

Unlikely best friends

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It wasn't until he looked Chantell in the eyes, she saw that twinkle. That's when it hit her that he really did love her too.

Rewind back to three years ago when Chantell met Jackson at high school. Jackson definitely caught her attention, but not for the right reasons. Everyone loved talking to Jackson. People surrounded him and Jackson enjoyed the attention. Chantell thought he was up himself.

Chantell and Jackson were in the same English class, and they didn't really have much to do with each other because they had different friendship groups.

That all changed.

There was a class project, and the teacher paired Chantell and Jackson together to work on it. Chantell did not like it. She felt nervous. At the start, their conversation was awkward with Jackson mostly talking about himself, his football club, and the matches he played.

One day, Jackson came into the classroom deeply upset. Chantell rolled her eyes and started teasing Jackson about him losing a football game. It turned out that it had nothing to do with football. It was something more serious.

Chantell felt awful. She then softened and said very gently to Jackson, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that."

Jackson then shared that his dad was putting a lot of stress on him about his game. His dad said that the way he played wasn't up to scratch. Jackson was devastated. Once he got home, he completely shut down and did not speak to anyone for the rest of the day. Jackson locked himself up in his room. He started to doubt his self-worth and everything about himself. Jackson began to believe that he wasn't good enough at anything anymore and he didn't deserve any of the opportunities he was getting.

When Chantell heard this, she felt heartbroken for Jackson. Chantell comforted Jackson.

Later on, during the project, Jackson's walls came down and he began to show Chantell a different side to him. Chantell saw that he wasn't how she really pictured him. He turned out to be kind-hearted and caring. The big football star was really just an act.

Over time, their friendship grew, and Chantell even started going to his games. She began to see that Jackson really was a talented football player, so it was no surprise when Jackson was drafted into the Greater Western Sydney football club.

The draft pick meant that Jackson had to move interstate. Chantell supported him with the move, helping him pack, keeping his spirits up, and saying encouraging words. Jackson really valued Chantell's support.

Even though Jackson lived interstate, Chantell and Jackson kept in touch, sharing and being truthful with each other about their hopes and fears.

Jackson's old football teammate had a birthday event coming up. It was happening in Victoria, and Jackson invited Chantell to the party. When he spotted Chantell, he felt something differently inside him. Jackson realised that Chantell was not only a great friend but that he really loved her.

Chantell looked at Jackson. She saw the twinkle in his eyes. That look that told her exactly what she needed to know - that Jackson was going to be there for her always. Chantell knew then and there that Jackson loved her more than just a friend.

That they will be together through thick and thin.

Photo: [People on dance floor, unidentified locations]

[Picture] / Rennie Ellis.

Ellis, Rennie, 1940-2003, photographer.

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