

Diversity

BY AMY LANE

Michael's wife walked amazingly fast. "Patrice!" he cried. "Patrice! Slow down! All the yarn will still be there!"

Patrice turned to him, her entire being glowing from the tips of her slender brown toes to the tightly coiled ends of her whisper-soft black curls. Her radiant smile invited him to play with her favorite toy—which was the plan.

"I can't help it!" she laughed. "I'm so excited for you to meet everyone! All I do is talk about you and they've never seen you. They're starting to think you're a myth!"

Michael felt the flush that would blotch his fair skin. "I'm not a myth!" he protested. "It's just..." Oh, he hesitated to say this out loud because it made him feel completely asinine. "You know. I'm not sure how well I'll fit in with your friends at the knitting group." He shifted uncomfortably. "I'm, uh, not exactly a poster child for diversity."

Her smile softened, and he felt marginally better. She understood—more than anyone, perhaps—how unhappy he was to see people treated badly. But he felt so helpless sometimes. What could he do? He had the face of the worst offender.

"No one person makes a crowd diverse," she said, taking him seriously. "How could we claim to accept everybody if we throw you out on your ear?"

Oh! She was so beautiful! And she loved knitting. She filled their home with blankets and valances and throw pillows, each thing more colorful than the last.

"You could at least throw me out on my behind," he said, wanting to make her laugh. "There's more padding there." She giggled and shook her head.

"Your behind is in perfect proportion and you're just looking for a compliment. Now come on. You need to pick out your yarn! Make sure it's something machine washable, yeah?" Since they already split chores—including laundry—Michael was all for that.

They arrived at the yarn store with a little time to spare, and Patrice took him to the section with worsted weight, wool/polyester blends. "This will go quickly, since you haven't done this in a while," she told him.

Babette, the store proprietess ventured near, asking them if they had any questions, and Patrice explained that they needed a basic texture—Michael hadn't done any crafting since he was a child, really. "Oh, that's a shame." Babette showed him a rack with yarn cakes, each one more fantastically layered with color than the last. "These are a very sturdy blend, and one of these should do for what you need. All you have to do is choose the colour!"

"Pink," Patrice challenged.

"I'm not having that discussion," he told her loftily, picking something brightly neon.

"Perfect!" she gushed. "Oh, Michael, that'll be wonderful! Now go purchase that and come sit."

He did, after choosing the right hardware. Patrice had the little kit inside her knitting bag, with the scissors and yarn needles and tape measure and such—he was always amazed at how much she could fit into the battered little envelope of cloth. As he stood at the counter he saw some bright little notions bags and he slid one of those on top of his purchases with a wink. Babette winked back, and asked him if he wanted one of the reusable shopping bags to double as a project tote and he took her up on it.

He was relaxed and happy as he



pulled up a seat in the little circle of couches and chairs that made up the knitting circle in the back of the store and listened to the conversation to see if he could join.

The young man next to him watched as he pulled out his crochet hook and began to chain.

"Hello—you seem to be missing a needle!" he said. "Hey, Kyle—he's doing it wrong!"

Another young man patted the first young man's knee. "Cliff, sweetie, that's crochet. Don't worry, it won't bite."

Michael smiled weakly. "I learned when I was a little boy at my grandmother's house."

"What are you making, luv?" A woman in her fifties smiled at him through sad eyes, and he smiled shyly back and looked at Patrice for help. She said she hadn't told anybody here yet—she'd been waiting for Michael to make the big announcement.

"A baby sweater," Patrice said smugly. "For our baby. Everybody, this is Michael!"

A general cheer went up, congratulations coming thick and fast, and in a moment, Michael was overwhelmed with names and projects and hugs. Julie—the woman who'd asked him what he was making was the first in the line to hug them both, and Cliff and Kyle came next, and a pretty woman named Jenny, and soon, Michael felt as beloved in that group of people as his beautiful wife.

"Thank you all," he said after everyone had sat down. "You're all so very kind."

Jenny looked up from a project rife with pink and eyelets. "Well my boy, we tend to love most everybody here. Even people who *crochet!*"