



FEBRUARY'S COSY

**A
Knit
With Me
Story**

AN INTRODUCTION:

I have written many stories since I was a kid. Ask my mother about the four pages describing an apple...on a test where I was to write 3 to 5 sentences. She will laugh. The apple was just so interesting. I had so much to say. My mom would also tell you about my first great chapter book: Fred the Fish that Couldn't Swim. I skipped many an elementary school lunch to go to the library to type it. Mistakes were rectified with a bottle of something called Liquid White-Out. It took almost a semester to complete. Story telling was more than something I did. It was my imaginary friend I could play with each day.

As an adult I have sought to develop community, especially with lovers of knitting. I show them what I am making, where I live and tell them stories about my small part of this big, incredible world.

The following story is about a woman who likes to knit, and finds herself creating as her life happens. The story can offer you a bit more to do than just reading the words on the page, if you decide you would like to join in.

Tucked into this story is a knitting pattern, which Ebbie, our main character, is making and writing about as she does. The incessant journaling she inherits quite honestly from me. There are any number of notebooks, binders and even bound index cards with my thoughts and feelings about projects I have made, written out in vivid detail. Very few finished objects made their way to my online Ravelry project gallery, but almost each cast on made it to a paper record.

Notes on where I purchased yarn, what needles I chose, what was I thinking when deciding on the pattern, responses to what I am making all collected on paper. Bits of the yarn are taped beside skein labels. Most entries pre-date now fashionable washi tape. I'd grab blue painters tape, scotch tape and once in awhile silvery thick duct tape to secure my fiber sample supply log for posterity.

Ebbie doesn't go to the extent that I did, not yet anyway. But she definitely gives enough insight so you can replicate her cosy knit as you read. She will share everything from supplies required to what she actually used, to number of stitches to cast on and bind off and what method she thought best. To ensure you get the fullest understanding, the pattern segment she refers to is included at the end of each chapter.

*Creative designers work very hard to formulate beautiful patterns to replicate. It is important to note Ebbie is sharing with you **my pattern for you** and doesn't undermine the pattern copyright parameters.*

Enjoy the story, enjoy the knitting. If you would like to share this project with others, please point them to this story in it's entirety housed on the Encourage Better website: <https://encouragebetter.com>

FROM EBBIE'S JOURNAL: STARTING & MATERIALS NEEDED

**I bought the Bird's Egg color way and used 32 in circular needles. The pattern called for 5 skeins for Size 1, which is what I plan to knit, but I got one additional skein in case I wanted to make it longer. If I opt not to increase the length, I have a small project in mind this extra skein will be used for. That hat I just bound off would be fun to do again in this yarn!*

I had quite a hard time picking a color. If I hadn't gone with the Bird's Egg, I would have loved to use Clay. I kept picking it up only to put it down again to reach for Bird's Egg. So that is what I now have safely in my sack. The blue looks like calm water, gentle, clear and cool. That's what I want my knitting to make me feel right now.

The first ball I wound by hand this evening in my room here at the B&B. The

skein fit over the back of the red linen slip cover chair by the window. It was quite a lovely contrast, red linen, blue wool, soft grey sheer curtains. Soft drops of rain slid slowly down the window. If I had my umbrella swift and ball winder I would have been done in half the time, but I did rather enjoy the repetition of around, around, around, watching the ball build.

The pattern called for 6 stitch markers, but I have a few safety pins and always some waste yarn on hand. I did buy a new tapestry needle to seam up pieces when I finish. I like the bent tip of it, will it make a difference when seaming I wonder..

I have a progress marker, a wee little ceramic blue sock I was using for my airplane knitting. Not that I need a progress marker, but there is just something about that little sock that I enjoy. And there is something quite satisfying about getting lost in my knitting, only to discover I have knit so many rows!

Mrs. Holmgren had some wood ready in the fireplace with extra stacked beside, so I now have a place to be comfortable.

On to the swatching..

1

It really was because she had looked cosy and content, happy with life, and even a bit mysterious that Ebbie had decided to get involved. She had no idea who the woman was, and she probably would never find out, but she did know enough to get started.

Ebbie was now in her fifth airport, with just one more to go, then she would be home.

She had mindlessly wandered the quiet streets of an unfamiliar downtown over a week ago. After a meeting earlier that morning, her brain couldn't settle. She needed time out of doors to quiet herself.

The sidewalks tried to take her places they thought would calm her, but they didn't know her like the moss-covered trails in the woods she called home. Ebbie followed them anyway. Concrete paths moved her along in front of restaurants with sweet and spicy scents mixing together, upscale clothing boutiques filled with lovely dresses that she would never have the occasion to wear, and home furnishing stores with items too big to carry-on and a bit too expensive to ship. She had been walking the better part of the afternoon and couldn't remember if she had

passed by the different storefronts before. Her mind had other things to do than pay attention to where her feet were taking her.

