

VIRGINS BY CHOICE

Interview with
filmmakers Sonia
Suvagau and
Adriana Villi
by Katerina Renti



1. What inspired you to create a film about abstaining from sex for a year?

The inspiration came through the creation process. We didn't sit down and decide that this would be one of the main themes of our film - it came from character development and play. We begin creating these two characters: Lily who is a "40 year old virgin" who tries to control everything in her life and do all the right things because she thinks that if she follows all the rules everything will work out.

Adriana who plays Lily was raised Catholic and as a young adult attended Christian churches so the idea of saving sex for marriage is embedded in that culture. Luna's character is the opposite of Lily in many ways. She lives freely and at the beginning of our story, more chaotically. As she is coming out of an abusive and suffocating relationship and has newly discovered she is bisexual, she is very sexually free but this sexual freedom almost imprisons her. Sonia who plays Luna had also recently discovered her own bisexuality and wanted to explore that in further in her character.

With these two contrasting characters, we had a lot to draw from. The writing process for us was very organic. We allowed the characters to speak for themselves and sometimes would pass the laptop back and forth to surprise each other. The story wrote itself. It's hard to trace back the exact moment, but when it hit, we knew that this vow to abstain from sex would be what the story would be hinged upon.



2. What challenges did you face in bringing this story to life, and how did you overcome them?

Making an independent film on a micro budget is always going to be your biggest challenge. Although we were blessed to find a wonderful executive producer we still had to respect a strict budget and so we had to pull in many favors to make sure we were "on time and on money."

We had to get creative and think about how we could use some locations for multiple scenes and find location sponsors. Finding the right team in front of and behind the camera made all the difference. We are grateful for those who came on board and found that each one aligned with the message of the film in their own way, motivating them to be flexible with their rates. This supportive family we created on set helped us feel safe to tell this story and do some of the very vulnerable things required. The positive work environment fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and excitement.

Make no mistake, producing this film was a full time hustle and we were still directing and acting so we had to switch creative hats on a daily basis. Additionally, we had to take on even more extra jobs ourselves to cut down on expenses so for example, we did our own costumes and stocked our own craft service, something we're sure other indie filmmakers can relate to.



3. What message do you hope audiences take away from "Virgins by Choice"?

In a lot of ways, this film is a coming out of the shadows, exposing the beautiful and raw nature of our humanness. We hope others can find themselves in the many rich characters we created and feel less alone. Our emphasis on putting healing first is an invitation for the viewer to reflect on where they are in their healing journey and encourage them to find that friend to hold them accountable.

4. Are there any plans to expand the story or create a sequel?

Yes, we have already started development on a sequel and a series spin off. We can't share any specifics as we don't want any spoilers for this current film that many haven't had a chance to watch just yet. We feel that we created very deep and identifiable characters and we would definitely want the opportunity to expand their journey for our audience.