

The First *six months*

Their first flat left a lot to be desired. It claimed to be a loft but that seemed to translate into “draught”—as winter approached, a constant cold wind seemed to tickle their toes, no matter how much roving they stuffed into the chinks in the flooring. They’d moved in when they were just out of uni, and their families had helped them with the deposit, so they took it instead of moving back home.

But they were so happy to be living together. Kyle woke up that first morning, looked into Cliff’s green eyes, and smiled.

“We’re doing it, yeah?”

“Yeah. Today we find jobs, tomorrow, we conquer the world!”

It was a plan! They got up and dressed as well as they could afford. The world was their oyster!

But things didn’t work out the way they’d planned. Nearly six months later, Cliff had found a job—but Kyle had not. He’d signed up for Centrelink and he worked a few shifts a week at a local fast food place. They ate in and shopped thriftily, but he felt the lack of income keenly. Cliff got up every morning and shivered across the draughty floor, hopping in the cold. Over the past three years Kyle had made him a hat, a scarf, mittens, even a sweater when he realised they were heading towards forever—but he’d never made him socks. And Cliff was getting the flu.

Kyle rolled out of bed while Cliff was in the shower and searched through his yarn reserves. There was a particular skein of navy-blue sock yarn he was searching for. While Kyle loved colourwork and really adored a good skein of hand-dyed multi-coloured merino, it was time for a plain old skein of navy blue to find its place on Cliff’s feet.

Except he couldn’t find the skein. He searched so frantically he almost missed his window to make the tea. He left the box of wool out as he ran

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to switch on the jug. Cliff emerged from the shower, sneezing and red-nosed, looking like he felt awful, just as the jug boiled. Kyle added some water to their oatmeal and poured them each their tea, setting the small table where he searched his laptop for work every morning.

“You got a day planned?” Cliff asked, voice congested.

“Same old. Go to Centrelink, look for a job, try to find some fruit juice on sale to get you better. You going to the doctor’s?”

Cliff smiled a little. “On my way to work. You worry too much.”

Kyle set the tea down and kissed his cheek. “I worry just the right amount. Six months is coming up and it feels like you’re doing all the heavy lifting.”

“Are you kidding? I went looking for a job, remember? It’s so much easier to have one and keep one than to find one!”

He wasn’t kidding—job hunting got brutal. Still, Kyle had been hoping their six-month anniversary would be something to celebrate, not something to ‘make it through’. “Cliff, luv, have you been through my yarn stash?” Kyle asked as he grabbed clothes for the shower.

“Uh... no. Why, uh, would I?”

“Was looking for a skein of something and it’s not there. No worries—I’ve got scraps. I’ll make do.”

He had, in fact, purple and grey scraps that would make a very handsome pair of socks with contrasting heels and toes. Kyle made it through his day—and two more job interviews—with good cheer. He could make Cliff a pair of socks that would keep his feet warm, and maybe his boyfriend could finally kick his cold!

A week later, Kyle put the socks in a little box with a bow—and a note. Surprises were wonderful when they were the good kind! Cliff was asleep,



See Jenny Occleshaw’s lovely pattern in this issue (p12) for the purple and grey socks!

having finally bowed to the inevitable and taken some days off work, but he was improving.

They had something to celebrate.

Kyle put the box on the table and ladled out his Nana’s famous chicken soup so it could cool while Cliff awakened from his nap.

“Is that Nana’s soup?” Cliff’s voice, free of congestion, made him smile.

“We’re celebrating,” he said.

“Six months.” Cliff’s presence at his back was a warm joy. “I remember.”

“And...”

Cliff gasped. “Did you?”

“Yes! I got the job!”

“Oh wonderful! That’s fantastic!” Kyle beamed. “Maybe we can afford some place with heat!”

“Just in time for summer,” Cliff chuckled. “Here, let me take the bowls.”

Kyle turned and smiled shyly at the sight of *two* boxes, one at each place. “A present!”

“Open it!” Cliff’s irrepressible self had been subdued but not cowed by the last months.

Kyle sat and fumbled with the bow. “Oh...” He felt absurdly tearful. “*That’s* where the wool went!” It had been transformed into a perfect, simple blue hat, as professional as their office clothes.

“Your Nana taught me when I visited,” Cliff said proudly. “I hope you don’t mind.”

Kyle grinned at him. “Open yours.” Cliff’s laugh warmed their draughty little space. “I guess six months is wool—for us, anyway!”

“It’s warm and made with love. So maybe wool should be for all anniversaries ever!”