



The Around Town Paper

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Valentine's Day often arrives wrapped in expectation – of romance, perfection, and moments that look good from the outside. But love, in its truest form, is rarely polished. It lives in the ordinary hours, in the spaces between plans, and in the quiet decisions we make when no one is watching. It is not always loud or dramatic, and it doesn't always announce itself. More often, love is steady.

Love shows up when life is inconvenient. It looks like listening when you're tired, staying curious instead of defensive, and choosing compassion even when it would be easier to withdraw. It exists in forgiveness that takes time, in patience that has to be practiced, and in the understanding that people are allowed to be imperfect while still being worthy of care.

There is also love that doesn't come wrapped in romance at all. Love lives in friendship, in family, in community, and in the ways we look out for one another without needing credit. It's present in kindness offered freely, in boundaries that protect peace, and in the courage to soften when the world encourages us to harden.

This Valentine's Day, let love be real rather than performative. Let it be measured not by what is given, but by how it is lived. Let it be generous, grounded and forgiving, starting with ourselves. Love doesn't need a spotlight. It only needs room to exist.



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The bravest thing lovers do is keep choosing tenderness in a world that teaches hardness.



"To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all." – Oscar Wilde

SUICIDE AFFECTS US ALL

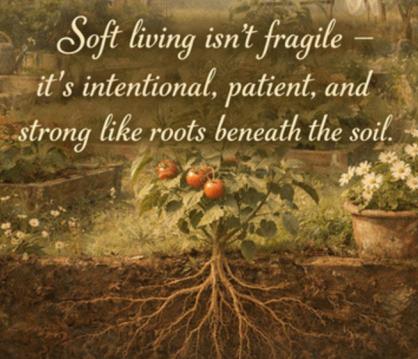
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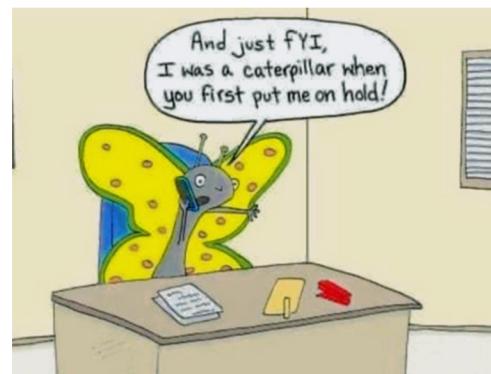
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treat
people
with
kindness



Soft living isn't fragile –
it's intentional, patient, and
strong like roots beneath the soil.





♈ Aries (Mar 21–Apr 19)

Slow down just enough to avoid unnecessary friction. Not every hill is worth charging today.



Clearing What's Holding Us Back – Sometimes the things that hold us back aren't loud or dramatic. They're subtle, familiar habits, like working through lunch on a busy day, saying yes even when you're already stretched thin, or telling ourselves something didn't hurt as much as it really did.

♉ Taurus (Apr 20–May 20)

Comfort and routine bring clarity this week. Trust what feels steady over what feels loud.

This way of being often comes from a generous heart and a deep sense of responsibility, but over time, it can drain our vitality, leaving us burned out and overwhelmed before we realize what's happening.

♊ Gemini (May 21–Jun 20)

A conversation lands differently than expected – listen twice before responding once. Insight comes from restraint.

What's easy to forget is that our ability to show up as our best selves often depends on taking time to replenish ourselves, to create a sense of spaciousness within that allows the mind to settle and the nervous system to calm.

♋ Cancer (Jun 21–Jul 22)

You're more resilient than you feel. Give yourself permission to rest without guilt.

Creating that space might begin with something tangible, like setting new boundaries or lightening a packed schedule. But it also invites a gentler slowing down: noticing the things that keep us rushed, reactive, or stressed, and giving ourselves permission to let them go.

♌ Leo (Jul 23–Aug 22)

You don't need to prove anything right now. Quiet confidence speaks louder than performance.

