

# extra fingers

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## Cute cop car

**HOLLY**, on the way home from a dinner out and referring to an unmarked police car that had suddenly activated its flashing red and blue lights to pull over a taxi: "Dad, it's the police!"

**DAD**: "Yeah, I know."

**ISABELLA**: "The police! Really?"

**DAD**: "Yeah."

**ISABELLA**, disappointedly: "Oh. I was just thinking 'how cute'."

**HOLLY**: "Cute?"

**ISABELLA**: "Yeah. It's a car with a little disco inside it."

# Worth the wait

As I was saying goodbye to Amelie one morning I asked her to wave to me when she reached the top of the hill leading into her school. It wasn't a particularly long slope for Amelie to walk up, however, by the time she'd made it to the top she'd forgotten all about it. A little dispirited but not really that surprised, I turned and walked away. About three minutes later, though, as I was about to ride home, I heard a little voice call out. It was Amelie, her face beaming, and waving with the biggest arc she could manage: "Dad! I forgot to wave!"

## Which one?

**DAD** yelling out to Amelie, as we were riding to school: "Hey, Ams. Bit late to be looking that way [to her right]."

**AMELIE:** "What?"

**DAD:** "Bit late to be looking that way."

**AMELIE:** "I did look that way."

**DAD:** "Yeah, but, you were across the road when you did that. You've got to look that way before you go across. You know how the traffic comes from two directions? It doesn't just come from one direction. You've got to look left and right."

**AMELIE,** referring to a dog she'd just ridden past: "Dad, that dog had a bandage on his leg."

**DAD:** "What's that?"

**AMELIE:** "That dog had a bandage on."

**DAD:** "I don't care about the dog, I care about you living."

**AMELIE:** "That's not very nice."

**DAD:** "No, it is very nice. You living is more important than the bandage the dog has on. Okay?"

**AMELIE:** "We still want the dog to live, Dad!"



**DAD:** "I do want the dog to live, but I need you to look at road rules and care about yourself more than the dog's bandaged leg."

**AMELIE:** "Would you want a cockroach to die or a dog to die?"

**DAD:** "I'm not interested in the cockroach versus dog—"

**AMELIE:** "Say it, say it, say it!"

**DAD:** "I'm not interested in the cockroach versus dog comparison. I'm interested in you living. And you need to look left and right when crossing a road, okay?"

**AMELIE:** "I would rather a cockroach — because they're smaller — live very little life and they're ugly."

**DAD:** "Yeah, alright. But I want you to look left and right when crossing a road so that you live."

**AMELIE:** "The big animals are like horses and when they die, that's very sad!"

**DAD:** "Yeah, you're the organism I want to live more than anything. Okay? Out of all three of those choices you're the one that I want to live."

**AMELIE:** "No, I didn't say three choices. I just said between a dog and a cockroach. Which one would you rather live? Which one, Dad?"

## Not that nice really

**DAD,** regarding a Junior School Mothers' Day morning tea held at her school: "Did you like having Mum at the morning tea?"

**AMELIE:** "Hmm-hmm. It was really good."

**DAD,** as a joke: "I bet you were sad that I wasn't there."

**AMELIE:** "Nope. Not one bit, Dad. There was only one other dad there and he had a laugh like a kookaburra. So, not that nice, really."

## Pole position

I was hurriedly racing around the house in an attempt to help Karin have things ready for guests arriving for Holly's 15th birthday party. But Issy had other ideas.

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, stop! Don't move."

**DAD:** "Issy. C'mon, darl. Don't get in my way. You know I have to keep going. There's still so much to do."

**ISABELLA:** "But, Dad. It's important."

**DAD,** sceptically: "It's important. So you say it is. As if it could be important."

**ISABELLA:** "No, Dad. It is. I need you to stay still for a moment."

**DAD,** inhaling very slowly and deeply before exhaling a lot of built up tension: "Alright. But whatever it is it can't take long. Okay?"

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, don't worry. It won't. Just stay still for a second. Alright? I just want you to be a pole I can climb up."

## Where do you live?

**ISABELLA,** regarding a manned space mission to Mars scheduled for ten years' time: "But that'd be terrible, going to Mars."

**DAD:** "You think so?"

**ISABELLA:** "Ah-yeah. Because where do you live? There are no houses on Mars."

## I'm talking to my veins

**AMELIE,** as told by Holly: "Issy went and opened the cupboard to get some cereal and, as she did, all of a sudden Amie just went and said, 'Stop it! I don't like it! I don't like it at all!' Then Issy said, 'What!' And Amie just said, 'Sorry, I'm not talking to you. I'm talking to my veins. They keep wriggling in my legs and I don't like it!'"

## On notice

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, I'm serious. When I'm in Year 12 and the father-daughter dinner is on you had better have black hair still."

