

# The catastrophic love triangle

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Dinah's transformation is so notable throughout the novel *The Red Tent*. Through love and tragedy, she learns to be independent from her mother as well as the people around her.

This is seen by the fact that she regularly went out on her own without the company of either the parents or her siblings. Her independence can also be seen from the fact that she decided to be in a relationship with an Egyptian boy without seeking her siblings consent. The novel *The Red Tent* has a lot of similarity with a biblical story in the book of Genesis. Dinah was a daughter to Jacob and Leah who was a co-wife with Rachel. The title 'The Red Tent' was derived to describe the tent where women experiencing the menstrual cycle used to reside.

" But I had no time to be sorry for myself, because suddenly a strange red bubble emerged from between Leah's legs and then, almost immediately, a flood of bloody water washed down her thighs". The novel has several instances of childbirth until when the writer picks up the story of Dinah. As already mentioned, as Dinah grew up she became independent as well as confident. She wanted to explore her surroundings and know the people in her neighborhood. This can be seen from the fact that she moved out of the house unaccompanied.

The reason of going out alone could be that she wanted some privacy which she could not get at home where there were several brothers and sisters apart from her parents. Her independence is also seen when she meets a total stranger Shalem, from a different tribe and they became friends. Shalem was a handsome young man whose father was a very rich and

famous king. These could be some of the reasons Dinah fell in love with him. In addition, their friendship was not just a casual one because they ended up sleeping together probably on several occasions. The friendship between Dinah and Shalem was not acceptable to the rest of the family.

This can be seen by the fact that during the relationship, no one in the family knew of its existence. It means that whenever she met with her lover, it was a secret that she could not reveal possibly because she didn't know how they would react. The worst happened when she conceived and since it could not be hidden for long, everyone in the family knew about it. Upon learning of the truth, many including her father were not pleased. What they did not know is that Dina herself was in love with the young man. Her father being a staunch believer in their own culture felt that what had happened was extremely wrong but he didn't know what to do.

Shalem informed his father about his feeling for Dinah and requested him to get her for him to become his wife. Therefore, Shalem's father decided to visit Dina's parents to ask for her hand in marriage to his son who was madly in love with her " The king waved at a cart laden with goods and trailing sheep and goats. He declared them kin, soon to share a grandchild". The love between the two was however not destined for anything good. Shalem's father decided to bring a good bride price to the girls parents. This shows that the king respected Jacob's family and thus he would not just take his daughter because he could.

When the king brought what appeared to be a good offer as a bride price, as the custom required, Jacob's sons felt infuriated because according to them,

Shalem had defiled their sister. They therefore would not accept the marriage just like that. To them it was a total insult and humiliation they could not swallow. Jacob himself was not so happy about the marriage but he could not show his feelings. The scenario echoed the 'Romeo and Juliet' case where love between them was not accepted by the parents and this fact led from one tragedy to another.

The brothers therefore plotted revenge on the Shechemites and tried to make a pact with them. They told them that in order for the two tribes to intermarry, the shechemites had to get circumcised to be just like Jacob's family. Since Shalem loved Dina so much, he could not refuse the condition and his father also had to do it. On the third day after the circumcision when the wounds were so painful, Jacobs's sons struck at the schechemites camp killing all their males. This made Dina vey sad and she decided to run off to Egypt where she gave birth to a son. Tragedy was not just about to get out of Dina's way though.

When she got to Egypt and gave birth, the son was taken away from her. When she woke up one day, she realized that her son had disappeared. "When I woke up, my son was gone. Frightened, I tried to stand, but the pain kept me pinned to my bed". She sobbed and cried but this could not help since she had no one to stand by her side in that foreign land. She was told that her son had a new 'mother' and therefore did not belong to her anymore.

Her son was taken away so that he could grow up as a prince in the Egyptian kingdom. The name of her son was changed and a new one given to him. To

add to her misery, she was forbidden to call him by the name she had given him originally.

His care will be your blessing, but he will call us both Ma and stay here until he is ready for school, and for this, you can be grateful". Since Dina knew the repercussions of doing otherwise which included banishment from the community or even death, she had to make do with just that, nursing the baby. Dina lived a difficult life due to loosing of both her lover as well as her child. " The baby is with his mother.' I thought I misunderstood her.

Perhaps I had not used the right words". She felt cheated by life which had given her one misfortune after the other. Nevertheless, she was not to blame since falling in love with Shalem was out of her control and she did it thinking it would make her happy, just like everyone else. The tragedy had taught her a lesson. " My husband's words found their mark, and I recalled something that Zilpah had told me when I was a child in the red tent, and far too young to understand her meaning.

" We are all born of the same mother," she said. After a lifetime, I knew that to be true". In summary, Dina was a girl from a humble family whose destiny was riddled with great predicament. She developed confidence and faith in herself from the beginning when she decided to befriend a rich and handsome prince from another community. However, the friendship developed into love and they two ended up engaging in merry lovemaking.

Their joy was however short-lived because soon after, she got pregnant which made everyone in her family very sad. Her father as well as her brothers did not approve of the relationship since they felt that the prince

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had defiled her, a fact that they could not live with. Therefore when the prince's father approached Jacob and his family to ask for his consent for his son to marry Dina, her brothers developed a plot to avenge her sister who they did not know was in love with the prince. After the revenge, Dina felt so hurt that she decided to run away and stay with her 'in-laws'. However, her troubles did not end there because she ended up losing her child to them since they wanted him to be the next king.

This love and the consequent tragedy were experiences she had to live with all her days.