When we clear away what no longer serves us, something wonderful happens. We become calmer, more grounded, and more present in the moments that matter.

♍ Virgo (Aug 23–Sep 22)

Progress comes from small corrections, not big overhauls. One good decision beats ten perfect plans.

Creating space then turns into an act of devotion, not only to ourselves, but to the life we're participating in. And from that place, we're able to open our hearts and feel a kind of freedom we may not have experienced in years.

I have a head and a tail,
but no body.
What am I?

ANSWER: A COIN

I DON'T CARE
ABOUT MY PRINCE
CHARMING.



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FOREST ANIMALS
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♎ Libra (Sep 23–Oct 22)

Balance returns when you stop over-explaining. Let your actions say what words don't need to.

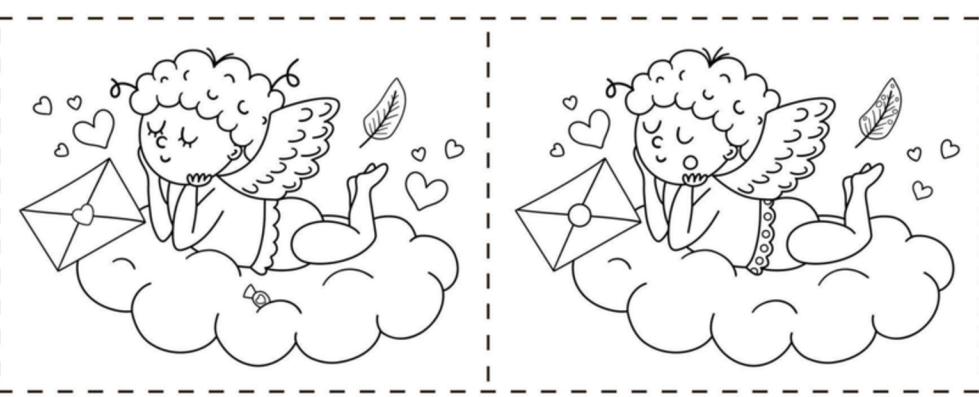
"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind."
– William Shakespeare

♏ Scorpio (Oct 23–Nov 21)

Something you've been holding onto loosens its grip. Release brings relief, not loss.



SPOT THE 10 DIFFERENCES



Valentine's Day Creamy Garlic Mushroom Pasta

Rich, comforting, and very 'we're not leaving the house.'

Ingredients

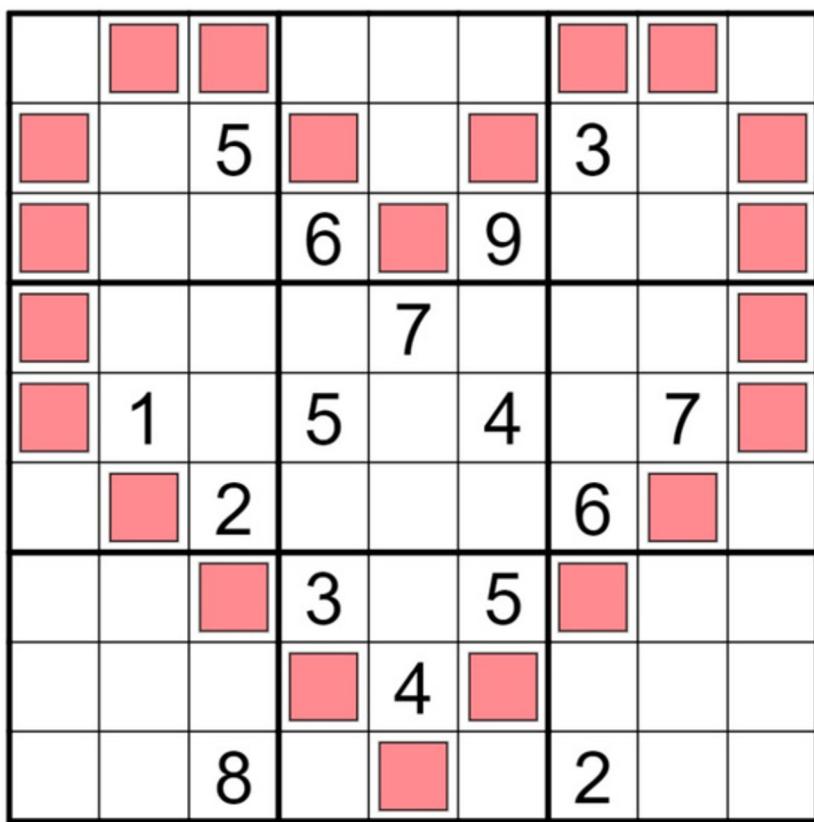
- 12 oz pasta (fettuccine, linguine, or penne)
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 12 oz mushrooms, sliced (cremini or button)
- Salt & black pepper (easy on the pepper 😊)
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ cup freshly grated parmesan
- ½ tsp Italian seasoning
- Optional: splash of white wine
- Optional: red pepper flakes
- Fresh parsley or basil (for fancy energy)
-