She decided to cross the street and search for the ice cream shop Mrs. Holmgren raved about earlier in the morning over breakfast. It was, after all, this delicious destination that had set Ebbie off from the B and B. She had been told the seventy-five-year-old ice cream parlor was a definite "must visit" and tucked in near the town center, still in the original location. Thinking the town center had to be a bit in, and away from the water, Ebbie readjusted her direction, turned right, and waited for the signal to cross. Funny that even as an adult, on an empty one lane cross street, she felt required to wait for the orange hand to disappear and be replaced by the small white pedestrian image. She always thought he looked like a creeping burglar with bad intentions, but still, she waited for him to give her permission to move.

Once he did, she crossed the street, repositioning the straps on the well-loved backpack she had slung over her left shoulder. Ebbie could pick up and go anywhere in under a minute. Everything she needed was usually in or near this bag. As long as her current knitting project wasn't out of control, Ebbie's life could fit inside this sack.

Or at least it could before...

Now she wasn't sure.

That lack of surety is what drew Ebbie to the nameless woman, for that woman was the literal face of Cosy.

Ebbie had crossed the street looking to find the place famous for homemade ice cream and instead stood in front of a green chalkboard easel with an invitation written simply: "OPEN! Come sniff the yarn."

So she did.

FROM EBBIE'S JOURNAL: SWATCHING

The swatch instructions were straightforward:

"12 sts and 21 rows for a 4 in/10cm square in pattern using US 10.5 needles."

I cast on 24 stitches and knit 30 rows. If I am taking the time to do this thing, I want it easy to read and big enough to measure in a variety of places. Plus, these little squares wind up under my coffee cup, clusters of jars on my desk, on the counter, wherever my life needs pops of fiber inserted. I know I've created enough swatches I could probably sew them together to make a crazy lap blanket.

The stitch pattern required for the swatch is one I always enjoy, a simple moss stitch.

Row 1: k1, [p1,k1] to end

Row 2 onwards is just repeating row 1.

A help to me is remembering that I need to work the opposite stitch of the stitch I see to keep me on track. See a knit, Ebbie? You know you need to purl. See a purl? Better make it a knit. Then I'm freed from relying on the pattern for a bit.

Initially, the swatch made me nervous. It seemed my numbers would be off.

After a good a soak and block, it was spot on, which is THE WIN for today that I needed.. and a reminder for me to follow through.

If I hadn't soaked and blocked, I wouldn't have a fair assessment of my gauge. But hurray, I'm good!

Now I can ball a few more skeins and get ready to cast on. I am getting quite into this balling by hand approach..

2

The deep bowl Mrs. Holmgren had loaned Ebbie was generously sized and perfect for soaking her knitted square. The sweet B&B owner had made the glazed pottery herself and was happy to take it off a shelf in her kitchen to put it to good use.

"I never took up knitting, though so many of the girls in my day did. I worked a needle well enough to help patch my dad's socks, but my hands wanted to be dirty, so gardening alongside my mother became my calling." She smiled as she passed the bowl over to Ebbie, happy moments gently drawing her back to a different sunfilled place, not the warm kitchen where she stood now, leaning with her hip against the counter.

As Ebbie took it, she looked at Mrs. Holmgren's hands. Long, dark fingers were elegant, muscular. Confident hands, unafraid of work.

A small chuckle, almost to herself, "I remember whispering to the blades of grass how sorry I was that I had to pull them. It didn't feel right uprooting them when they hadn't done anything more than show up at the wrong place at the wrong time. I would dig and plant with her in the morning. Afternoons my father would put a stick in one of

my hands and a pocketknife in the other. I'd whittle with him as we swung beneath our shady pecan trees in a swing he built." Her eyes glanced at the bowl with a different look, one not seeing the here and now, but cherished moments past. "The two of them always talked of making pots or dishes; thought that pottery was an interesting thing to take up. They passed away, having never tried it. Years later, I took the class. I didn't go because I wanted to learn, I went because I missed them." Her eyes met Ebbie's. "It's a special feeling when you make things that give more than just the satisfaction of the finished work."

Ebbie nodded. She knew that feeling, too.

"Are you sure this isn't too special for me to use just to soak something in?" she held the large bowl to her chest, feeling protective.

Shaking her head of soft curls, Mrs. Holmgren answered, "Letting you use it gives me the chance to have a bit of fun remembering. It will be big enough for that thing you are holding," a nod to the dangling swatch also in Ebbie's hand, "but still fit on the sitting-room table in your rooms."

"Well, thank you, Mrs. Holmgren. I'm going to let 'this thing' have a little bath so I can figure out if I am ready to start my sweater," and back up the stairs to her suite Ebbie went, bowl, and swatch in hand.

