

# extra fingers

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**“Dad, do planets  
talk to each  
other?”**

## Explaining Gaia

**ISABELLA:** “Dad, do planets talk to each other?”

**DAD:** “How can they talk to each other? They’re planets.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, maybe they have a planet language. Because, you know how the Earth and the Moon go around the Sun?”

**DAD:** “Together, yes.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, probably the Sun wants lots of attention. So, it says, I want to be the biggest star to the Earth and the Moon because there are people on that planet and it wants to really show off. So maybe it just, like, tells the Earth and Moon to go around the Sun.”

**DAD:** “No, it can’t tell it, darl. It doesn’t have a voice.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well maybe it does. How do you

know that? You know when the Earth has hurricanes and stuff like that, the Earth could be talking to the Sun and the Earth might be very angry with the Sun. And then when the Earth is happy, you get those really hot days because the Sun's really close."

**DAD:** "But the Sun doesn't have feelings. It doesn't have any way of feeling sad, happy, content—"

**ISABELLA:** "Well, I think it does because, you know how sometimes it [the Earth] is really in the sun, I think that's when it's happy. And when it's sad, it like cries so the rain comes down. And then when it's shy, it hides behind the clouds and, when it wants to go away at night it goes away. To let the Moon have a go of being popular."

**DAD:** "Well, as I said, I don't think anything like that means anything to the Sun because the Sun is not alive."

**ISABELLA:** "Well, it's so hot that maybe it could be alive. Because, if it's really hot then it could be alive. And, it could have a heart. Because we've never been on the Sun so we don't know whether you can feel the pump, pump, pump, pump."

## How do they sing?

**AMELIE:** "Dad, you know people with beards?"

**DAD:** "Hmm-hmm."

**AMELIE:** "Well, I was wondering. How do they sing? How does a song come out?"

## Too many overweight people

**DAD:** "The Australian team that went over to London to compete in the Olympics, what's happened is, they have been getting into trouble because they haven't been winning enough gold medals."

**AMELIE:** "I know. They've only won one."

**DAD:** "I think it's two now. I think a sailor got

a gold medal. But do you think that they should be winning more gold medals and they should get in trouble if they don't?"

**AMELIE:** "Well, no, but I just want to say. I don't know why we only got two. Someone got five. We only got two because we got (sic) so many overweight people in Australia."

**DAD:** "You think that's the reason?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah. We started with McDonald's and Chicken Treat and, um, you know, Red Rooster and Hungry Jacks. We started with that, and then other countries copied us. We were the first people to do it so that's why we're so fat."

**DAD:** "No, that's not true. Because America started McDonald's."

**AMELIE:** "Really?"

**DAD:** "Yeah."

**AMELIE:** "I didn't know that."

**DAD:** "No, it's true."

**AMELIE:** "Who started Red Rooster?"

**DAD:** "I think we might have done that one."

**AMELIE:** "Who started Chicken Treat?"

**DAD:** "I think we did that one too."

**AMELIE:** "Oh my god! That's why we're so fat. Because we did two. Who did Hungry Jacks?"

**DAD:** "Um, I think we did that one too."

**AMELIE:** "Oh my god! We did three and they only did one."

## The 40-Hour Famine

**ISABELLA,** referring to her 40-Hour Famine privation of having to abstain from using any furniture for forty hours: "Dad, would sitting on you while you sat on furniture count as

me not sitting on furniture?”

**DAD:** “Um, I don’t think you’d get away with that, Is.”

**ISABELLA:** “So, it wouldn’t count?”

**DAD:** “That’s right.”

**ISABELLA:** “Darn.”

## Cross-eyed’s for something else

I was happily sitting in the winter sun when Amelie wandered by.

**AMELIE:** “Dad, don’t look at the sun or you’ll go cross-eyed.”

**DAD:** “Cross-eyed?”

**AMELIE:** “Yeah.”

About two minutes later.

**AMELIE:** “No, blind. Don’t look at the sun or you’ll go blind. Cross-eyed’s for something else.”

## Poverty

**ISABELLA:** “How come we think of Africans and not animals that die? Like, how come we always think of Africans and poverty but not about animals that die? Like, every day.”

