

Love Capped

by Angie

"If you want to get ahead, get a hat .."

- old British joke

Catherine's close association with the Tunnel community had changed her buying habits, just as loving Vincent had changed her socially – and both for the better.

She now preferred to make something for Vincent, whether it was for Christmas/Winterfest, his birthday, or as now, their anniversary. Finding a project she could do was the big challenge.

She had become something of a knitter and crocheter, thanks to Mary, and the older woman never seemed to lack for materials, but Catherine knew she was no pro and had to find a project within her capabilities.

So she aimed for the practical – which didn't mean it couldn't also be beautiful as well. Tunnel folk preferred presents that were useful, not merely decorative, as too much in the world above was – and she fully agreed with that. Having been one of those decorative people herself – despite her training as a lawyer - she was very glad that was all behind her.

Her job in the DA's office used her brain, something she had never felt was really exercised in her father's law firm. That her relationship with Vincent meant that the life in that firm, along with her social life, had changed irrevocably, was in her opinion a good thing. Looking back, she could see how shallow it had all been.

So, a practical project was needed, and quickly. Vincent was away mapping, so the time was right.

Catherine also preferred projects that were quick, as she often had little time to devote to them. So she made her way to Mary's chamber and began to browse the box of patterns, neatly divided into crochet and knitted items.

Mary came in as she was looking and greeted her with a smile. She had become used to seeing the younger women right where she was, looking for her next project.

"Can I help, Catherine?" she asked.

"Lord, I hope so," Catherine replied. "What on earth does Vincent need that I can make for him?"

"Funny you should ask," Mary commented. "I was talking to Kanin the other day and he was complaining that his hair was getting long - but Livy liked it that way - so he needed a way to keep it out of his face while he was working with hammer and chisel in various chambers. Of course I suggested a hat, and at first he wasn't keen on that, but when I explained that it would be more of a cap for working men, he said he'd try anything I came up with."

“Well, Vincent could certainly use something like that,” Catherine responded, grinning. “Do you have any ideas or patterns?”

“As it happens, I found something just lately in an old crochet magazine. It is supposed to be a three season unisex hat – meaning not really suitable for a hard New York winter, but quite useful for the other three seasons. I tried making one, just to see what it looked like, and it’s great Catherine. It doesn’t take long to make, and it stretches nicely too. If we use some of that scrap cotton yarn I have, it will also not be too hot for the men to wear when they’re working – and of course it can be washed. They might like to have at least a couple each, so one can be washed regularly.”

“May I see the pattern, Mary?”

“Certainly. It’s over there on my table, along with the hat. I tried it out for Kanin.”

Catherine went over and picked up the hat. It wasn’t heavy and had a fairly loose weave, so it wouldn’t be too hot. The stitches lower were more open, giving the hat some built-in air-conditioning. It was indeed simple, even she could see that, and she liked the texture. And for sure, it would be great for either men or women, she thought with a grin.

“I really like this, Mary. Can I get started on one?”

“Of course. Find a largish hook and that bag over there has the cotton yarn. I’ll just take this hat over to Kanin and let you know what he says. He’ll want a couple, I’d imagine, if he likes it.”

Catherine did as directed, and sat down with the pattern, which was indeed not difficult at all, just rounds until the hair line (she measured it on herself), and then the more open stitches and finally some rows of border. She was not a fast crocheter, but it worked up very quickly.

She looked at the hat, and decided she had better make at least two more, and rummaged through the yarn bag until she found something she thought suitable. He looked good in blues because of his eyes, so she tried to incorporate as many shades of that as she could.

Mary came back as she was admiring her work, and praised her.

“That’s lovely, Catherine! Kanin liked mine and it fit perfectly. Naturally, he wants another. William was there and he wants one too. I think we’re going to have a run on these, so perhaps we can get Livy and some of the others to help us.

Catherine nodded, and started on the next cap, then decided she wanted one or two for herself as well. Her hair was a little longer now, but even shoulder length hair needed to be kept in place when she helped with the chores below.

Dinner interrupted the work, but she returned to it afterwards and made herself caps of whatever came to hand. Over the next couple of days, she made several more, deciding there was no reason to be stingy with them. There was lots of yarn. Mary was making them too.

On their Anniversary, Catherine presented Vincent with a towel-wrapped package. She had found some nice pieces of terrycloth and had cut them into wide strips and hemmed them. Besides making good wrapping, they would be good for mopping sweaty brows, which the hat wouldn’t be able to prevent.

Vincent opened the package carefully, intrigued as he always was with Catherine’s gifts. He carefully removed one of the three caps in the fabric package and examined it, wanting to be sure what he was seeing before he commented.

"It's very lovely, Catherine. I think I know what this is for. I ran into Kanin a little while ago, and he seemed to be wearing one much like it."

"Yes, Vincent, that's the same kind of cap, something to keep your hair out of your eyes. Kanin gave us the idea and Mary found a pattern. Would you try it on, please?"

Vincent did and with a little stretching found it a snug but comfortable fit.

"It fits very well, Catherine."

"Good. I have a couple too, and I'm sure we'll be seeing more of them."

"You're amazing, Catherine. Why has it taken us so long to think of this?" Vincent shook his head in amazement. He knew a lot of men above wore baseball caps but they weren't the best solution for tunnel work. Who needed an sunshade, or anything with a brim, below?

"To be honest, Vincent, a lot of hats I've seen in patterns are not really practical, more decorative. This one was intended for men, as a kind of work cap, but I see no reason why women couldn't wear one as well. I certainly plan to."

Vincent gave her a big hug, rendered speechless again. What would he do without her? The cap certainly offered a better solution for him than a leather tie, his usual control for his hair when working. He had never found a hat worth the trouble. This one would be both useful and comfortable.

END

