



## **The buttons' drawer, about Merel's and Soliman's world.**

**In this little readingbook, in the series "Happy learning" we follow Merel and Soliman.**

**Merel knows about the neighbour's life, as is clear from the fact that she knows that neighbour Soliman is a fugitive.**

### **Introduction to the plot.**

**The neighbour has a tailoring's shop.**

**Merel often passes this way for a chat.**

**The neighbour appreciates her visit and invites her to string buttons on a necklace.**

**It is not just a necklace: every button represents someone who Merel likes, as the neighbour recollects.**

**The neighbour asks about the people of the buttons.**

**Merel keeps chatting about them.**

**A conversation between the two develops.**

**It is how the neighbour gets to know Merel.**

**Merel knows about the neighbour's life, as is clear from the fact that she knows that neighbour Soliman is a fugitive.**

## **The buttons' drawer, about Merel's and Soliman's world.**

**\* It smells after pieces of cloth  
in Merel's neighbour's workshop.  
The shop is next to the workroom.  
The neighbour tailors pieces of cloth into dresses.  
The pieces have been rolled  
around cardboard.  
Piles of them.  
In all sorts of colours.  
Pieces with stripes and with diamond shapes.  
In a corner of the room you see a sewing machine.**



**\* The little bell rings over de doorway.  
It means there is someone in the shop.  
Who wants something tailored.  
'What can I do for you?' the neighbour asks.  
'I like to have a new jacket and a pair of trousers.'  
The man replies and adds:  
'A jacket and a pair of trousers with stripes.'  
'I will measure your arms and legs  
and the size of your back', the neighbour adds.  
The neighbour uses the centimetre  
around his neck.**



**\* The neighbour lays a sheet of paper on the table.  
He takes a pencil and draws the jacket  
on the piece of paper.**



**'This will be the shape of the man's jacket,'  
the neighbour explains to Merel.**

**'I will cut out the jacket's shape from the sheet of paper.  
This piece of paper we call a design.'**

**The neighbour says: 'I lay the design on the piece of cloth.  
It will tell me what the man's jacket will look like.'**

**Now he takes a pair of scissors and cuts the jacket  
from the cloth. The cloth with the stripes.**

**The neighbour says: 'I still have to sew the jacket.  
If it is finished, I will iron it,  
so that it will be smooth and soft.'**

**\* Another jacket hangs from the wall.**

**'It is already finished', the neighbour says.  
Then the bell goes again.**

**'I am coming to collect my jacket',  
the customer says,**

**'the new jacket with the diamond design.'**

**The neighbour gets the jacket from the wall.**

**He tells the customer: 'Let us look if the jacket fits.'**

**'The jacket is a beauty', the man says.**



**\* It is quiet for a while. The bell does not ring.  
The neighbour hands a drawer with buttons  
to Merel.**



**'Here you are, you may pass a thread through  
each button.'**

**The neighbour takes a thick thread and a needle.  
He selects a button from the drawer with a little sun.  
The needle with the thread  
goes through the whole in the button.  
And back through the other whole.**

**'This button is you, Merel', he says,  
'because you resemble a little sun.'**

**The neighbour looks at Merel: 'Now you have to select a button,  
one that stands for someone you know.'**

**\* Merel searches for a button in the drawer.  
'This is you, neighbour' she says.**



**The button which she holds on high,  
has been made of gold.**

**'Gold is more beautiful than silver', she says.**

**Using the needle, she pokes the thread through  
the holes in the button.**

**Now, there are two buttons on the thread.**

**Merel and the neighbour.**

**Merel has a fancy for the neighbour.**

**The neighbour likes Merel.**

**They are friends already.**

**There are more buttons in the drawer.**

**Many more. Buttons, made of wood, buttons made of iron.**

**Buttons with the image of an anchor.**

**These are for a sailor's coat.**

**\* The neighbour does not sit at the table.  
He sits on top of the table, because he is a tailor.  
The neighbour brushes all sewing things off the  
table.**



**'Come and sit by me on the table', he says.  
'I sew a jacket and you make a string of buttons.'  
Merel takes another button from the drawer.  
'This is mama', she says, 'because this button  
has been made of soft material.'  
She pokes the thread through the holes in the button.  
'This is papa.' The button which she has chosen,  
is a large button, made of leather.  
Merel says: 'This button smells like my dad.'  
'This is Hidde', she says. And she takes a little button  
made from a shell in the drawer, because Hidde  
is still a baby boy.**

**\* Grandma's button has been made of wood  
as grandma prefers to sit under the large tree of  
her house.  
Merel now has already five buttons on the thread.  
Next, she takes Milan's button. The most beautiful one.  
The shape of a little heart.  
The neighbour says: 'I know mum and I know dad  
and Hidde. And grandma.  
But I do not know who is Milan.'  
'Milan is my best friend', Merel says.  
'She continues to add more buttons to the thread.  
Merel calls the names:  
Robert the sailor, Miss Marianne, Baker Sebastian.  
The neighbour repeats the question: who are they?  
The neighbour and Merel chatter  
about everybody Merel knows.**



**\* Now she has a long thread with many buttons.**

**'These are the people you like most',  
the neighbour says.**

**He ties the end of the thread to the beginning.**

**The thread now becomes a circle.**

**The neighbour says: 'This chain is for you.'**

**He carefully hangs the chain around Merel's neck.'**

**'Now your people are always with you', the neighbour says.**

**'The thread should not break', Merel says, 'if it breaks  
the buttons will come loose.'**

**The neighbour says: 'The thread will not break.**

**The thread I gave you,  
is very strong.'**



**\* The tiny bell rings. The neighbour disappears into  
the shop.**

**Merel still sits on the table.**

**She weighs the buttons in her hand.**

**'Every button was alone in the drawer', she says,  
'but thanks to the thread they all come together.'**

**Merel walks towards a large mirror.**

**'To be frank, this is a photograph', she says.**

**'I am in this photo with all the people I love.'**

**She looks at the buttons, but also recalls  
their faces in her head.**

**She says: 'Because the thread is strong, we stay together.'**

**She smiles at the people around her.**



**\* She caresses the neighbour's golden button.**

**The neighbour is a fugitive, she knows.**

**Merel says: 'If you are a fugitive you can no longer stay at your home.**

**When you are a fugitive, you have to find a new home somewhere else.'**

**Merel emits a deep, loud sigh and says:**

**'Imagine, I would have to quit my home my bed and everyone else in this country like wise.'**

**She says: 'I do not want to leave.'**

**There is the neighbour again. He overhears what Merel says.**

**The neighbour says: 'Yet, we decided to leave our country as we were scared of the soldiers who made war in my country.'**

**'Leaving your country was the right thing to do', Merel says.**

**She says: 'In this country you need not be afraid any longer.'**



**\* Merel looks at the chain and its buttons.**

**'Each button has a name', she says.**

**'My name is Merel.'**

**'My name is Soliman', the neighbour says.**

**She says: 'The first button is Merel**

**and the second is Soliman and between the two of us there is a small thread.'**

**Then she counts: 'Mama sits by Soliman, then daddy, grandma and Milan, and all the others.'**

**Merel says: 'All along I felt that we belonged together, but now I can see it thanks to the chain with buttons.'**

**Merel likes neighbour Soliman.**

**Neighbour Soliman likes Merel.**

**They are friends.**



## Colophon

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