

Winnie Cooper was my first girlfriend. She was a fictional character from the show “Wonder Years” played by Danica Mae McKellar. If you haven’t watched the show, or perhaps it was a little before your time, I won’t judge. I would however, recommend you drop everything and go check it out.

The show was an “everyman” program. It aired weekly in half hour blocks. It followed an American family doing American things. The star of the show, a kid named Kevin, or more importantly, his inner monologue, charted his life path through puberty and adolescence.

I couldn’t think of a better way to spend my Saturday nights than tuning in to watch this kid go through the same life dramas I myself was going through.

We were the same age, 10-13. We had the same mother/father, three-kids-and-dog, nuclear family dynamic. It was like looking into a mirror. The television screen was reflecting my own life back at me.

Winnie was the first of many of my “TV Girlfriends”. The early nineties were a fertile hotbed of innocence. This was pre-Britney Spears era wholesome. Back before every cute teen was layered with skin tight clothes, taught sexually explicit dance routines, and paraded out on stage to the hyper sexualized masses of the burgeoning “internet era”. At a time when pornography came on a ‘slab-of-a-plastic-brick’ called VHS and it was considered some back alley deviant act reserved for depraved perverts and closeted sadists. The nineties were by and large, a fairly wholesome environment for impressionable youths such as myself.

There is the possibility this wholesome innocence I had perceived of the nineties was just the tinted shade of my rose colored bubble. A latchkey child, hidden away from those depraved perverts and sadists, absorbed in the comfort of the glamorized family programming. No, of course not. The world was a shiny happy place for a twelve year old. The television made it so.

Me and my TV Girlfriend had an interesting life. A life full of drama, love, rolling around in tall fields of grass experiencing our first kiss, this was heaven piped in, on a broadcast wavelength to a thirteen inch CRT TV. This was the good life, and it was lived at a pace of thirty minute blocks.

Who is going to be the TV Girlfriend tonight? One of the “TGIF” girls that dances across my Friday screen? One of the “Saved By the Bell” girls, obviously out of my league, and more mature than my prepubescent viewing eyes could ever be? The choice was simple. Any and all would suffice. My imagination fixated on the next set of eyes I stared into. Even if those eyes were locked in a cage built by RCA. They were both real and imagined at the same time. They were anything I wanted them to be and I was anything I wanted to be.

The TV Girlfriend allowed me to be the idealized man they longed for from a safe distance. Behind a screen they lingered as I watched from the comfort of a well worn sofa.

It was an easier time back then, back in the nineties. Back before I had the pleasure of losing my innocence, when the effortless "TV Girlfriend" turned into the real life complications of a human relationship I wasn't equipped to handle.

It looked so easy on TV. The guy got the girl he wanted, they went on a date, kissed, and made love. It only took them a half hour. Sounds easy enough. Now here I am twenty years later, looking for a date, looking for a kiss, looking to get laid.

I still find comfort in my TV Girlfriends, but reality has flashed before my eyes. There is no TV Girlfriend. There is no half hour love story.

This is just an idea. A figment of an overactive imagination.