

Glory

BY AMY LANE

Well I thought the sweater was beautiful," Cliff said as they walked away from the display. Kyle nodded bravely but Cliff could tell

he was depressed.

"It was your best work—and that pattern of atoms is wholly original. Think about it. Those other pieces were worked from somebody else's pattern."

"But the back of the piece that won was so neatly done," Kyle said, glum. "Did you see that? It formed its own pattern, did you see?"

"I see we need to get out of this heat," Cliff temporised, because the truth was, he *had* seen. Kyle did very fine work, but he was up against knitters with forty years experience.

Winning a ribbon in the district show wasn't just a matter of cobbling together a potholder—these fibre artists were profoundly talented.

Kyle looked at him sideways. "You saw that I still have a long way to go," he said with a sigh.

"Hey, I'm still stuck on a basic sock. I think you're a rock star." Cliff winked at him and Kyle brightened. "Wait here though—I'm off to talk to Eunice!"

"What?" Kyle might very well be outraged—Eunice Pasternak was the official in charge of textile entries for the show this year, and she'd been a bit condescending. A man? Was entering something he'd made his *boyfriend*? How quaint. Kyle's big blue eyes and quiet smiles had eventually won her over, but in the meantime, Cliff had endured Kyle's counting-to-ten sighs for the past two months.

More than once he'd wanted to tell Kyle to chuck it all in, this much grief wasn't worth it, but then he'd look at the jumper. Fine gauge yarn, tailored just for Cliff with wide shoulders and a small waist, the pullover featured a tiny print of a single electron circling a single proton—like Kyle claimed he'd been pulled into Cliff's orbit from the very first. Kyle had worked on it for the past six months, while on the train, or in front of the television. He hadn't said a word to Cliff about who it was for, but the only other place he'd ever used that pattern had been on the hat he'd made Cliff when they'd first met. He'd known.

But the work had been so lovely—so fine and perfect, and Cliff had been so proud of him, that he'd urged his shy



and gentle boyfriend to enter his work into the show. He hadn't thought of Kyle actually *winning* anything, he just wanted to showcase Kyle's gift. Get his boy a little bit of glory, that was all.

He hadn't counted on a Highly Commended—or how depressed Kyle would be at not being the best. Well, Cliff had a plan for showing Kyle he was the best in *Cliff's* eyes. He'd had this plan in his pocket for well over a month, actually—but work, family, preparations for the show—everything got in the way.

But standing next to Kyle, seeing him looking so sad in the hot autumn sunshine of May, he thought that maybe nothing should get in the way of *his* path to glory—not this time.

"Here," he said, grinning brightly. "Let's go see some animals, ride some rides, and eat something *really* bad for us."

A reluctant smile tugged at Kyle's mouth.

"It *did* get Highly Commended," he said, and for the first time, it didn't sound like a bad thing. "I should probably take a picture of it with the ribbon to send to Mum."

"She'll be as proud of you as I am.

Now come on!"

They ran around like children. They ogled the sheep and rabbits being shown, watched the horses parade around the ring, and even saw a sow in farrow. They braved the rides to whoops of laughter, and Cliff tried his hand at knocking over milk bottles, winning Kyle a stuffed unicorn which he carried proudly. They finished off with fried ice cream, and then took a walk to the blessedly air-conditioned exhibition building.

"Oh," Kyle whispered. "Look at all that glorious needlework. See that doily? That was worked with triple-o needles in thread. I feel like such a fool for putting my work up against something so fine!"

"Well it looks like a very handsome beginning, don't you think?"

They drew up to the sweater, and Cliff silently thanked Eunice Pasternak. She'd done exactly as he'd asked.

"Cliff?" Kyle said, voice uncertain. "What's that attached to the ribbon?"

Cliff caught Eunice's eye as she stood watch over the knitted treasures, and she winked. He leaned over the divider and took off the ribbon—and the platinum rings attached to it.

"What do you say," he asked, holding the bands in his palm. "Will being my husband be enough glory for you after this?"

Kyle bit his lip to hold back the blinding smile.

"Yes. Oh yes." 