

SANDY DAYS, SALTY NIGHTS

What's love got to do with it?



ArtisHENDERSON
sandydays@florida-weekly.com

The summer after my freshman year in college, I spent three months in the woody, pine-scented northeast, working at a summer camp. I shared a drafty lean-to with two other counselors, girls my age, and we formed a sudden, solid friendship, the sort of connection that comes from confronting bears and whispering secrets around a smoky campfire.

Late one evening, while the embers cooled and the campsite slept, the three of us huddled in our separate cots, telling stories through the green mosquito netting. The night grew dense and the forest pressed in around us, leaves rustling in the impermeable darkness. After a long pause, just as I thought everyone had drifted off, Elizabeth began talking.

"When I was 16, I went on holiday with my parents," she said, her British accent rising and falling in elegant waves. "We stayed along the shore. It was quite lovely."

She told us about the friends she made, the guys and girls she met in that stony vacation community along the English coast.

"One bloke, he really took a liking to



me. Told me how beautiful I was." Fair and rosy-cheeked, she was beautiful when I knew her, and I could imagine her blue eyes in a younger face.

Her soft voice was nostalgic. "He told me he loved me after just a couple of days. I was so young then..." Her voice trailed off, then turned hard as she told us how he seduced her, his love a subterfuge, stealing her virginity with his honeyed promises of affection.

"The last day, he wouldn't even talk to me. When I asked what was going on, one

bloke laughed and told me they had a bet going, to see how long it would take him to sleep with me."

I could hear her voice catch in her throat, and I wanted to reach through the netting and squeeze her hand, to show her how sorry I was for this treachery. She went on to number the men she had been with since her first, tracing her promiscuity back to that initial mockery of love.

Nearly ten years later, this story still rocks me. The cunning and deception break my heart, but more than that, it

points to an essential truth: the intricate linking of love and sex. In our dating culture, we are quick to separate the two, often putting sex first and waiting for love to come afterwards.

A friend recently talked about the origins of the word "adultery," saying it stemmed from a term that meant "sex without love." I can't find any concrete evidence of this, but the idea still rings true. What a sin against our higher selves, the souls that embody our self-love and that crave love from others, to commit to intercourse without a connection in our hearts.

I say this as an idealist, not a practitioner; I've dated enough to know how the world works. So much so, in fact, that when the Londoner and I absconded to the beach on our final night, I felt honor-bound to tell him on the way: "I will not be having sex with you."

He laughed his confident, comfortable laugh. "I know, sweets. But, even if we did now, it wouldn't be 'having sex.' It would be 'making love.'"

My pulse surged and I smiled back, my heart whispering words of hope while my mind told campfire tales. ■

Contact Artis
 >>Send your dating tips, questions, and disasters to sandydays@florida-weekly.com

JUST IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS...

We've Moved!

NOW OPEN
 IN OUR
 CONVENIENT NEW LOCATION
 IN THE
 FINE SHOPS AT ANDREA LANE

NEXT TO BONEFISH GRILL
 ON US 41 IN FORT MYERS.
 CALL FOR DETAILS.
337-2723

DIAMONDS
 EXQUISITE JEWELRY
 CUSTOM DESIGN
 EXPERT REPAIR
 FINE ART

PROPRIETORS BRAD AND COLBI CONGRESS

WWW.SEAREELLIFE.COM 14261 SOUTH TAMiami TRAIL • SUITE 3 • FORT MYERS

See You Soon!