That little block of yarn divided most knitters into two camps: always knit a gauge swatch or never knit those things. But Ebbie relied on it. She found she enjoyed and benefitted from the preparation. It had corrected her

course a few times, directing needle choice, but also served as a testing ground for practicing a new stitch. With quite a few patterns, her swatch had been handy later when she thought something looked too small. *Trust the swatch*, she reminded herself.

"And here's one thing I'm a success with on this trip," she pronounced as the numbers from the swatch stitches and rows matched up perfectly with what the pattern called for. The alternating knits and purls and purls and knits created a nubby texture; her hand brushed over them lightly, her mind somewhere else.

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The brass plate on the door had been polished by many a creative soul entering in before Ebbie and was now shiny and smooth. A series of gentle bells sounded, tiny and soft, like welcome rain you pray for while lying in bed when the dry heat of summer is just too much. She smiled, remembering those childhood summer nights. You could never be still enough to hide from the heat. She and her sister wouldn't speak, but they shared the same thought, the same plea, the same prayer, "Send the rain, please send the rain." And when the sound of it on the roof finally came, they dared not speak or move for fear of scaring it away. That sound meant hope.

It was indeed the perfect sound for entering this yarn shop. Bamboo stalks, dry and golden, stretched down from the ceiling to meet black shelves, the sides of which looked as if they once stood guard as ornate fences protecting a well-loved garden. Ebbie imagined blue and purple hydrangea

teasing their way between these iron-scroll spaces so many years ago. Now the curving swirls and decorative twists had bursts of colored yarn peeking through.

Standing just inside the wood and glass double doors, Ebbie looked at the long room. So many textures, unexpected furniture, and knick-knacks; she began to wonder if it was an antique thrift store with yarn accents. It wasn't messy or cluttered. Somehow the menagerie of furnishings artistically worked and drew Ebbie slowly forward. Her eyes focused, and the fiber was everywhere! She stepped past a.. wheelbarrow? Yes, it was. Red-painted metal now faded and smooth was heaped full of tweedy yarns: brown, black and golden. She continued moving, an old washstand beside her, where a gleaming white porcelain pitcher wasn't filled with water but an assortment of wooden knitting needles.

"I'll be right with you!" a cheerful, but muffled greeting came from behind a massive wooden desk that Ebbie was sure her fourth-grade teacher had once used. On top of it were jars, tall, short, wide, thin, holding varying sized bits of yarn, buttons, and— was that sea glass? She moved a bit closer to see.

"Welcome!" Up stood a woman, dusting off green-linen overalls. She appeared so suddenly from behind the desk it surprised Ebbie just a bit.

The woman wore a cardigan, cropped and grey and knit from the gentlest, fuzzy mohair Ebbie had ever seen. Hopeful brown eyes blinked above the most sincere smile. The smile was real and warm and kind. Ebbie found it hard

not to try smiling back, despite the tightness growing in her throat.

The woman asked, "So, are you here for a certain yarn or in need of a distraction?"

Ebbie started to cry.

Walking towards the front door, the woman uncapped the dry erase marker hanging by a colorful strand of yarn. She wrote: "Back at 1:15!" on the board and turned it so passers-by could see, "A distraction it is!" She said and twisted the lock before turning back to Ebbie.

FROM EBBIE'S JOURNAL:

CAST ON & HEM

I went back and forth, trying to commit to a cast-on style. The pattern calls for tubular cast on, so off I went to find the youtube tutorial that's been so helpful in the past. I seem to need a reminder each time I try this method! You'd think since I have done that cast on over and over for hats and sweaters, I would have it down.

But I don't.

Truth be told, the tubular cast-on is quite lovely, but I did the swatch using a long-tail cast on, and it works fine. I suppose I will have to see how easy casting on 87 stitches using the tubular will be...

Update! *-I made it through the tubular cast on without too many issues. I just had to go slow and steady, especially working the first row -but I stand firm by my earlier assessment that long-tail is a fine alternative!*

Worked the hem as follows:

Row 1 (right side): K1, [p1,k1] to end

Row 2 : P1, [k1,p1] to end

*Repeated rows 1 and 2, 6 total times
(12 rows)*

I love the way Osprey feels as I work. The thick yarn has a gentle strength to it that gives softly between my fingers and needles. Even in a simple 1x1 rib it looks amazing. I am really looking forward to wearing this sweater.

Go needles, go...

3

She inserted the key into the box, gave it a turn, and opened the silver door. Reaching up, she pulled out the mail. Having thought she heard the familiar dull sound of a plastic key fob hitting the metal within, she reached back into the box and felt around, clumsily with her gloved hand.

"Uhhhhh!" Ebbie rolled her eyes, removed her hand, and jumped a few times to peer into the box to make sure it was now empty. It was. And she was sure a key for the additional packages was on the floor on the other side.

