

chewed

Arne Svenson + Ron Warren



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for Charles
and
for Joshua



Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off,
and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby.
But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real
you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Margery Williams Bianco
The Velveteen Rabbit





FOREWORD

Any dog or cat owner will speak of a favored toy that, in the course of being gnawed, shredded, punctured, torn, eviscerated, has become an indispensable companion to their pet. They will recount with wonder their pet's specific manner of ravaging this toy, or even try to convince you that a deliberate pattern of transformation is at work. But do they ever really see this bedraggled object of their beloved pet's desire?

This question arose when we visited a friend and were met at the door by her dog, who presented us with a slobbery mass of yarn and stuffing: the gutted remains of a handmade sock monkey. Having spent years photographing sock monkeys for a previous book, we were well aware of their "un-chewed" form. Intrigued that such a benign plaything had so readily become an eyeless, armless, one-legged monster, we realized that we had found our next project—portraits of chewed toys as seen through the eyes of the adoring chewer.

We began by coaxing these victims of tough love from pet-owning friends, some of whom confessed that they just *might* have an old pet toy or two lying around—only to produce an astonishing array of mangled remains. Soon we were inundated with boxes containing plush animals, rubber squeakies, and unidentifiable bits and pieces. During our photo shoots a number of owners insisted on waiting in the studio, refusing to budge until photography of "their" toy was complete, as if their housebound pet's sanity were on the line. Especially poignant was the delivery of cherished toys that had been held onto long beyond the lifetime of the pet.

Among the perpetrators responsible for the sorry condition of our subjects is a dachshund who rips the squeak boxes from plush animals' throats; pit bull Daisy who finds nothing more satisfying than delicately gnawing a rubber doughnut; and an Abyssinian who sends canvas creatures to heaven on catnip-scented clouds of fiberfill.

As our project evolved, it seemed that everyone had a favorite story relating to their pet and a toy. This led us to invite authors to contribute tales inspired by their favorite *Chewed* photograph. The results range from Roz Chast's humorous chronicle of the meteoric rise and precipitous fall of Gertie Lou, a "gorgeous duck" from Albany, to Andrew Zimmern's "Cautionary Tale," complete with a recipe for fried squirrel.

Our eyes have been opened. Now when a slobbery mass of yarn and stuffing comes our way, we recognize what the true gift is—the chance to witness the bond between a love thing and its maker.

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