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I TOOK
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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A VANILLA
COUPLE SPENDS A WEEK AMONG COUPLES
WHO GET IT ON WITH OTHER COUPLES?
ANNA BRESLAW FINDS OUT.

FOR MOST OF THE YEAR, Hedonism II is a low-key nudist resort in Negril, Jamaica, for mostly middle-aged Americans, many of whom return annually to let it all hang out. But for two hypersexual weeks a year, it hosts couples ready to throw back a few shots at the open bar, expose their asses to the elements, and... have sex with one another. This is the fourth semiannual Young Swingers Week.

I was there with Mike, my monogamous boyfriend of two years (okay, that's not his real name). We'd discussed threesomes before but only in that spitballing-ideas way, like "Maybe we should get a hypoallergenic dog!" We were locked in a heteronormative stalemate: I'd prefer an extra guy; Mike would prefer adding a girl. As we unpacked in the hotel room, I knew we were both wondering if the answer might be one of each.

The next morning, I met (and attempted not to stare at the penis of) Brett, the founder of Young Swingers Week. Blond, well-built ("Can you put my age as 40ish?"), and positively vibrating with frat-bro positivity, he is based in Florida and runs YSW with his wife, Lesley, a travel agent who now books for the weeks full-time. Eventually, he hopes to make this his main gig, but right now, his

primary source of income is website design. (They requested we use just their first names.)

Brett had booked 40 rooms for the first YSW but wound up selling 100. About 350 people attended the March 2016 YSW, part of Hedonism II's push to appeal to a younger, more upscale clientele, Brett explained. (Fees start at about \$200 per person per day, not so different from other all-inclusive Jamaican resorts.) And yes, he was buck naked the whole time he was telling me this. Then he gave me and Mike necklaces with green beads, signifying our potential status as a "soft swap" couple—meaning no penetration, only kissing, oral, and "everything but."

The first couple we met were Alex, 30, a curvy social worker, and her husband, Michael, 39, who works at a major technology company. The two are from Pittsburgh and wore necklaces with red beads, signifying their status as "full swap." They've been married for six years and joined the lifestyle shortly after the birth of their son, now 3. "My sex drive went up after I had the baby," Alex told me. Contrary to the stereotype that nonmonogamy is the guy's call, it was Alex who suggested they spice it up. "He's gonna be mine forever. But has another penis entered my vagina since we got married? Yep."

There are two kinds of swingers, Alex and Michael explained: sexual swingers, who are strictly DTF, and social swingers like them, who like to get to know a couple before they jump into bed. "We like to ask them to sit with us at dinner," she explained. We sat with them at dinner.





Each dinner had a theme, like “schoolgirl and schoolboy night,” “fetish night,” “hats and heels night.” The result was surreal: men in mesh tank tops and grown women in pigtails and Lucite heels lining up with buffet plates in hand. Mike and I were one of the few couples who remained in civilian dress.

By night three, Alex and Michael had become our de facto guides, explaining the lifestyle’s lingo, traditions, and safe-sex practices. Alex says that everyone uses condoms and gives full disclosure: “I’d tell people right up front if I had an STI.” Swing unto others the way you want others to swing unto you. Or something.

After our third dinner, Mike and I went back to the hotel room (alone), and I brushed my teeth (not a euphemism).

“I might be full of myself,” I gurgled through foam, “but I think they want to swing with us.”

“What tipped you off?” he snorted.

“Do you want to?” I asked him, because I wasn’t sure myself.

“Do *you* want to?”

“Do y—ugh, this is stupid.”

That night, at Club Hurricane, I spotted the first guy at Young Swingers Week I was actually attracted to, a dark-haired dude in his late 20s waiting to be served at the bar. *Carpe diem*, I thought, and I mentioned him to Mike.

“What did his girlfriend look like?” he asked. I hadn’t seen her. Back home, it was hard enough to find a couple we both liked enough to go out to dinner with. Here, we were presented the same challenge with a whole additional checklist of sexual criteria. Weirdly, the negotiation was

“THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF SWINGERS: SEXUAL AND SOCIAL....”

working wonders for my and Mike’s ability to sense each other’s moods and thoughts. Every couple I talked to said that swinging had improved their communication, and I totally understood why. It’s a lot like gossiping to your BFF about the guy you made out with the night before—only you’re gossiping to your boyfriend about the couple you made out with the night before.

