

Proposal for “The Village We Grew Up In”

By Caroline Campbell

I played “My Father’s Long, Long Legs” before I read the article about Twine video games. “My Father’s Long, Long Legs for the first part read like a passage found on a standardized test. Then at the bottom it had a hyperlink to continue. Then I continued and there were more hyperlinks. That made me think “How is this story going to end? Does the main character ever find out why her father was always digging?” Then in the paragraph when she goes down into the basement, I had to shine a virtual flashlight over the text to read it. Then I got to a point when she heard the sound of digging. I continued to click on the hyperlinks and started hearing a humming sound as well. Then I clicked on another series of hyperlinks until I pointed the flashlight at an illustration of a long, hairy leg. Then I read the text that her brother had grown up to be as tall as their father. The last words were “My father’s long, long legs.” There were no more hyperlinks and she never finds out why her father was digging.

I am going to visit many different villages in the Netherlands when the Dutch government will let me in. One of the villages I am going to visit, Staphorst, has changed tremendously in the last fifty years. Fifty years ago, according to American journalist Paulette Cooper, Staphorst was an insular community with tight borders, much like an Amish community in the United States. They dressed in chaste modest costumes specific to their village. They had such tight borders because they kept old traditions that modern Europeans and modern Americans consider old-fashioned and cruel. For example, they believed that a woman’s primary purpose in life was to bear her husband children and if she failed to get pregnant after having sex during ovulation with her first boyfriend, it was assumed that she was sterile and she was destined to never get married and be shamed by her community. While Staphorst is still an orthodox Calvinist farming village today the people are more open to outsiders and modern life. The men and younger women no longer wear local costume in daily life and that cruel, misogynist tradition has probably been abolished by now.

I would like to write a story about two sisters who grew up in a small, orthodox and insular village in the Netherlands that was a popular destination for tradition seeking tourists. When the older sister came of age, a young man whom she thought was very attractive. They then followed the traditional courting ritual, which included having sex for one purpose and one purpose only: to test if she can bear children. After five months she realizes that she is not pregnant and knows that it means she will be publicly shamed by her community and the only way to find people who will accept her as a person is to run away in search for a new community. By the time the younger sister comes of age, that ritual has been abolished. The younger sister then sees many more changes in their village. Meanwhile, the older sister marries a man she met at the University of Vienna after she ran away. They have sex and she surprisingly gets pregnant, having never occurred to her before that her first boyfriend couldn’t father children and that’s why she didn’t get pregnant with him. When the older sister is 50 and the younger sister is 40 the younger sister sees the older sister with her husband and their 20 year old son at a café in Rotterdam where the older sister and her husband has come to give a guest lecture at Erasmus University. The sisters do not recognize each other right away because they have not seen each other in 30 years. Rather the younger sister sees the older sister as

somebody who looked like their mother and the older sister sees the younger sister as somebody whom she may have known growing up because she was dressed in the local costume of their village. Then the player, playing the older sister, decides whether or not to take the offer to visit her village but eventually takes it through a series of persuasions. The younger sister buys the older sister a train ticket to the nearest city to their village and then a bus ticket to their village and the son, who wants to be more traditional than his parents, decides whether to talk to his aunt about what it takes to join the community his mother left. If the son is interested in potentially joining the community, the aunt explains what it takes to join the community. Every statement ends with a question on whether or not that is something he values with a [hyperlink](#) for yes or no. If he is not interested, they take a tour of the village's museum and shops. Either way, the sisters reunite for the evening and the older sister rediscovers the village they had grown up in, thinking about how much they and their village have changed.