**DAD:** “Well, that’s right. But—”

**ISABELLA:** “They die from no food or water too. Like, maybe out in the desert.”

**DAD:** “Hmm-hmm.”

**ISABELLA:** “No one cares about them.”

**DAD:** “Well, okay, the truth is we really don’t care a great deal about the children or people in Africa who are starving. We really don’t. We don’t care that much! Some people care a lot. And do a lot to care. But overall we don’t care that much about them. As for animals that are in the wild, well,

they’re in the wild and therefore they live under the laws of nature.”

**ISABELLA:** “No, that’s not always true. People hunt them down and shoot them.”

**DAD:** “That’s true.”

**ISABELLA:** “A lot.”

**DAD:** “That’s true.”

**ISABELLA:** “And, we don’t care about them.”

**DAD:** “There is the poaching, for example, of elephants’ tusks that goes on.”

**ISABELLA:** “Do we care about them? Are you caring about that right now? Are you giving money to save them? No!”

**DAD:** “No, I’m not giving money for that particular cause; I’m not. That’s true.”

**ISABELLA,** feigning indignation, however still making a valid point: “So mean! And they’re also shooting endangered animals.”

**DAD:** “Hmm.”

**ISABELLA:** “And you’re just sitting here doing nothing.”

**DAD:** “What are you doing?”

**ISABELLA:** “I’m a kid, Dad. I can’t do anything.”

**DAD:** “Oh yes you can. You can raise money.”

**ISABELLA:** “How can I raise money? My school just gets it [the money it raises] for people.”

**DAD:** “The truth is, Issy, there are thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of causes throughout the world that are all important. And we can’t care about them all. But we should care about some.”

**ISABELLA:** “What else do we care about apart from poverty?”

**DAD:** "Um, (after a brief pause) we care about building really big houses."

**ISABELLA:** "That covers poverty because out of poverty it branches up to the people who are in big houses and who should give more money. See? It all connects into each other."

**DAD:** "Well, it does actually, yeah. There is a connection of course."

**ISABELLA:** "So, that all comes under one section. But animals are different because animals, they never get a chance. Because hardly anyone thinks about animals getting shot. They just think about poor people. Even though it is good to save money for poor people. We need to care a bit about animals as well though."

**DAD:** "Well, like I said, we don't really care a real lot about poor people in the world. Because if we did, they wouldn't be as poor as they are. But you're right, we don't care very much about animals either. Um, and you're right. I could do more myself."

**ISABELLA:** "Definitely."

**DAD:** "I do do little things, but I could make them a bit bigger, you're right."

**ISABELLA:** "Why is World Vision religious?"

**DAD:** "Well, it was set up by religious people. It came from religion. It came from Christianity. It was set up by them."

**ISABELLA:** "But how could World Vision, after all this time, after seeing people in pain, think that God is still true?"

**DAD:** "Well, you'd need to ask them."



**ISABELLA:** "Because if God was still true He would be helping them. And, no offence, but, there hasn't really been much of a change throughout the years. There's been a bit, but only slightly. Very slightly."

**DAD:** "Well, that's a question you need to direct towards those who believe in—"

**ISABELLA,** her voice sometimes imploring God to do something: "I mean, He still could be true, but He's not helping them much. He could give us some money to give to the people, or He could just help them Himself, or save their families by giving them food or something like that. And by making sure they all have an equal chance."

**DAD:** "Well what about, you could ask this. You could ask this of God. You could say, 'Why did you even let people be born into poverty in the first place when you didn't have to?' Why was I not born into poverty but another child was? You could ask that, couldn't you? Do you think the world's fair, Issy?"

**ISABELLA,** after a long pause: "In different parts it is, yes. In, like, this is just a very bad example but in running it is. There's different things. If everything was put together though then poverty would probably pull it down a bit. But there's also good things that are fair in the world."

**DAD:** "What's fair in the world, darl?"

**ISABELLA:** "Oh god! Well, um . . ."

**DAD:** "No, I'm curious. You might have a good example."

**ISABELLA:** "Well, I'm not sure whether this is true but mostly everyone gets clothes. I think the Africans do. Like, at least they get a sheet. Or a cloak or something. Like that dress sort of thing that they wear."

**DAD:** "Yeah, okay."

**ISABELLA:** "And everyone gets to live somewhere. Like they're not just put out in the sea; they're all on land. Unless you're in a boat."

