

**Made  
by  
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Never throw a button away; they are the salvageable parts of things.  
There are hundreds of them in here, generations, collected, saved, lost, found,  
Cut from old clothes, kept. In the button box.  
Buttons, like ships, are always female. Those that match: sisters.  
Sisters strung on a twist of thread, twine, a broken bootlace.

You know there were two who came before you - they would have been your sisters.  
They, poor things, came too soon, much too soon,  
And quietly, for myself, I called them Marianne and Ellen.  
They told me there would be no more and I was sad for my lost girls.

Later, much later, I set about it.

In the box it is hard to find so much as ten the same.  
But then there were such a ten, bound by the eyes to a piece of card.  
Those ten were brand new. I thought it a good start.  
My mother had them for some thing she had been to make for my first,  
(My Marianne) but she came too early to need clothes.  
My mother folded the crispy paper patterns away, the unused buttons went into the  
box.  
But I knew those ten, a decimal sisterhood,  
Made a new start and I collected them for ten toes.

Second, there were not another ten all just the same,  
But I found eight sisters on a stem of twisted silk.  
They were a pretty pearl pink-white, strung upon eyes in their backs.  
They had fastened my mother's wedding dress - a flawless, sightless line.  
I knew their smooth domes would do well for eight fine fingers.

Third, I struggled greatly to find two thumbs.  
I thought to seek out two as delicate as those fingers  
Yet, much more to the purpose; two sturdy leather toggles, strong, creased as  
knuckles.  
I believe they came first from a pair of dancing shoes.

Now fourthly this one chose itself; red and full of promise as a new rising sun.  
These came from my Grandmother's warm winter coat.  
I remember the smooching lips of the pockets about her slender wrists  
Her hands sucked deep into their warm mouths, ha'pennies sewn into the hems.  
Seven round buttons fastened up the front. I took just one for a healthy heart.

Fifth, I found two intricate roses fashioned perhaps from ivory or bone,  
So small I used them as flowers for my doll as a girl.  
I chose them for ears, for the innocence they had once heard.

Sixth, most unexpected!

A bright uneven fastener of brutally beaten copper.  
It spoke up and begged I give it voice.  
And sometimes, although you do not know the reason, listen.

Seventh, I chanced upon a tiny quiet kiss. A mellow blushing butterfly.  
Those awkward shapes are always tricky to button fast.

Eighth, I sought two quite the same.  
There are many like them in here, discs of mother-of-pearl, pressed raindrops,  
I found an almost flawless pair: two shining, ever interesting,  
The full moon twice reflected on a rippling sea.

Ninth, mindful of my false beginnings, I rested. I waited. I hoped.

At last you opened your wing-kissed lips and cried a beaten copper wail.  
From those live lunar eyes shed two shining tears  
Even upon your cheek they froze. Two tiny seed pearls, hard and glistening.  
I caught them up, strung them together and put them back into the box.