

# The Friendly Scrubber

by Angie

It often amazed Catherine how her more frequent association with the tunnel world got her thinking 'outside the box' in so many little ways – ways that would never have occurred to her in her old life, that of a rich socialite.

Take something mundane like bath scrubbers. She did not use facecloths, finding them too floppy and awkward for the purpose. For years she had been using the plastic net balls with the cord. They scrubbed well, but didn't last long ... and they were plastic, after all. Not at all what she should be buying. She gave the ones that fell apart to William, who braided them into long ropes to keep certain foods out of reach of a certain raccoon. But what could she replace them with?

She loved sponges, but the synthetic ones didn't last long and the real ones were not only expensive, but also had a fairly short life – and they weren't particularly eco-friendly either. Over the years she had tried loofahs, brushes, hemp coils and pads - and other things she had forgotten. None of them existed in her bathroom now – which said it all.

She kept her eyes open in the shops, but found nothing she liked, and that what other options existed were either impractical or a ridiculous price – and would likely not last long either. She had changed that way too. She no longer bought products that were not meant to last.

Catherine had to admit she had no idea exactly what it was she wanted, except that it had better be simple and do the job as well as the plastic scrubber had. She also had a look in the tunnel bathing chambers, including Vincent's, but saw nothing that seemed to address the issue of a good scrubber that was also re-useable and washable.

Christmas was coming, so she was getting desperate to find something for the personal gift she and Vincent gave each other. She concluded some kind of hand-made item was more likely to serve, so she went to her usual source of information for such puzzles - Mary. The older woman seemed to have an encyclopedic knowledge of every kind of possible knitted or crocheted item. Catherine had come to realize that crafters solved problems no one else had even thought of.

Arriving in Mary's chamber one Saturday, Catherine saw a pile of small round, twisted things a little more than 2 inches across. She picked one up and looked at it closely.

"What's this?" she asked Mary, after they had exchanged greetings.

"We got a lot of small amounts of cotton yarn from a helper, so I found a pattern that makes pot scrubbers. William's washer-uppers like them, so I'm making more."

The kitchen was the place Catherine had not thought to look for an answer and she berated herself as she turned the scrubber over and expanded it by pulling on the ends. It was just a kind of tube. She collapsed it again and ran her hand over the end. It seemed as if it would work well. Now she had an idea.

"Could these be made larger – like twice the size?" she asked Mary.

"I don't see why not," Mary replied. "They'd need to use doubled yarn and they would be quite bulky."

"Exactly what I want," Catherine responded. "Could you show me how to make a larger one?"

"They're very simple to make," Mary told her, after they had gathered the yarn and a suitable crochet hook. The pattern was the same as for the small scrubber, so the pattern could be used for either.

Perfect, Catherine decided, after she had made one in a quite short time, sewed it up and flattened it into a thick disk. Something else was needed to make it easier to use, though. She chained a couple of long loops, one for each end, large enough to get a two or three fingers – even Vincent's - into. Also, she realized, it could then be pulled by the loops to it's full length and hung up to dry. Very practical. She showed it to Mary.

She decided to make another. Looking in the box she found a ball of bright variegated and digging further, a zip bag of of small, neatly-wound ends. Well why not? She took the bright yarn and coupled with with one of the larger chunks of variegated in the baggie and got to work, joining more as she needed it with the reef knot Mary had taught her some time ago, and carefully working the ends into the next stitches. When she was done, it was eye-popping.

"I don't think 'anyone' is going to lose this in the soapsuds," she laughed, holding it up for Mary to see. Now she wanted to make another with plain yarn. There was still lots in the baggie.

Mary laughed too. "Catherine, I think you've done a marvel. We must make more because these will be popular – and they're washable. We have lots of yarn."

"Can we keep them secret until Christmas?" Catherine asked. "I think they'd make terrific gifts."

"That's a lovely idea, Catherine. I'll keep them all in this old sewing box that came down the other day. Mouse always brings anything like this to me. We can wrap them and hang them on the tree with the other 'Secret Santa' gifts."

Now why hadn't she thought of that? Catherine smiled at Mary, happy to have contributed something to that project, which often challenged her imagination. Two problems solved!

The two women made several more scrubbers more before lunch and agreed to make more as soon as they could, until the yarn ran out or they had enough. Catherine put the remnant scrubber into her purse.

She began to suspect there was always a friendly solution to the dilemmas of her world. She felt wonderful for having solved one of them herself.



END