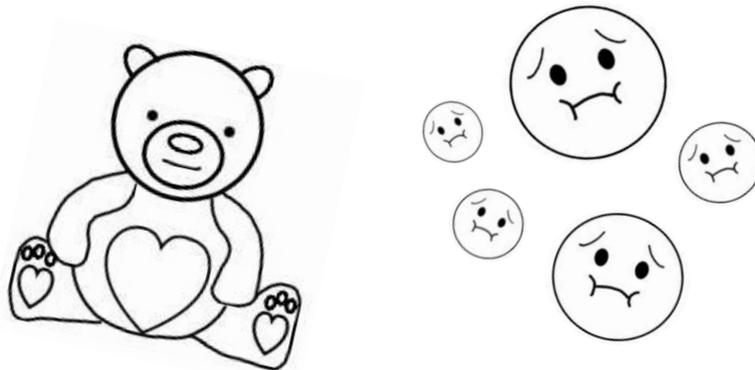


THURSDAY FEBRUARY 14, 1991

I hate nothing more than Valentine's Day. Hearts in every shop window and those ghastly teddy bears sold at every corner, all this lovey dovey stuff was enough to make you sick. I put on my headphones, pressing play on my Discman and my favourite album (currently *Behaviour* by the Pet Shop Boys) drowns out the buzz of London traffic on my walk back home after work on this lame Thursday evening. I specifically requested **NOT** to have a shift on Valentine's Day, but Laura (AKA THE WORST BOSS EVER) called me in last minute. Her phone call was laced with smugness, it's as if she knew I had no plans tonight. For the whole of today, the other girls at school were giddy with excitement, chattering about how many boys from St Michael's - the neighbouring mixed school- had sent them Valentine's and finetuning the plans of the double, triple, quadruple dates they'd organised. They all stared at me with pity in their eyes. I brushed it off telling them I didn't need a crappy piece of paper with Cupid on it to know my worth, but deep down I was only trying to convince myself with this whole "independent woman" facade. Let's just say I won't be winning an Oscar for that performance any time soon as they all deffo think I'm a lonesome excuse of a 15-year-old girl. When I finally made it to the shop for my shift after school, I was faced with all these couples who were completely infatuated with one another (BARF). Let me tell you trying to clean away dirty plates from couples playing tonsil tennis isn't an experience I would recommend.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 14, 1992

Here was me hoping this year's Valentine's Day would be better than the last, yet somehow, it's worse?!! Well, it got off to a good start I suppose as my BFF, Tilly, and I had planned a double date to the local Odeon. She was coming with her boyfriend Zach (*they're totes the next Winona and Johnny*), and he was bringing along a mystery fella for me. Me and Tilly were waiting for them by the popcorn stand and Zach turned up with none other than Swoony Spencer (*who FYI Every Girl Is Crushing On*) which is so exciting for me, right? WRONG! There was no chemistry at all, zero, nada in fact I wasn't even remotely attracted to him. There **MUST** be something wrong with me! And it simply went downhill from there, not only was I dragged along to see *Star Trek VI* (*spoiler alert: it's a total yawnfest*) but Swoony Spence leaned in to kiss me at the end. Obviously, I dodged the kiss, and he planted a sloppy one on my cheek instead, but it was mortifyingly embarrassing. So embarrassing that I bolted out of there the second the movie

A Girl Called Lonesome

ended and ran all the way home. Let's hope no one asks too many questions tomorrow, eh?

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 14, 1993

I'm sick of not being true to myself and wallowing in a pool of self-pity every Valentine's Day. I'm tired of hiding who I truly am behind all these different versions of myself that I'm putting out there. I'm lesbian. I like girls. GOD THAT FEELS SO GOOD TO SAY! (Even if is written in this random Lisa Frank notebook for now) I've always felt like this deep down, but I've been too scared to come out, until now, for the fear of people looking at me differently. After all, I'm the same shy, scrawny Penelope no matter what my sexuality is. But now is the right time to for me to come out because I've finally got real feelings for someone. Real, heart racing, electrifying feelings. I can't hide them any longer because this someone is called Lola and she sent me a Valentine today! A glittery, pink, sappy valentine that made my heart swell with happiness. I've been antagonising myself for weeks on end; does she like me or like me not? And now it's finally been confirmed, a weight has been lifted off my shoulders and I can finally breathe again.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 14, 1997

Huh, it's been quite a few years since I've written in this notebook, hasn't it? I guess there hasn't really been a need to after I came out. It was one of the most terrifying experiences I've ever had to face in my entire life. The paralysing fear that my nearest and dearest wouldn't accept me for who I am. However, that was all diminished, seconds after coming out, both my parents wrapped me in a hug as they cried and said things like 'it's okay' and 'we love and accept you no matter what.' They assured me they just wanted to see me happy. And that's what I am: happy. That girl Lola, well now she's my girlfriend! In fact, I'm getting ready for our special night out at a new drag bar, Freedom, in Soho. Life couldn't be sweeter and I'm finally spending Valentine's Day with someone who makes me smile like the Cheshire cat and laugh until my belly aches which is all I could ever ask for.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 14, 1999

I'm moving into my own flat today and coincidentally I've found this notebook again during the move. It must be fate! My life has changed extraordinarily since that last entry, for one Lola and I are no longer together. Although, it is beyond wholesome reading about how blissful I was during those years with her. Looking back, I'm thankful for her as she helped me transform into who I am today. Valentine's Day is no longer a big deal to me, there's no need to wallow in a cesspit of misery accompanied by a big tub of Ben & Jerry's cookie dough ice cream. I've found fulfilment in other aspects of my life: education- I'm studying for my master's in criminal justice- and my career- I'm working as a paralegal at a lawyer's office in Marylebone. I've finally found my niche, helping others which I'll be putting into action tomorrow at court. How times have changed!

A Girl Called Lonesome

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2001

This notebook has been in my desk drawer since I finished my MA and I've been deliberating whether to write in it one final time. It's Valentine's Day 10 years after my first ever entry, have I found love? Hell no. But have I found something better? Hell yes! Love in my career and my community. But most importantly, I've found love in myself.