

extra fingers

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What if it never comes back?

ISABELLA, after the internet had been off for nineteen hours due to the NBN being installed and with her arms around me and referring to wifi: “What if it never comes back?”

As interesting as a TV series

I was loaded up with the usual items I carry to the girls' school. Three school bags, a sports bag, a violin and a cello.

AMELIE, after crossing Canning Highway: "Dad? Did you see that boy then?"

DAD: "What boy?"

AMELIE: "The boy on the bus. He was looking at you as if you were an interesting TV series."

Can a girl have a six pack?

AMELIE: "Holly, is it possible for a girl to have a six pack? I don't want one. Why would you want one? But a girl at my school reckons she has a four pack. She didn't want it but . . . she's got it anyway."

You're really not that good at it, you know

I'd been helping Amelie un-jumble some words for English.

AMELIE: "Dad, you're really not that good at it, you know."

DAD: "Oh. Aren't I?"

AMELIE: "No. There are billions of people in this world so there'd easily be people studying anything."

DAD: "Yeah. Like what?"

AMELIE: "Oh I don't know. Eggs cracking, specks from off the floor. I don't know. There'd definitely be people who would just practise un-jumbling words all day. Definitely! They'd easily do something like that. And in a second. You took ages. There's no way you went really well at un-jumbling, Dad."

DAD: "What are you talking about? Who are these people? I thought I went quite well. Name them."

AMELIE: "I don't know their names. There's just billions of people in this world, Dad, so of course there'd be people in the world studying un-jumbled words all day. Of course there'd be!"

How small are people's feet these days!

AMELIE, in a shop looking at a pair of baby's shoes: "God, how small are people's feet these days!"

I bet they wish they did

AMELIE: "Dad, when did people first know they lived on a planet?"

DAD: "Well, all I can say for certain is that it was after when they first knew what a planet was."

AMELIE: "No I mean, what told them?"

DAD: "Well their brain did."

AMELIE: "No but no brain's that fantastic that it can just let people know that. How did they know? I mean, when did they know?"

DAD: "I don't know when they knew. But, at some point, they would have started to realise that this thing that they were standing on was a planet. Our brains evolved to work such things out. First of all, there would have been language. And then, after enough people had speech, ideas about things like what people were standing on would have then started to spread around quite easily. So, rather than just one mind thinking about what people were standing on many minds would have probably started to think about it. Or something close to that. And, following lots of conversations, the thought about what humans were standing on would have probably crystallised. I mean, it would have become clearer."

You can never go 'oh, great!'

AMELIE: "Dad, do you have to go to university?"

DAD: "No."

AMELIE, happily: "Oh! So you can be dumb all your entire life?"

DAD: "Well—"

AMELIE: "But if you don't want to be dumb all your entire life then you can't really go 'oh, great!' after you finish school. Can you? Because then you have to go to university. And then, when you go to university you can't go 'oh, great!' then either when you finish because you've got to go to work. And then, when you finish work and retire you can't even go 'oh, great!' then. Because then you die. You can never go 'oh, great!'"

AMELIE: "Do animals know they're on a planet?"

DAD: "No."

AMELIE: "Oh. Poor animals! I bet they wish they did."

You should really want me to have one

AMELIE: "Dad, can you buy me a 'milky way' bar please?"

DAD: "No."

AMELIE: "Oh! Why? It's all about space so you should really want me to have one."

Have you seen how dumb they are?

AMELIE: "Dad, if you wanted to be a kindly teacher would you have to study hard?"

DAD: "Yeah. Pretty hard."

AMELIE: "Oh. But why? They're really dumb."

DAD: "Who?"

AMELIE: "Kindy kids. Have you seen how dumb they are? They don't know anything."

When I grow up . . .

AMELIE: "When I grow up I want to study really hard and become a volunteer."

I'm the child

AMELIE, ringing my work: "Hello. I'm David Broadbent's child. Can I speak to my dad?"

AN EMPLOYEE AT MY WORK, politely: "Oh, and which one are you?"

AMELIE, frustratedly: "I'm the child!"

You're so lucky I wanted these pineapple rings

AMELIE, after shopping: "Dad, you're so lucky I wanted these pineapple rings because now you've got some change. I got your fifty to go down a bit and now you can use it better. And also these pineapple pieces were really cheap."

DAD: "You think \$2.97 for a can of pineapple rings is really cheap?"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "According to who? Compared to what?"

AMELIE: "According to me. Dad, moving on please. One of these cans might end up being for Issy."

DAD: "Oh, okay."

AMELIE: "I'm not sure yet. Whether it's going to be a surprise for her. It might be. If I'm not hungry after I finish this can."

So many people

AMELIE, watching runners go past during Perth's City to Surf: "I never realised there were that many people in the world."

Stop heaving down the trampoline

AMELIE, whilst bouncing with me on the trampoline: "Dad, stop heaving down the trampoline."

Tyres can't even get sad

DAD, after Amelie had finished explaining the procedure her school uses to select captains: "Do you want me to let down the teachers' tyres who don't end up voting for you to be Music Captain? If we can find out who they are that is."

AMELIE: "What does that mean? I don't even know what that means. Tyres can't even get sad."

A hundred rats

AMELIE: "Dad, do you think a hundred rats could carry someone and then tie them up?"

I was ninety-nine percent sure

AMELIE: "Dad, I don't know if I should ask this question. *(Giggles a few times).*"

DAD: "Oh. Why?"

AMELIE: "Well . . . okay. Were you, like . . ."

DAD: "Hmm."

AMELIE: "Did you (*giggles a few more times*), um, see black and white when you were little, or colour?"

DAD: "Ams, you know I can see in colour now, right?"

AMELIE: "Hmm-hmm. Yeah, but—"

DAD: "Well? I have colour vision."

AMELIE: "Yeah I know, but, like, you had black and white TV when you were little, didn't you?"

A few hours later, just as Amelie was about to go to sleep . . .

DAD: "Amie?"

AMELIE, sleepily: "Hmm?"

DAD: "Did you once think I only saw in black and white?"

AMELIE: "No."

DAD: "Oh. I see."

AMELIE: "I was pretty sure."

DAD: "Oh, okay. You weren't a hundred percent sure?"

AMELIE, sleepily: "I was ninety-nine percent sure, Dad."

LAST WORD

Who's my lawyer?

AMELIE, during a discussion with Holly and Isabella about lawyers and the law: "Dad, who's my lawyer? I don't even know what my one's called."