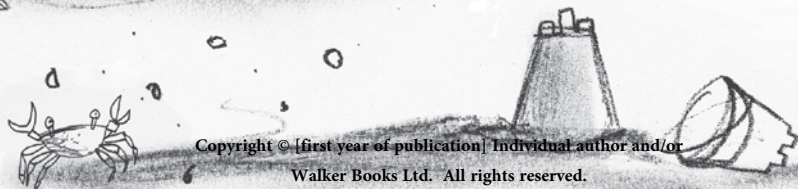


The Pink Shell



Violet Mackerel is on a
summer holiday at the
beach with her sister,
Nicola, her brother,
Dylan, her mum and
her mum's boyfriend,
Vincent.

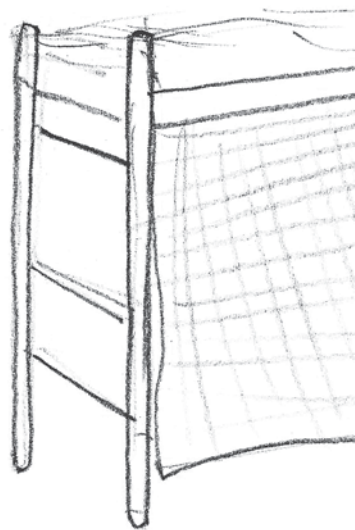


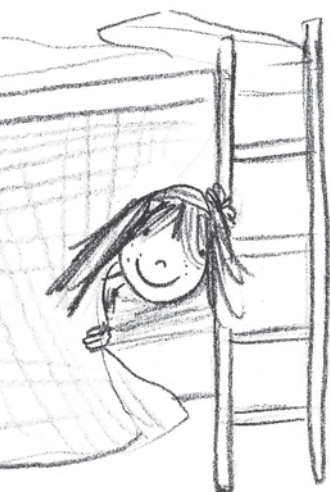
It is nearly the end of the holiday and Violet is wishing it was still the beginning.

At the beach house where they have been staying there are bunk beds. Violet has been sleeping on the bottom

bunk. She has tucked a sheet under the mattress of the top bunk and dangled it down, so it is a small **personal space** of her own. You can't do that with an ordinary bed like the one at Violet's normal house. It has to be a bunk bed.

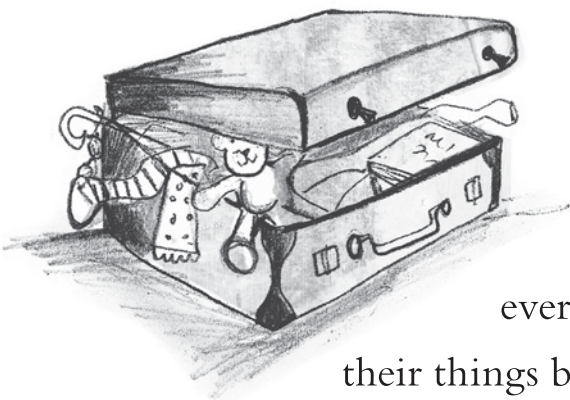
It has been quite a good holiday. Violet likes Vincent making pancakes





for everyone each morning. She likes going for walks to look in rock pools and having the sound of the sea in her ears all the time. She likes it after dinner when they roll

up their trousers for an evening paddle and their trousers get wet anyway and no one minds. And since no one has to get up at any particular time, no one has to go to bed at any particular time either, so they sit up late on the verandah, chatting and burning citronella candles to keep the mosquitoes away.



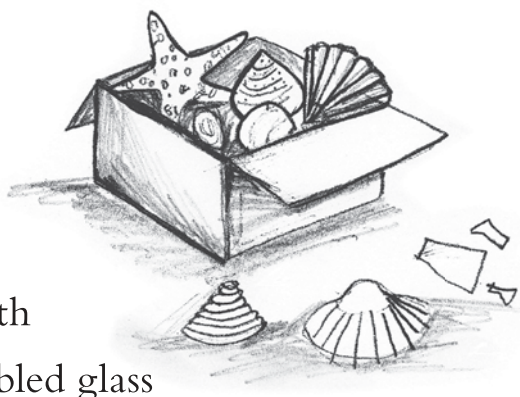
On the last
morning of
the holiday,
everyone puts all

their things back in their
suitcases. Violet takes the sheet down
from the bunk bed and folds it up. One
minute it looks as if her family actually
does live in the beach house, and the
next minute it looks as if they have
never stayed there at all.

Mum says, “Before we go, let’s all
have one final check and make sure
we haven’t left anything behind.”
So everyone has a look behind the
couch and in the little cupboard in
the bathroom and under the coffee

table. Violet thinks she might pull up the corner of her mattress and have a look under that. There is a row of flat wooden slats with little spaces between them. And in one of the spaces there is a small pink shell.

It isn't one of Violet's shells. She has collected lots of shells but they are packed carefully in a box in her suitcase with the pieces of tumbled glass she found on the beach. This pink shell has been left there by someone else.



Violet wonders who it could have been. Maybe it was someone else who

slept on the bottom bunk and didn't want to go home. Maybe they left the small pink shell behind on purpose.

This thought gives Violet a good idea for a new **theory**, the

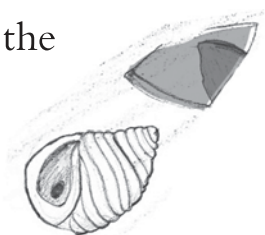
Theory of Leaving

Small

Things Behind.

The **theory** is this: maybe wherever you leave something small, a tiny part of you gets to stay too.

Violet opens her suitcase, finds her box and takes out a little piece of green tumbled glass. She presses it into the space beside the pink shell and covers it all up again, smoothing the mattress. No one sees.



“Finished,” calls Violet, going to join the others. She puts her suitcase in the boot of the car next to Mum’s.

Before they leave, she has one last look at the room. It looks exactly the same as it did before she stayed there. But it is not. Somehow, this idea makes Violet feel a bit less sad about the summer holiday being finished.

It is a long drive from the beach back to her house, so she has lots of time to think about her new theory and about all the places she might like to leave **small things**. She would like to hide a sequin up the Eiffel Tower,



and bury a little glass bead somewhere
in the African wilderness, and slip a



silver star under
a stone in an old
English castle.

It would be like
a little trail of
Violet all through
the world.