

# SANDY DAYS, SALTY NIGHTS

## Craving more than vanilla



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In "Summer of Sam," Spike Lee's film set in the south Bronx during the tense, fearful summer of '77, the Son of Sam murders provide an eerie backdrop for the drama. The movie focuses on the personal lives of the residents of a mostly Italian neighborhood steeped in the atmosphere of chaos and fright.

John Leguizamo plays Vinny, a leisure suit wearing, gold chain-sporting husband who can't manage to keep on the marital straight and narrow. His tastes veer toward the debauched, but he can't stand to mix kink and marriage. His wife Dionna (played by the spunky, talented Mira Sorvino) gives it a valiant go, donning a blond wig and black leather boots in one scene. Vinny makes an effort to get into the mood, but ultimately opts out of the naughty role-play. "You're my

wife," he says.

Leguizamo's characters rarely make great philosophers - and least of all the greasy Vinny - but his keep-the-dirt-out-of-the-marriage-bed policy has a certain truthful ring.

Perhaps it's my own personal bias, but I have the sense that most serious relationships opt for keeping things vanilla in the bedroom. The naughty bits remain the territory of brief flings and extramarital affairs.

In a recent conversation with a would-be suitor, I rolled my eyes as he listed the taboo

things guys crave (I always wonder where guys come up with this stuff, but if an article in New York Magazine - "Not Tonight, Honey. I'm Logging On" - is to be believed, then a lot of it is porn-influenced). He saw my less-than-amused look and said, by way of explanation, "Well, it's not like I'd want to do any of this with you."

Wait a minute. Was he not interested, after all?

"No, see, I actually respect you," he said. "This type of stuff, it's for - other girls."

What's so perplexing about all this is that, clearly, people dig adventurous bedroom escapades. As a matter of fact, there's an entire industry built around non-vanilla sex.

A quick Google search turns up informational sites, online superstores, and even YouTube videos. Yet, the people that should be tapping into this lifestyle (monogamous couples in relationships built on trust and respect) often steer clear. Into the void comes Web sites like ashleymadison.com. Its tag line? "Life is short. Have an affair." Heavily advertised on the Sirius satellite radio Playboy channel, the Ashley Madison agency offers an online dating community for married people.

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Posters often seek "NSA" - no strings attached - relationships, a transparent request for sex only. The site caters to the idea that, though a marriage may be happy on many levels, sexually speaking, many spouses go unsatisfied. With 2 1/2 million users, that's a lot of unmet needs.

So, the question becomes, if this is what folks truly want, why are we keeping it out of our serious relationships? Maybe some couples are overdue for a frank discussion about sex and desire. If respect provides the guiding framework, then anything is possible. All you have to do is ask. ■

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