

Entertainment for Men

On a crisp December evening in Beverly Hills, Hugh Hefner stands outside the **TASCHEN** Bookstore surrounded by blondes and the warmth of camera flashes from paparazzi yelling even warmer praise. He's here to showcase a new hardcover, a six-volume, \$1,300 retrospective of *Playboy*, covering the covers and what came between them from 1953 to 1979.

As he and his gilded entourage enter the halls for free champagne, the crowd surges behind. Winter is not the most wonderful time of the year when it comes to the expression of flesh, but plenty of it is pressed together as the crowd squeezes into this temporary den of inequity, a place where women tower over the men in ways not limited to height. One particularly willowy person wears her hair like a white, spherical cloud that at any moment threatens to dissipate. A *Playboy* bunny is marked across her chest in precise, almost demure workmanship.

Hefner holds court in the rear of the room, unsurprisingly fawned over, serene.

As the event wears on, a man exits to meet a woman who has just arrived outside. They haunt the empty sidewalk, anything but serene. This is the part they don't tell you about in *Playboy*. This is the thing the *Playboy* Advisor reads about in letters and laughs at with the Happy Hooker.

"You're addicted to inertia," the man snaps.

"Hugh Hefner says nothing to me," she replies. "I don't care, I don't care, I don't care about Hugh Hefner."

"So if you don't want to go, then just don't do it," he says. "What was your alternative?" he adds, the disgust whistling through his teeth in a different kind of season's greeting.

"Jonathan Richman, *Unsilent Night* — anything but this."

The centerfolds in "Hugh Hefner's *Playboy*" are presented full-size in the pricey volumes,

as are Hefner's early cartoon drawings. The set includes a 2.75-inch-square piece of Hefner's silk pajamas. This is so that one might more closely approach the *Playboy* reality.

Outside, the woman is crying. A colossal doorman takes no notice of her, his gaze darting in and out of the bookstore.

Presently, here comes Rodney Bingenheimer, bopping down the street with that permanently startled look he wears. He waves as he's greeted and walks with his own blonde through the gates of joy.

Inside, the champagne runs out. Outside, the man and woman continue their argument, pacing, tethered to the general vicinity of the bookstore. It's the only place with any warmth.

"I wait around the corner for you, waiting for you to call, and you leave your phone in the car," she says. "I left all those messages and waited, for nothing. And now the night's shot because it'll take forever to get anywhere and nothing ever happens in Beverly Hills!"

He sighs heavily.

The scene gives rise to a question: Whom does *Playboy* appeal to these days? How inclusive is it, even after all these years?

The crowd inside begins to thin, leaving behind a brace of Bunnies, ears cocked in ways that only wire and *Playboy* can produce.

The man and the woman linger on the sidewalk, apparently addicted to inertia. As Hefner and Co. glide past, he gives the man a look of sagacious pity, as though God himself had once been married and somehow failed at it.

The man had chosen the event, as it was becoming increasingly apparent, out of some misguided sense of *Playboy* nostalgia.

The two leave in separate cars.

Dear *Playboy* Advisor: What kind of stereo system works best in Hell?

—David Cotner