THE SMALL THINGS

LISA THOMPSON



"Truly original and deeply moving" PHIL EARLE

THE SMALL THINGS

LISA THOMPSON

Illustrated by
Hannah Coulson

Barrington Stoke

First published in 2021 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Text © 2021 Lisa Thompson
Illustrations © 2021 Hannah Coulson

The moral right of Lisa Thompson and Hannah Coulson to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in any part in any form without the written permission of the publisher

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library upon request

ISBN: 978-1-78112-964-7

Printed by Hussar Books, Poland

For Lily (and Lily-Bot)

Chapter One

It was pouring with rain on the day Ellie joined our class. On our drive to school, Mum had to put the windscreen wipers on to their fastest setting. They whizzed back and forth, but the windscreen was still blurry as we looked out into the heavy shower.

Mum pulled into a parking space close to the school gates and kept the engine running.

I didn't move.

"Come on, love, off you go," Mum said. "I've got to get to work."

I watched the streaks of rain run down my window.

"Can't we wait a little longer?" I said. "There's still ten minutes until the bell goes."

Mum sighed. "I can't, Anna," she told me. "The traffic is always bad on Mondays. I need to get Henry to nursery and I can't be late for work."

I sighed. There were three reasons why I didn't want to get out of the car.

Nia Gibson, Shavina Bates and Erin Smith.

They were all standing in the playground huddled under an umbrella.

Nia, Shavina and Erin were lovely. They weren't nasty to me in any way and I guess I'd call them my friends – even if I was on the edge of the group.

Shavina and Erin were never far from Nia and hung on to her every word. Sometimes I thought Nia was like the sun and the rest of us were planets, orbiting around her. There was nothing wrong with Nia, Shavina or Erin at all. They just made me feel so small.

"Come on, Anna," said Mum. "I'm going to be late."

My little brother kicked the back of my seat as if I needed reminding that he was there. I picked up my school bag, which was down by my feet.

"There's an umbrella in the boot," said Mum. "Take it with you or you'll get soaked. And remember we're going to the supermarket after school."

I groaned. My parents liked to go shopping later in the day when things were reduced and there were more bargains to be had. We went at least twice a week.

"Bye," I said.

I got out of the car and shut the door as the rain hit me in the face. I put my head down and trudged towards the gates. Behind me, I heard Mum shout out of the car window.

"Anna! The umbrella!" she said. I ignored her and kept walking.

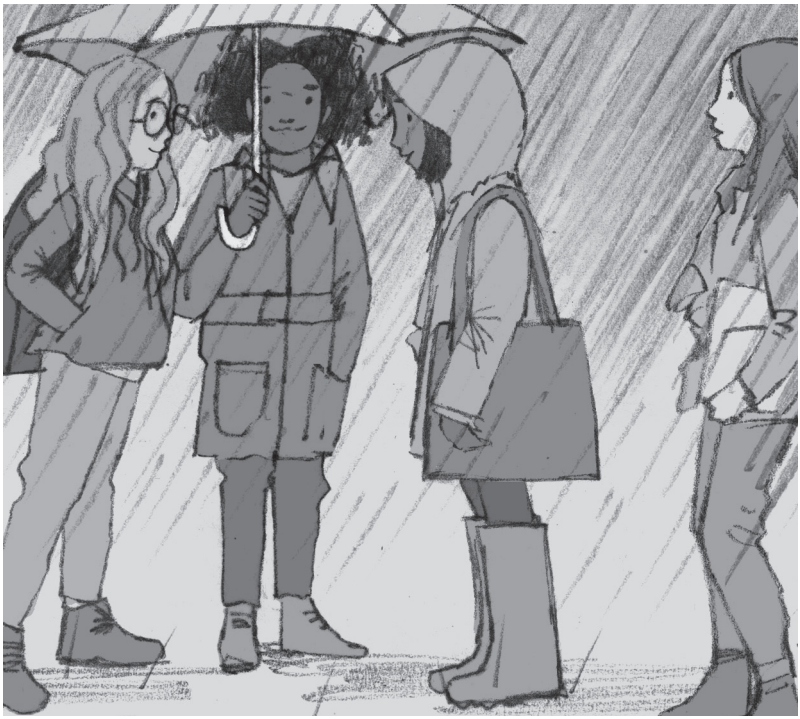
I got to the playground and headed over to where Nia, Shavina and Erin sheltered under their umbrella. I stood behind them.

"It was incredible!" said Nia. "The slope was so high and it was real snow!"

Shavina and Erin gasped.

"Real snow?" said Shavina. "How can they use real snow?"

I remembered then that Nia had gone to an indoor ski slope at the weekend.



"Morning!" I said brightly. I hoped when they saw me they'd let me squeeze in under the umbrella. But none of them turned round.

"I don't know, but it was so cold!" Nia said. "It felt just like it did when we were in the Alps." She turned her head and spotted me. "Oh, hi, Anna," she said.

"Hi, Nia. That sounds amazing!" I said.

She smiled. No one moved to make space for me. I felt really awkward just standing there with rain dripping off my nose.

"Did you have a nice weekend, Shavina?" said Nia.

"Yeah, it was OK," said Shavina. "I had a county competition. I won the freestyle, but we lost the relay."

Shavina was a brilliant swimmer and spent so much time in water that I was surprised she hadn't turned into a fish.

"I went to my street-dance club!" said Erin. "It was so cool. We're doing a routine at the school fete next weekend!"

The three girls all smiled.

"Oh, that's great, Erin!" said Shavina.

"How about you, Anna?" said Nia. "Did you do anything nice at the weekend?"

I opened my mouth. I had nothing to say. I didn't do anything out of school and my mind was a total blank. Nia, Shavina and Erin all watched me, waiting for me to say something. Our teacher, Miss Burnell, suddenly called out across the playground.

"Come on in out of the rain, Badgers Class!" she said.

I closed my mouth. I was saved.