



the look of love

Our columnist Charlotte Butterfield got an unexpected **gift last Valentine's Day...**

Valentine's Day. The day of hearts, flowers, chocolates and candlelit dinners à deux. Last year, just around the time I should have been sniffing the scent of some deliciously decadent bouquet, I was knee-deep in an epidural, as my gorgeously fragrant Raphael came bounding into the world two weeks early, eager to ensure that he, for one, will always be the recipient of cards on February 14.

Whenever I'm asked for his date of birth, even the most hardened receptionist cracks a sweet smile at my answer and coos, "Aww, Valentine's Day, he's so lucky." And I have to hold my hands up to

a fleeting moment of madness minutes after he was born, where I mooted the idea of commemorating the day with a middle name such as Valentino, Eros, Amore, or in what I can only put down to a sudden surge of hormones, Cupid. Thankfully the other half of his parental unit still had all his senses intact and was quick to veto my suggestions with a look that combined loving bemusement with sheer disdain.

But is my son really so fortunate with his choice of birth date? On the surface his birthday will always be associated with love and happiness, and as a competitive teenager he will always receive more cards than his sister or

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his friends, but will he just be disappointed when the envelopes are cream or blue and not red? When they involve jokes and numbered badges, not declarations of romance?

Also, have you ever tried to book a table for four on Valentine's Day? Ain't ever gonna happen. Every table in every restaurant has two place settings, flanking the ubiquitous sorry-looking red rose – hardly the recipe for a raucous family gathering, is it?

What's worse is that, as he edges out of adolescence – a terrifying thought as he's only days away from his first birthday – and girls start to notice his deep azure eyes and handsome dimpled chin, he may well have to sacrifice his own birthday frivolities and instead fork out for an overpriced set menu for two and said sorry-looking red rose in order to get the girl.

And should he ever find himself single come V-Day, (an unlikely concept due to his astoundingly good genes), he may well find himself stuck celebrating with his parental unit rather than his mates who may well feel compelled to forgo friendship for feminine wiles.

And while most of my concerns are entirely unselfish and altruistic, there is a small, and it is very small, hardly worth mentioning in fact, teeny tiny part of me that is a little bit miffed that my own Valentine's Day, for at least the next 10 years, will be spent at a fast food restaurant with the only candles in sight being the ones adorning an iced version of Mickey Mouse's head.

There is a fabulous quote by an unknown author that says, "I don't understand why Cupid was chosen to represent Valentine's Day. When I think about romance, the last thing on my mind is a short, chubby toddler coming at me with a weapon." Substitute "weapon" for "soggy biscuit" and for me it will always be thus. And they say romance is dead... ❀