There were two separate stretches of beach available: the Prude Beach (clothing optional) and the Nude Beach (full nudity mandatory). Mike and I spent our mornings sunning on the Prude Beach, where I read Gay Talese’s *Thy Neighbor’s Wife* and eventually got bold enough to take off my bikini top. It felt great. Very classy, very European. Except for the one time we heard moaning and determined that a dude was getting his wife off. I went back to my book.

One night, we stood around awkwardly in the Playroom, a sauna-esque chamber with a lush waterfall and laid-out mattresses, where couples watched other couples have surprisingly tame sex.

Mike and I weren’t the only couple not getting busy in the Playroom. Britta, a gorgeous, quiet 35-year-old

photographer from San Diego, met her husband, Mark, online. They also wore the green beads. She'd recently had her first same-sex experience back home, she told me. "I always thought women kissed each other to turn men on, but when I tried it, I realized there's something so sensual about it and it feels amazing." The two are unsure about moving into red-bead territory. "Maybe one day, when we've had some wine," she laughs.

Much of the appeal of YSW is the younger age range of the couples. Many of the attendees mentioned to me that their local swinging circles tend to skew older. And YSW isn't just a mating ground, it's a community. Alex and Michael see—and swing with—a lot of the same people every year. Take Ashley and Chris, both in their early 30s and based near Toronto. They're getting married this week—at YSW—and their wedding party is entirely composed of people they've met here in previous years. Alex is one of Ashley's bridesmaids.

Some swingers see the trip as a lasting investment. Jay, 30, a good-looking auto technician, and his childhood sweetheart, Nikki, 29, saved up to make this pilgrimage to Jamaica from Georgia. They use their sexual exploits at YSW to enhance their sex life back home, Jay explains. "It's basically like, 'Let's do something kinky and then talk about it for a week while we fuck each other's brains out.'"

The guys here are way more cut than your typical dudes off the street, whereas women of all shapes and sizes seem comfortable just as they are—almost like a strange, lovely alternate universe where men actually sculpt and trim and perfect their bodies to tempt the female gaze.

Paradoxically, YSW's competitive activities overlap with what you might find in a frat house. When I asked Brett which event was most representative of the YSW ethos, he insisted that Girl-on-Girl Simulated Play in the Lube Pool was not to be missed. So I stood in the back of a crowd on the Nude Beach, staring at bare asses—flabby and taut, round and flat, pale and tan—and watched as pairs of women flailed through missionary, doggie-style, girl-on-top, and scissor positions in a slick blow-up kiddie pool.

By then, I'd gotten comfortable being topless but not bottomless, and I

was wondering how strict the mandatory-nudity policy was. The answer: Approximately five seconds into the competition, a resort employee told us to strip naked or kindly GTFO. Mike was briefly embarrassed as he kicked off his swim trunks, but he'd been smart enough to numb himself with a few mojitos beforehand and quickly got used to feeling the balmy island breeze on his scrote. I reluctantly took off my bikini bottoms, because I Am a Reporter, Goddamnit. But I felt the opposite of the way I did when I took off my top on the beach: trapped, embarrassed. It wasn't because I have body-image problems or some deep-rooted shame about sex. It was just that I've never been a fan of mandatory anything, be it 10th-grade chemistry homework or showing 200 strangers my bush.

After the event, Mike could tell I was upset—something he may not have been able to discern before our nonverbal communication improved on this trip—and we holed up in our room with comforting true-crime TV. It had all started to feel forced, I told him. The sexual freedom was so insistent that I'd started feeling obligated to "let myself be free," which perhaps wasn't something I actually wanted. There are only so many naked people you can see before nudity itself becomes mundane and loses its sexual charge. It was heartening to see the body-positive dynamic, the open-mindedness, and the friendliness of YSW's attendees. But the sex-themed *everything* was often a turn-off.

For such an unorthodox setting, Ashley and Chris's wedding was surprisingly traditional. Ashley wore a cream-colored dress, the bridesmaids matched, the groomsmen wore ties (and no shirts, but still). There was a professional photographer (it was Britta in a black fishnet bodysuit with no underwear and an iPhone, but still). I was shocked to discover that the best man was the cute guy I'd eyeballed at Club Hurricane. I got a better look at him. Not quite as cute.

Meanwhile, Mike's and my sex frequency and intensity had definitely been on the incline, even though the number of people in our bed was still only two. In its own weird way, being monogamous at Hedonism II was the kinkiest thing we could do. ■