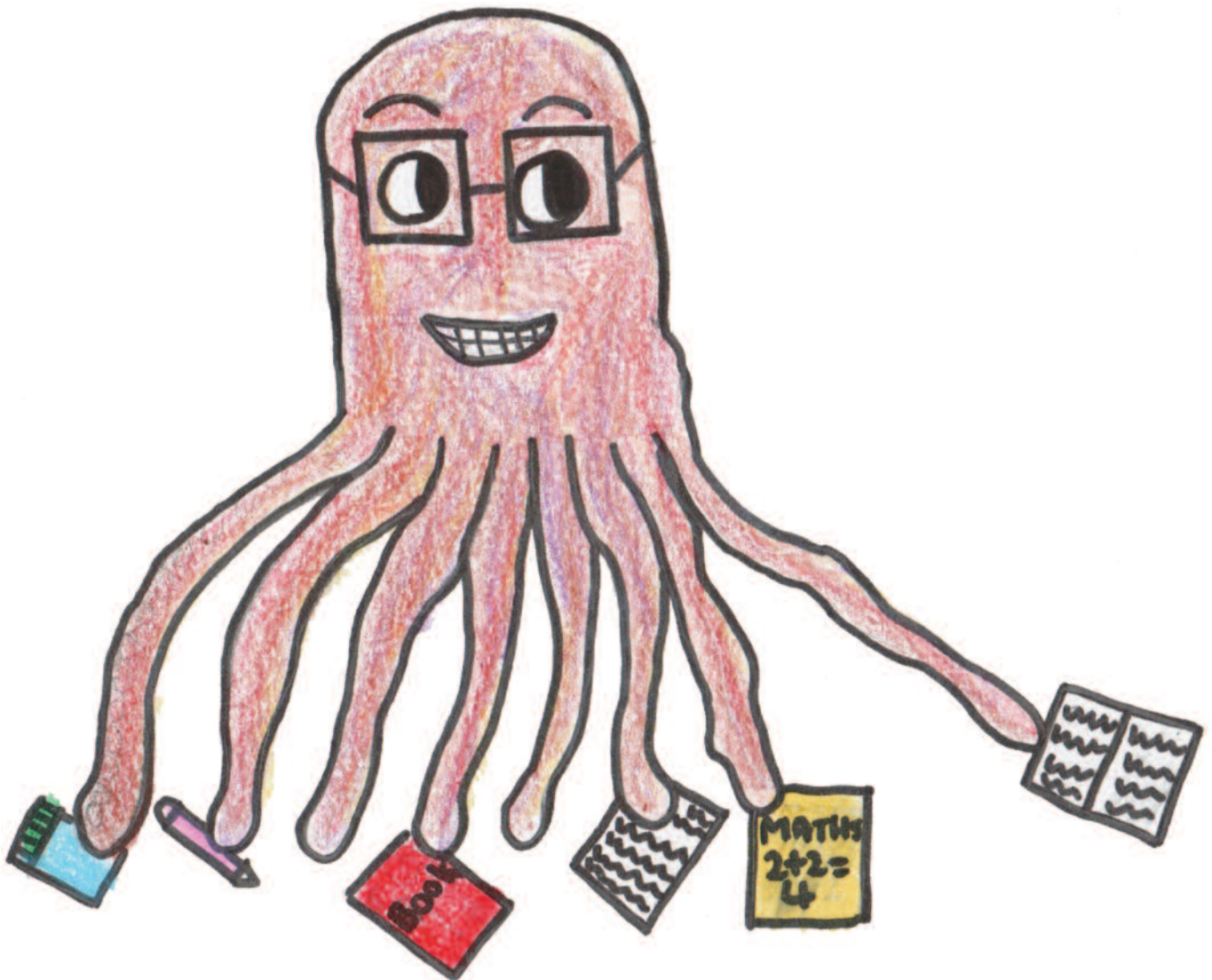


extra fingers

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A little knowledge can sometimes go a long way

ISABELLA: "Dad, you know the octopus?"

DAD: "Hmm-hmm."

ISABELLA: "You know how they're really smart and how you told me our intelligence has a lot to do with us standing on two legs, which

has freed our hands to pick up things and eventually make tools and stuff?"

