

# An Abundance of Days

BY AMY LANE

**To Shawnee and Lorna—getting that box of yarn broke my heart.**

Julie held out the four large skeins of pastel 8-ply alpaca—plenty for a shawl or sweater. “Who gets this?” Anne had to take a deep breath through the oxygen tank before answering.

“Jenny,” she said, like she already had it planned. Well of course—Jenny was a girlie girl, and she wasn’t going to be any less girlie after the surgery than she had been before.

“Done.” Julie set the skeins in the small box marked “Jenny” and reached into the larger box for the next whack of yarn. She held out the 10-ply dark watercolors and sighed. Julie once had plans for this—a sweater for herself, when she so rarely made things for herself. So much yarn, so much generosity—so little time.

“Kyle,” Anne wheezed, “and Cliff. They can... fight over...who makes...the sweater.”

Julie smiled into her beautiful brown eyes. “For the other one to wear,” she said softly.

Anne’s breath was deserting her, but her sense of humour wasn’t. After twenty years together Julie knew by the crinkles around her eyes and the wrinkle in her nose that she was laughing. They loved Kyle and Cliff, the two lovebirds at their local yarn group. Anne had so looked forward to their wedding in six months. She would probably not make it six months.

“And this?” Julie pulled out bright neon self-striping yarn—five skeins, enough for a blanket.

Anne shivered. “The Andersons,” she wheezed. “There will be a baby, I’m sure.”

Julie put the yarn in the appropriate box and hurried to the corner by

the heater. Anne’s pi shawl and her fingerless mittens\* rested there, both made by their friend Shanny. Shanny wasn’t an amazing knitter or crocheter, but she put love in every stitch.

“Mm...” Anne pulled the shawl around her shoulders and the mitts over her hands, sinking into the heated wool happily. “Thanks love.” Julie kissed her forehead. “Any time.” Her heart constricted—they weren’t done. They weren’t anywhere close to done apportioning some thirty years of Anne’s stash to their friends.

“Shall we resume?” Anne smiled, and their aging cat padded delicately into her lap. Julie was reminded of when they’d brought her home as a kitten, sort of a five-year anniversary gift to themselves, a celebration of being friends and lovers and cohabitators and still being deeply in love. Anne had chased Sheba unmercifully, teasing her with a yarn scrap and feathers, until neither of them knew when the darned animal would be leaping from a shelf or a counter onto their heads or laps. Anne said cats should never be predictable—but it was Anne who was always surprising.

“Sure,” Julie said, thinking that her throat and her ears were aching with tears she promised she wouldn’t shed. “This batch here.”

Anne leaned back and closed her eyes. “That’s yours, love. I was going to make a sweater for you. You need to make something instead.”

“I can’t do this—”

“Of course you can. You’re a lovely yarn-worker—”

“No. I mean I can’t do *this*—” Oh she couldn’t. She’d promised Anne when the diagnosis came through. She’d promised that she’d save all the tears for when Anne was gone and live through their days with all the laughter they’d shared over twenty years.

“Come here.” Julie set the yarn down and curled up on the couch



next to her beloved. “We can... finish tomorrow...” Anne stroked her hair, like there would be infinite tomorrows for the two of them. Once there had been—an abundance of tomorrows, an abundance of yarn. But no more.

“Sure,” Julie said, wiping her face on her shoulder. Tomorrow...

The people at the yarn store took their boxes of stash yarn with equal parts gratitude and grief.

“Does she really want us to have this?” Kyle asked, stroking the water-colored wool covetously.

“Absolutely,” Julie said, her voice strong, her smile intact. “She’s not going to have time to use it, right?” The look on the boys’ faces told her that she wasn’t fooling anyone.

“This is lovely,” Jenny said, looking at her bit, but her lower lip was trembling. “Is this all of her stash?” Julie shook her head. “No. Not even close. It’s going to take a month. I... just me, you know?”

“Well that’s not right,” Kyle said. “Not right at all. It should be all of us. You shouldn’t do this alone.”

Julie gaped at him.

“Of course not!” Cliff got out his phone.

“We can be by Saturday, right Kyle?”

“Absolutely. You, Jenny?”

“Friday night all right with you?”

Jenny smiled at her, and Julie nodded. One by one their friends and fellow knitters offered to help with the monumental task of saying goodbye to someone they had loved too.

Silently Julie gave thanks. They’d had so much. An abundance of yarn, an abundance of laughter—even twenty years was an abundance of days. And now they had an abundance of friends.

\*Shanny’s fingerless mittens pattern can be found on page 40