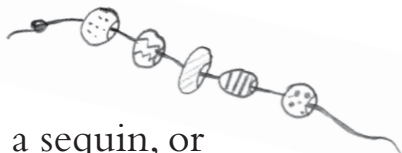


The Red Button

Violet Mackerel is a girl with a theory. Her theory is that when you are having a **very important** and brilliant idea, what generally happens is that you find something small and special on the ground.





So whenever you spy a sequin, or
a stray bead, or a bit of ribbon,



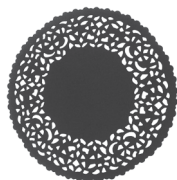
or a button, you should
always pick it up and try
very hard to remember



what you were thinking about
at the precise moment
when you spied it.



Then think about that
thing a lot more.

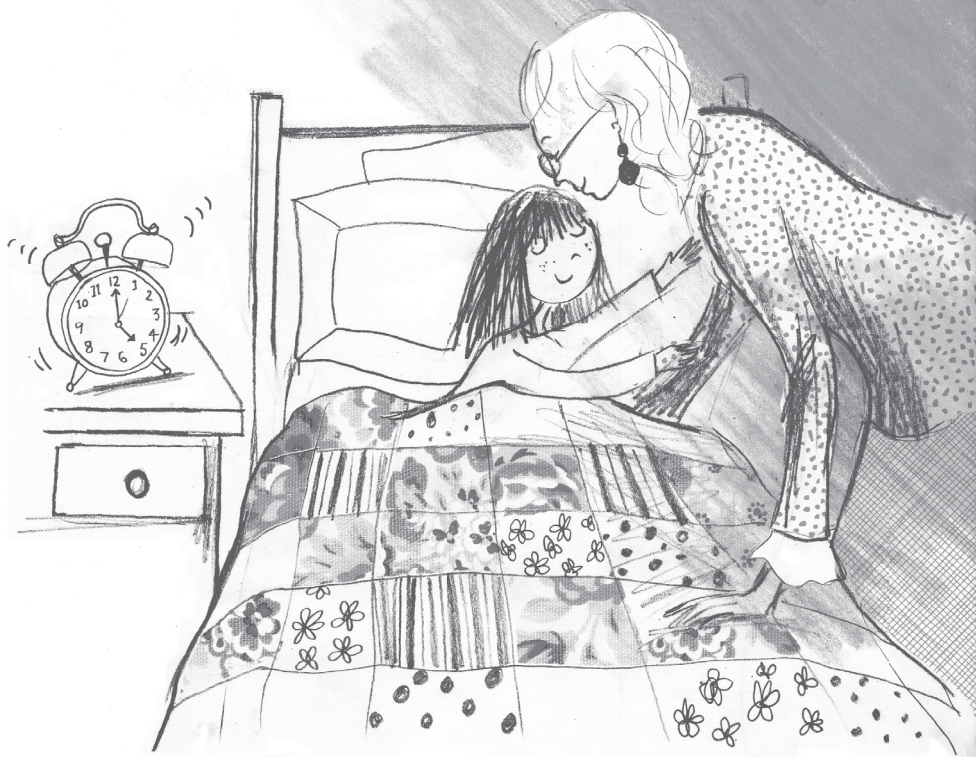


That is Violet's theory,
which she calls the



**Theory of
Finding
Small
Things.**





“Wake up, Violet,” says Violet’s mum.

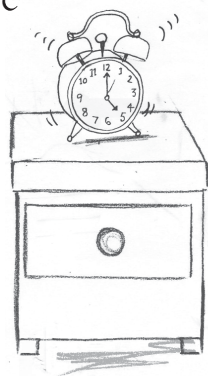
“It’s nearly five o’clock.”

It is Saturday, which is market day.
Violet yawns. It is still dark. Mum’s hair is a bit damp from her shower and it smells like mangoes and blossoms. Violet leans forward for a snuggle and nearly falls asleep again.

“Just stay awake until we’re all in the van,” says Mum. “Then you can sleep as much as you like.”