DAD: "Yeah, I remember that."

ISABELLA: "Well, would the octopus be really intelligent because its eyes and mind are

Sound advice

AMELIE: “I can’t believe Snow White ate the apple she got off that old witch. You know the old queen that became a witch and then gave an apple to Snow White?”

DAD: “Yeah.”

AMELIE: “Well, why would Snow White do that? The witch was a stranger! She should have just slammed the door in her face. That’s what I would have done. Unless *you* were there. No, even then . . . Even then, I would have slammed the door in her face. Just to stop germs.”

always interacting with its tentacles? Because, you think about it. It’s the same thing, isn’t it?”

DAD: “You know what. I’ve never thought about that. But I should have. It’s so plausible.”

ISABELLA: “An octopus was able to open a can or jar of something once. Just with its tentacles. I saw it on a nature program.”

DAD: “I’m going to have to look that up, Issy. You’ve really got me thinking now.”

All that trouble for nothing

ISABELLA: “Dad, you know when someone’s going into jail?”

DAD: “You mean after someone’s been convicted of a crime?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah.”

DAD: “Yeah, I know about that.”

ISABELLA: “Well, would they check them for things that you aren’t allowed to have in jail?”

DAD: “Yeah. Of course they would.”

ISABELLA: “But what about if they just had a sandwich?”

DAD: “What do you mean?”

ISABELLA: “What if they had a sandwich for their lunch that they wanted to take in so they could eat it? Would they check their sandwich?”

DAD: “Hmm-hmm.”

ISABELLA: “Whooah! Even their sandwich. I can’t believe the trouble they go to. Where else would they check to make sure someone didn’t have a suicide pill? Because a pill is so tiny, Dad. I mean really tiny. How many places are they going to check?”

DAD: “They check everywhere, darl. But they’re not just looking for suicide pills. There are other things they look for.”

ISABELLA: “Like what?”

DAD: “Drugs.”

ISABELLA: “Oh yeah, they’d definitely be looking for drugs and stuff. What other places would they check? Would they check your hair?”

DAD: “Yep.”

ISABELLA: “Would they check that you didn’t have sticky tape stuck to you that could be hiding something?”

DAD: “Yep. They check everywhere, darl. Okay? Even inside your bottom.”

ISABELLA: “Whooh! They even go in there? That’s so much trouble.”

DAD: “For who?”

ISABELLA: “I don’t know. Some poor dude.”

DAD: “No, I mean, would it be a lot of trouble for the person searching, or the person on the receiving end?”

ISABELLA: “Both, probably.”

DAD: “Yeah.”

ISABELLA: “What about your clothes? Oh yeah, they’d definitely check your clothes. Your mouth? What if you had a suicide pill in your mouth? What would they do then?”

DAD: “They’d check your mouth. Issy, look. For starters, suicide pills aren’t that easy to get, you know. You don’t just go up to the local chemist and ask for one. For one thing, they’re illegal.”

ISABELLA: “Illegal?”

DAD: “Yeah.”

ISABELLA: “But what if you just had a whole mouth full of sleeping pills?”

DAD: “What!”

ISABELLA: “Oh, I guess then you’d talk pretty strangely.”

DAD: “I’ll say.”

ISABELLA: “There’d have to be something you can get in.”

DAD: “Well, things do get smuggled in.”

ISABELLA: “See? Told you. All that trouble for nothing.”

It was *your* question, Dad

DAD: “Ams, I’ve got a topic.”

AMELIE: “Yeah.”

DAD: “The universe is very big.”

AMELIE: “Yeah.”

DAD: “It’s ridiculously big. It’s so much bigger than us that I can’t even explain it to you how much bigger than us it is. Right?”

AMELIE: “Hmm.”

DAD: “We’re not even like a dot to the universe; that’s too large.”

AMELIE: “Yeah.”

DAD: “Okay. Now, who do you think made it? Or do you think it wasn’t made? Maybe it wasn’t made. I mean, what do you think?”

AMELIE, very confidently: “It was made.”

DAD: “Okay.”

AMELIE: “Because, millions and millions and millions of, like, kind of rocky stuff formed together and eventually it made a big burn-up ball. Because, um, the Moon was made before the Earth. Right?”

