

“NADA, nothing”

Kayla Guthrie

Stepping alone out of the sliding doors at the airport in Miami. Hot dark air and an awareness that you're wearing wool tights from earlier that day in New York.

The shuttle drives down the strip toward the hotel. No perceptible beach: the view is blocked by an uninterrupted wall of hotels and condo buildings.

We pull up to the packed hotel driveway; it's like entering a party that's been going on for days. It has. Couples and groups are crowded up and down the semi-circular steps leading to the lobby, where a greeting booth is attended by youthful interns wearing lariats and ID cards. Beyond them in the beer-stenched sitting area there are no adults in sight, only aged looking young people.

Friends of mine have been here for 5, 7, 9 days. When I arrive at our shared hotel room all are currently absent at a party; there are several different bikinis hanging in the bathroom, wet towels and beer cans, suitcases overflowing and beds unmade. Feeling pleasantly shocked and completely in tune with the situation downstairs, I pull clothes off and swimsuit on. I take the elevator down to the hot tub outside.

A group of guys and girls appears walking up from the beach, enters the hot tub and sort of tries to talk to me. They don't seem to be guests at the hotel. I stay quiet in the aqua light, looking around the pool deck, the empty gazebo bar and its darkened margarita taps.

The next morning, the bellhop helps me bring my speakers and equipment to the pool deck. I meet one of the event organizers; he's wearing sunglasses; dark hair and moustache; shorts. He offers to let me play in a sculpture installation next to the pool, made by a collaborative design group. It's raining lightly; nobody is around. Everybody is busy. But no worries.

Later on I go for a swim in the pool in my denim string bikini. I wave to the organizer, "Hi!" He smiles distractedly, talking to some girls who are doing a large performance

scheduled for that night. I realize it would have been smarter to have planned ahead and gotten a sponsorship from a gallery.

But there's still time to print invites at the hotel business center. It's actually an internet cafe in a strip mall beside the hotel, but accessible through a long hallway on the bottom floor. The room, stocked with greasy black PCs, has low ceilings and industrial fluorescent grid lighting. The walls are painted an odd dark bright color, mauve. At the front desk they have some glass cases with old looking webcams and software packaging on display.

Our room at the Deauville, #1542,
11 PM sharp.

I go to set up the room, and one of my friends is there alone. He is drunk or stoned and keeps making loud jokes, kind of in his own world. He helps me move the heavy TV and coffee table toward the windows to create a long platform. The view outside the windows is of the city, not the beach. When it gets dark, the city doesn't look like anything much from here - just a wide sprawl with some taller and lower areas. It's glowy and warm, orange and light black.

For dinner everyone's gone. I eat from a pile of snacks under a table: apples, a container of roasted almonds someone bought on the trip down, and a large bar of 80% chocolate from the drugstore across the street, the only store in sight. About 12 people come to the hotel room. They're wearing t-shirts and shorts; there's a photo where you see Dan's white pants.

Afterward, Asher says the performances are either Nico or Jim Morrison. Nico's bad because she's too vulnerable; Jim Morrison's good because he's going to the moon.

We unplug my equipment, take some pictures, and change to go to this apartment down the block. It's warm; I'm still wearing my big platform shoes and Bless shorts. Everything is ugly, like the inside of 7-11s, and the look of the streets is familiar from video games.