**DAD:** "What! How can I have any control over my hair? That's ridic—"

**ISABELLA:** "And no more wrinkles\*, Dad. Or laughing from you because that just makes that awful vein thing in your forehead go right down and stick out. (*Shudders before continuing*) And no egghead hair cuts either. Or smiling so that everyone sees your gold tooth [the one remaining amalgam filling]."

- what Isabella calls 'wrinkles'.

# She's right for TV

**AMELIE:** "Dad, my friend, Monique, doesn't need a TV."

**DAD:** "Doesn't she? Why's that?"

**AMELIE:** "Because she's got twenty-nine animals."

**DAD:** "Twenty-nine? Are you sure?"

**AMELIE:** "Hmm-hmm. She's got a farm."

**DAD:** "Oh. So what are some of the animals?"

**AMELIE:** "Well, she's got, um—"

**ISABELLA,** interrupting: "A goat?"

**AMELIE:** "I think she's got two goats."

**DAD:** "Right. Two goats."

**AMELIE:** "Five alpacas."

**DAD:** "Five alpacas!"

**AMELIE:** "Um, I've forgotten how many sheep she has. I think, seven turkeys."

**ISABELLA,** interrupting again: "Seven turkeys! How do they pay for all those?"

**AMELIE:** "She's got, like, loads of chickens and stuff."

**ISABELLA:** "Do they have a cow?"

**AMELIE:** "No, they had to sell their cow. Because she can't eat dairy. I think. Well, she told me something about it. I think that was it. They did have cows; they used to."

**ISABELLA:** "Pig?"

**AMELIE:** "Nuh. Pigs aren't that common."

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah, but, five alpacas!"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah! She does. Anyway, Dad, she's right for TV. She really doesn't need one."

## Did they even have beaches back then?

I'd been telling Isabella and Holly about the case of Mary Latham, aged 18, and James Britton who were both hanged in Boston in 1644 for the 'crime' of adultery even though the so-called 'offence' didn't take place due to Britton's very intoxicated state on the night of the alleged offence.

**ISABELLA,** with a look of horror: "When did you say this happened again?"

**DAD:** "In 1644, Is."

**ISABELLA,** breathing a deep sigh of relief: "Oh thank heavens! I thought they might be still doing that."

**DAD:** "You always like it, don't you, when you find out a really horrible punishment has occurred in the 1600s rather than now?"

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah, definitely."

**DAD:** "Imagine how those two people must have felt. All James Britton did was try to have sex with Mary Latham on a beach. That's it! Nothing else. Just think about that for a second. Remember what I just said. He tried to have sex with her. Which means he didn't even actually do it. And the worst thing was, after being told over and over

again how despicable they were for being adulterers, both James Britton and Mary Latham ended up believing they were indeed a loathsome pair. In fact, just before being slowly strangled to death at the end of rope, on the scaffold as the nooses were being placed around their necks they actually spent the last remaining minutes alive beseeching others not to stray as they had done. Can you believe that, Issy?”

**ISABELLA:** “What?”

**DAD:** “Can you believe something like that could have happened?”

**ISABELLA:** “Yeah. Because back then lots of really bad stuff happened to people. But, Dad. Did they even have beaches back then?”

**DAD:** “What’s that?”

**ISABELLA:** “You know how you said those two people were on a beach?”

**DAD:** “Yeah.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, was that even possible?”

**DAD:** “What do you mean?”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, did they really have beaches way back then?”

**DAD:** “Yeah. Of course they did. Beaches didn’t just suddenly come into existence when we invented the swimming costume.”

**ISABELLA:** “Um, well, I didn’t really know. Beaches just seem really modern to me. You know how they’ve always got all those chairs and stuff today? And you never see many pictures of beaches from the olden days. There aren’t many drawings of them. Well, sometimes there are. Just where people have landed\*. But mostly they don’t even look much like beaches even when you do see a picture. They don’t look like the beaches we have today.”

\*A reference no doubt to those illustrations we seem to come across as school kids of explorers planting their country’s flag into thin strips of sand to signal their taking possession of a land in the name of their king or queen.

## Could they sue?

**ISABELLA,** as we waited for our meals to arrive at a restaurant called Heavenly Plate: “Dad, if someone – well, a kid – wasn’t religious and they invited a friend over to their house for a sleepover and their friend was very religious. You know, right into the Bible and all that.”

**DAD:** “Hmm-hmm.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, what would happen if the kid who wasn’t religious had a father who converted the religious kid into someone who also wasn’t religious? Would his parents be able to sue? Because it wouldn’t have been what they wanted.”

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### THE LAST WORD

# Let me be your TV

**AMELIE,** about to do a cartwheel and a handstand as I was sitting reading on the lounge: “Dad, look up for a second. Let me be your television.”