**Author’s Note:** Stepping away from my comfort zone a little, here’s a Pokémon fic for Valentine’s Day that I got the idea for earlier this week and just had to type up and post. I pulled a couple of ideas from the games to fit the concept, and I’m using my own personal headcanon universe, which any future fics will likely also pull from.

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It was still the cold season in Johto, having just recently passed into the month of February. Ash Ketchum and his friends Misty Waterflower and Brock Slate were headed towards Goldenrod City for Ash’s third Johto League Badge. They had stopped for the night a day out of the Ilex Forest.

At the moment Ash was looking rather confused. He turned to Brock and asked, “Wasn’t there a holiday sometime around now? I could have sworn there was one I read about once…”

Misty gave Ash a funny look, before turning to Brock as he spoke up. “Well, in America a long time ago, I think they celebrated President’s Day next Monday.”

“President’s Day?” Misty asked.

“Ah, two of that country’s most historically important presidents had birthdays about 11 days apart, so the country declared that the Monday that occurred between them would serve as a national holiday, or something like that.” Ash just shook his head, as if to say that wasn’t ringing any bells. “Back on the second was Groundhog’s Day.”

“What’s a groundhog?” Ash asked.

“It was an animal that existed over a thousand years ago, before the first known record of Pokémon. It was a small land mammal. On the holiday, if the groundhog saw its shadow, it promised six more weeks of winter; if it didn’t, spring would arrive six weeks early.” Again, there was no real acknowledgement, so Brock adopted his thinking pose and tried again. A minute later, his head jerked up and he spoke again. “There’s St. Valentine’s Day coming up!”

Ash and Misty blinked at him, then each other, before Misty asked the only question that was on their minds. “Who’s St. Valentine?”

“I have no idea.” The other two had to catch themselves before they fell over at that. “But I do know what the holiday was used for. It was a day dedicated to those who were in love; for couples to show romantic gestures to one another, which frequently meant a man giving gifts of flowers, jewelry, and chocolates to the woman he loved.”

Misty got hearts in her eyes at that description, and as such missed Ash crinkling his eyebrows and dropping into his own thoughts. That night Ash’s sleep was restless as thoughts he’d never had before begun to trickle through his mind.

The next several days were uncharacteristically quiet. Brock led the way, and they somehow managed to reach Goldenrod with minimal fuss. The whole time Ash was lost in thought, though that wasn’t to say that he was antisocial; he contributed to any conversations that the other two were having, and showed that despite it all, he was listening. What got Misty worried, though, was that not once in those days did Ash get into any arguments with her.

When they arrived, they checked in at the Pokémon Center and got their room straightened out, and then at Ash’s insistence headed out to Goldenrod Department Store. He asked if they could let him wander on his own and meet back to the Center around dinner time. While they were puzzled, he didn’t give them time to question him before he took off.

Ash was troubled. Brock had informed him that today was the 14th, the day of the holiday he had described. Thoughts about feelings he never knew he had before kept tumbling around and he didn’t really know what to do with it. Something was leading him in a certain direction, though, and before he knew it, he found himself standing in front of the jewelry section.

“May I help you?” An elderly man in a suit had approached him, startling him a little.

“Oh, um… I guess I’m looking for something.” He paused to think about how to say it, before deciding to just go all in. “I’m looking for a gift for Valentine’s Day.”

The man’s eyes lit up when he heard this. “Not many people know about the old holidays; rarer still for a youth such as you. Tell me a little about her.” So Ash began to describe her. He had no idea that he started rambling about five minutes into it, and the man’s grin grew wider and wider as he spoke. “I think I might have just what you are looking for…” He escorted Ash to a case on the far side of the floor. Once there, he pulled out a piece to present to his prospective customer.

Ash examined it for a moment before deciding that he liked it. He then got a look at the price tag and gulped; this would make a serious dent in the money he had been squirreling away to replace Misty’s bike. He waffled for a moment before deciding to take it. He then asked one more question of the man.

“Flowers? Well, there is a floral department on the first floor, but if you want real quality, there’s a small shop in the northeast corner of town that sells the best flowers outside of Sinnoh. I’d go there if I were you.”

Ash thanked him and pocketed the case holding the piece he just bought. On his way out, he ran into Brock and asked him to do him a favor; Brock just smirked at him and agreed to help once he heard Ash’s plan.

