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The Button Bag

Mary Graham Bonner

Inside a large sewing bag lived a button bag — blue-and-white cotton, tied at the top with a blue silk ribbon. Inside the button bag lived hundreds of buttons.

The household depended on this bag completely. Whenever a button went missing, or a coat came undone, or a shirt needed mending, someone would go to the sewing bag and find exactly what was needed. It never failed.

But what did the buttons make of all this?

"When is the party?" asked a large white button with a particularly shining face.

"Soon," said a small green button. "Pretty soon."

"I've been to quite a few parties," said a button engraved with a noble face — an old knight or lord, from the look of him. He had two sisters and a brother, all four identical, and not one of them had ever been used. Nothing had ever come up that required their particular kind of button. They'd been in the bag for years.

"It's good to have a secure home," said the engraved button. "Some mistresses would have thrown us out long ago — old buttons, taking up space, probably never wanted. But ours always says: they don't eat or drink, they don't cost anything, and they might be wanted someday. Sensible woman."

"I haven't always lived here, of course. Once I was on a very handsome dress — remarkable silk, I seem to recall — and I went to all sorts of grand occasions. Balls. Parties. I've seen things."

"I've lived on fur coats," said a large black button, with the air of someone who has been places. "Several. On brisk winter mornings — snow blowing in your face, sleigh bells in the air, the cold bright and sharp — there's nothing like it."

"I spent my time by the sea," said a small brown button. "A little girl's bathing suit. All summer — sand castles, happy voices, the ocean coming over me in waves. It was wonderful. If I'd had a voice, I'd have called out: the button is happy too!"

The tan button checked the hour. "We should get ready. We must be back in our places before morning."

So the buttons dressed themselves up in scraps of ribbon and thread, and danced and sang in their small make-believe voices:



*The buttons are we, happy, gleeful and glad,
We are of all kinds and we never are sad.
We love those who use us, and those who do not —
Ah yes, indeed, we're a merry, merry lot!*

And then they were quiet and still and back in their places before anyone came to sew.

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