



How a Trip to Puerto Vallarta Helped Me Move Beyond Grief

It felt empowering to focus on the relationship with myself and with my friends—and to even take a break from hooking up.

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January in New York City is long and dreary; sometimes it feels like a year itself. During the first month after the holidays, we are awaiting the much desired return of Spring. I've always heard about people going away at the start of the year for a week or more to get a reset for the rest of their cold season in Manhattan.

In January of 2018, I participated in this winter vacation thing for the first time. Off to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, I went with my friends to celebrate one of their 30th birthdays. I was ecstatic to leave New York City as an incoming blizzard was on its way. I couldn't get out fast enough, and by the time I arrived in Mexico, I had completely forgotten about the winter. I landed and was promptly offered margaritas. This was a nice touch, but being sober and all, I kindly declined.

I arrived at the airport around the same time as some of my housemates from a different flight. We called an Uber and off we went on our journey to our accommodations. I wasn't sure what to expect. I had traveled to Mexico for work, but never for vacation. And as we made our way up a winding brick road to the top of a hill past the Almar Resort, we finally arrived at our villa entrance. The door opened and immediately I felt at ease. This grand entrance with a beautiful circular table right in front of us. There was a grand kitchen to the right and to the left where the breeze was coming from, I saw the sunlight. We were shown around by our friends and the hosts, Rob and Saul.

The home had many levels with a pool and a tennis court. My room was on the lower level, tucked between the two other bedrooms overlooking the pool with a view of the ocean. It was absolutely breathtaking. Knowing that I'd wake up to this every day for over a week was unbelievable and wonderful—it also made a great set for Instagram photos.

This stunning villa had a staff that would prepare breakfast for us each morning at 9am, and we would gather then for an hour to eat, laughing and talking about the evening before. The merriment led to discussion about the plans for that day. Would we go to Montamar, the local beach club with a pool? We had one at the house, but it'd be nice to sit in a cabana with hotties swimming nearby. It was like a meat market, but at that point I hadn't had sex in about six weeks. As much as I loved looking and flirting, I just wasn't in the place emotionally or spiritually to allow someone to be inside me.

I had been there for a few days when I was chatting with Miss Fame on the phone and through text message. I got this sense that she wanted to be there and needed a vacation, even if for a few

days. Ever so casually, I mentioned that she should come, and within moments her flight was booked and my bestie was to be flying to Puerto Vallarta to join us in our tropical delight.

The restaurants around the city were beautiful, and all had a new experience to offer. La Palapa: a style of roof, but for this beachfront restaurant that opened up onto the sand with fire performers followed by fireworks. Café des Artistes: a two story restaurant with a piano bar downstairs and a picturesque garden rooftop dining room seated gracefully above. The Hacienda San Angel: A charming luxury hotel with a stunning entrance and dimly lit courtyard leading you by a candlelit staircase to the left. The host guides you to the restaurant placed toward the back of the property and onward up a staircase to a dining room on the terrace.

We went out dancing and to strip clubs—one exciting excursion after the next. It was really a beautiful time for me to spend with my friends; even when I checked out what Grindr and Scruff had to offer, I decided it was more important to make deeper bonds with the people I was already with instead of allowing in outside energy.

One of our final days in Mexico, a few of us went on an actual ziplining adventure about an hour outside of the city. We got in a touristy travel van, and along the way, Fame and I got into talking about where we were emotionally in our lives.

I had received a message from Trish, the mother of my dear friend Brit, who had recently and unexpectedly died. Trish said she was sending me something and wondered if I wanted anything specific of his as his wife was going through his things. The bracelets that my friend Brit's family had made after his passing had "Brit Burns: The Man, The Myth, The Legend" written on it.

I hadn't discussed much of my feelings about his passing up to that point. There's something about the friendship between Fame and me that allows us to speak so freely with one another. I broke down a little while opening up. It was a beautiful moment of sharing as we drove through the rainforest.

On our last night out on the town, we had dinner then bounced from one bar to another. On our bar hop, we ran into Cynthia Lee Fontaine from season eight of RuPaul's Drag Race. We danced so hard that night. Sometime in the middle of raging to the music, I locked eyes with a handsome, muscular man. He finally approached me to dance, followed by lots of flirting, leading to making out.

After we left the club, this sexy man and I strolled and grabbed a quick bite. We sat and talked, and he was really into me. I was feeling it out, but making out with him didn't mean I was going to sleep with him on my last night there as some "last call" hookup. I let him down easy and went up to the villa. I felt great not having sex at that time. It was empowering to me and I felt amazing to focus on the relationship with myself and with my friends.

I think that I just needed time for me to get right emotionally after such loss and heartbreak. I was grieving so many things. Some people may view it as strange to take a break from sex. We put such an emphasis on sex, but that importance is often excessive. I needed to find a balance for myself, and I guess that meant a continued break from sex.

This vacation soothed my soul, enriched my friendships, and allowed me to breathe. I think this was the trip I needed to refocus at that point in my life. It was a way for me to move into the next area of growth in my life.

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