Misty stood outside the Pokémon Center as the evening was closing in. Brock had told her that dinner was going to be in a restaurant that night, instead of at the Center, and that she should dress a little nicer for it. He told her to wait out there for Ash to arrive, and she went without question; had she turned around on her way out, she would have seen the wild smile on his face and wondered what was going on.

As time was passing and she was starting to get frustrated, she heard a clearing of the throat from behind her. She turned around and was shocked to see her traveling companion Ash Ketchum standing there in casual attire and without his hat; he had one hand behind his back and the other held out for her. As Misty continued to stare, Ash shuffled a little and said, “Shall we get going?”

This broke her out of her trance; she shook her head and said, “We’re waiting for Brock, remember?”

Ash shook his head right back. “Actually, we’re not. He’s staying behind to watch Pikachu and Togepi while we go out… together.” Misty was taken aback, especially by that pause at the end of his sentence. She couldn’t figure out why Ash was doing this, or why his statement made her heart pound just a little harder. He brought his other hand around to show that it was holding a single red rose. “For you.” He mumbled.

Misty brought one hand up to her mouth, while the other reached out and plucked the flower from his hand. He still had his other hand held out to her, so she took it and allowed herself to be escorted, all the while thoughts kept roaming around her; *why is he doing this, why did he give me this flower, where are we going if Brock isn’t coming with us*.

Before she knew it, they were seated in a small restaurant that she didn’t even know the name of. She set the rose down and busied herself with looking at the menu to buy a little time. Once their orders were taken, though, she knew she had to confront Ash on what all of this was.

He looked nervous, which matched how she felt perfectly. Finally, she felt like she waited long enough and asked, “Why are we here alone, and what’s with the flower?”

Ash looked down at the table and took a few deep breaths. Without looking up, he said, “Have I ever told you how thankful I am that you’re traveling with me?” Misty was startled by the return question, but Ash didn’t give her a chance to reply. “Without you, I wouldn’t be anywhere near the person I am now, and besides that, you’ve saved my life more times than I can count.”

He finally looked up at her and she had to bite back a gasp at the look in his eyes; just staring at them made her feel like they were looking right through her and into her soul. “The truth is, a few days ago when Brock was telling us all about those holidays, it got me to thinking, and I started to realize that there was a feeling that I’ve had for quite some time now that I just didn’t know what it was or what to do with. When I realized what day it was when we got to town, I knew I had to do something…”

Misty still couldn’t tear her eyes away from his. He reached into his pocket and pulled something out, but her peripheral vision couldn’t make out what it was. “Considering the day, I figured that this would be the best way to tell you. They say that actions are louder than words, so…” He reached across and placed the velvet box in front of her, which finally snapped her out of her trance. She tentatively reached for it and opened it, as he said, “Happy Valentine’s Day, Misty.”

Inside the jewelry box was a golden teardrop pendant on a gold chain; inset in the teardrop, which resembled a golden Cascade Badge, were small sapphires in the shape of an ‘M’. A mysterious wetness formed in her eyes as she matched up what she was seeing with what she was hearing. She lifted the pendent and proceeded to latch the chain around her neck. She looked back up at him and smiled. “I love it; thank you Ash.”

Ash looked a little relieved, but still a little nervous. He coughed awkwardly and looked away. “I have a question, too…” When he looked back up, she was still smiling, though perhaps a bit wider than before. “Will you… be my girlfriend?”

By this point, Misty realized where Ash was going with this, and once this clicked, she then realized that this was actually something that she wanted. There had been times on their journey that she had entertained thoughts of Ash; crushes that lasted a few hours before being forgotten in the adventure. Somewhere in the back of her mind, though, all of those moments were being stored away, waiting for this precise moment to occur.

Finally, she gave him the answer he had been looking for. “Yes, Ash Ketchum; I’ll be your girlfriend.”

From his hiding spot in the restaurant, Brock had to bite his lip to keep from shouting as he heard Ash ask and Misty answer the question he’d been waiting to hear from them for the last two years. Nothing, however, was going to stop him from dancing in place alongside Pikachu and Togepi from behind the potted plant that he’d commandeered to spy on his two best friends.