

Widow's Scarf

by [Diana Cole](#) in the [May 20, 2008](#) issue

My mother's elegy was long and red.
Off the needles, stitch by stitch, it slipped,
when tears failed her and words knotted in her throat.

It kept her from going crazy,
this long, thin thing
falling off her lap,
curling into itself,
with each row making it through one minute,
her mind occupied in her hands.

How else to spend those first nights
with a husband dead
and never before alone in a house for more than a day?

Over time the scarf lengthened less,
until one afternoon, needles crossed mid-stitch,
its keening accomplished,
it was laid aside.