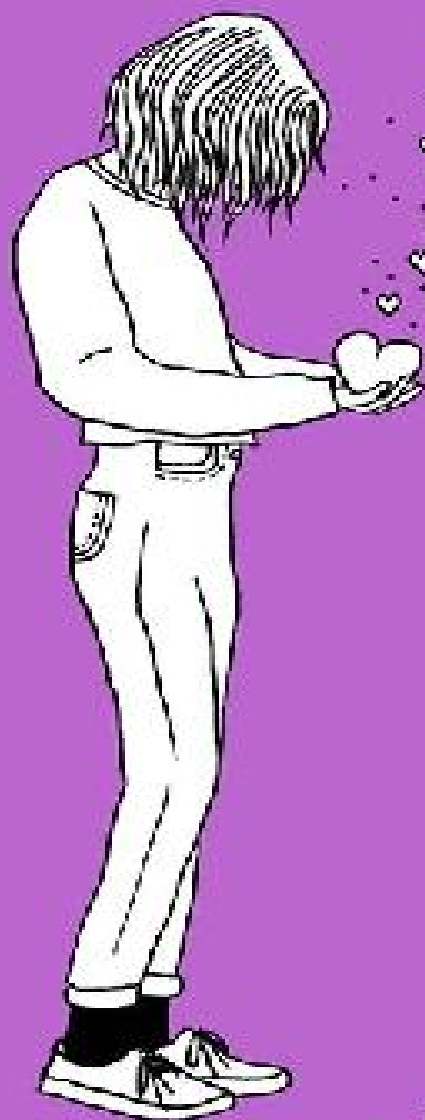


Praise for debut novel *Solitaire*: 'The Catcher  
in the Rye for the digital age' – *The Times*



How  
long  
before  
her story  
begins?

# Loveless

Alice Oseman



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If it proves so, then loving goes by haps:  
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

*Much Ado About Nothing*, William Shakespeare

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# PART ONE

## LAST CHANCE

There were literally three separate couples sitting around the fire making out, like some sort of organised kissing orgy, and half of me was like, *ew*, and the other half was like, *Wow, I sure do wish that was me*.

To be fair, it's probably what I should have expected from our prom afterparty. I don't go to parties very often. I hadn't been aware this actually was the culture.

I retreated from the firepit and headed back towards Hattie Jorgensen's giant country house, holding up my prom dress in one hand so I didn't trip, and dropped Pip a message.

### **Georgia Warr**

i could not approach the fire and retrieve the marshmallows because there were people kissing around it

### **Felipa Quintana**

How could you betray and disappoint me like this Georgia

### **Georgia Warr**

do you still love me or is this the end

When I entered the kitchen and located Pip, she was leaning against a corner cupboard with a plastic cup full of wine in one hand and her phone in the other. Her tie was half tucked into her shirt pocket, her burgundy velvet blazer was now unbuttoned and her short curls were fluffy and loose, no doubt due to all the dancing at prom.

'You OK?' I asked.

'Might be a tad drunk,' she said, her tortoiseshell glasses slipping down her nose. 'And also I *do* fucking love you.'

'More than marshmallows?'

‘How could you ask me to make such a choice?’

I slung my arm round her shoulders and we leant back together against the kitchen cupboards. It was almost midnight, music was thumping from Hattie’s living room, and the sound of our classmates chatting and laughing and shouting and screaming resonated from every corner of the building.

‘There were three separate couples making out around the fire,’ I said. ‘Like, in unison.’

‘Kinky,’ said Pip.

‘I sort of wished I was one of them.’

She gave me a look. ‘*Ew.*’

‘I just want to kiss someone,’ I said, which was odd, because I wasn’t even drunk. I was driving Pip and Jason home later.

‘We can make out if you want.’

‘That wasn’t what I had in mind.’

‘Well, Jason’s been single for a few months now. I’m sure he’d be up for it.’

‘Shut up. I’m serious.’

I *was* serious. I really, really wanted to kiss someone. I wanted to feel a little bit of prom-night magic.

‘Tommy, then,’ said Pip, raising an eyebrow and smiling evilly. ‘Maybe it’s time to *confess.*’

I’d only ever had a crush on one person. His name was Tommy. He was the ‘hot boy’ of our school year – the one who could actually have been a model if he’d wanted. He was tall and skinny and conventionally attractive in a Timothée Chalamet sort of way, though I didn’t really understand why everyone was in love with Timothée Chalamet. I had a theory that a lot of people’s ‘celebrity crushes’ were faked just to fit in.

Tommy had been my crush ever since I was in Year 7 and a girl had asked me, ‘Who d’you think is the hottest boy at Truham?’ She’d shown me a photo on her phone of a group of the most popular Year 7 boys at the boys’ grammar over the road, and there was Tommy right in the middle. I could tell he was the most attractive one – I mean, he had hair like a boy-band star and was dressed pretty fashionably – so I’d pointed and said *him*. And I guess that was that.

Almost seven years later, I’d never actually talked to Tommy. I’d never even really *wanted* to, probably because I was shy. He was more of an