

BY AMY LANE

Kyle loved the small stuff. Tiny needles and stitches, complicated charts. Fair Isle technique was his favourite—how he agonised to make the back of the work just as perfect as the front.

He didn't knit a lot of sweaters. He needed portable projects to carry in his backpack as he ran from class to class at uni. He'd spoken to his lecturers beforehand, and they took him at his word. He was a better student when he produced mittens, hats, socks, and mobile phone cases for his family than he was when he was forced to sit, tapping his fingers.

"Hey," whispered the guy next to him in chemistry, "What're you making?"

"Mittens," Kyle mumbled.

"Those are cool—make me some."

Kyle bridled. Non-knitters had no idea how much work this was! "I don't even know you!" he protested. "These things took weeks!"

The guy—brown hair, green eyes and a cleft in his chin—grinned back, undeterred.

"I'm Cliff Porter. We've got twelve weeks. Maybe you'll know me enough by the time class is over to knit me something."

Kyle wasn't great at flirting, but something about that unrepentant smile made Kyle smile coyly back.

"Maybe. But you'll have to convince me it's worth my time." Cliff's grin grew wider. "I can do that."

That day, Cliff caught Kyle on their way out of class and invited him to lunch with his friends. Cliff hung with a fun bunch—lunch on the grass, ball games in the quad people—and Kyle enjoyed their company. And Cliff's. He enjoyed their company for the next six weeks. And sometimes, he just enjoyed Cliff.

He was with Cliff alone when they were walking across campus late at night, just when it got cold enough for Cliff to shiver as they spoke.

"It's getting cold," Cliff said, flirting. Kyle wasn't sure if Cliff was flirting with Kyle specifically, or if he just flirted with the entire world. It didn't matter.

Cliff had become the centre of Kyle's world. Kyle had been planning Cliff's hat for the last week, including creating a chart with designs from atomic structures, since they'd met during a chemistry lecture.

"It is getting cold," Kyle said cheekily, pretending indifference. "We'll have to bring out our hats and scarves soon."

"Mm-hm," Cliff confirmed. "You know, I can't find my hat from home. I'll have to just buy one of those ugly cheap acrylic ones from the uni store."

Kyle's cheeks flushed. He'd waxed rhapsodic about

Love on display

quality yarn a few times. "Well, you know," he mumbled. "Whatever you think is best."

They drew near Kyle's room, and Cliff stood, chest to chest with Kyle, smiling in the light from the sodium lamp. "I think I might wait," Cliff said, a dimple popping on his cheek.

"Wait for what?" Kyle's voice was embarrassingly breathy.

"Well, I'm going on a ski trip during the winter break. Maybe I'll... find a better hat by then."

"You'll find one," Kyle deadpanned.

"Mm-hm."

"Find one."

Cliff drew nearer. "Yup."

"You do that," Kyle whispered, lost in his playful eyes.

Cliff kissed his cheek, and then popped back. "Maybe," he said with a wink, and then sauntered off, leaving Kyle in an agony of anticipation.

Kyle knitted furiously. During classes, between classes, during meals. Stitch by stitch, the hat took shape, and Cliff made sure to touch the wool with an appreciative finger at least once a day as they sat down in class, or ate lunch together, or studied in Cliff's room.

The kiss on the cheek was followed by another, after a movie. And another, before lunch, and once, giddily, a shy kiss on the lips after Kyle walked Cliff to his hall of residence.

Kyle finished the hat at three a.m. the night before Cliff left. Cliff's grin as he arrived panting for breath made the sleepless nights worth it.

"For me?" he asked, biting his lip as his father loaded the car.

"Of course."

Cliff put it on—it was a little loose, but the yarn would felt with wearing. "I'll wear it every day," he said proudly. "I'll tell everyone who made it for me."

Kyle's heart beat triple time in his chest. "What will you say?" he asked.

"My boyfriend does nice work." And then, in front of his parents and everything, he kissed Kyle—not on the cheek.

Kyle floated back to his room after Cliff left. He was planning a sweater.

Mother, knitter, wife and writer—Amy Lane writes romance and urban fantasy, and babies two spoiled dogs. She keeps her retirement in yarn and knits or crochets every chance she gets.

