

Scrap Happy

by Angie

Catherine entered Mary's chamber one morning to find her friend surrounded by overflowing boxes of yarn. She stopped in amazement.

Mary was crocheting, and had obviously been doing it for some time. A pile of neatly-folded ... scarves? ... sat next to her on a small end table. Her fingers moved at a speed that made Catherine envious, but she could see that the stitch was easy and quick.

"Can I help?" Catherine asked, pulling up a chair to sit as close as she could.

Mary smiled at her. "Of course you can. I have all this scrap yarn and I decided this was the year everyone ... including our helpers ... would get a scarf. These are easy and quick, and each is unique. Also, quicker to do than a scrap blanket."

"And no one can have too many scarves," Catherine laughed.

"That's so ... especially around here," Mary agreed.

"Show me," Catherine begged, and Mary quickly did so. Catherine had learned to crochet, but had not used this particular stitch before. It was simple, decorative – and surprisingly lovely as a scarf.

It didn't matter how many colours were used, as she found out. She stayed with similar yarns types for any single scarf, but planned to experiment by mixing some with novelty yarns, as she saw some of that in the boxes. Mary had already done so, she saw.

"How long are you making them?" she asked, as she started making the foundation chain.

"Long enough to go around your neck and knot once – about 40 inches," Mary said. "Too long and they're dangerous here, but they need to be secure and keep the neck warm. Oh, and about four inches wide seems best."

Catherine nodded and then tested her length around her own neck, made a few more stitches and then turned her work to do the first row.

They had made several more scarves before the pipes announced lunch, and Catherine sat back with a sigh and smiled at Mary.

"Well, these are fun! What is this stitch called?"

"I've heard several names," Mary told her, "but the most common are Moss, Linen or Woven stitch."

"Thank you for teaching me this. I think I've found a new addiction," Catherine confessed. "I'll be back after lunch."

The two women rose and arm-in-arm went to the dining hall. They both looked so obviously happy that many people looked at them. Vincent could feel a new sense of achievement in his love. However, Catherine immediately told him not to ask questions, so he stifled his curiosity. There were a lot of secrets in the tunnels at this time of the year.

After lunch, Catherine and Mary returned to their task, and made a significant dent in the scrap supply.

"How many do we need?" Catherine asked.

"Oh, dozens," Mary told her, with a wry smile. "I don't think we'll run out of yarn though."

As the pile of scarves grew, it became necessary to bundle them up. Mary presented a messy bag of raffia, so the two women folded the scarves and tied them. Really, it was all that was needed. Why wrap something so beautiful?

"I think we should just make a pile of them in the Great Hall and let people pick their own," Mary suggested.

And that's what they did. Over Winterfest and Christmas, all the scarves disappeared but two. Mary and Catherine decided to take one each, for in all their work they had not thought to make one for themselves. They wore it, and soon noticed that the tunnel residents were all doing so as well. The scarves gave the underground world a festive air and seemed to cheer everyone up in that cold season.

"What are we going to do for an encore?" Catherine asked Mary, as they toasted each other in the New Year.

"We'll think of something," Mary assured her.

Catherine laughed.

