

Imagine Me Watching 'Imagine Me and You' Imagining Me

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I realised I was gay when I was 15, and (somehow) it came as a bit of a shock. I'd spent my life dressing in boys' clothes, playing football and rejecting the colour pink. And yet, as I watched two women kiss on my TV in my bedroom, alarm bells ringing in my lil' gay head, I didn't expect it. I remember, as a young tomboy kid, a friend asked me what I would do when I grew up and wanted to get married, and I replied, 'I'll just start dressing like a girl then'. In my little kid brain, my gender expression was a temporary thing. Something that, when the heterosexual time came, would be put in a nice little box in a big straight closet. But once those gay alarm bells ring, it was impossible for me to ignore them.

A couple months after my B.G.R (Big Gay Revelation), I watched Ol Parker's 'Imagine Me and You', a lesbian rom-com which follows Rachel (Piper Perabo) as she meets (and proceeds to fall in love with) florist, Luce (Lena Headey), on the day of her wedding to a man. As I sat, in the dark of my room, watching this quaint gay film from the man who would later direct 'Mamma Mia!: Here We Go Again!' (another gay classic), I felt excited. Seeing two women kiss, yearn for each other, end up together - I got giddy. This could be me, I realised. Sure, it would take a while (my hometown lacked both florists and lesbians), but that love and excitement was something that I could have, not just an abstract dream.

As a Cancer Moon and overall romantic, I adore the 'love at first sight' trope. Is it bullshit? Who knows, but when Rachel and Luce first lay eyes on each other as Rachel is walking down the aisle, and you can see that spark - that unshakeable connection - I blush. Perabo's subtle expression after she looks away from Luce - her face almost frozen for a moment before she readjusts - combined with Headey's visible confusion at what she just felt, only adds to the moment. The unexpected but undeniable nature of it. At the most inconvenient time possible, the two women look at each other and, even if they can't figure out what it is, they know they just felt it. What's more romantic than that?

So rare is such a moment between two women seen on screen. Rarer still, is a sapphic rom-com. Often, lesbian cinema is full of heavy themes of guilt, repression and shame. Don't get me wrong, I love all that too. What would I be without the lingering pain that 'Portrait of a Lady on Fire' left me with? Without the baby-gay heartbreak of Lexa from 'The 100' dying? I love a yearn, whether that is melodramatic or wistful, either way, it's lovely to watch two women fall in love. But knowing that, because of the genre of the film (Romantic Comedy), they'll almost definitely be okay, it makes for a lovely watching experience. That we'll see them laugh, have near-touches, sly glances - all whilst 90's British Pop plays in the background. 'Imagine Me and You' is fun; it was fun when I was just coming out, and it's fun now. And us gays, we deserve fun. We deserve silly tropes, predictable plots, goofy moments.

I have rewatched the dance-off scene more times than my little gay self can count. Rachel and Luce - both feeling the romantic connection that exists between them, but neither fully addressing it yet - go to a football match ('You're a wanker, number 9!' is sacred Lesbian text), then head to a games arcade, where they play one of those fun dancing games. The scene is full of unfiltered gay joy; small glances shared between two people who want to keep looking at each

other, unrestrained laughter, cheesy dancing. As Kelly Marie's 'Feels like I'm in Love' plays, the exaggerated lighting captures the joy of the two women dancing, and I feel happy.

Rewatching that specific scene today takes me right back to how I felt when I was 15. My face breaks into a smile involuntarily as I see pure lesbian happiness in the form of a dance battle. My younger self, in the closet, unsure what the future would hold for me and my lil' gay heart, watched that scene and just felt hope. And not an abstract, distant hope - I felt sure that, whatever happened regarding my sexuality and coming out, it would all be worth it for the possibility of this. Of a little gay dance-off to a 1979 Pop song, opposite a woman who I wanted to kiss and who wanted to kiss me. It would all be worth it. And I was right.