

Column

Female husband

Loes Magnin



I'm on my way to visit a traditional shrine in Ghana, West-Africa. The village I arrive at is a bustling African hotspot. Women in brightly coloured dresses balance enormous bowls of food on their heads; men are playing checkers; people are sitting on the streets, talking, negotiating, cooking or doing nothing. There's loud music on every side of the street. I can smell the familiar mix of charcoal and sweat which reaches my nose by a hot breeze, while the daylight is its typical African yellowish-blue.

I mean: how could I not love this?

My Ghanaian friend Alice calls me from the other side of the street. She's sitting on the pavement with a couple of her friends, and they are involved in a very serious game of... Ludo.

They are extremely fanatic about this game.

(Okay. I admit. When the ladies invited me to play with them I soon became as fanatic as they were. I clapped high fives in the air when I beat somebody; theatrically cried when somebody beat me; we bursted out laughing when somebody was playing tactics.

Yes. I am still talking about a game of Ludo.)

The ladies are hungry so we invite one of the women with an enormous bowl of snotty cooked okra (yuk!) on her head to sell us some. Our conversation quickly moves towards boys-and-girls.

I love this about travelling; wherever you go: girltalk is girltalk! One of the women heard that in Holland it is possible for a man and woman to live together as a couple without being married. For a little dramatic effect, I tell the girls that since a few years women can even marry women and men can marry men in Holland. Dramatic effect: 100%. They are absolutely shocked.

One of the girls is a shy, silent, young Ghanaian, who so far hasn't said much to me. But when hearing about this novelty – marrying a woman! – she reacts very pleasantly surprised; she says it would feel like paradise to her not to have to sleep with a man any more. My stomach hurts when I hear her say that. There is still a lot to do in Ghana for women's sexual freedom. After our snotty-okra-diner we continue our game of fanatic Ludo, but the shy girl is absent minded. As the other ladies tell her off for not playing properly she looks at me with a very serious gaze:

Lucy, she says, next time you come to Ghana, will you bring me back one of those female husbands?

Loes Magnin studied Communication and Literature in Amsterdam and wrote her thesis on development aid dilemmas in Southern Africa. She worked as a travel guide and took dance classes in different African countries.