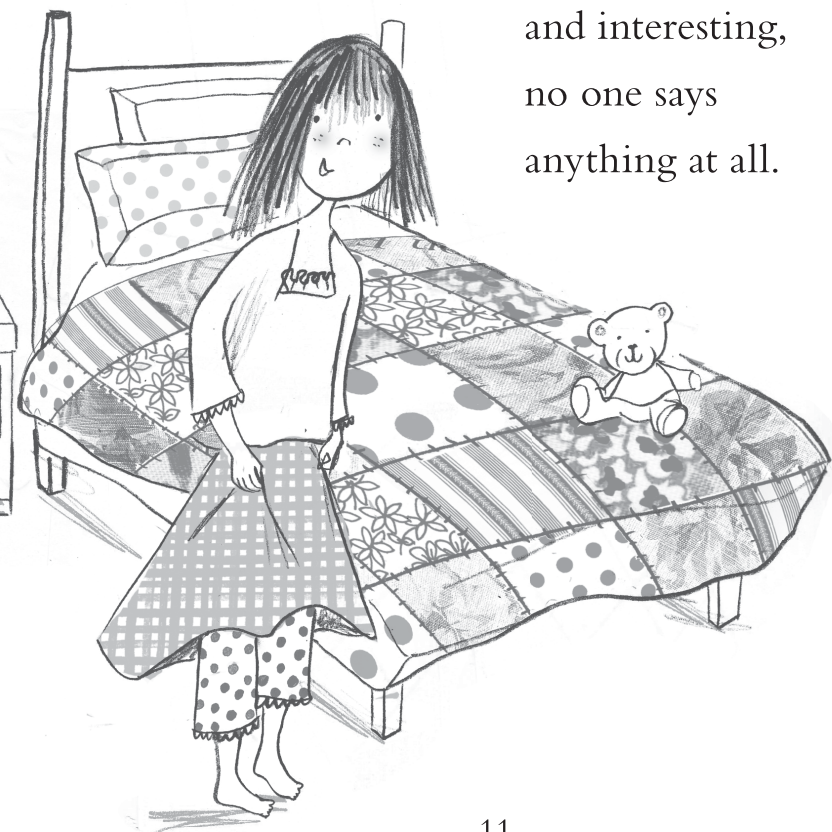
Violet’s big brother, Dylan, and big sister, Nicola, are already awake and they are helping to load up the van with fold-up tables and chairs, the big canopy umbrella, and boxes and baskets of Mum’s knitting. They are going to the market like they do every Saturday morning, to sell the woolly things Mum makes.

Violet thinks she would quite like to wear her pyjama bottoms under her skirt today. They feel nice and warm from bed. Sometimes if you say things like “Can I wear



my pyjama bottoms to the market?”,
people say things like “No.” But if
you just put your skirt on over the top,
and have your eyebrows slightly raised
like someone who is thinking of
something **very important**

and interesting,
no one says
anything at all.





When Violet, Mum, Nicola and Dylan arrive at the market, even though it is still not properly light, lots of people are already there, rugged up



and rubbing their hands together with coldness, unfolding and unpacking their things to sell. No one notices Violet's pyjama bottoms.

Violet's favourite person at the market (apart from Mum and Dylan and Nicola and herself) is a man who never smiles. He sells china birds, small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, and he is there every week. Violet says hello to him as she always does, and he doesn't even look up, which he never does. But after waking up at nearly five o'clock in the morning, Violet doesn't feel much like chatting or smiling either. So she feels that even though he never says hello back, she and the man might share a sort of *understanding*.

The man's china birds are all different and all very dirty. Dylan says that they are probably brand-new

from a factory. He thinks the man has just put dirt on them so they will look ancient and he can sell them for ten pounds instead of two. But Violet doubts it. She thinks it is much more likely that he is an **archaeologist**. She suspects that he specializes in digging up ancient china birds.

Violet would quite like to own one of the man's birds in particular.

It is made of pale
blue china,
the colour of
a robin's egg.
It is always
right at the
back of the table.



And just as she is having that thought, out of the corner of her eye, Violet spies a small red button on the dusty market ground.