Closing the door to her box and locking it, Ebbie tucked her keyring into her coat pocket and looked through her mail as she walked around the corner of mailboxes towards the post office counters. A wooly golden brown cow with long horns looked up at her from the stack. Ebbie turned the postcard over and read what her friend Louise had to say. Life in Scotland was routine, kids were fine, husband into everything, the weather cold, and when would Ebbie be headed that way? Oh, I do hope soon, she thought to herself.

She flipped through the remaining mail. A few magazines, the monthly newsletter from the local museum, then a

small paper for a certified letter. She kept it at the top of the pile as she took her place in line.

Kodiak was such a pleasant small town on a massive, rugged island. "The Rock" locals called it. Some folks uttered the nickname like a complaint, but Ebbie loved her most recent home and knew most of those in her community felt the same.

The small-town post office was tucked quietly into the ocean-facing side of a hill. From her place in line, she could simply turn around, look out the wall of windows behind her, and wonder how anything could be more beautiful. The sky was the soft blue you could see only in winter, and today it was a brilliant backdrop. As she looked off in the distance, the memory of vibrant greens sprung to mind, too numerous to count and such a contrast to the sweeping white covering everything now. Kodiak was then The Emerald Isle, the equally fitting nickname this strong island had earned. Then the sky had been a different blue, but no less incredible. Ebbie was lost in plans of summer hikes until she heard Mrs. Yvette say, "Hello Ebbie? You here for pick up?"

Ebbie turned round and laughed a bit embarrassed, "I did it again, Mrs. Yvette. I really should wear platform boots to check my mail."

The older woman shook her head, smiling, smooth black hair moving back and forth as it framed her kindly face. "We should have a height policy for those who get the upper boxes. Give me a moment, and I'll grab that key. You are by the mid 3000s, right?"

Ebbie nodded, "Box 3101."

Mrs. Yvette turned to go, but Ebbie stopped her. "I have a certified letter I need to pick up, too, since you are headed that way..." She extended the paper to the postal worker who took it and headed into the shelves of boxes and bundles, the mysterious world beyond.

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"Now don't you start kidding yourself and pay no mind to that shameful voice telling you nobody else has ever popped in here for a good cry. It happens more times than I can count, and truth be told, there's rarely a problem that can't be put into perspective by creative undertakings." Beautiful chocolate eyes looked at Ebbie, who took the tissue proffered and wiped her nose. "We will find your hands something to do so your brain can work through what it needs to sort out. Now, what's your fancy: the needles or the hook?"

Ebbie found her voice, "I knit. I can crochet a little, not very well, but I love to knit." She expected to feel embarrassed about losing composure in front of a stranger. The eyes looking at her now held no judgment. The moment had passed, and it seemed no explanation for the tears was expected from Ebbie. She stood to follow where the store owner went.

"Are you a new knitter?" The shop owner called over her shoulder, an assessing query, again no expectation in her tone.

"Actually, I have been knitting since I was seven. I learned when I was cooped up at a cabin with my sister one summer." She smiled slowly, remembering. "Knit my first sweater at ten. I just turned twenty-nine last month. So, no, I'm rather an old hat." Ebbie smiled again, the collection of hats, mittens, and scarves in baskets at home by each door she made popping to mind. Her top drawer had an array of socks, most being a lonely single sock. It was just so hard to knit two. And there were neatly stacked sweaters on shelves in her closet all knit by her two hands. She laughed, short and sharp, as her bathroom popped to mind. "I just finished knitting a bathmat. I'm not sure why it's funny, but suddenly it seems like I may be either a well-rounded knitter or the crazy knitting lady..."

"Let's choose 'well-rounded' and perhaps add adventurous to your description." Turning, a grin on her face, she continued, "I'm Maddie, and this is my shop. I've been here nineteen years. Remarkably, when I became the owner, I was not a knitter. Or a spinner, or crochet-er," she clarified when it looked as if Ebbie was about to ask. "I didn't work with fiber at all. I wanted to own a business, and our little tourist town didn't have a knitting shop. My husband owned a restaurant, and the number of visitors that came in asking 'Where's the local yarn shop?' became such a regular thing—and asked by a variety of interesting people to chat with—I decided Springhill was missing out if we didn't have one."

Not quite sure what thought in her mind she wanted to blurt out first, Ebbie missed her chance when the pause came. Maddie continued on, "You are in capable hands

now, so relax that panicked face. I studied. And I practiced. I taught myself to knit, as well as crochet and embroidery, and I did take lots of classes from knowledgeable crafters, too. Several weeks a year, I still head to some sort of retreat or workshop to catch up on the latest and greatest." Maddie continued weaving between a whitewashed corner hutch with skeins of handpainted yarns and an oversized rocking chair that could fit two adults with their knitting despite the assortment of overstuffed pillows in the seat.

