

The Secret Behind the Knitted Dress

By Lucie Joseph

When I was four, my mother picked up a set of knitting needles and a couple balls of variegated yarn, snow white with raspberry red flecks, and began to knit a dress set for my cherished baby doll. Like many mothers in the company town we lived in, she was a stay-at-home mom, but she was not a particularly talented homemaker. Though she kept all five of her children well-fed, clean and most importantly well-loved there were no matching sets of anything in our home and it took me years to realize that rice was not really supposed to be crunchy.

But none of that mattered on the day that she presented me with a knitted doll dress complete with a pair of booties, underpants and a bonnet. “Now your baby will be warm for the winter,” she told me as I reached out to gather the new clothes, eyes wide with amazement. I beamed as I slipped off my doll’s thin cotton dress and carefully put on her new outfit. That winter, as the snow fell hard, my baby doll remained snugly wrapped in a dress that kept her warm by the fabric it was made from and the love that was woven within it.

I do not remember my mother knitting much after that. She had learned the craft from her mother but rarely found the time or patience to sit with it. Her knitting needles lay gathering dust in an old cabinet and I wondered about what had led her to that moment of creativity. It was not until I became a mother myself that I began to comprehend the significance of the knitted dress.

The birth of my son gave me the reason I needed to sit down and put into words the tales that danced in my head. Self-doubt and a fear of failure remained my constant companions with each story I wrote, but I now possessed something more powerful than the two combined, motherhood. It is what compels me to write and instills in me the desire to wrap my son in the stories I create, encompassing him like a warm blanket. Perhaps this is what my mother wanted, to create something that would wrap me in the knowledge of her love.

My pen and paper are my mother’s knitting needles. With each word I write I weave in the immense love that I feel for my son, the fears and joys that now occupy my heart and take my breath away and the profound sense of humility that motherhood has brought to my life. I now understand what compelled my mother to put everything else aside and sit down for a moment to create an object of love. I now understand the secret behind the knitted dress.