Instructions

1. Cook pasta according to directions. Reserve ½ cup pasta water.
2. In a large pan, melt butter with olive oil over medium heat.
3. Add mushrooms and cook until browned and slightly caramelized (5-7 min).
4. Add garlic, cook 30 seconds.
5. (Optional) Deglaze with white wine, let it reduce.
6. Stir in cream, parmesan, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper.
7. Simmer gently until thickened. Add pasta water if needed.
8. Toss pasta into sauce until coated and glossy.

Valentine's Even Sudoku



We are hearing too much of the world right now and our minds weren't built to carry it all.



Bad news travels fast, tragedy echoes louder than hope, and it can feel like every time you open your phone you're handed another horror to hold.

Wars, losses, cruelty injustice are all stacked one on top of the other and somehow we're expected to carry on like this is normal. It's not.

If you feel overwhelmed, heavy, distracted, numb, angry, exhausted, or suddenly fragile, there is nothing wrong with you. That's a nervous system doing its best to survive information overload. Caring deeply comes with a cost, and compassion fatigue is real.

Here's the quiet truth: you are allowed to look away sometimes. You are allowed to protect your mental health without being uninformed, uncaring, or selfish. Stepping back does not mean you don't care – it means you care enough to stay functional.

Limit the intake. Choose trusted sources. Put the phone down. Ground yourself in something real and near: a warm drink, a familiar voice, a task you can finish, a place where your body feels safe. You don't have to carry the whole world to be a good person.

And if today all you can manage is getting through without falling apart, that counts. That is strength too. Be gentle with your mind. It's going through a lot lately. – **Ruby** ❤️

Have you got something to ask Ruby?
Email: writerubyrealtalk@gmail.com

All names changed for posting in The Around Town Paper



Love is not the absence of struggle, but the decision to face it together.

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I	Q	K	W	Q	E	R	T	P	A	M	Y	L	P	I	A	E	Y	Z	B	O	N	Q	G
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Registered charities and not-for-profit groups: the deadline for grant applications to Coldwell Lundar Community Foundation is 4:30pm, February 28th, 2026.

Applications are available on the website at www.clcf.ca, are auto-fillable and can be e-mailed to clcfdn@gmail.com.

Printed copies are also available for pick-up and drop off at the Pauline Johnson Library in Lundar.

Any questions or if you need help with filling out the application, please e-mail the above or call 204-762-5727.

What can travel around the world while staying in one corner?

Answer: a stamp

NAME THAT TUNE
Oh my heart is spinning like a wheel. Only she can see the way that I feel...



Real Housewives of Atlanta

American Horror Story

Tera's Little Family

Pretty Little Liars

Switched At Birth

Wheel of Fortune

Deadliest Catch

Grey's Anatomy

House of Payne

Finding Carter

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