"My husband found this-" Maddie gestured around the store "as interesting as I did, but for his own reasons. We worked shoulder to shoulder to start the restaurant, so that part wasn't hard, the framework and ins and out for starting a brick and mortar shop." She grinned conspiratorially, "He's since sold the restaurant-- which yeah, is still the best place to eat in this city!-- but now helps out here behind the scenes, and *only* "behind the scenes," she dramatically whispered "cause he wants to be left alone to knit," then chuckled at the look of surprise on Ebbie's face.

"He has quite the thing for making socks." She tilted her head to the display in the storefront windows. Socks like buntings were hung across the oversized bay windows; back and forth, four strands deep, ten maybe twelve socks across. Stripes. Colorwork. Plain with contrasting toes and heels. Large, small, and baby-sized. There were a lot of socks. They hung by clothes pegs on a line like laundry out in the summertime breeze. A clothes basket overflowing with an assortment of lovely self-striping yarns balls was tucked in the corner below.

Ebbie looked back to Maddie, who answered her unspoken question with a nod, "Each and every sock over there he either knit using double pointed needles or with last year's birthday gift... a vintage sock knitting machine that he's restored. I say *vintage*, it's about seventy years old, but sock construction hasn't changed much since then. When he uses it, he often just happily works a tube, picking up for an afterthought heel and then finishing with an afterthought toe."

Ebbie was quite impressed. Never having used a sock knitting machine herself, she wasn't sure of how difficult it was and made a note to hop online later and see what she was missing.

"I love knitting socks," she confessed as she looked down at her own feet, clad in the monster socks she had made with scrappy leftover bits from last year's sweater collections.

Maddie smiled. They held each other's gaze for a moment. "You're going to be fine," the store owner encouraged her. "You will. Now, let's get you purposed with a knit, shall we?"

Not knowing why, but Ebbie believed the gentle woman. For now, anyway. She followed Maddie to the nook past a display of rainbow speckled yarns, where she saw the pattern cover. And just like that, her hands had the problem of how to keep busy solved.

It really was because she had looked cosy and content, happy with life, and even mysterious, that Ebbie had

decided to get involved. And by involved, she meant embarking on this new pullover. It was an unusually constructed pullover, sloping shoulders with an oversized fit made it surprisingly unique.

"I want to knit that," her tone resolved she reached for the booklet. The pattern design was called "Cosy." Ebbie wanted to feel that way! Yes, she wanted to knit herself that cocoon, a self-care mantra made of yarn. How that marketing worked, she laughed to herself as flipped to the back to study the schematic. The numbers and measurements of the sketched garment blended with visions of documents filled with numbers and legal jargon from earlier that morning. She shook her head and breathed deeply.

"Yes, I think I'd rather like to get distracted by this! I brought a hat to knit on the trip here but finished it somewhere over the mid-west. So I've been projectless. Can you help me gather supplies, Maddie? I'll need needles too."

"That's what I am here for. Start over this way and pick the color you want to use. This whole selection is the suggested yarn, all Aran weight, squishy with a satisfying bounce," she pronounced as she picked up a skein and handed it over for Ebbie to feel.

For being thick, it was surprisingly light, Ebbie noticed. She gave it another squeeze. "Blue, I think. I haven't a single sweater in a solid blue, and this is just lovely." Bringing the skein to her nose, she sniffed. Lovely...

"Well, this is just lovely, having you here, now," She said with a flat, anything but "this is lovely," tone.

Ebbie kept her shoulders back, and eyes level with the woman speaking, that face unreadable. Ebbie didn't look away, despite the complete want of doing just that.

"Everyone is in the conference room. This way," and she walked ahead, leaving Ebbie to follow behind her.

FROM EBBIE'S JOURNAL: STARTING THE BODY

Hem is done.

It is at this part of all my sweet knitting that I feel the most excited. That first piece of the project able to be stretched and squished and evaluated... but not so much is knit that I can't jump ship if I feel something is a bit off.

No mistaking this one! I am all in and ready to get on to my favorite stitch. After practicing the moss stitch on the swatch for gauge, I am ready to knit the next 14 inches and make some pebbly texture. I rather do think this stitch looks more like pebbles smoothed out, each lying next upright, sideways, all directions

I don't see it as moss. Maybe my imagination isn't as keen as the original stitch inventor, or maybe I just don't know my moss, but all the moss growing on the trees and rocks back home are not nubby like this. The strands of moss are short and smooth, just shy of being called thick, or they are wispy green-grey beards you imagine on a forest gnome. No bumps like this stitch.

No bumps like my day...

FROM EBBIE'S JOURNAL: DECREASES

Is there anything more terribly wonderful than knitting a sweater you just can not wait to wear? It's like the perfect oxymoron. A bittersweet adventure where I am trying to enjoy the process, but I really want it off the needles and on me!

What creative release, moving my hands and watching as they hold needles and yarn and build these little pieces...

Seeing the stitches evolve into rows, and then they grow into the fabric... I should be embarrassed at how much pride I am feeling, but I AM NOT. I look again and again at this rich texture and think
I.

