

SHORT STORY

IN SEARCH OF A FLAT TO RENT

BY: ISEL L. RIVERO

Translated by Soledad Dominguez and Alicia Porrini
Source: Lola Press No. 2 Dec. 1994
P.O. Box 11402, Windhoek, Namibia
tel/fax: 264 61220156

The problem began the moment they started looking for a furnished flat to rent. They would be students, baby-sitters, childhood friends, cousins; youth can cover many things but it is not always easy to close the eyes of the nasty-minded.

They thought the best would be to go separately. Then they changed their minds. Everything depended on the person that rented the flat. Identity should be flexible, depending on what happened on the face-to-face chat with the landlord or landlady. So, they should be prepared. Stories should coincide, should be corroborated beforehand, so as not to be confused or embarrassed when knocking at the door.

It might have been better to go to a real estate agent. But they should battle this issue as a matter of principle. Who cares if two women want to rent a furnished flat? In some buildings, proprietors even asked for references and prospective tenants had to fill in long questionnaires on morals and respectability. These owners did not realize that to have access to these big buildings of thirty floors and more, one had to go to several marginal neighborhoods and streets where indigent children sniff glue and even smoke marihuana once in a while. For sure, the subversive problem was not renting a furnished flat, but that two daring women thought that it could be done in daylight. The well-known senator and the old magnate of the building industry kept some hidden furnished flats for their concubines, until one morning, the headlines of the daily newspaper read: "Blonde X accuses Don Cacho of bigamy; Famous Model commits suicide in Rosa neighborhood, she lived in a penthouse rented by Don Cacho..."

But if they were not students and came from the provinces, and they were university professionals, why was it that they weren't married, why weren't they someone's concubines or prostitutes?

What do two single women do living together?

It was not very difficult to see that two single women can have lots of fun living together. The thing was to find the flat. And it could not be just anywhere in the city; since they were women, they had to live in a safe neighborhood, in case some degenerate rapist would be interested because they were women and they lived alone.

Do air hostesses live with their families? And singers? Or do they live in someone else's house, hidden in the darkness without name?

Discrimination against women will truly have ended when two single women can rent a flat without having to give explanations, without feeling embarrassed, without needing to hide the fact, without caring about having a joint bank account, and that they only need one bedroom.▲

REFLECTION

Cassandra's Daughters

* Cassandra, seer and Trojan woman. Gifted with the ability to see into the future, but cursed to carry the burden of her knowledge because no one, the jealous gods declared, will ever believe her visions.

"In our community as soon as a baby is born, it is the women who prepare the food, the clothes, the flowers, the ribbons, the menu. Everything is fixed by the women. And then when all has been set, a priest, who is a man, will come and officiate in the baptismal of the baby. In funerals, it's the same thing. When somebody dies, it is the women who wash the body of the dead. They also organize all the details--the cups, the flowers, all the little things needed in the ritual for the living and the dead. Again a priest, and the eldest son or the brother or father of the deceased--all men--will come to officiate in the ritual. It seems to me that it is women who weave the basic fabric of a society. And the men, they put the embroideries on that fabric."▲

SHANTI SACHITHANANDAM
woman, peacemaker
International Consultation on Women as Peacemakers
2 June 1995