

Just Magic

by Angie

"If this be magic, let it be an art."

- William Shakespeare (The Winter's Tale)

Catherine was passing Mary's chamber when she heard gales of children's laughter. She knew Mary had been teaching a group of children to knit, but what on earth was so funny?

She entered in quietly, unnoticed in the bedlam, and watched as one of the children pulled the knitting they were doing and laughed as it unravelled. They were apparently all doing this. What most knitters considered a disaster, a dropped stitch, was now seemingly deliberate and hilarious!

Mary noticed her and beckoned her over.

"Hello Catherine," she greeted the younger woman, who was still rendered speechless, but managed at last to say, "What?"

"I've been teaching them to make a magic scarf," Mary told her. "It's a great way to get the children interested in knitting, and it's fun too."

"How?" Catherine asked, not too sure what to think of this.

"We just cast on an even number of stitches to our chosen width, knit 1/3 the length we want, and then drop every other stitch on the final row. Then pull it out all the way down from the top, and ...

"**Presto neato**," bellowed one of the children, who had been listening. She held up what she had done, and Catherine had to admit it was interesting, a sort of mesh scarf, which seemed to have conveniently rolled itself into a tube.

The other children held up their scarves and everyone broke into laughter again, as they wiggled them around like snakes. A couple of the boys wound them around their necks, to even more laughter.

"It's a very old technique," Mary confessed. "I had forgotten about it until I saw it mentioned in an old knitting instruction book. Great way to use up partial skeins or even scrap yarn, as long as it's not exotic stuff."

"I think I want to try this," Catherine admitted, intrigued.

She was not a great knitter, but this certainly looked to be easy enough and she could make one for Vincent and herself. She went over to the box of scrap skeins and pulled out something tweedy-looking that she hoped would be enough. Then she picked a pair of needles out of the large vase of them and sat down on the bed next to Mary.

The children meanwhile, had started another. Each had two or three skeins. Catherine watched them and remembering Mary's instructions, got to work. After her piece reached a little over a foot long, she stopped and considered, then did a few more rows. Better too long

than too short. Then she dropped every other stitch as instructed, leaving the rest on the needle, and laughed as the lines ran down, like a run in a pair of tights.

Mary laughed with her, and showed off her own, which had used several colours of scrap to good effect.

That done, Catherine started on the second one, relieved when the yarn proved to be enough.

She didn't know what Vincent thought of 'his and hers' fashion, but she would find out shortly.

END

