

Kathleen Ernst
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST



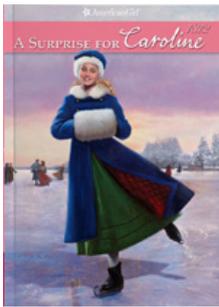
Preview of *A Surprise For Caroline*

Caroline Abbott: An American Girl – Book Three

Written by Kathleen Ernst

Illustrated by Robert and Lisa Papp

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Caroline imagined it would be great fun to have two girls staying at her house for the winter. But her friend Rhonda Hathaway and her cousin Lydia are both twelve, and sometimes they seem to be better friends with each other than with Caroline. Worse, they'd rather stay inside styling hair than go skating and sledding! Nothing Caroline tries seems to change things, not even the special Christmas gift she gives Rhonda. Finally, hurt feelings lead Caroline to make a rash decision—one that puts all three girls on very thin ice!

Chapter One – Winter Wishes

Caroline Abbott held up two pieces of cloth. "Shall we use this brown cotton for the doll's dress?" she asked. "Or the blue silk?"

Lydia Livingston, Caroline's cousin, pointed at the blue fabric. "Let's use that beautiful silk!"

"I don't know if that's wise," said Rhonda Hathaway. The three girls were making the doll to give to Rhonda's little sister for Christmas. "Amelia doesn't always take care of things as well as she should. Perhaps the brown fabric would be better. It's sturdier, and it won't show dirt."

"What do you think, Caroline?" Lydia asked.

Caroline was pleased by the question. She was a couple of years younger than Lydia and Rhonda, and they didn't always ask her opinion. "If we give Amelia a doll wearing a pretty party dress," she said, "I think she'll take good care of it."



Rhonda tipped her head thoughtfully. "You may be right. Yes. Let's use the blue silk."

Without warning, the door opened and Amelia, who was four years old, peeked inside. Her face brightened when she saw the older girls. "What are you doing?" she asked as Lydia quickly hid the doll behind her back.

"Amelia!" Rhonda scolded. "You mustn't enter a room without knocking! Go away."

Amelia's smile faded. "Why can't I come in?" she asked. Her face puckered as if she was about to cry.

Caroline jumped up and led Amelia back into the hall. She couldn't tell Amelia that she'd almost ruined her own Christmas surprise! "We—we're busy with something, that's all."

"Everyone's always busy." Amelia thrust out her lower lip in a pout. "I just want someone to play with me!"

I wish Amelia had children near her own age to play with, Caroline thought. She crouched down so that she could look Amelia in the eye. "I'm sorry, but we can't start any games now. Rhonda and Lydia and I will leave for lessons soon. Why don't you go ask my grandmother if she needs help in the kitchen?"

Caroline waited until Amelia had plodded downstairs before going back into the bedroom. "She's gone," Caroline reported.

"It will be hard to keep this doll a secret until Christmas!" Rhonda said. "We'd better finish our planning now." She draped the blue cloth around the doll as if imagining the dress. "I'll make some lace trim."

"And I have an old glove we can cut up to make shoes," Caroline added. "Amelia shall have the prettiest doll in New York State!"



Lydia pulled some white cloth from the pile of scraps. "We'll need to make the doll a petticoat."

"Two petticoats," Rhonda said.

"If it were up to you, we'd make six petticoats," Lydia teased. "You're always cold!"

Rhonda laughed, fingering the scraps. "Caroline, I'm glad you suggested that we make this gift for Amelia. She'll be so pleased!"

"I know Amelia wasn't able to bring any toys with her when you moved here," Caroline said sympathetically. Rhonda and Amelia's father, an army officer, had been sent to Sackets Harbor after the United States declared war on Great Britain. His wife and daughters had come too, and had moved into the Abbotts' house.

"We couldn't bring much with us," Rhonda agreed. She looked at Lydia. "We were able to carry more than your family could, though. I can't imagine having to sneak away from home in the dead of night, as you did!"

Several weeks earlier, Lydia and her parents had fled Upper Canada, which was controlled by the British, and had squeezed into Caroline's house as well. "It was scary," Lydia admitted. "But we made it here safely. And as soon as my father finds a new place to farm, we'll start over again." She lifted her chin, as if facing a big challenge she was determined to win. "I'm glad we'll be here for Christmas, though."

"And since Christmas is just a week away," Rhonda reminded them, "we'll need to work quickly to finish this gift."

The reminder that Christmas was approaching made Caroline both excited and anxious. She had hemmed new handkerchiefs for her mother, her grandmother, her aunt and uncle, and Mrs. Hathaway. She'd secretly sewn a warm winter muff



for Lydia, too. But she still didn't have a Christmas gift for Rhonda! Rhonda already had a muff to warm her hands, and several handkerchiefs with her initials embroidered in silk. Try as she might, Caroline hadn't been able to think of a single good idea for her friend.

Well, at least I had a good idea for Amelia's gift, Caroline thought.

She was sure Amelia would love the doll. And it was great fun to sew the doll and plan her clothes with Rhonda and Lydia. She smiled at the other girls.

"I can embroider a face on the doll," she said, "but what shall we use for hair?"

"When my mother knit mittens for Amelia, she had a little yarn left over," Rhonda said. "The yarn isn't dyed, though—it's just white. Do you think we might be able to color it?"

Lydia giggled. "You mustn't ask *Caroline* about dying yarn." She nudged Caroline in the ribs. "Remember when we were little, and you decided to dye yarn with pokeberries?"

"You helped," Caroline protested. "It wasn't all my fault."

"What wasn't your fault?" Rhonda asked.

"By the time we were finished, our hands were as purple as the yarn," Caroline confessed.

Lydia flopped down on the bed, laughing. "Our mothers scolded us, but we could tell that they thought it was funny."

Rhonda snickered. "It must have looked as if you both were wearing horrid purple gloves!"

Lydia held her arms in the air gracefully. "My dear Miss Hathaway," she said, as if she were a fine lady, "purple gloves are the newest style! All the French ladies are wearing them."

"Oh, my," Rhonda said. "I am sorely behind the times."

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Caroline pretended to look down her nose at Rhonda. "We shall show you *all* the latest fashions."

Rhonda got her giggles under control. "Perhaps we shouldn't dye the yarn for Amelia's doll."

"It will be *fine*," Caroline promised. "I'll ask Grandmother to help us this time."

Someone knocked on the door. Caroline thrust the doll beneath her pillow.

Mrs. Hathaway stepped inside. "Gracious!" she said. "I could hear you girls laughing from downstairs. It's almost time for your lessons. Tidy up your sewing, and then you may be off to the shipyard."

A Surprise For Caroline is available as a hardcover or softcover book from independent bookstores as well as from American Girl, Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and other vendors. Personalized, signed copies can be acquired directly from the author, Kathleen Ernst. For details, click on http://www.kathleenernst.com/book_surprise_for_caroline.php.