

What buttons see...

'The little holes in the button are its eyes. They see the world like me, Mummy.'

'Oh really, and what do they think of our world?' I ask my five year-old daughter as I kneel before her, fastening the gold buttons of the red cardigan that once belonged to me.

'They like this world,' Amelia says as she traces her little fingers around the gold trim on the right sleeve.

'And just how are they telling you all this, darling?' I fiddle with the second to last button. It's always been tricky to fasten.

'Well, the buttons wake up when you touch them.' She looks down, lightly fingering each one.

She leans in close to my face. 'Don't tell anyone, but they send messages straight to my heart.'

I kiss the tip of her nose and feel the warmth of her love rush through me. Today is my Grandmother's funeral. Grief is rooted deep in my chest.

I stand up, hearing my knees click and smooth my black pencil skirt down.

'Are you sad Mummy?' Amelia asks.

Looking into her green eyes, I feel tears brewing. 'Yes, a little bit sweetie.'

'Did my great Nanna make this cardigan?' She asks, twirling the small gold buttons around.

I swallow hard. 'She did indeed, years ago. I wore it when I was a little girl.'

The red wool is still fixed together in a perfect pearl stitch. Amelia smiles and I see the same smile I wore all those years ago, each time I stepped into my Nanna's sewing room...

The smell was the first thing I noticed about her sewing room, tobacco and wool. The noise of different machines working in unison would then hit me. The knitting unit would fly back and forth, weaving the wool with precision. The needle of the over locker would be gliding along, guided by my Nanna's sculptured hands. I'd bound into the room and envelope myself in here warm embrace.

I would play with the tubes of buttons that sat on the shelf. While Nanna smoked and drank tea in between spooling a thread, I would tip the buttons from each tube, listening to them tinkle on the worktop, and I'd make funny faces on the flat surface.

Conversation changed as I grew up, from school, to boys, to parents, to weddings. Slowly, our lovely chats became no more. The sewing room lights no longer lit, the smell of tobacco no longer seeped into the roles of untouched wool, the buttons no longer scattered across the worktop.

Back in the here and now, I cup Amelia's cheeks in my palms.

'It's OK, Mummy. Remember that the buttons on my cardigan have seen my great Nanna work,' she stands before me. 'They will tell me all about her.' She fiddles with the top button, smiles, and skips out the room.

I whisper her words back to myself, 'Sending the messages to your heart.'