DAD: “Um . . . well, not really.”

AMELIE: “Yes, it was.”

DAD: “Okay. It’s your story.”

AMELIE: “It [the universe] went into a big burn-up ball and, over time, it got . . . very over time . . . it got life. Just a single life. And, sometimes there was, like, sea and

then, at the end of the sea there were weird creatures, like beetles [trilobites] running along the ground. And big, big, big other creatures. Really weird creatures. That were looking for them to eat them when they saw them.”

DAD: “Are you going to get back to the question I had at some point? Because remember my original question? You said the universe was created and you were going to tell me who or how the universe was made. Weren’t you? Was it ‘who’ or ‘how’?”

AMELIE: “‘How’.”

DAD: “‘How’. Okay. Tell me how the universe was created?”

AMELIE: “Rocks.”

DAD: “Rocks.”

AMELIE, in a bold voice: “Big stone rocks.”

DAD: “Yeah, but hang on. How did those rocks get there?”

AMELIE: “Well . . . I don’t really know.”

DAD: “Oh.”

AMELIE: “They came from . . . I don’t know. I don’t know where they came from. They just started coming out from nowhere.”

DAD: “Oh.”

AMELIE: “Do you know?”

DAD: “No.”

AMELIE: “You should, Dad.”

DAD: “Should I?”

AMELIE: “You came up with the question. God!”

It’s just one long party

ISABELLA: “I like August. It’s a good month. February’s just, well, starting the year. Well, it’s good because it’s my birthday but, then my birthday’s over and I have to wait a whole another year.”

DAD: “Well, what’s wrong with that?”

ISABELLA: “I don’t like waiting years; years are long.”

DAD: “You don’t like years?”

ISABELLA: “No. Who does?”

DAD: “Well—”

ISABELLA: “Like, the day after my birthday’s all sad because no one’s saying ‘happy birthday’ anymore and no one talks about my birthday. It’s all sad. Like, the days leading up to my birthday I’m, like, ‘Yes!’ and then one day it goes and it’s just gone. They should have a week for your birthday.”

DAD: “A week!”

ISABELLA: “A birthday week. I’d love that! It would be, like, ‘Happy Birthday Week’. (*Thinking again*) Happy Birth Week.”

DAD: “Hmm.”

ISABELLA: “Because it’s the week you were born.”

DAD: “Or you could have a birth year. A whole year in which to celebrate your birthday.”

ISABELLA, her eyes lighting up: “That would be so cool. We could all be saying, ‘Happy

The imaginary giraffe

AMELIE, on her way to class: “Dad, if you’re wondering what I’m holding onto it’s just my imaginary giraffe’s lead.”

DAD, as a congregation of magpies sang noisily nearby: “You’re imaginary what?”

AMELIE: “Giraffe’s lead. Because I have an imaginary giraffe. Did you know that?”

DAD: “No.”

AMELIE: “I remember I was playing with it in Art.”

DAD: “How long have you had this imaginary giraffe for?”

AMELIE: “Well, just since yesterday.”

DAD: “Just picked it up yesterday, did you?”

AMELIE: “Yeah. Because, um, she said do you want to have an imaginary pet and I said, ‘okay’. She said, ‘what do you want?’ And I said, ‘okay, a giraffe’.”

DAD: “Who said this?”

AMELIE: “Taia. And then she went like this: click. And it was there.”

DAD: “Click, and it was there?”

AMELIE: “Yeah. (*Motioning in the direction of where a lead would be if she were holding onto it*) So, he’s just there. It’s a baby.”

DAD, in a tone expressing wonderment: “Oh! Well, where did she get him from?”

AMELIE: “Where?”

DAD: “Yeah. Because she clicked. And that click had to connect with—”

AMELIE: “The sky.”

DAD: “Oh! So, out of the sky comes imaginary giraffes?”

AMELIE: “Yeah.”

birth year!”

DAD: “Yeah but the problem with—”

ISABELLA: “Every day.”

DAD: “That is, it runs into the next birth year. There won’t be any gap.”

ISABELLA: “I don’t care. That would be amazing! We can have one day’s break. Which is Christmas.”

DAD: “That’s not a break!”

ISABELLA: “Everyone’d be, like, ‘Happy Christmas! Merry Christmas!’”