Am.

Making.

THIS!

All by myself.

Me!

I finished the sleeve and shoulder shaping! And this first piece is so close to being done.

The shaping was straightforward:

Knit 2 stitches together at the start of every row, and then continue to work in pattern to row end.

Work this decrease row every row 28 times for my size (32, 36, 38 times for the other sizes) or until 59(65, 71, 79)sts remain.

Before starting the decreases, I had created a 14-inch swathe of beautiful moss stitch fabric. The repetitive stitch work had become second nature way before I completed the first inch. So decreasing 1 stitch at the start of each row and then moving across the remaining stitches "in pattern" was intuitive. I would work the decrease then simply (k1,p1) or (p1,k1) to the end, depending on what the "established pattern" presented itself as.

Before I knew it, I had hit the "59 stitches remaining" mark.

Then it was on to the shoulder shaping, which was pretty much the same thing..

Row 1 I decreased by knitting two stitches together at the start and end of each row, then **Row 2** was working in pattern with no decreases.

To make sure I didn't lose track of which row was which, I put a safety pin on the side of the fabric for the visual cue "Decrease On This Row, Ebbie!"

Rows 1 and 2 were to be continued "until 35(41, 47, 53)sts remain".

This portion of the knitting flew by! Each row getting smaller and smaller, fewer, and fewer stitches. Definite emotional boost.

I know I am not a writer for a knitting magazine—wouldn't that be a dream job!—but I do have thoughts on knitting sweaters in pieces. The title of my pretend article wouldn't be "Worked in pieces vs. in the round vs. seamless." Because I'm not saying one is better than the other overall.

Just like the weather, each approach has its purpose. I walk through the woods at home on sunny days, rainy days, and snowy days. Each walk I take is done by placing one foot in front of the other. That fact remains regardless of what precipitation is -or isn't—falling from the sky.

Having said that...

When I knit sweaters in pieces, I really do enjoy the compartmentalized creation aspect. For this sweater, in particular, the back piece became its own finished object within the actual project. It was an attainable benchmark that I was able to get on my needles, off my needles, and feel a sense of completion.

I understand the pieces need to be seamed up, and some knitters shy away from this style of work. Putting the pieces together becomes an additional step before you can say, "I am done!"

For me, the seaming is exciting, time to explore the way what I've created fits together. The work sewing it together becomes an extension, a part of the craftsmanship.

I used to be more apprehensive about the process of seaming. My first attempt ever I had to pull out twice as it didn't look smooth; quite frankly, I rushed through it, and it was a mess. **I learned the added value of my swatch from that experience.** I practiced and became comfortable (and quite good) at seaming by using my swatches as experiments. I took swatches of similar yarn, if not identical weight, and worked the mattress stitch between them. Around the top of the swatch was the ideal place to see how I could do better when picking up stitches for things like sleeves, collars, button bands.

The little squares were a treasure trove of experimental knitting possibilities.

But that's not where I am right now in this knitting journey, I still have a bit more to do before I start the seaming. I am looking forward to it, though. I need to double-check my stitch count and make sure my decreases are well and truly finished so I can wrap up with the neck shaping next and be ready to cast on the front!

4

Ebbie left the bed and breakfast thinking she would be equally early to the meeting. A solid half-hour before the appointment should have been the gentle buffer she needed.

It wasn't.

She was led into the room where four others were already seated, wrapping up what must have been the earlier "what to do about the next meeting" meeting.

"Hello, February!"

"Hi, Dad."

Her father stood and walked quickly over to greet her with a hug. His sincere embrace was a kind gesture, and though Ebbie knew it wasn't meant to be awkward, it still was.

"It's good to see you! I had hoped we could have met yesterday for a visit, but maybe you'll have a bit more

flexibility with your schedule tonight?" He asked, soft eyes looking down at her.

She nodded and swallowed, wondering why her throat couldn't behave normally. He gestured to the chair situated across from his own. First, her throat and now her hands... They were sweaty, she noticed as she smoothed her dress and sat down. He smiled at her again.

After escorting Ebbie into the room, her sister continued to her own seat. "We can go ahead and start a bit early since she's here now." It seemed a nod in Ebbie's direction was the only welcome she would get from her sister.

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"February! If you hurry, we won't miss the good stuff at the beginning!" the voice called out from the bottom of the stairs.

Ebbie was digging through the pile on her desk, frantically searching for her pencil set. She didn't want to make them late for the movie, but she had to have those pencils. Usually, she could grab her art supply set and go, but her sister had stacked the piles of hand-me-downs on top of the desk yesterday, and Ebbie had yet to sort through them. Her fingers rummaged around beneath the folded clothes, which couldn't really be called "folded" anymore. "Got it!" she proclaimed, satisfied with her victory, and put them into her backpack.

