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ALCOHOLIC
MOTHER
FAILED
MARRIAGE
A LIFETIME
OF THERAPY

How I survived
by Brooke Shields



This week I'm wearing Lisa Armstrong

Is there a question more calculated to strike gloom and (self) loathing into the dedicated fashion follower's heart than, "Have you put on weight?" Yes, there is, readers, yes there is. "Have you got moths?" is one of those casual inquiries that presages so much potential devastation it's hard to believe it can be conveyed in four such seemingly innocuous monosyllables. But the blithely emphatic "You have got moths" is incontrovertibly worse.

"Are you sure?????" I gasped across the counter of my dry-cleaner's. From where I stood, this wasn't the work of insects, but the culmination of a crazy night of compulsive de-bobbling using my snazzy new battery-operated de-bobbler. I had it coming. Buying anything that requires a battery to do what the good Lord gave you elbow grease to do has to be bad karma. But the de-bobbler looked so thrillingly effective in the catalogue, and my knitwear looked so fuzzy, that not buying it seemed, prior to purchase, a gross dereliction of wardrobe upkeep.

Have you tried one of those de-bobblers? They're exhilarating. For the average, non-testosteroned-up female, slicing through thickets of bobbles to a soundtrack of ruthless grinding is like *Grand Theft Auto* or *Call of Duty* for wimps. And so my daughter and I spent a pleasant hour or three resurrecting our knitwear and saving a pile of cash by not rushing out to buy new knitwear, as we might once have contemplated in the bad old days.

It was only over the following days that the true extent of our frugality emerged. Thus far I have – to put a positive spin on the situation – deconstructed £500 of knitwear, and that's without carefully examining everything we laid waste. I just haven't the heart. Meanwhile, my dry-cleaner is still insisting the rampage is down to moths, possibly because the cure for that entails me getting every single item in my wardrobe dry-cleaned, at a potential cost of £2,000, whereas if the de-bobbler is the culprit, all I have to do is go cold turkey and chuck it.

It's enough to put you off knitwear for good. But not quite. Witness the relentless rise of the Indeterminate Drapey Thing – an asymmetric garment, usually but not always featuring sleeves, that can be worn 276 different ways. Donna Karan started it all, I believe, as she so often does, with her Cozies – those much-copied, cleverly cut cardigans that can be worn back to front, upside down, belted, brooched and, if you're really bored, as scarves. My

**DRAPEY
KNITWEAR**



'I go out shopping for something edgy, modern – oozing fashion editrixyness – and I return with a Cozy'



Left: Lisa wears poncho, £130, Casha; top, Lisa's own; trousers, £49.99, Zara; boots, £150, Mint Velvet; earrings, £325, Astley Clarke. Clockwise from above: coat, £395, Crumpe; poncho, £249, 360 Cashmere; Michael Kors spring/summer 2011

guilty secret is the Cozy. I go out shopping for something that says I am edgy, modern. Something oozing fashion editrixyness. I return with another Cozy. This poncho was really pushing the envelope, although it turns out to share many of the Cozy's virtues.

That's drapey knitwear for you – warm, cosy and, umm, drapey, ergo flatteringly concealing or flatteringly clingy, depending on your mood. It comes in soft colours that most other fabrics can't match. It can be layered over jackets (a plus, since coats over jackets get

bulky). No wonder it's the crack of clothing.

I was thinking I should wean myself off knitwear and get Directional, especially with fashion shows looming, but knitwear gets more fashionable by the minute. Some is positively exciting. So I may just concentrate on killer accessories – the usual hit-and-run job at Browns, where I'll panic-spend on yet another pair of too-high heels, and then one amazing necklace, just to prove that even though I am gliding around in serene comfort (not the shoe part, obviously), I have made an effort. ■