



Bedroom Diaries

A summer spent sleeping around the neighborhood taught my husband and me about the best place to rest our heads. **BY SANDRA A. MILLER**

My husband and I never expected to spend our summer nights in three different couples' bedrooms this year, but we were grateful for the chance. When delays in our home renovation project found us scrambling for temporary housing beyond what we had prepared for, Mark and I ended up with the keys to three friends' homes. The plan was to do a housesitting stint in each while the owners were on vacation.

Settling into Beth's condo was a cinch. A super-organized single mom with an eye for feng shui chic, Beth left the place impeccable. How do people live like this, Mark and I wondered aloud as we dumped our suitcases into empty corners, then put our disheveled children to sleep in the well-appointed guest room.

"It's like a hotel in here," I said to Mark later that night as we slid between crisp sheets in the master bedroom. There was no dust and no Playmobil pirates threatening mutiny from the bureau.

"Yeah," my husband said, reaching for me across the silky duvet. "It's been a while since you've taken me to a hotel."

In our three-week stay at Beth's, I never finished a novel or a rerun of *Seinfeld*. Rather, most nights that bedroom called to us — a beacon in a storm of renovation madness. And if it felt

slightly strange being intimate in a friend's bed, we also knew that it was summer and this was the closest we were getting to a vacation.

When the honeymoon ended with Beth's return, we trudged down the street with our suitcases to the comfortably cluttered home of our friends Mara and Amr. Although we were still glowing from our last round of housesitting, the next two weeks would turn pretty chaste. Out of respect for our Muslim friends' religion that prohibits drinking, I didn't bring any alcohol into the house. So gone was my late-night glass of chardonnay sipped to the sounds of slow jazz. Gone was the romp that might have followed.

There was also something sacred to me about Mara and Amr's home hung with religious artifacts and exotic paintings. Not surprisingly, by nightfall, I was more in the mood for meditating than

much else. So propped on pillows in the bedroom, I got Zen while Mark got his billing done, both of us finding some much needed balance — emotional and financial — within the serene space.

When it was time to move again, we rallied our children and rounded the corner to our final summer sleeping grounds, John and Sue's. We knew the house well from regular visits. It held three teenage boys, tons of sugar cereal, a ginormous flat-screen television, and bookshelves overflowing with great reads — John and Sue both being English majors who worked in the arts. When we tucked our bags into our friends' bedroom, we weren't surprised by the tightly packed headboard bookshelf or the dozens of magazines and literary journals tumbling off the night stand. There was also a small TV piled with art-house videos and a mirror angled against the wall, in which my petite frame was reflected back as ridiculously lean and leggy.

"Check this out," I called to Mark. "I look like Gisele Bundchen." He sauntered up behind me and wrapped his arms around the flattest stomach I'd ever have.

"We could play Gisele and Tom," he proposed, admiring his own astounding height.

Behind us in the mirror, I could see books and magazines I'd love to pore over and that tiny television that could probably reveal the Red Sox score.

"How about we just fall asleep reading in front of the game?" I asked. Mark looked titillated by how normal that sounded.

The following week we moved into our renovated home. With our furniture still in storage, we lay down in the middle of the empty master bedroom and considered different possibilities for making it our own.

We both liked the idea of having it feel like a hotel room — but one that welcomes kids and pets. I insisted on keeping the space beneath the window empty for my meditation practice. And while Mark thought we might want to get a television, I kissed him and pointed out that there are usually better things to do in a bedroom. Eventually, he had to agree.

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