Thumping down the stairs two at a time, Ebbie made it to the landing where Trin stood. Standing next to the window seat, hands gently tugging each end of a well-worn patchwork scarf, her sister was trying to be patient.

Ebbie thought storybooks always got it wrong. In them, older sisters were bossy killjoys. Despite just being twelve, Ebbie was sure she had read enough books to be an expert in most things. And the subject of sisters was one on which she could speak with authority, for Ebbie had the most incredible big sister in the world! Trin was good at keeping things managed but fell just short of actually being bossy. Her nature was to be thoughtful. A “strategizer” their father would say and definitely clever. She could word things in a way that Ebbie found herself nodding in agreement and on board with whatever Trin was explaining. A well-made bed and a clean room somehow made sense after Trin gave her a pep talk, though none of Ebbie’s other teenage friends thought so. Could Ebbie see that sleeping in on a Saturday morning really was a waste when instead she could get up early and volunteer at the library? Friday nights, Ebbie made sure her alarm clock was set for 8 a.m. Her sister was either prepared or preparing, and that made Trin quite a lot of fun to be around. It also left Ebbie little room to get herself into mischief. Trin was ever-present and helping direct each step. Ebbie couldn’t have asked for a better sister.

Trin wasn’t just the perfect sister, she filled the void of a missing mom. Ebbie had a few lovely, dreamlike memories

of her mom, but often wondered what her own remembrances were and what were the visions she imagined from Trin's endless stories. Ebbie loved her sister all the more for sharing moments that she herself would never get to have since their mother died when Ebbie was three.

"Got everything now?" Trin asked, reaching out a hand to fix the sweatshirt Ebbie was wrestling. Her hood was choking her, but with a pull and a twist, Trin had it set right.

"I'm all ready!" she smiled. "And thanks for all the clothes and stuff. The pile you dropped off is so big I couldn't even see my desk or my chair! I can not wait to sort through it all!"

They walked together down the sweeping staircase. The table in the entrance hall shone with the warm light pouring in from outside. Ebbie dragged her fingers across the polished wood, loving the squeak her damp fingers made as she did. She traced them around the glass vase in the center and watched as the almost invisible streaks evaporated. Beneath the flowers in the vase, dancing rainbows moved on the surface of the wood top and along the metal catch-all that kept the family necessities organized.

"So, here's something I want you to think about when you do go through them," Trin paused and took her keys from the tray, "I love that you get excited to re-use my clothes for

your “Franken-makes.” Still, when you cut them up for fabric, it prevents someone else from using them, someone that has a need rather than just wants to play with them for a hobby. Those clothes I don’t wear anymore can go to the charity shop and help people get good things inexpensively.” She looked to Ebbie with a soft smile, “You probably have a huge stockpile of crafty things stored up already, right? We could give more away this time, maybe all of them? Then we could go into the city and actually shop in a fabric store for your supplies if you are running low.” With her forefinger, she gently tapped the tip of Ebbie’s nose, just like she said mom used to do Ebbie thought. Trin continued, “Maybe something to consider before getting too scissor happy? What do you think?”

Ebbie was stuck. As usual, she didn’t know how to say what she was thinking. She didn’t want to sound dumb. But she also didn’t know how to share all the things she had in her head. They never made it out of her mouth the same smooth way they seemed to swirl and collect in her mind.

It wasn’t just fun to see things that Trin wore with such grace and style be transformed into something unexpected. It was more than that. And not just Trin’s clothes, but her father’s too. Strips of fabric Ebbie collected for months had been slowly braided into a small rug now finished and in her father’s den. Another on the floor by her own bed. Stepping on that collective assortment each morning felt right to her feet and to her heart. Corduroy from dad’s old pants, wool from Trin’s sweaters and flannel

from her own outgrown pajama bottoms, had all come together to create something needed; refreshing and beautiful.

She had carefully deconstructed three blazers that her dad no longer wore. The sturdy fabric from the outside and light, silky pieces from the lining were a jackpot! From them, Ebbie had made a patchwork rectangle of alternating materials and colors, sewing them carefully with delicate stitches. Trin had opened the gift and looked at it wordlessly for a long time. So long that Ebbie wondered if it was a bit too “Franken-make,” a term lovingly used to describe Ebbie’s unique style of piecing fabric akin to Frankenstein’s Monster.

Trin was wearing that scarf now.

Her family was always supportive, and that fueled Ebbie to create makes especially suited for each person she loved.

But Ebbie nodded, slowly, knowing Trin was right about being mindful of sharing things with others. Ebbie found joy in helping others. Trin felt the same, it seemed. For years she talked of colleges and majors, where to go and what to study. She was determined to become a significant help for her father, who included them both to be part of various charities he supported. Trin would be leaving in the fall, eager to study and learn, then to help manage and grow the family’s charitable foundation.

