

# Sad end of 7-yr-old girl raped and set ablaze

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that even if she survived, she could not live a normal life again because of the severe impact of the burns.

The Head of Department of Family Medicine at the hospital, Dr. Faren Aboyar told *Sunday Sun* that the burns affected more than half of her body. At the time of the incident, when her body caught fire, Eugenia

was wearing a dress. Apparently in the bid to pull off the dress, her skin was peeled off too.

He described the case as very complicated and blamed the incident on broken home. He opined that if both parents had been together with the child, she would surely not have gone through such a traumatic experience. He said that parents should put the welfare of their children first

before they take any decision about their marriage.

While people who knew her are consoled by the fact that Eugenia has gone to rest where there is no pain or evil maneuvering, they are however disturbed that the person who did this devilish thing to an innocent girl is walking free and might never be discovered by the law.

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Culprit still unknown Human Rights Commission wades in



Eugenia on hospital bed



Eugenia's burnt back

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**A seven-year-old girl, Eugenia Eugene, who was raped by a yet-to-be-known culprit, has died at the Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) Hospital in Jos, the Plateau State capital.**

Little Eugenia gave up the ghost after 70 excruciating days of pain arising from the defilement and fire that burnt her entire back.

It is till unclear how she sustained the third degree burns on her back as there are two conflicting accounts on the blaze that ultimately led to her death.

Eugenia herself gave both versions of what transpired on the fateful day. The obvious contradictions in the tale left the medical team caring for her confused.

In the first account, she said that a man broke into the house where she lived with grandmother on Rukuba road in Jos when she was alone and tried to rape her, but she resisted, prompting the man to say that he would deal with her. He then set her ablaze. Though Eugenia could not give the name of the culprit, she was said to have affirmed that she could identify the man if she saw him again, given that she had seen him in the neighbourhood prior to the incident.

This account raised questions in the minds of healthcare workers at the hospital, who spoke with *Sunday Sun*. They wondered how a girl of seven could have resisted being raped by a man, who turned around to set her ablaze in anger. In the second account of the incident, Eugenia said that she set herself ablaze. The second version of her story was also doubted because the people who spoke with *Sunday Sun* reasoned that if she had set herself ablaze, the front parts of her body would have been affected not just the back. They surmised that the two versions could have been planted on her lips to shield the person that committed the heinous act.

However, what *Sunday Sun* further learnt in the course of investigation added a fresh twist to it in that Eu-

genia appeared to have been the victim of a game to arm-twist the father which went awry.

Nevertheless, healthcare workers confirmed that there was evidence that Eugenia was defiled as there were bruises on her genitals and the hymen was broken, indicating vaginal penetration.

When the matter was first reported at the 'C' Division of the Plateau State Police Command, policemen said that the incident occurred outside their jurisdiction. The hospital's Department of Social Welfare had wanted to take over the case in order to get to the root of the incident especially as it had to do with rape, but decided to put off the investigation until after her wound have healed, especially as the doctors said that she had a 50-50 chance of surviving. All the same the case was reported to the Human Rights Commission.

*Sunday Sun* gathered that Eugenia Eugene was a love child of a naval officer and a lady whose name was given as Akuse. Eugenia's maternal grandmother was a seller of local alcoholic beverage called burukutu at Rukuba road. When Eugenia's father discovered that Akuse was pregnant, he expressed interest in marrying her and then rented a flat for her at Apata area of Jos. While making arrangements for their wedding, he was said to have made discoveries about her lifestyle, which he found difficult to cope with and consequently jettisoned the idea of marrying her. When Akuse gave birth, he made efforts to take custody of the child, but was rebuffed by the parents of the lady. So he let Akuse to bring up the child while he provided financial support. Just like her mother, Akuse was said to have taken up the sales of burukutu and the lewd ways associated with it.

When she attained school age, she was enrolled in a private school as her father continued to pay her tuition fees and other related expenses. But Akuse wanted him to also provide for Eugenia's upkeep, which the father apparently turned down.

When the rape incident happened, he was said to have

been contacted in Warri, Delta State by a maternal relation of Eugenia. He immediately sent someone to check on the child only to discover that it was a ruse. The following day, he again got another message that the child actually got burnt and was admitted at Our Lady of Apostles hospital. Again, he sent someone to check for him. This time around, the story turned out to be true. This raised the suspicion that the severe burn injury was deliberately inflicted on the girl, probably to punish him. In view of the extensive burn injury, all the healthcare givers, social workers and the police were more interested in the hapless girl healing first before intense investigation as to how she got badly burnt. Despite the efforts by the hospital to cure the burn injuries, Eugenia's health started deteriorating. Her ribs were already showing through the skin because she had emaciated so much and the wound was also spreading towards her tummy from the back. There was the indication that she might have been infected on the sick bed. It was gathered through some of the patients and their handlers that it was when her health began to worsen that her mother who had been staying with her became very disturbed and rarely left her bedside. Before, she used to abandon the poor girl and go out to have fun.

On March 31, the day she turned seven, Eugenia insisted that her birthday be celebrated with a party at the hospital, and appealed to one of the nurses to buy her a birthday cake, which the lady bought. Despite being quite sick, she hummed a song as she cut the cake and swayed to the sound of the song playing from a mobile phone. Little did they know that Eugenia was gradually saying goodbye to the world. On the May 9, which was a Saturday, Eugenia did not wake from her sleep.

Though many were disturbed that such a brave and brilliant girl could die even before she blossomed, doctors at the hospital have maintained

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