the fire from the candle could have got her burnt so suddenly. So, everything is a mystery. And for her grandmother, I don't think she can forget the incident for a long time. She cries almost everyday. Boluwatife's mother did not feel it the way grandma is feeling the girl's death. Grandma took the baby from her mother