

June 2019
Hallmark Baby; republished by Scary Mommy

Mia's Lovie
(Strange Things Our Children Love)

We have no idea where it came from, although we think it originated as a white-elephant gift, one opened with a rolled eye and laugh, maybe tried on and mock-catwalked. All we know is that it was tucked away in my husband's bottom drawer, behind chlorine-faded swim trunks and old fraternity tees. She appeared with it one day when she was just over a year old, after she had inventoried the plastic ware in kitchen cabinets and moved on to dismantling all contents of the dresser, as curious babies do. And for reasons unknown to us, she latched onto that thing and hasn't put it down since.

Mia's most cherished possession is a T-shirt with painted on muscles. Yes, faux nipples and abs that should make a cameo in Magic Mike. Front and back, it's Jersey Shore on soft cotton knit. And it's airbrushed.

Yes, airbrushed--the stylish method of t-shirt making for all county fairs, Venice Beach, and anyone who wants to declare in neon fabric paint that "Troy (hearts)s Trish."



Some would call it inappropriate.

We call it “Lovie.”

Three years later, Lovie is more beloved than ever.
He’s worn and holey and stained and stretched out—
somehow making him better, softer, cozier, more dependable.
(I should add that long ago she declared Lovie a “him.” Obvs.)

Lovie is napkin, teddy bear, hug, cape, blanket, shield from the world.
Yesterday, she declared “Mama, at Halloween, I’m gonna go through
Zombie High. But only if I can bring Lovie with me.”
Like a tiny suit of armor . . . but with nipples and a tan.

He is the most prolific photo bomber ever.
Take 79 photos in their velvet Christmas dresses and there will always be a
bicep or navel in the shot.



There was the day when a wail from the backseat brought our Honda to a
screeching halt, as she realized poor Lovie had been left behind at the mall.
Worse even, he was abandoned on the floor of the American Girl store.
He didn’t stand a chance.
(Lovie, as you can likely guess, is quite hard to replace. Trust me when I tell
you that, although eBay offers multiple taxidermied squirrels in top hats, the
exact anatomy that is Lovie is inimitable.)
I called the mecca of tiny tutus and frontier dresses while my husband made
a U-turn.

American Girl doctor/stylist/caretaker: “Can you describe the item you’ve left behind?”

Me: “It’s a white T-shirt. Somewhere near the itty-bitty crutches. Um . . . there’s a body painted on it.”

He was found, and Mia was reunited with her one true love, the prize she wanted most amongst all the ice-skating, circus-leading, picnic-having dolls.

In case you’re wondering (most people do), yes, I was embarrassed by Lovie at first. He goes everywhere with us and is tacky and awful and doesn’t at all enhance her girly pink dresses and matching hair bows.

But now, when people ask, I shrug and say “she appreciates the male form.” Because, let’s be honest, she’s my *second* kid. My first daughter had a “lovie” too, and you better believe it was plush pink organic cotton, hand stitched and monogrammed from an Etsy boutique, washed in dye-free detergent.

But major concessions are made on that second kid.

And—with the exception of the 40 minutes Lovie is in the washer and Mia sits on top and cries into the Kenmore—*time*, like any mother will tell you, goes by way too fast.

Our diapering days are long gone and there are no stray bottles or sippy cups curdling under car seats.

We no longer snap 77 snaps on onesies or cut grapes in half.

The baby things, and even most of the toddler things have paid their dues, served their purpose, come and gone.

But Lovie is a constant.

I have no plans to pack it away or trade it for something more Carter’s, less Chippendales.

We love her untraditional personality, and we will never quiet her quirk.

Because sometimes Lovie is all the comfort we have to offer her, when her heart breaks or she’s scared in the night.

It’s interesting what we humans are drawn to, what soothes our souls and calms our anxieties—a hand-stitched blanket, loving sewn and passed down through wrinkled hands, a purring calico in our lap, and for some poor souls, alcohol, or food or drugs.

So often love and security are found in the simple, little things.

And on the rare occasion, the beefy, brawny things.

