

# Strange Accident: Car somersaults as woman suddenly appears on bridge

From Rose Ejembi, Makurdi

**RICHARD** Dooga, a corporal with the Nigeria Police Force, who sustained a spinal cord injury in a ghastly car accident in May is now confined to a bed at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital (BSUTH), Makurdi.

Despite the desperate situation the incident has put him, 28-year-old Dooga is still grateful to God for surviving the auto-crash that claimed the lives of three of the eight people onboard the ill-fated vehicle. However, Dooga is sad that he is yet to undergo surgery that would enable him work again.

Narrating how the accident happened, Dooga said that on May 11, himself and seven of his friends were traveling from Abuja to Ikpa Mbatyerev in Vandeikya Local Government Area of Benue State, to attend a burial, when they encountered a woman about 8pm, who was standing in the middle of the bridge. In the bid to avoid hitting the woman, Dooga who was driving, lost control of the vehicle, which skidded off the bridge and fell into a ditch. "I was the driver of that vehicle and we didn't know that there was a bridge ahead because there was no sign to show that we were approaching a bridge. Suddenly, I saw a woman appear on the bridge and while I was trying to dodge her, I lost control and the vehicle summersaulted and ended up in a ditch.

"Three occupants died on the spot while three of us also sustained various degrees of injury and are being treated in different hospitals in the state.

"I suffered spinal cord injury in that accident. I can't feel any sensation from my waist to my legs. I can't sit anymore. All I do is lie down all day since the accident," he said and broke down in tears.

After regaining composure, Dooga who is attached to the FCT Police Command continued the narration, saying that he has been praying to God for a miracle to enable him

3 die instantly  
Police corporal breaks spinal cord



Dooga

walk again.

"I can't imagine myself being relegated to a bed or a wheelchair at this age. I'm not married yet and I still have a long way to go in life. How can I cope in this kind of condition?"

And perhaps, God seems to have answered his prayers as Dr. Oko Joseph, a surgeon with the Federal Medical Center (FMC), Makurdi, who is said to have attended to several of such cases of spinal cord injury has taken up his case. At the time, this came as a cheery news Dooga as he told Sunday Sun: "Any moment from now, I would be wheeled into the theatre and I hope to come out, walking again on my two feet. I am happy that I am finally going in for this corrective surgery and I am optimistic that I'll walk again. The doctor has assured me that the corrective surgery would help me walk again. I look forward to that day and pray that the operation is successful." But Dooga's hope came

crashing down when on May 30, the surgery was not done after he had been taken into the theatre and had been in there for several hours. It was gathered that BSUTH had other emergencies the same, which compelled the cancellation of the surgery to enable the medical staff attend to the emergency patients.

Regrettably, since then till the time of filing this report, the surgery is yet to be performed as there seems to be a squabble between the hospital management and the surgeon.

One of Dooga's siblings, Ankwase, lamented that since her brother was returned from the theatre without the surgery being done, he had been suffering from depression.

"It is like his hope has been dashed. My brother is even refusing to talk to anyone. He is in so much pain and the doctors have still not called him back to the theatre for the surgery. "As it is now, we don't even know when they would do the surgery again. We understand that the delay is as a result of

some in-house wrangling between the hospital management and the medical team who are to carry out the surgery."

Ankwase who sobbed bitterly wondered why her brother, a promising young man would become a victim of internal quarrels among doctors.

"My brother is in pains and I can't bear to see him in that condition any longer. In fact at a point, we thought of taking him away to another place out of frustration but my brother refused saying that as a Benue indigene, the state-owned hospital would not treat him; he would not go anywhere else.

"He even said we should go and get him a wheelchair and that he would not mind being confined to a wheelchair than leaving BSUTH for anywhere else," Ankwas said.

The distraught elder sister who revealed that the surgery is going to cost about N2million is however pleading with the hospital management to have pity on her brother and ensure that the surgery is done as soon as possible. When contacted, the Chief Medical Director of BSUTH, Prof. Teremun Swende, said the surgery would be carried out soon on the patient as the hospital's neurosurgeon was already in town for that purpose.

He said everything that is being done is in the interest of the patient and assured that the surgery would be done at the right time.

Swende said the decision to stop the surgery at that time became necessary to discourage the practice of smuggling just anybody into the hospital to perform surgery on hapless patients with a view to extorting money from them without the knowledge of the management.

"Dr. Oko is not a staff of the hospital and should not come in through the back door to conduct surgery on any patient. We have a neurosurgeon who is well trained to handle the case and he will do it when the time comes. Our neurosurgeon is already in town. Patient care is serious business and we take it as such."