

Cheaper Than Therapy
Joy, healing & life lessons in fiber

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Drunk, Divorced
& Covered in Cat Hair
Laurie Perry

Great love stories never begin with the phrase, "*I think we need to talk.*"

The night I heard those six little words from my husband, I had cooked spaghetti for dinner. Now, I'm no Betty Crocker; I don't know baking soda from baking powder, and in my kitchen *everything* goes with red wine. Everything.

But spaghetti is a relatively confrontation-free dish, so I had a sneaking suspicion that he did not want to talk about pasta. Apparently I am psychic.

It was August – broiling hot outside, chilled to Arctic freshness inside. I sat cross-legged on the floor, flipping through a magazine, eating spaghetti at the coffee table. My husband sat across the room, flipping through channels on the TV.

"I think we need to talk."

And so began the conversation that ended my marriage. Before the month was out, he had moved into a bachelor apartment in a neighboring town; left me alone in our condo with four cats, an empty bed and hours of endless night.

I spent the next four months drunk, avoiding the word *Divorce*, and covered in cat hair. The very thought of me (me? *Divorced!?*) with four cats – well, it was so sexy and appealing that mere words could barely describe it. Most, if not all, involved some poetic combination of: crazy, cat, lady, spinster, eaten, dead, alone, alone, *ALONE*.

Thanksgiving came. Then Christmas, and New Year's Day, and I moved into a little house with all my cats and all my stuff, and fear and free time. There was a *lot* of free time, sleep had become a thing of the past. Goodbye, married life – farewell, slumber! So long, my true loves! Nice knowing ya'll!

Each night I went over the details of our demise, struggling to pinpoint the exact moment when the lines of communication had grown so twisted and tangled; when did the relationship become hopelessly knotted? After an hour of fitful sleep I'd wake, place one foot in front of the other, and stumble through the day blanketed with a fine layer of cat hair from knee to ankle.

Friends tried to entice me out of the house, but evenings it was just me, Patsy Cline and the cats. And ya'll ... you have never *seen* from the cat hair. **THE CAT HAIR**. If only I knew then what I know now — that you can spin fur into yarn — well, shit. I could have knitted a new husband.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Right after New Year's Day, my friend Shannon invited me to a knitting class. Knitting? Ah. Knitting – something maybe I could do on long nights with Patsy and our mutual friend, Jack Daniels. They wouldn't mind, we could knit together and remember the good ol' days. Knit sweaters without fear of a boyfriend curse – yes, knitting...

I could try that.

After a run-in with a lint roller I arrived at class to learn, in just one afternoon, the intricate magic of pulling a beautiful wood stick through yarn to make fabric. I saw fiber so gorgeous it was shocking, needles polished to a glassy sheen. And I learned to cast on, and to knit.

And it *took*.

I drove home with my new yarn and needles and I knitted. And I knitted. And DAMN YA'LL. I knitted. By Tuesday I was ready to join a new ball of yarn and I HAD NO IDEA HOW TO DO IT. Did that stop me? Did the war of Northern aggression stop Scarlett? Oh *please*. I double-stranded and knit on. And on. My very first scarf was a testament to my determination. Right, wrong or indifferent, I would knit, dammit! Tomorrow?

Tomorrow was another day – for *knitting*.

Before long, knitting became my constant companion. I spent every evening with my projects, telling my cashmere it was the George Clooney of yarns – romantic, intimate, and a little beyond my reach.

I bought needles in all sizes and began to stockpile yarn like it had been outlawed. I made promises I could keep – promises of scarves and hats and one day (one day!) a sweater. I knew this was real love because I eagerly introduced it to all my friends, my family, my coworkers. We were ON FIRE, me and knitting.

Sure, there were problems – there were issues. Every relationship has its moments, its tangles.

But with this relationship, things were *different*. I could just rip back down to the very core of the problems, knit it all over again, purl where I should have known better, love harder. Hold it tighter. Or not hold on so tightly at all.

What I could have never known is that knitting would inspire me to understand that not all mistakes are *flaws*. I hear it at every Stitch 'n Bitch meeting, "*Those aren't flaws! They're design elements!*"

I met other knitters, I got out of the house, my knitting is covered in cat hair – but that's OK.

It's mohair anyway.

I've learned a lot from this relationship. Sometimes the yarn runs out, or it's hard to find, or the extravagant cost must be carefully considered. Yes – like all worthwhile things – a fiber affair has its' price.

But you make do. You improvise. Life hands you plastic needles and crummy yarn, you get the wrong gauge, but you knit *through* it, and around it.

In spite of it all, I knit.

And *that* is a great love story.

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