**DAD:** "I think some people don't have very good shelter at all."

**ISABELLA:** "But they at least have land; they're on land. Instead of being put in the sea."

**DAD:** "Well, not in the cases where a lot of people are trying to get out of countries. They're being destroyed because of war. Or for other reasons. And they're trying to leave. They don't leave their homes with much in those cases. They pretty much leave their country with only their life intact. Because a lot of people try to escape their country if there's a civil war going on."

**ISABELLA:** "What does 'civil' mean?"

**DAD:** "'Civil' means, well there are quite a few definitions of 'civil' but 'civil' can certainly mean being respectful and—"

**ISABELLA:** "A respectful war?"

**DAD:** "Ah, no, no. Oh, I see what you mean. No, remember when I said there were many different definitions. I was giving you one definition of 'civil'. There's 'civil' where you're nice to somebody and you're respectful and you have good manners. That's being civil. When it comes to war, if it's a civil war, then it's a fight between two

opposing groups or armies within a country. So it would be like us going to war with New South Wales."

**ISABELLA:** "That's really weird."

**DAD:** "That would be classed as a civil war."

**ISABELLA:** "Australia used to be different countries, actually."

**DAD:** "No, it's never been different countries, darl."

**ISABELLA:** "Well, not really, but we used to be separate from all the other states. We didn't used to be, like, just Australia. Miss Neal said that at one point we were all like different little 'cons' or cities or something [she meant we were all once separate colonies]. She said, like, we didn't have the same railway tracks and we were all different. Like Western Australia was its own little place and all the states were all different. And then they became Australia. That's what she said. Because they knew they couldn't fight by themselves."

**DAD:** "Who couldn't fight by themselves?"

**ISABELLA:** "All the states. They couldn't fight by themselves if a war happened."

**DAD,** trying to get back to the topic: "Well, it can be really sad for people who are in a country that's at war with itself. Because it can lead to really terrible consequences."

**ISABELLA:** "Does everyone have to fight?"

**DAD:** "Well, you don't have to fight, but it's difficult not fighting because you're seen as a coward."

**ISABELLA:** "If you're a little child?"

**DAD:** "You're okay if you're a little child."

**ISABELLA:** "But what if you're fighting against your family members accidentally?"

**DAD:** “How would that happen, do you think?”

**ISABELLA:** “Like, your father goes off to war but then you decide you want to go. And then you go off and you’re put in the opposite team.”

**DAD:** “Oh no it’s not like a soccer game where you’ve got people picking who will be on what team.”

**ISABELLA:** “No, like, you go to the army and then they decide where you go.”

**DAD**, beginning to lose track of thoughts as tiredness sets in: “Oh, I see. Yeah, well, in the time of war where they just need to call up people fast to fight they don’t train people that well. But there are a lot of people who have been in the army for many years and they’re more trained and know more about what they’re supposed to be doing. So, you can imagine in some cases you can have some very good and capable soldiers coming up against ones who aren’t capable at all of sustaining . . . Oh, I just went somewhere then. I went to sleep and I can’t remember what I was saying before I said the word ‘sustaining’. Did you notice that I was talking nonsense for a second there?”

#### LAST WORD

## She looked as though she’d been punched in the face

**HOLLY**, excitedly: “Dad, today I kicked the ball all the way to the other end of the court. Or field or whatever it is.”

**DAD:** “What in?”

**HOLLY:** “In soccer, of course. The teacher looked as though she’d been punched in the face. That’s how surprised she was.”

**ISABELLA:** “You were?”

**DAD:** “Was I?”

**ISABELLA:** “I don’t know. I was half asleep.”

**DAD:** “I was heading towards nonsense. I can’t remember the sentence now but I was saying a sentence – it might have even sounded okay – but then I used the word ‘sustaining’ for some reason. And at the point just before I said the word ‘sustaining’; I’d actually nodded off. You didn’t notice that?”

**ISABELLA:** “No, I was nodding off too.”

## They’ve gone and cleaned it up

**AMELIE**, as we were riding to one of her friend’s places: “I didn’t know there was a place called Land Fill.”

**DAD:** “Well, a landfill’s not actually a place, Amelie. You know what I mean? Somewhere where people live.”

**AMELIE:** “It used to be a forest with birds and animals and trees and stuff like that in it but they’ve gone and cleaned it up and now it’s a landfill.”