

extra fingers

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Our team always loses

AMELIE: "Dad, in netball our team always loses."

DAD: "Hmm."

DAD: "Does it?"

AMELIE: "But here's what we're bad at. I mean really bad at. You ready for it?"

AMELIE: "Yeah. We're really good at . . . um . . . okay, this is what we're really good at. Okay?"

DAD: "Hmm-hmm."

DAD: "Hmm-hmm."

AMELIE: "We're really good at passing. We can pass it so well. And we're really good at getting the ball over someone's head. Like a tall player."

AMELIE: "We're really bad at defending. We're so bad at doing that it's amazing. And we're also so bad at scoring goals. That's probably what we're most bad at. And . . . I can't think of anything else we're bad at."

The woolly sheep on the hill

Part of a longer conversation on exploration

DAD: "Would you like to be an explorer, Ams?"

AMELIE: "No. I just want to be an ordinary person who wants to do what I want to do. Like, doing stuff with my friends, or doing musical theatre, or, you know, going to places like Europe and Spain and Italy and going to Dover Castle. With the woolly sheep on the hill."

DAD: "What's that?"

AMELIE: "At Dover Castle*. You know when it was really wet and rainy?"

DAD: "Yes."

AMELIE: "There were sheep on the hill."

DAD: "Right."

AMELIE: "They were so cute. They looked really happy there. They don't look happy in Australia. Because it's really hot."

DAD: "Hmm."

AMELIE: "Poor things."

*We had been on a family holiday to England, which included a particularly wind-swept adventure to Dover Castle.

How heaven works

AMELIE: "There's nothing after death."

DAD: "Right."

AMELIE: "Well there could be. You don't actually know."

DAD: "That's true."

AMELIE: "Because . . . I hope there is. Because I really want to live. That'd be really awesome to have a heaven."

DAD: "Do you think so?"

AMELIE: "Yeah, it'd be really cool. You could live again."

DAD: "You really want to live, don't you?"

AMELIE: "Yeah. Then in heaven you can, um . . . if you die again in heaven there's another heaven. And if you don't want to live again and you just want to die then, um, if you had a painful death you can have a really nice calm death."

DAD: "Hmm-hmm."

AMELIE: "Because you probably would like one."

DAD: "Hmm."

AMELIE: "And if you had a calm death you can choose if you want a painful death or a calm death."

DAD: "Hmm."

AMELIE: "And then you don't live again and if you want to live, (*suddenly becomes excited*) um, like, you have this special power in you and then you just go . . . you'll still be thinking but you'll be, like, asleep. But you won't ever wake up. You just keep sleeping."

DAD: "Oh."

AMELIE: "And then when you're thinking, 'I want to wake up, I want to wake up' then you can. Then you will. They will let you. The people who own heaven. That would be really cool."



It's all about how big the 'however' is

AMELIE, talking about how kids are marked on their assignments in her class: "No matter how badly someone goes in something they always get 'Great work!'. Always! No matter what they do. It can be the most hopeless thing ever and they still get 'Great work!'. The only way you know someone's done really badly is by how big the teacher's 'however' is. One girl, for one of her writing assignments, had this gigantic paragraph with no punctuation anywhere and capital letters all over the place. She got a massive 'however'. The teacher's eye went up and everything."

DAD: "Did it?"

AMELIE: "Yeah. She's doing really badly."

DAD: "Hmm. But what about the 'Great work!'? Wouldn't she have gone well in something?"

AMELIE: "No. No, Dad. Nothing. She went well in nothing. Remember? Big paragraphs, no punctuation, not even a full stop."

If you could be any animal what would it be?

DAD: "If you could be any animal in the entire world what would it be?"

AMELIE: "I don't know. I don't know, Dad."

DAD: "Okay."

AMELIE: "Oh! A human!"

DAD: "Yes. I was going to answer it that way as well."

AMELIE: "I'd be a human because you could, um . . . like, animals, we have control over them."

DAD: "Right."

AMELIE: "And they don't have control over us."

DAD: "No."

AMELIE: "It's really unfair. I think it is because, like, they don't do what they want to do. We get to do what we want to do but they don't. I just think it's really unfair for them."

I'm wishing I was you

DAD, at a park watching Amelie practise her running: "I wish I was you, Ams. Being able to run freely and agilely like you can. It's very frustrating being injured. I'd love to be able to run like you."

AMELIE: "Yeah but, Dad, I'm wishing I was you."

I'm either obviously good or obviously bad

AMELIE, describing to me how she thought she went in her audition for the part of Gretl in a school musical: "I don't know, Dad. I think I was the only one who sang in tune but I just don't know. When the two judges were watching me sing I could see them both writing stuff on a piece of paper but I just can't be sure. I could just make out one word that one judge said to the other judge. When I finished he said 'obviously'. So I don't know. I'm either obviously good or obviously bad. Who knows?"

I'm wishing I had a torn hamstring and was all injured so I didn't have to train for a silly cross country."

I saw it in Art

AMELIE: "Dad, did you see that really gross picture in the newspaper some years ago? It was, like, of this war and there was this boy and he chopped a guy's head off and he was holding it. I think there were some dead people already and he chopped the dead man's head off and he was holding it. And it was a picture of them. But their faces were all blurred out. Even the dead man's face and the little boy's face. I saw it in Art. Because we have newspapers. And I was, like, 'ew!' It was last year."

LAST WORD

Too real

AMELIE, at school looking at a favourite tree:

"Dad, this tree is so perfect. Look at it. See all the bark and the lines. It's so incredibly perfect-looking. It's so absolutely right like a tree is. It actually looks as though it's fake."

Bit off-topic

AMELIE, referring to a man in the distance: "Dad, what's he doing?"

DAD: "Um . . . riding some sort of bike by the look of things. It's hard to tell but it looks like he's almost falling off all the time."

AMELIE: "Oh. Dad, this is a bit off the topic. Actually . . . no. I don't think it is really. Actually, yes. It is off the topic. Yeah, definitely! Now that I come to think. Caitlin has this tooth and it's almost out. It's so close. I mean, it's actually hanging by a thread. One thread. And she can twirl it and roll it around in her fingers. It's really gross, Dad!"