

Good Riddance

With the End of HBO's Sunday-Night Sex Show, Men Throughout New York Breathe Sigh of Relief

By David Joachim
Special to New York Resident

I believe I speak for all the city's eligible bachelors when I say I couldn't be happier *Sex and the City* is over.

As Samantha might say about a date with erectile dysfunction, "Good \$!@&*! riddance."

It's not that I didn't enjoy the show at one time. Before the main characters started registering at Tiffany's, I looked forward to Sunday nights as much as anyone. I couldn't wait to see what kind of sexual deviant Carrie would choose as her next *luvah* or the shocking new way Samantha would offer strings-free pleasure to a guy young enough to be her son.

But then the show turned. By the end of season five, the writers had pulled a devilish switcheroo, preparing viewers for a fairy-tale ending to mirror the inner psyche of every woman I have ever dated.

Cocktail parties with Gotham's elite. Gushing love poems. A hotel suite facing the Eiffel Tower. Horse-drawn sleigh rides through Central Park. Spontaneous \$20,000 gift necklaces. I couldn't help but wonder: When did my ex-wife join the writing staff?

The ladies of *Sex and the City* have only raised single women's already high expectations. The Average Joe bachelors of this city are left holding the Prada bag, and we're not happy about it.

Sure, Carrie, Charlotte, Samantha, and Miranda were never strangers to extravagance. But in earlier seasons, each indulgence came with a price. Charlotte got the Park Avenue apartment but lost the husband. Carrie's wealthy suitors wouldn't commit.

In the last episodes, however, they were getting it all. They were having their wedding cakes and eating them too. In the series finale, I half-expected the writers to reveal that Mr. Big's real name was Prince Charming.

Of course, the media likes to feed our fantasies, and there's nothing wrong with that. We men are no strangers to the concept. We spend roughly \$4 billion a year on porn, after all.

But there's a big difference with *Sex and the City*. The women of Manhattan so envy the *Sex* kittens that they can't resist mimicking them. They want everything their TV friends have. If you don't have a penthouse apartment, a full-time driver, and a white horse, don't bother applying, Mr. Small.

Materialism cut in on the real-life mating dance long ago, of course, but women didn't dare make their class-jumping motives obvious, lest they be

labeled gold diggers. Shame was an effective deterrent. A lady didn't ask a gentleman too many leading questions about his occupation or his spending habits or he'd be out of there faster than you can whip out your green Amex card.

Nowadays, New York women seem to have outgrown their fear of the date cut short in the name of finding their very own Mr. Big. I went on a blind date recently that lasted all of 45 minutes, most of which I spent answering Jenny's questions about my career ambitions. "Where do you see yourself in five years?" she asked. We could have cut the date down to 15 minutes had I e-mailed a resume in advance.

My friend Ted tells me of the time a woman opened a blind date with the line, "So tell me your work history." Aiming to please, he complied for a minute. "Then I realized it was unnecessary — I never wanted to see her again," he said.

These are probably the same women whose online personal ads start with: "I want a successful man who knows how to treat a woman." Sure you do. Translation: Don't expect me to try to grab the check.

The fantasy concocted by HBO was so satisfying for female viewers in the final season of *Sex* that they missed a startling subtext that should have left them feeling betrayed and offended. This show, once lauded for its portrayal of strong women who certainly didn't need no stinking men to have an orgasm, portrayed Carrie, in the end, as a helpless damsel who couldn't take care of herself.

This successful career woman quit her job to live out her "dream" of becoming a sex slave and cocktail party accessory to a very rich man in Paris. What, that's not your dream?

Thank goodness Big swooped in at the last minute to offer Carrie the same life, only in the comfort of her hometown. It's OK that this notorious womanizer treated Carrie like a high-class hooker for six years. I mean, he *cried* when he saw her. You can't stay mad at *me*, kid. Love ya, babe. *Wink*.

I'm just grateful the series is over. At least HBO's next original series, a Western entitled *Deadwood*, won't prey on men's feelings of inadequacy.

It's a throwback to when women weren't so demanding. They were happy just to have a man with a big gun.

Uh-oh. ■

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