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opening extract from

Clarice Bean, Don't Look Now

written by

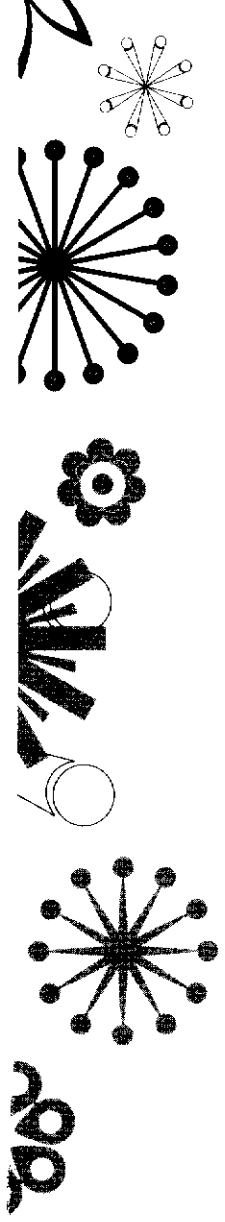
Lauren Child

published by

Orchard Books

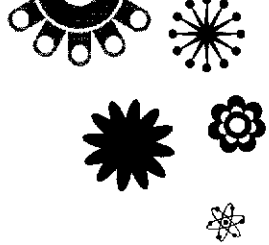
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PART ONE

Thinking and Spinning



Where does infinity end?

For a long time I used to go to bed early
But now I go to bed late.
I am not sleeping at night
And I wake up in the dark
And my mind is thinking and spinning
And I start to go into a panic
And that's when I have to switch on my Ruby torch –
I keep it by my bed.
It's in the shape of a piece of wood.
It's disguised, like most Ruby things.
I am currently reading – ***THE RUBY REDFORT SURVIVAL HANDBOOK – WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR WORST WORRY COMES YOUR WAY.***
Granny sent it to me from America – you can't buy it over here in this country, not yet.

It is a very handy book and it is crammed with brilliant ideas.
Most of them seem to involve standing still.
For instance – what to do if a tiger comes along – stand still.
And the whole book is about escaping or getting out of and dealing with tricky situations.
You wouldn't believe some of the tricky situations Ruby can get into and although it is unlikely that I will find myself in a swamp with an alligator, who can say that I won't?
And what I always think is, I would rather know something than not know something.
Don't you think?



I have quite a few worries. I have made a list of them in my notebook – it's a notebook for **worst worries** *– because people say things aren't so bad if you make a list.*
And then you can tick things off when they are solved.
So far I haven't ticked anything off.

When I first started my Worst Worry Notebook, **WORRY no. 1** *was* how to stop my brother Minal eating all the chocolate biscuits before I got home from school.
But then Mum stopped buying chocolate biscuits because she said all our teeth would fall out. So the worry sort of went away – though it doesn't count as solved.



Lately I have been having bigger worries – for example, i.e. **WORRY no. 4:** the meaning of life.
Why are we here?
Is it just to be nice to everybody and have a nice time?
Or do we all have to come up with something clever – like doing a test or something.
On one programme I heard, they said space goes on and on forever without stopping.
And how it has no edges.
And they call it infinity.
But what I want to know is – how can something

go on and on forever without stopping?
How can something have no edges?
Am I just a tiny speck floating about with lots of other specks,
i.e. planets and stars?
Where does infinity end?
WORRY no. 1: infinity.
Mum says, 'It is often best not to think too much about it because it is all slightly beyond our understanding and if you spend too long wondering about it all, it can make you feel rather insignificant,' i.e. small and pointless.
Which to be honest I do feel a lot of the time anyway.
I phone Granny and ask her, does she ever feel small and pointless when she thinks about infinity?
And she says, 'Not a bit of it, I love infinity. It's rather reassuring to remember you are just a speck and that in the end it really doesn't matter if you wear a pair of purple shoes with a red coat or a pair of yellow ones.'
I ask Grandad – he says, 'The last time I was there I lost my glasses but on the whole I'm pro it.'
Dad says, 'I am sure it would be a quieter place to read the paper.'

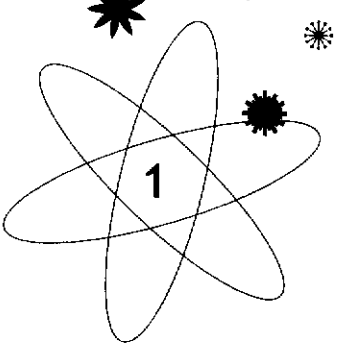
Which I am not sure is true because I believe there is a lot of wind in space.



One thing I do know is,
the more you worry the more worries there are
and just when you get used to things, they change.
WORRY no. 3: change.
Things have a habit of not being the same quite a lot.
Change can be a good thing for some people, but
sometimes it comes along when you don't want it to.
Like when my teacher Mrs Nesbit changed into
Mrs Wilberton.
Or when my mum and dad decided to stop having
three children and have four instead,
and we got Minal.
And I stopped being the youngest and became
the second from youngest – and being the second from
youngest isn't really anything, is it?
Just three out of four.
Mum says I will see the benefit of him when I get
a bit older.

I say, when did you see the benefit of Uncle Ted?
And she says, 'When I left home.'
But the thing I am trying to say is, change can mess up how you fit into things.
And you never know when change is going to happen. Which means you never know when disaster is going to strike.
There is this bit in the **RUBY REDFORT SURVIVAL HANDBOOK** *which is worrying me. Right at the end of the first chapter Ruby says,*
'REMEMBER – it's the worry you haven't even thought to worry about – that is the worry that should worry you the most.'
I am wondering what Ruby means – should I be worrying about everything just in case it might be my worst worry and I am thinking if this is true then I am going to have to get a bigger notebook.
And I think, how can you stop your worst worry coming your way if you don't know what your worst worry could be?

What to do When Disaster Strikes



You see the whole problem starts because Marcie is running a bath while she is also talking on the phone and she forgets that she has taps turned on and is just nonstop chatting to her friend Stan – Stan is a girl even though it doesn't sound like it and she mainly wears boys' clothes.

Anyway she is chatting so much that she forgets the bath and the next thing you know, I am watching the television and finding it's raining into my Snackle Pops.

Of course it takes me a few minutes to work out what is going on until I hear Minal shouting, 'The carpet in our bedroom is all soggy'. I go in there and he is jumping up and down on it in his bare feet like an utter lunatic.