

## **Observing the Mama's Boy/Daddy's Girl Relationship at the Movies**

By Joseph and Sarah Elizabeth Malinak

Did you know you can attend a mini-workshop on romantic relationships in the comfort of your own home for the price of a rented movie and be entertained at the same time? That is because this "at-home workshop" uses movies that you might already own!

This article, which is an excerpt from the book, "*Getting Back to Love: When the Pushing and Pulling Threaten to Tear You Apart*" (copyright 2008, All Rights Reserved) shows you how to pay attention to the Mama's Boy/Daddy's Girl dynamics in certain romantic relationships found in specific movies. It even shows you the movies where you can find evidence of Father's Sons and Mother's Daughters.

Mama's Boys are tied, either consciously or subconsciously, to the influence of their mothers. They believe they get their power from the women in their lives. For systemic reasons, they did not get the chance to bond with their fathers in their early teens. Mama's Boys are naturally attracted to Daddy's Girls who are complimentary to them in the male/female dance of life.

Daddy's Girls are tied, either consciously or subconsciously, to the influence of their fathers. They believe they find fulfillment taking care of the men in their lives. For systemic reasons, they did not get the chance to bond with their mothers in their early teens. Daddy's Girls and Mama's Boys draw each other like magnets! Each of them senses in the other what was missing from childhood and believes they can find the missing pieces together. Their relationships begin with a lot of chemistry and happiness. However, when they reach a certain level of commitment, they risk falling out of love unless they can learn to be together as adults, rather than as parents and children.

On the other hand, Father's Sons did get to bond with their fathers in their early teens. These men know they get their power from within themselves. Similarly, Mother's Daughters were able to bond with their mothers in their early teens. They know that fulfillment comes from within.

An effective way of observing Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls in action is to be on the lookout for it in movies and on television. That removes the subject far enough away from oneself to be both entertaining and educational!

The most recent classical Mama's Boy on television can be found in reruns of *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Raymond and his brother are so tied to their mother's apron strings that it can be both repulsive and hysterical to watch. Raymond's wife, Debra, is a typical Daddy's Girl too, as she barely tolerates Raymond's behavior and bosses him around. Routinely, the most tension-filled moments on the sitcom happen when Ray has to choose between his mother and his wife. Invariably, he does his best to choose both, disappointing both women every time!

One of the more painful depictions of a Daddy's Girl is found in *Funny Girl*. As depicted in that movie, Fanny Brice very sweetly takes care of her husband, Nick Arnstein, as though he is a boy and not a grown man. Out of love for him and without realizing what she is doing, she demeans him over and over again, chipping away at his masculinity and destroying what is left of their love. She doesn't mean to, but she can't help herself. She is desperate to hold on to him. The option of letting him handle the consequences of his own actions must have felt like a sure way of losing him. But taking care of him made certain she'd lose him. If you or someone you love is at risk of jeopardizing their relationship because of this kind of caretaking, *Funny Girl* can be an effective, if painful, mirror to help encourage yourself or someone else to make a change.

In movies like *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, or *Enough*, or *Hanging Up*, the depictions of Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls are equally obvious. In *Enough* we find a depiction of a Mama's Boy who tries to get his power from his woman in abusive ways. In it, Slim and Mitch Miller are newlyweds apparently in love and with an abundant future ahead. The honeymoon is quickly over, though, when Mitch turns abusive. He becomes more and more controlling of their environment and their child, isolating Slim from her friends and potential support. He eventually begins to have an affair. Between finding out about the affair and Slim's desire to protect their daughter from Mitch's abuse, she leaves their home with their child only to have Mitch pursue her relentlessly. Mitch's obsession with controlling and belittling his wife, his having an affair and apparent feeling of entitlement to that affair, are all symptoms of a Mama's Boy who uses abuse to try to get his power from women.

What about getting to witness a Father's Son and a Mother's Daughter on film? Are any of those available? Yes!

