



Valentine's Day the Feminist Way

by Jennie Webb

I kinda hate it when I act like a girl. I mean, not entirely. As a feminist for the 21st century, I think I should be willing to embrace and accept all things female. But there's definitely a part of me—the inner eye-rolling part—that balks when I invest in something pink and Barbie and mushy, like, well, Valentine's Day.

The truth is that this is a relatively new fixation. I spent the better part of my adult life pretty much mocking Valentine's Day—or rather, the very loaded trappings that go along with it.

For years I had a standing date with a girlfriend every Feb. 14. We'd get dressed up, then dine together at a fancy restaurant where we'd look pityingly at the couples surrounding us. We'd watch them awkwardly navigating the top tier of romantic rituals, the men nearly crumbling under the pressure to make everything perfect, the women clearly lowering their expectations.

I tried to dissuade my girlfriends who chose to spend Valentine's Day with—get this—their boyfriends. Couldn't they see it was all a set-up, that they were bound to lose, buying into this Hallmark picture of true love? The fact that two of my best friends had V-Day weddings, and subsequently went through nasty divorces, strengthened my resolve. No woman should allow herself to be duped by cardboard hearts.

Of course everything changed when I met my husband.

Shortly before we were married, the ominous February date rolled 'round and we just happened to be getting together. Go figure. Almost by accident, I had found the perfect Valentine for my guy. He, too, thought it was perfect. So perfect that he felt compelled to immediately make me a card. On his computer.

Clutching the perfectly charming dot matrix missive as I foraged in the fridge for dinner, I was strangely, suddenly struck by the absolutely overwhelming appeal of this gooey, lovey-dovey celebration. I had completely given in to high-stakes girlishness. And I hated it. Of course, my years of watching disappointed women and their Valentine's lovers had given me one advantage: I knew that if I was going to go there, I would need to take Valentine's Day by the balls.

Right. My husband now knows how to make my Feb. 14 perfect because I tell him: dinner reservations, flowers, and a card—from the store. That's what I expect, that's what I get, and there's nothing awkward about it. Romance at its best. But after 10 years of marriage, I'm thinking maybe I should raise the bar. Perhaps Valentine's Day now necessitates the giving of jewelry.

Can I help it if I'm a girl? ■

GIRLFRIENDS'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE with Jennie Webb

✿ “No woman should allow herself to be duped by cardboard hearts.”