



# Helen Croydon

## LITTLE SIN'S GRAND AMBITION

*When we were good and ready,  
we made our excuses and left*

A girl in a white corset is lying on a huge four-poster bed lined with rich gold embroidered drapes. Three people's hands are all over her and her mouth is twisted in a kind of strained ecstasy. There are four other beds in the huge Moroccan-themed room with more naked bodies in varying poses. One man has three leggy blonde-haired beauties pawing at him and feeding him pieces of mango. Yes I'm at a posh sex party. THE sex party – the one that kept the tabloids churning out hernia-inducing headlines for a whole week in July. Not that swinger parties are anything new, it's just that when they take place in a 17th century manor house in the wholesome Somerset countryside, they're cannon fodder to the popular press.



I found it hilarious that all these journalists could be so aggressively judgemental when they hadn't even been there. I however, thanks to a commission by *The Erotic Review*, had the fortune to report from the field and thoroughly enjoyed my first taste of voyeurism. The hysteria was probably a fair reflection of general public phobia towards eroticism. Can you believe, I invited five female friends, three male friends, two dates (both of whom I suspect I've scared off for life) and one fellow I quite hoped could become a date, but none of them were brave enough to say yes. It meant the only person to witness my pre-party ensemble of six inch platforms, hip-length hair extensions and long black coat covering all but a peep of stocking (not strategic, honest), was the startled middle-aged owner of the farmhouse bed and breakfast where I was staying. I imagine he'll just about be out of intensive care by now.

The party, 'Eyes Wide Sin', named after director Stanley Kubrick's last film *Eyes Wide Shut*, was hosted in a magnificent grade I listed stately home in the village of Goatshurst, around 40 miles south of Bristol. Guests pulled up outside the beacon-lit grand entrance in Porches and Bentleys, earnestly pulling on masks and slipping on black velvet cloaks. They entered the manor by whispering the password into the ear of two masked guards. The protocol was inspired by the mysterious but enviable hierogamy scene from the Tom Cruise classic. Only after the midnight candle-lit ceremony, under the orders of a Latin chanting priest, could guests take off their cloaks and masks and reveal their impressive lingerie – strictly no black. No expense had been spared. My scarlet Agent Provocateur two-piece

felt very modest in comparison to the lace rimmed basques, diamante studded garters, elegant negligees and pink feather boas. Good on the men for going to town too. While some swaggered around in just black trousers and neatly toned torsos, others wore fishnet body stockings (with underwear thankfully) or PVC shorts. One was in full psychedelic cycling gear. A very handsome clean-cut exec type caught my eye as he padded around in white high-waist jodhpurs and a crisp white silk cravat shift tucked in. Though when I spotted him leaving at 4am it wasn't so crisp and no longer tucked in his trousers.

There were 300 guests wandering round the maze of rooms in Grahame Bond's stately mansion. Door after architraved door opened into endless oak panelled lounges and boudoirs, saturated with impressive baroque artwork. There were a limited amount of guest rooms and many opened straight off the corridor of the main party. I walked in on one mistakenly thinking it was another unexplored room. A couple in their mid-fifties looked up from where they were delicately poised on a red satin bed spread as a photographer happily snapped away. "Sorry, I didn't realise this was a private room," I bumbled, but I was far from an unwelcome guest. "Oh, we're having our photographs taken," purred the voluptuous brunette, as if I hadn't quite figured that out, "why don't you get in shot for a few?" Slightly wary of the speed of digital photo-spread these days and the likelihood of me featuring in a Facebook photo album, I politely declined and made a dash back to the safety of group flirtation.

For a no-holds-barred sex party, the atmosphere was very respectable. All the hot steamy action took place in just one room – ironically labelled the chill out zone. Everywhere else, guests chatted, sipped champagne and reclined on chaises longues deliberately letting hands brush against nearby legs. What a gloriously



uncomplicated, uninhibited way to flirt, I thought. Far less strained than a normal party where we're expected to suppress any feelings of attraction and disguise sexual interest with questions such as what we do for a living or – God forbid – whether we come here often. As a single female, I imagined I'd be terrified. I had a local cab company programmed to speed dial in case I needed a sharp exit but it was actually far from threatening. I was invited to join countless *ménages à trois* but it was done so delicately and my 'no thank you's' accepted graciously. People were there for fun and sexual exploration so egos didn't really come into it. Interesting too that it was always the females who made the initial approach. A sex-thirsty woman is clearly seen as less predatory than a horny male. And from watching other intimate exchanges it

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was always the man waiting for the go-ahead from his partner rather than vice versa.

Swinging, I imagine, must have two points of pleasure – the physical and the visual. I didn't stretch my role to any practical research but watching was just as novel as taking part. I met one female first-timer wandering around in wide-eyed fascination. She hadn't yet ventured into any threesomes or foursomes, but was delighting in the scenes before her, which she said was like "watching porn in 3D."

As for the physical pleasure, it's not without complication. I noted that couples don't simply charge ahead in a selfish exercise of physical gratification. Nearly all set boundaries on how far they are comfortable for their partner to go and many steer clear of group action all together. I suspect the fact that so many couples restricted themselves to voyeurism indicated how dangerously close to the surface jealousy can linger. Being a lone agent I was very

aware of being perceived as a threat. This was the first time I felt being single and female was actually a sexual disadvantage. Shane (31), the main organiser of Eyes Wide Sin echoed that. "The ideal couple to play with are those who are madly in love. No one welcomes someone who could be a threat." Little Sins brought the concept over from Holland, where sex parties have a much more elite following. Shane told me the swinging scene in Britain has been driven underground by prudishness. "We wanted to give the UK a taste of the European swinging scene. People here are much more inhibited so the couples open to swinging tend to really go for it and it's really in-your-face-raucous. In Europe, people are more liberated so you get a respectable crowd unashamed of taking part."

They aren't the first party people to successfully mix sex and sophistication. London clubs like Fever and Killing Kittens have long boasted impressive and competitive guest lists. They often call on their wealthy members to host the parties in their luxury penthouse pads. Even MP Dougie Smith was publicly involved in organising a few. Their popularity has grown so much recently it has almost propelled elite swinging into mainstream entertainment.

I'm not sure how erotic I'd find the whole experience if Eyes Wide Sin hadn't held the event in a grade I listed stately home and attracted such a well heeled crowd. Let's be honest, exchanging bodily fluids with random strangers is the same under a chandelier as it is in a seedy basement swingers club in Milton Keynes. But somehow combining it with Veuve Clicquot and educated accents heightens the aura.

I suppose there are some things which just don't sell as well in economy class and sex is one of them. 🍷

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