

Relatives in a Marriage - My Experience

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It was a long drive with dad under the hot sun on our way to the local Government Council. He suddenly pulled over and said, "I regret giving my people the access to interfere in my family". I looked at him in astonishment and thought it was a dream. But he continued, looking at the side mirror of his car and said, "They've ruined me and my family. They said your Mom was a tough luck in my life and theirs and that, I should get married to someone better. This unexpected disclosure made my ears tingle and my heart was gladdened. I had now unraveled the reasons behind dad's intolerance of mom and why he never bothered looking for her when she left the house after the fight with dad's siblings over the missing keys. Dad was right but, he had more blames.

A Brief History

Dad was born into a relatively poor family in Isoko, a tribe and people group in Delta state, Nigeria. The culture recognizes polygamy which is a normal way of life. Dad was the eldest amongst his six siblings consisting of three males and three females. Due to his background and position as the eldest, he wanted to change their situation, so he enrolled in a driving school after his primary education and graduated as a good driver.

He worked as a driver in a transport company before he got his personal cars and started making some money. He later built a fine bungalow for his parents and siblings to live in the village. He fed them, paid their fees and other bills and so, became their breadwinner. There was nothing that took place in the house without dad's knowledge and vice versa. They became overly protective of dad and his affairs.

Dad married mom against his mother's (my grand mom's) wish and relocated to the city where he built another house. Later, his siblings moved to the city to live with us. They lived with us for several years till they moved out with dad's support except for one, my aunt Roseline, whom dad gave the B.Q at the back of our house to stay with her own family. The period of their stay with us was like war without end. Dad and mom fought and quarreled severally in their presence but they did nothing to stop them. Dad was pressured to marry another wife back in the village which he did secretly.

Attitude of dad's siblings

Dad's siblings created chaos in the house. The house was no longer conducive for us because of their toxic attitude. They ignited misunderstanding between mom and dad that made them wrangle severally and even fight. Occasionally, they joined dad to mete their injustice on mom while dad watched them.

It was obvious dad took sides with his siblings. Mom severally experienced their pernicious attitudes in the house and couldn't help but cry after each one. I have memories of how two of my uncles fought with mom one night in dad's absence. Our

eldest brother, then about 15 years old, could not take it. He fought back and got a deep cut on his right shoulder that night. Mom took him out for treatment that night after our neighbours intervened. Dad did not utter any word to mom or my brother that night when he came back. He supported his siblings. I was deeply saddened by his action. I felt unsafe under him as my father.

Dad's Reaction To His Siblings Attitudes.

Dad never reprimanded his siblings over their behaviour. He took sides with them and was aggressive to mom and to us his children after any misunderstanding in the house. I observed the following after any fight in the house;

1. He isolated himself from mom and us, his children.
2. He won't give mom money for our daily upkeep instead he gave the money to his siblings
3. He occasionally slept out
4. He responded harshly to our educational needs and would ask us to meet mom for our needs.

Dad's reaction often stirred up anger in our eldest brother who confronted him at times. In a nutshell, we suffered for every conflict in the house.

Mom's Reaction To Dad and His Siblings:

Sometimes, mom had to act like everything was okay because of us but we knew she wasn't herself since dad was not ready to change his mind about his irrepressible siblings. When mom gave dad an ultimatum for dad's siblings to leave or she leaves, dad told mom to leave instead.

Mom got her relatives involved and they did their best but dad was inexorable. Dad's sibling continued their attack on mom till they left the house except our aunt who stayed in the BQ with her family. I thought their leaving the house would bring peace between mom and dad, but I was wrong because dad and mom continued to struggle with their differences. Even with dad's siblings' absence in the house, they were still informed of events between mom and dad and, would show up sometimes

to challenge mom.

That was why dad's regret astonished me. He was not compelled to act the way he did. It was entirely his choice to have acted the way he did. I imagined possible reasons could be;

- He doesn't love mom.
- He wanted mom out of his way to continue with his secretly married wife.
- He wanted to please his people especially his mother, my grand mom who was against dad's marriage to mom.
- He felt a need to show his family that they were more important to him notwithstanding marriage.
- Maybe it was a show of loyalty to his people.

Dad's Siblings Attitude to his Mistresses

Dad's rue started when the same treatment was given to his secretly married wife in the village. His wife could not put up with their unpleasant attitude so, she left dad after having two kids for him. As if that was not enough, they continued with their assault on mom till she moved out of the house never to return. And that was when dad bought his mistress home. She already had a baby for him. Initially, all was well between his mistress and his siblings but I knew they were already showcasing their attitudes before her.

I was right. Five years later, they came out of their shells and started giving dad's mistress her own taste of their attitudes. Dad also took sides with his siblings as they dealt with his mistress. We watched them quarrel and fought without our interference. Dad's mistress couldn't tolerate dad's changed attitudes towards her and that of his siblings, so she left after 7 years of her stay with us.

"I'm not comfortable with dad's new mistress", I said to my sister and she replied, "don't worry about her looks because she looks like a bomb that will explode for our

aunts and uncles to give this house some peace”, I smiled nodding my head.

Dad's New Mistress Encounter With Our Aunt

My aunt staying at the B.Q had it tough with dad’s new mistress. On this particular occasion, the dire experience she got after her venomous attitude kept the rest of dad’s siblings several miles away from our house.

Dad’s mistress worked with the Police force. This was a piece of information we were unaware about, until our aunt was thrown into the police cell for two days. On the fateful day, our youngest uncle who came to visit our aunt took to his heels on sighting dad’s mistress in police uniform with her colleagues. He climbed over the fence and ran as fast as his legs could carry him, for fear of being arrested too.

Our aunts experience made my uncle advise me to stop going home during my holidays alleging that dad had brought home a mad woman. I quietly laughed. The specialized home breakers (dad’s siblings) had been humbled by dad’s police mistress and accordingly stopped coming to our house. Strangely, this time dad appeared to support his mistress for her action and not his siblings. Maybe dad was also scared of being locked up as well.

When two people decide to get married, each makes a pledge that the other will be the most important person in their life. “You’re the one” and “you come first”, are the common phrases that seal these promises. And so, it is expected that each partner will be on each other’s side, when the going gets tough.

But the case was different for my mom because dad took sides with his people to unleash their wickedness on mom.

In a nutshell, balancing our loyalty to all those we love is a complex issue that requires tact, understanding and team work which my dad did not demonstrate at any time.

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