Ebbie enjoyed helping, but she preferred to visit with people, trying to offer them distractions. Distractions, she sought for herself whenever she wanted to be free of that cold sadness that sometimes crept in. Ebbie would pack up fabric scraps she had collected, and along with other supplies— thread, needles, stuffing— she would teach kids her age ways to piece together bits of this and that and make stuffed toys for themselves, or small gifts for a parent or loved one. She taught kids and moms how to knit, and found the simple rhythm of needles and yarn connected them, pulling them to a common place where they could just enjoy a moment to build. They could push away that heavy cold feeling deep inside and make better. It was a small gesture she knew. Maybe smaller than what was needed.

“Yeah, Trin, you’re probably right. There might be bigger purposes for those things.”

Trin hugged Ebbie and smiled. “I love you, kiddo.”

Ebbie rearranged her backpack, shifting the sketchbook and pencils, a bit embarrassed. “Yeah, me too, Trin,” and they walked out the door, headed for the movies and ice cream and fun. Together.

“So February, our plan is to restructure the way we manage Horizon Charities. Part of that restructuring will conclude

your involvement. It should be an easy, straightforward transition. You already have other things that keep you busy and away..." There it was. Though the words had been spoken in almost the same tone, the sting of disappointment in Trin's voice was sharp in Ebbie's ears.

"Today, we just want to go through a simple exit strategy for you, help you understand the bigger picture and then wrap things up hopefully tomorrow or Thursday at the latest and you can get back to doing whatever it is you are up to these days." No smile, no frown, just a look from Trin, level and empty.

And Ebbie didn't like it.

"Dad and I have other meetings while we are in the area, which is why we asked to meet you here rather than closer to home, but we will try to be available and flexible for you. We understand you are here for a few days..." She was waiting for Ebbie to clarify.

A nod and then Ebbie found her voice, "My reservations at the Dram Tree B & B are through next Wednesday, so another week and a few days. I don't have an agenda, except meeting with you, Dad, and" –she awkwardly gestured towards the three other members of the meeting, "you all."

Not one to miss an opportunity, her father pounced on that bit of information and said, "Well, if that is the case, you should have plenty of time to squeeze in a dinner or two

with your old man. Maybe even let me take you and your sister to lunch since there will be time."

Ebbie noticed Trin stiffen slightly, and she wished she had brought her knitting with her. If only she had wrapped up that neck decrease. Ebbie tried not to laugh at the thought. Did I really think those decreases were going to be the hardest part of my day? She wondered.

If she survived the next uncomfortable hour or two here, she would welcome any challenge her hand-knit sweater wanted to bring on.

FROM EBBIE'S JOURNAL: NECK SHAPING & NEXT STEPS

Done.

Cue the roaring crowd.

I am done!

Well, done with the back of the sweater anyway. But I really do think this calls for a celebration, so bring on the confetti. And maybe some coffee ice cream...

I thought it would have been longer, but it took considerably less time than I'd built up in my head. That's usually the case with knitting patterns and me. If I just get on with the work it turns out much simpler than I thought.

But I can't believe —or maybe won't believe— that I'm the only knitter who cringes as they read what appears to be a lengthy process ahead:

Right Side: Work 11 / 13 / 15 / 17 stitches in pattern, turn and work these sts for first side of back neck shaping.

Row 1 and 2: Continue to work in pattern, decreasing 1 st at the end of row.

Row 3: work in pattern without any decreases across 9 / 11 / 13 / 15 remaining sts.

Repeat Rows 1-3 once more 7 / 9 / 11 / 13 sts remain.

Next 2 rows: Knit 2 sts together, work in pattern to end 5 / 7 / 9 / 11 sts remain. Bind off.

So, I set off to do that bit. And in the end I started the neck shaping and was done in five minutes. Ok, maybe seven. Whatever, it was quick.

Once this side was complete I felt more at ease with getting on with the other side. I knew once I wrapped it all up I could start the front piece of the sweater, and that was exactly what I wanted to be doing!

So back to those final few stitches I went:

With Right Side facing, slip 13 / 15 / 17 / 19 sts on to holder or waste yarn, work in pattern across remaining 11 / 13 / 15 / 17 sts

Row 1 and 2: Continue to work in pattern, decreasing 1 st at the end of row.

Row 3: work in pattern without any decreases across 9 / 11 / 13 / 15 remaining sts.

Repeat Rows 1-3 once more 7 / 9 / 11 / 13
sts remain.

Next 2 rows: Knit 2 sts together, work in
pattern to end 5 / 7 / 9 / 11 sts remain.

Bind off.

I left my remaining stitches on a length of
waste yarn that I tied in a bow just to be
sure those live stitches didn't sneak away!
And then it was party time...and yeah, by
party I mean getting busy with a tubular
cast on!

I have set to work on the front hem in just
the same way as the back. Looking forward to
wrapping that up and on to the beautiful
rhythm of moss stitch.

My knitting is going to dinner with me
tonight. Well, not just me... me and dad...