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“What Really Goes on in Topless Clubs?”

The truth comes out

By Kimberly Blaker

Jennifer* and Matt had a great relationship. They’d had their share of difficulties, but trust was never an issue.

One afternoon, Jennifer picked up the phone unaware that Matt was on the other end. Much to her surprise, Jennifer overheard him discussing a topless dancer. As Matt continued, Jennifer’s temperature rose.

Inside Scoop

Topless bars come in many styles. Upon entering The Stallion Club, you are greeted by soft purple fluorescent lights, glimmering mirrored walls, and the gleam of chrome chairs. Several narrow tables surround an oblong stage, and along one side of the room sits a mahogany bar with comfortable stools. Oval booths with plush seats line the other walls sporting tables covered with stark white tablecloths and napkins. Pricey steak and seafood dinners waft a subtle aroma into the air.

As men watch, rhythmic music plays and dancers move across the stage like high-fashion runway models, pausing occasionally to seduce their audience. The dancers’

near-perfect figures compliment their attractive faces and alluring eyes. Five inch spiked heels give their legs a long, slender appearance. Each dancer is provocatively dressed—one taunts patrons with a tiny thong, sheer short-shorts, and an easily untied Spanish style blouse showing breezy, three-quarter length sleeves.

The club is patronized mostly by clean-cut businessmen, creating a calm and dignified aura, which is undisturbed even as dancers straddle patrons’ laps. Here men spend an average of \$100-\$300 per visit, though a few manage to keep it in the \$50 range. Many men eagerly pay for lap dances, and quality is dependent on the price they pay. Some men also pay attentive dancers to sit with them, talk, and flirt.

The next stop is a strip bar called Deuces, which is popular with the average Joes in town who can enjoy an affordable beer, a game of pool, and a glimpse at some bare-chested girls on the way home from work. Amid flashing strobe lights, attractive-but-not-quite-model-thin dancers strut their moves on a platform stage while the remainder of the building is lit up like a tavern, revealing worn tables and chairs scattered throughout the room. Deuces is louder than the gentlemen’s club, filled with men hooting at the women and playing billiards.

His Perspective

The majority of men who frequent topless bars, especially the classier clubs, are married—and many claim to be happy with their relationships. Most men say the reason they visit topless bars is to socialize; they just want to “get together with the fellows.” Some men go to these bars on business, and still others claim to linger over the food.

Further discussion with these men, however, reveals a very different picture. Many come alone despite their professed need to be with friends, most men eventually

confessed that the dancers are the big draw. One married man put it this way. “I come here because I can get everything I want here; television and the stock market, food, drinks, and women.”

Another patron, also married, said, “It’s a form of entertainment. It’s like watching basketball.” Of course, men don’t usually date the basketball players, as this man later revealed he’s done with some of the dancers.

Half the men interviewed admitted that their wives or girlfriends would be upset to know they were at a topless club, and some expressed empathy for their significant other’s hypothetical feelings. Therefore, these men conveniently fail to mention it or play down their topless experiences to their mates. Others come up with creative stories of their whereabouts.

But some women don’t necessarily disapprove of the activity. A few men declared that their wives don’t care as long as they “don’t bring it home.”

For example, Joe says he visits topless clubs twice a week. His wife, who’s aware that he pays for lap dances, isn’t concerned because “it’s virtually impossible” to go beyond that inside the clubs. But perhaps Joe’s wife should be worried—he did admit to “dating” dancers. He also revealed that in some other clubs the “services” of the dancers go much further than that.

Jim, another patron, said he just started frequenting strip clubs after a five-year intermission. He explained that he’s happily married, but wants a little more than his wife is able to give him. Jim said his wife doesn’t want him to go to the clubs “because it makes her jealous. So she pretends not to know.” He goes on: “My wife doesn’t understand that women come in all different shapes and sizes. When walking in malls or

down the street, men always turn to look at attractive women because there’s always the slightest chance . . . Here, my wife doesn’t see me looking at other women.”

Look but don’t touch?

Shaun, a married man in his 30s, claimed that he’s only been to strip clubs on a handful of occasions—his wife would be furious if she knew he was there. Although he denied accepting lap dances himself, he’s certainly glimpsed monkey business going on. At one classy club, Shaun observed a businessman in a semi-private corner booth, seated with his arms stretched out across the booth. As the lap dancer maneuvered, Shaun noticed that her hand had disappeared. As Shaun pointed out, while topless clubs often have a policy against men touching the dancers, the rule doesn’t necessarily work both ways. He noted that lap dancers frequently taunt and tease men as they press bare bosoms into men’s faces, sliding up and down the men’s bodies.

Ryan, another married man, first denied getting lap dances but finally admitted that sometimes dancers will give him a lap dance even if he hasn’t asked for it. The dancers are there to make money, and if they don’t have a paying patron to entertain, they’ll seek out men and offer their services. Sometimes dancers slide onto a man’s lap before he’s even had a chance to respond.

Carl, whose wife believes he only watches the dancers, explained the dilemma of many men who enter the bars. “My wife would blow a gasket if she knew I got lap dances,” he confesses. “She really doesn’t like me being here at the club because she’s heard a couple of stories from some coworkers.” He admits that meeting at a strip club for a business luncheon or even with a group of friends sometimes leads to more than he intends. He says, “Sometimes someone will buy a round of lap dances, and you feel

obligated to accept one. Besides, men have this macho image we have to uphold. No one wants to be singled out so you just go with it.”

Worried Yet?

The fact is, some topless clubs are well known for their extra “services.” Even at the more posh clubs, dancers discreetly rendezvous with men outside or in private VIP rooms. But many men who visit topless clubs really do go for nothing more than to socialize and watch a few dancers take it off. Still, once on the inside, a heady combination of alcohol, sexy women, and peer pressure can combine to lead a man astray. Most women will never know the truth of where their mates draw the line. How far do you trust *your* man?

*Names of clubs and persons have been changed.

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SIDEBAR IDEAS OR WAYS TO LOCALIZE: Suggestions for women whose partners frequent topless clubs.

Kimberly Blaker of Michigan is an author and writes for women's and parenting magazines.

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