

9-Year-Old Boy Marries 62-Year-Old Woman...Twice!

Sanele Masilela is nine years old. He lives in a small town in South Africa. Sanele did something that most kids his age have never thought of doing. Sanele got married! Not only that, the woman he married is 53 years older than him!

Sanele claims that his dead ancestors told him to marry the older woman. Her name is Helen Shabangu. She lives in a town neighboring Sanele's.



Sanele told his parents, and they took him seriously. They contacted the bride last year, and they told her what Sanele said. They paid her \$800 as a dowry. They also paid over \$1,500 for wedding arrangements.

Some local people are upset by the marriage. They think the marriage is "revolting." But Sanele 's family defends their actions. They said the ceremony was just to please their ancestors, and not a legally binding marriage.

Their first wedding took place last year. But Sanele was not satisfied. In South Africa, there is a tradition that couples have two weddings. According to tradition, the second wedding must be at the bride's home.

Patience Masilela is Sanele 's mother. She is 47 years old. "Sanele was fine and he was happy about the ceremony last year. He was happy to get married, very excited, and was not embarrassed by it. He wanted so much to do it again." Patience said.

As before, some of the local people are upset by the marriage. But both families are happy about it. They want to make their dead ancestors happy. And, after all, Sanele and Helen aren't legally married.

Actually, Helen has been married to her husband Alfred Shabangu for over 30 years. Helen and Alfred have five adult children, aged between 28 and 38. "My kids and I are happy because we don't have a problem with her marrying the boy - and I don't care what other people say," Alfred said.

"Our families are very close," Patience said. "It was nice to celebrate with a wedding once more. It was, after all, a calling from the ancestors."

After the second ceremony, Sanele and Helen went back to their families.

Sanele appears to be very happy in the wedding photographs. "I told my mother that I wanted to get married because I really did want to," he said. "I chose Helen because I love her, and although we don't live together, we meet all the time at the dumping site where my mother works regularly."

Helen was also quite happy that Sanele chose her. "One day Sanele will grow normally and have a family of his own and get married; all this ceremony is just to make our ancestors happy. We are playing," she explained.

Sanele and Helen have had two weddings, but their marriage is not legally binding. They have not signed a marriage certificate.

"I am happy that I married Helen," Sanele said, "but I will go to school and study hard. When I am older, I will marry a lady my own age."