

Woven Stories

In all the scarves that my grandmother has made, there is a story. Stories flow from her fingers like water, flow from her hair like sunshine, flow from her mouth like song. The scarves that my grandmother knits are beautiful and full of color. Red from the bloodiest heart, blue from the most vibrant flowers, yellows that seem straight from the sun. They mesh together into a collection of beauty that takes your breath away and at the same time gives all the oxygen needed. These scarves, when worn, tell the wearer fantastic adventures of love, of loss, of friendship, and of life. The scarves, made with the softest wool, wrap the wearer in warmth with the stories that creep silently into their ears and crawl into their memories.

On my 10th birthday, I was given my scarf woven with strands of silver and gold from the trees in our backyard, the ones that I sit under to think and reflect. The mix of deep ocean blue and parrot green tells others about my secrets, the ones that I don't even realize that I have.

My mother's scarf is purple and red. Orchids and cherries wind through my memories, like filtered sunshine. My father's is black, so deep that it goes on forever with slashes of marigolds that look like they might be swallowed up if you stare for too long. The scarves tell my family's stories. We put them on and the words wriggle up from the woven strands of memory and out into the world. The cherries tell of parents lost too early. The orchids tell of the pain receding. The darkest and deepest black show life with no true family and the orange there hints at family is who you choose. The scarves tell your most sacred secrets to the whole world but still keep them close to your heart.

There is bravery in letting others wear your scarf. The secrets will dig themselves out from their hiding place in the wool and go into your head and heart. They will share themselves with the

wearer. They will make a nest in that person's heart and will not leave. The scarf is forever.

There is bravery in wearing someone else's scarf.

The scarf is woven from love and loss. The pain is shared between the wearer and the maker.

The giver and the receiver. The scarf only comes to you when you have secrets though. It could come at 10, 20 or 30 years old. Everybody has secrets. These scarves help us to acknowledge that. Without your scarf, you are safe. But with your scarf, you are protected.

No one knows how my grandmother makes such wonderful stories. No one knows how she knows all our secrets. No one knows how she weaves them together. No one knows except for me. I am the one who knows.

I know that you have to take filtered sunlight from the afternoon sun. That you must know the person inside and out before their scarf appears. That the making of the scarf takes only minutes even though the secrets last for lifetimes. Those memories are the hardest part to grab. They are like spiderwebs. Sticky and icky to touch. You have to reach out and pluck --*not grab, not pull, not extract, not jerk, not yank, not tug, not twist and certainly never snatch, she tells me*--the memories from the mind. *This is a slow process, she tells me.* The winding of this memory thread into wool, the weaving of the wool into a scarf, the giving of the scarf to the receiver. That I have not learned yet. When to start it and when to give it has not been taught. *This is a slow process, she tells me.* But I am willing to wait. The stories will one day flow from my fingers like water, flow from my hair like sunshine, flow from my mouth like song. The scarves will be my gift to people, a relief from the burden of carrying their secrets around alone.