

Before Special Valentine's Day

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The greatest surprise, warmest thrill for Ashley!! Well, she has wished for something wonderful just a few days before Valentine's.



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In her apartment, content Ashley Reynolds closes the bedroom curtain. She is reminded of Aunt Judy's birthday, few days after Valentine's. Judy collects window figurines and Ashley bought an attractive one yesterday. It's a cute snowman holding a pretty sparrow. This snowy evening of February eleventh, Ashley's phone rings. She is expecting a call from best friend Laura who had a job interview today at the mall. Laura and Ashley share this apartment. Now, she turns to get the phone, it's soft pleasant voice, Megan Hayes, a close friend at work which is the community rink.

"Hi Ashley, I stayed late at the rink. I came up with a good idea for Valentine's Day, Sweetheart Skating! Red balloons, cupids, paper roses. What do you think?" Ashley glances at a nearby photo of her, Aunt Judy at a Christmas party. This is next to a cute, well dressed teddy bear from sister, Christene.

"That's great Megan, Mrs. Patter mentioned something similar. We can discuss it tomorrow. Did you see Ryan? He plays hockey at five." Megan is distracted by someone in the background. She tells to hold a bit. Ashley thinks of Ryan Canley, a friendly hockey player who often brings donuts to the staff. Ashley now enjoys a warm special memory, she was decorating the rink's front entrance for the, January figure skating competition. Ryan mentioned to be careful on the ladder, "You wouldn't want to miss the opening of that fun musical play, Love Shines like a Star, I'll be taking my young nephews, Tyler and Jeffrey. Are you going?" Ryan has smiley, warmest eyes. Ashley quickly sighs while telling about previous plans skiing with her friends. Now, reality sets in, she hears Megan.

"Sorry about that. Ah, no Ashley, I didn't see him but Sam asked about you, he wants to know if you're free Thursday evening, he is playing guitar here at the lounge. He is sweet on you! I'm going to the movies later, like to come?" Ashley thinks of googly eyed Sam MacLean. When Ashley recently helped Sam with his locker combination, he has been in a love craze, he thinks they're a perfect couple.

"Sam is nice, he makes great coffee but he can't understand I like him as a friend only. Ah, at seven, I'm babysitting the Smith kids in the next apartment building. See you tomorrow, Megan." Ashley likes working at the local rink office, she started in the fall. Now, Ashley heads to the kitchen, she eyes the calendar. All of a sudden, she remembers last Valentine's Day, Ashley happily spent it with handsome Dr. Jordan Woods. She dated him for three months and in May, he left to work in Africa. While staring at the calendar photo, a lovely couple by a fireside, Ashley wonders if she will find that lasting, true love.

"Ah, I just want to snuggle with my sweetheart by a fireplace, romantic!" She makes a wish then she opens the fridge door for that last piece of apple pie. The phone rings again, this time it's Laura who has gotten that job at the mall. Ashley is happy for excited Laura.

"I wanted to go dancing this evening but sweetie Greg is working. How about double dating tomorrow, Greg has a good friend, Terry Mitchell. He is a lawyer's assistant, not bad hey!" Now, Ashley sadly groans.

"Oh Laura, I'm just not sure, you know how I am on blind dates. Anyways, I left you some soup, garlic bread. Call you later at babysitting." She enjoys the pie while thinking of Ryan. It's nice looking out the window, the snow is falling blissfully. This brings back fond memories, she and her parents, older sister make a big snowman on a snowy evening. Ashley contentedly smiles.

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Just before slipping on boots, Ashley hears someone in the hallway. She looks through the peephole. The neighbours, Jill and Danny greet a young couple. Thereâs great excitement, the happy couple tell of their wedding plans on Valentineâs Day. Ashley happily sighs, itâs wonderful news. Moments after, she looks at the nearby mirror to see a long face. The only exciting thing in Ashleyâs life is an awkward date tomorrow and Aunt Judy has a birthday coming up. This is too sad, Ashley canât believe the quiet dullness. A soft, snowman toy by the door brings on a grin. She sees her book, the story is getting good. It's great to read while babysitting, the kids colour, do their homework.

Ashley reaches for the ski jacket, she puts on a cap, scarf and she holds the book. She is slow on the stairs down to first floor. Surprisingly, coming in the main door now is Ryan Canley. This is simply grand, Ashley is so tickled. She certainly loves this greeting.

"Hi Ryan, what a big surprise! Wow, never expected this!" Ashleyâs special wish came true. Ryan is all smiles, he chuckles.

"Ashley, great seeing you! Of all places to meet! My sister Sarah lives in apartment K, she is sad because hubby went on a business convention. Iâm taking Sarah out for some Chinese food. Weâll shop for Grandmaâs birthday on the thirteenth, day before Valentine's. So, you live here too?" Ashley is enjoying this glowing, perfect moment.

"Iâm in apartment M! I see Sarah often at the bank too. Iâm heading nearby to babysit. Well, youâre busy with hockey?"

"Oh yes, Iâll be going out of town February twenty third. Ah, I still canât believe seeing you here! Today is so lucky for me. I am now teaching Phys. Ed full time, Iâve won fifty dollars in a scratch and win ticket and now meeting you, pretty awesome!"

Ashleyâs heart is beating fast, she is on top of the world. Now, Ashley thinks of when Ryan mentioned the play, Loves Shines Like a Star.

"I am very surprised, shaken up! Ah, do you have plans tomorrow evening, my friend got a new job, she likes to celebrate. Oh gosh, Iâm forward, you have a hockey schedule."

"No, itâs ok, Iâm free tomorrow evening. I really thought you were dating Sam MacLean, he talks about you at the rink." Ashley lightly blushes, she thinks of a silly mix up.

"Sam and I are just friends, he has gotten the wrong idea. I will talk to him." Excited Ashley is sincere, Ryan gazes.

"Give me your phone number so I can reach you." Ryan takes out a pen, slip of paper from his pocket. He uses her book.

"Well, you know where I live!" She and Ryan laugh. The mood, snow falling makes it one memorable evening. Ashley can't wait to tell Laura.

Later on, after babysitting, Ashley felt like seeing Aunt Judy. She enjoys delicious hot chocolate and a turkey sandwich by the fireplace.

"Aunt Judy, I simply love this spot, I love this fabulous evening!"

Aunt Judy nods, she knows that Ashley has been delightfully hit by cupidâs arrow.

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