DAD: “You’d allow that, would you? You’d allow someone not to talk about your birthday on Christmas?”

ISABELLA: “I might just squeeze in Easter. Maybe. Because then you’d get chocolate.”

DAD: “But we wouldn’t get any work done in the world. Everyone would be just having birthday parties every day.”

ISABELLA: “No. They wouldn’t have birthday parties. It just . . . oh yeah, there would be birthday parties every week, but—”

DAD: “Well, how would anything get done?”

ISABELLA: “No, we still go to school, but everyone’s, like, ‘Happy birth week, happy birth week, happy birthday!’”

DAD: “Yeah, but, as you get older . . . say you’re twenty-five or you get into your twenties when you should be doing jobs — for example, you might be wanting to build a bridge, or a tall building, or you might want to drive a train. Well, if everyone’s having birthday parties each day, they won’t be able to do those jobs.”

ISABELLA: “Not each day. Everyone has a party each week.”

DAD: “Okay, but—”

ISABELLA: “At different times. You go from one party to the next.”

DAD: “Yeah, but the problem is: How does a train driver do their job?”

ISABELLA: “Fine. They get one day off. Each week. And that’s a Monday because I hate Mondays.”

DAD: “So there’s one day for a person who’s a train driver to drive a train? Just one day?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah.”

DAD: “So the trains would only run on one day?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah. No one would be going on the trains; everyone would be wanting to go to the birthday parties.”

DAD: “Yeah.”

ISABELLA: “So they wouldn’t need trains, would they? They’d be happy. Happy weeks. Happy days.”

DAD: “I’m just wondering how the work gets done, that’s all. What about people who need to deliver babies? Babies come anytime.”

ISABELLA: “Oh, fine! They can stay at the hos . . . no, I’m not saying that they have to go home, you know. I’m just saying that they have one party a week. Which means they only have one day off.”

DAD: “Hmm. But, if everybody’s having fifty-two parties a year, and you know how you get invited to parties, think about it. You’re going to get invited to parties, right?”

ISABELLA: “Fine. One person has one each week.”

DAD: “See, you’re changing the rules. You’re trying to run the world around the concept of birthday parties.”

ISABELLA: "It would be so cool. Why can't we think of the simple things? Just saying them."

DAD: "What do you mean, 'the simple things'?"

ISABELLA: "You know, like, not saying, 'oh, it'd be complicated because of the trains. Why can't we just say (*in a sagely whisper*), 'it would work'?"

DAD: "Well, we have to find out if it's going to work. We've got to think it through."

ISABELLA: "It would work. You're not going to be invited to every party so . . ."

DAD: "But you'll get invited to a few, and if everyone's—"

ISABELLA: "You'll get invited to your friends' parties."

DAD: "Yeah, but they're all having fifty-two of them a year."

ISABELLA: "'Fifty-two'? How'd you work that out?"

DAD: "Well, once a week there's a party."

ISABELLA: "Yep."

DAD: "And there's fifty-two weeks in a year."

ISABELLA: "There is?"

DAD: "Yeah. Didn't you know that?"

ISABELLA: "Nup. I'm just taking all the advice from you."

DAD: "It's not the advice from me; it's a fact that it is that way."

ISABELLA: "Fact? Hmph! What if it's 52.9?"

DAD: "Well, it isn't, darl."

ISABELLA: "Has there ever been half a day? A really short day? And everyone didn't know why?"

DAD: "No."

ISABELLA: "And the Moon went down early?"

DAD: "No."

ISABELLA: "And everyone went to sleep? That'd be so funny."

DAD: "No. That's never happened."

ISABELLA: "What if the Sun thought, 'Oh, I'm going to make this a short day. I'm so tired. I want to go back.'"

DAD, very abruptly: "The Sun doesn't think."

ISABELLA

"Have an imagination, Dad. You can have half of your brain being a labby science brain but, have the imagination too. Now, let's switch our imagination on . . ."

ISABELLA: "No, what if it just thought."

DAD: "But it doesn't; it doesn't have a brain."

ISABELLA: "Have an imagination, Dad. You can have half of your brain being a labby science brain but, have the imagination too. Now, let's switch our imagination on . . ."