



# REMINISCING HIGH SCHOOL ROMANCE

IQRA L. QAMARI

Last night I stumbled upon my younger cousin, a high-school student, chatting away with a girl from his class for whom he apparently has a 'thing'. It took me down a dusty memory lane of high school romance and made me feel like a wrinkly 60 year old with a cane and a chronic cough. But I'm just in my 20s having an existential crisis.

So kids, let me give you an account of how love-affairs used to be ensued back when all those diverse and expressive GIFs and emojis were not used as the means to channel our deepest and darkest emotions.

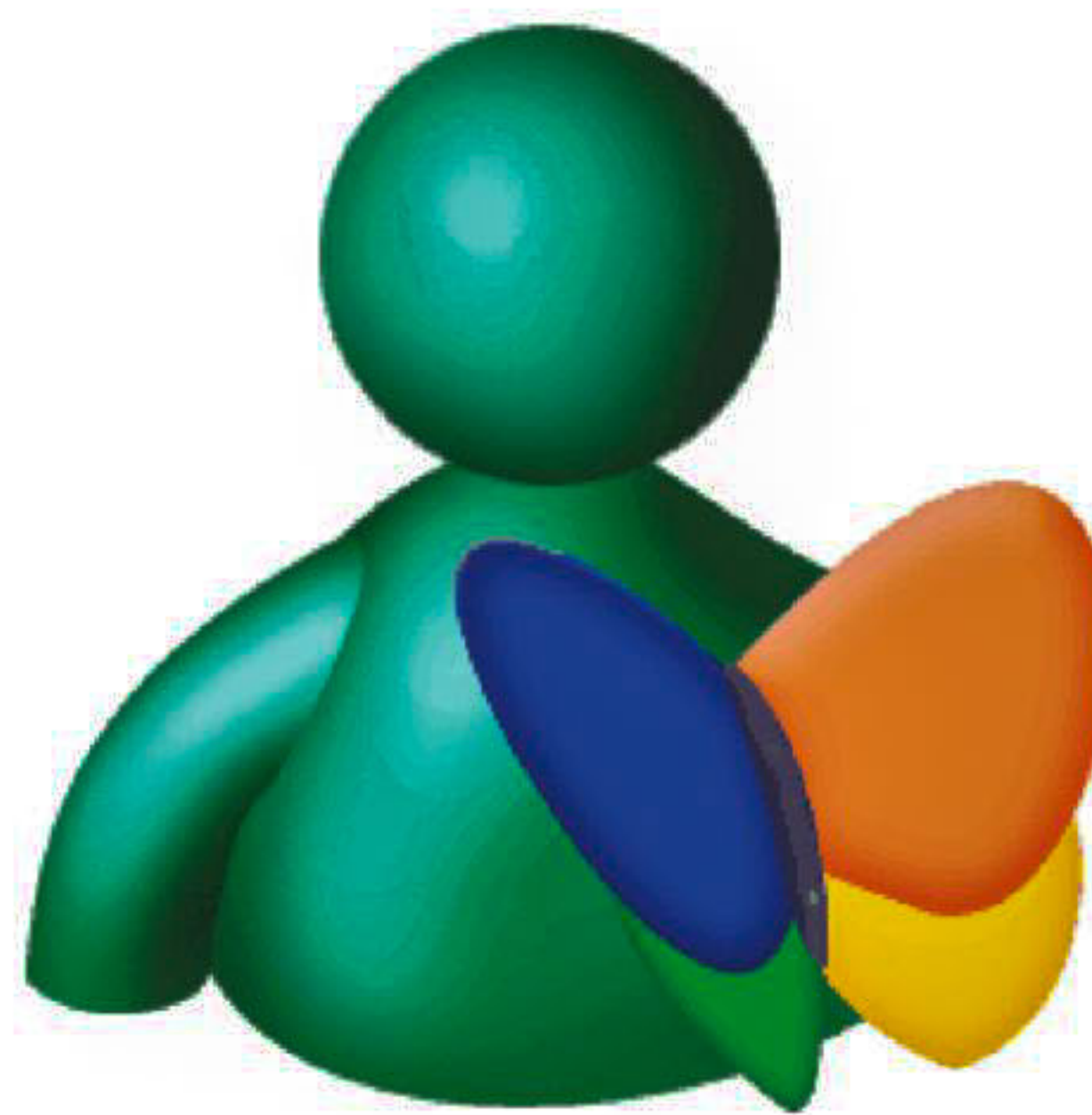
In those days, awkwardness would sizzle up in the atmosphere amidst all the confusing hormonal ups and downs and the sparks would start flying once rumours would begin to spread among the friends of said boy-girl in question. The option of constantly love reacting to your crush's picture to send a harmless and subtle romantic signal was not available. You have to realise that I am referring to the era when a boy and girl were made to sit together as a form of punishment. The feelings were confirmed by playing word games like FLAMES which acted as a relationship calculator.

Once the relationship kick-started, landline telephones and MSN messenger came to the rescue. The TNT telephone was a different ballgame altogether where

**You:** hi  
**Friend:** hey  
**You:** u k?  
**Friend:** yh u?  
**You:** gd gd  
**Friend:** g2g  
**You:** ok lol

different strategies had to be implemented in order to avoid getting caught by parents who resembled nothing short of Bollywood villains back then. Their faces zoomed in thrice whenever they realised you were up to any shenanigans. There used to be coded TNT missed calls which signalled that your melancholic sweetheart was calling out to you. Dating used to be adrenaline-packed given how there was always the risk of your parents' eves-dropping on your conversation from the parallel landline. Conference calls were set up to make the lovebirds have a proper phone date while all other parties remained silent.

For those who had the privilege of accessibility to the internet, basked in the luxury of MSN Messenger. Even with the



countless dating apps available today, there's still nothing like the rush of constantly signing in and out to let your crush know that you are online. Logging into MSN Messenger as soon as you got home was a post-school essential. This was the platform for proposals as well. One could also indirectly exhibit their mood-o-metre by posting some deep and intense lyrics under their messenger status showcasing how lonely or lovesick they are.

Going for a date outside the school premise was almost non-existent except the times when the whole class was invited to that one friend's place for a grand meet up once in a blue moon. Otherwise, having lunch on a separate table during recess while the gang of

friends teased the new couple was the regular routine. Even classroom desks were not spared from the dopamine-delight of the new lovers. Those tables would always be filled with doodles of the names of couples contained inside an etched out heart with some cheesy lyrics to go with it.

As shocking as it sounds, tagging someone in memes was not an option so one had to step up their humour game in order to impress the significant other. Fashion was limited to improvising with the school uniform; boys wearing their pants a bit lower than the waistline to appear cooler (?), or girls constantly pulling their sleeves upwards to look more attractive.

Even though all of these quirks may seem a bit ridiculous, somehow it all made sense back in the day. The pangs of not being in touch with your supposed soul mate constantly made everything more dramatic. The more I delve into it, the more I will start missing my crazy exes from school and that is the stuff nightmares are made of so I will stop. But, I wish someone would somehow bring back the 2000s high school romance into this present world of "heart reacts" and meme-tagging.

*Iqra suffers from wanderlust, dreams of discovering the Loch Ness Monster and occasionally complains about Economics. Tell her to get a life at [iqra.kashmir53@gmail.com](mailto:iqra.kashmir53@gmail.com)*