In the movie *You've Got Mail*, you find a Mother's Daughter and a Father's Son in action. Kathleen Kelly is her mother's daughter, having followed her mother in ownership and management of her mother's children's bookstore. Joe Foxx is his father's son, having followed his father in ownership and management of the family business, Foxx Books.

The next time you watch *You've Got Mail*, pay attention to how Joe and Kathleen manage their relationships. Joe neither pushes against nor pulls on the women in his life. And the women in his life don't treat him like a little boy. Kathleen doesn't take care of the men in her life as though they are little boys. Even though Frank, the man in her life when the movie begins, may in fact be a Mama's Boy, Kathleen doesn't take care of him in that way. And when life throws her a serious curve ball, with the loss of her business, she reaches down deep and takes care of herself. The movie makes it clear that the resource she taps into is her relationship with her deceased mother.

In *Open Range* you'll find a character who is likely a Father's Son. Charley Waite is a middle-aged cowboy and former gunslinger enjoying the final years of grazing his cattle freely in open country. He is a man who has never been married and who, apparently, has not had a great deal of contact with the opposite sex. When he meets and becomes

smitten with Sue Barlow, he doesn't quite know how to go about letting her know of his interest and growing love. His attempts to tell her he finds her attractive are awkward, yet appealing.

In the end he comes to her, hat in hand, offering her marriage and a kind of leadership as a husband that is old-fashioned and chauvinistic. Sue is also middle-aged and has never been married. She is too wise and courageous about life to attempt to pretend she will be fulfilled being the little wife whose husband protects her from all harm. She challenges Charley to meet her as one adult to another. He is man enough to meet the challenge, and the movie ends with the promise that their spirited romance has only just begun.

Speaking of spirited romances, *Bull Durham* gives a viewer a robin's eye view into a Mama's Boy and a Father's Son in pursuit of the same woman! In this movie, there is a love triangle that forms around Crash Davis, a seasoned baseball catcher, Annie Savoy, the team's best fan, and Nuke LaLoosh, the new young rookie on the team.

Even though Crash and Annie test their attraction for one another in the beginning of the movie, Crash quickly steps aside for Nuke and Annie to do their thing. He is too seasoned, both on and off the field, and too self-contained to waste his energy competing with the highly strung "puppy" that Nuke surely is.

Annie is in the habit of taking on one ball player a year whom she helps mature. She says, "There's never been a ball player who slept with me who didn't have the best year of his career...there's a certain amount of life wisdom I give these boys. I can expand their minds...I make them feel confident and they make me feel safe and pretty." As such she puts herself in the position of Mama to her chosen ball player and lets him be her Boy.

The first night she meets Nuke and Crash, she invites them back to her house where she sits them down and explains the rules. "I hook up with one guy a season. It usually takes me a couple of weeks to pick the guy. It's kind of my own spring training. And, well, you two are the most promising prospects of the season so far. So I just thought we should try to get to know each other." Crash stops her right there. He wants to know why she gets to choose. Why not one of the men? She goes on about quantum physics and how no one really ever gets to choose anyone. Crash gets up to leave. Annie asks him where he's going.

Crash responds, "After twelve years in the minor leagues, I don't try out. Besides, I don't believe in quantum physics when it comes to matters of the heart."

"What do you believe in then?" Annie asks.

As he puts on his coat to leave, Crash answers her with one of the most famous movie speeches that ends with these words, "...and I believe in long, slow, deep, soft, wet kisses that last three days. Good-night."

Annie breathes, “Oh, my.” She then chases him out the door to say she just wants to date, not fall in love. Crash tells her, “I’m not interested in a woman who’s interested in that boy. Good-night.”

When Nuke makes it to the big leagues and leaves town, Crash makes himself available to reconsider the chemistry that was and still is evident between him and Annie. At that point he requests she show up as one adult to join the dance with another adult. It is a stretch for her, but she’s woman enough to take the challenge.

Movies are a great way to attend mini-workshops to witness the ramifications of being blind to the Mama’s Boy/Daddy’s Girl dance and the relative ease of the Father’s Son/Mother’s Daughter dance!