

extra fingers

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Maybe they'll be too lazy

The sign atop the barricade of bags, pillows, cushions and towels Holly had erected between doorways to deter cockroaches from entering either her bedroom or her sisters'.

DO NOT REMOVE

For your information, this is a cockroach barrier. I am aware that they can climb but hopefully they're too lazy.

"DO NOT REMOVE

For your information, this is a cockroach barrier. I am aware that they can climb but hopefully they're too lazy."

How we see Africa?

ISABELLA: "Dad, you know African children who are starving all the time?"

DAD: "Well, not all African children are starving. Some are doing alright you know."

ISABELLA: "Yeah, but, not the ones we know about. I'm talking about them, Dad."

It's just like being born again

DAD, in the middle of a discussion with Amelie regarding how she felt about sleep: "Do you get scared, do you?"

AMELIE: "Hmm-hmm."

DAD: "What do you get scared of?"

AMELIE: "Nothing really. But, I just want somebody with me. I don't like darkness."

DAD: "I wonder why that is."

AMELIE: "I hate it when it comes to sleep."

DAD: "Do you really?"

AMELIE: "It's really annoying."

DAD: "Hmm. But then when you finally do drop off to sleep, you don't think of anything. Until morning."

AMELIE: "Yes. It's just like being born again. It's 'bing', and then morning. Straight away. It seems so quick."

They should be able to at least occasionally

ISABELLA: "Dad, where do moles live?"

DAD: "Underground."

ISABELLA: "No, I mean in which country?"

DAD: "Oh, they live in lots of countries."

ISABELLA: "Do they? But I didn't see one in London."

DAD: "Yeah, but—"

ISABELLA: "They pop their heads up a lot."

DAD: "No, I wasn't finished. In London there's a lot of concrete."

ISABELLA: "Yeah, but still. We went to lots of parks and there weren't any there."

DAD: "Well, they can't be expected to be somewhere where you want them to be simply because you want to see them."

ISABELLA: "Dad, in a park they should be able to stick their head up at least occasionally. We were at parks quite a bit remember!"

It must be good

I was watching Isabella climb a tall tree in our backyard.

DAD: "Gee, I wish I could be that nimble."

ISABELLA: "Don't know what that is, Dad. But it must be good. If you want to be it."

Making friends (the very hard way)

Isabella was watching me as I was filling out a form for Amelie's school photo and I needed to include my credit card number.

ISABELLA: "What would happen if you got that number wrong?"

DAD: “Well, they’d probably ring me up to tell me that they weren’t able to put my payment through because the number I gave them wasn’t correct.”

ISABELLA: “That’d be pretty cool.”

DAD: “Would it?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah. Because then you’d get a phone call.”

DAD: “Yeah, so?”

ISABELLA: “Well, if you haven’t got many friends then at least you’d be able to get phone calls that way.”

DAD: “Yeah but, Issy. I don’t think making heaps of mistakes on forms to get phone calls is the way to go. I don’t think lonely people should be making contact with people that way.”

ISABELLA: “Well, sad people probably don’t even fill out forms so it probably wouldn’t happen anyway. They’d be too sad to do it I reckon.”

On alcohol

AMELIE, as we were riding home from school past a hotel where a man was leaning over a wall making sounds as though he was a dog howling at the Moon: “Why was he making those sounds for, Dad? You know, the stupid dog sounds?”

DAD: “Well, there are three possibilities I would think. He’s either not all there mentally; he’s drunk; or he thought he was being funny.”

AMELIE: “It’s like a potion, alcohol. It’s like a potion that makes you go all crazy.”

Torture

AMELIE, trying to get her ice-cream out of a paper wrapper: “This is torture!”

ISABELLA: “Oh really. That’s nothing! You should have seen what it was like in the olden days. Everything was torture back then.”

They’re fine where they are

AMELIE, regarding all the leaves at her school that her school insists on blowing away with a leaf blower: “They’re fine where they are.”

It could really hurt their feelings

ISABELLA, as we were driving home from her musical theatre practice: “What’s all those drawings for?”

DAD: “Oh, that’s just a building site where all those drawings as you call them are simply an artist’s impression of what they think the apartments being built on the site will eventually look like.”

ISABELLA: “Well, they’re pretty good drawings. I mean, I know I wouldn’t be able to draw like that. How do they know what the building’s going to look like? And look, Dad. They’ve even put in all the people as well. They’re such good drawings. Can you do a drawing that’s really wrong?”

DAD: “What do you mean?”

ISABELLA: “Well, can you end up drawing something that’s nothing like what the building finally looks like and it would still be okay?”

DAD: “Well, not really. It should look almost identical to how the building eventually turns out once it’s built.”

ISABELLA: “What about if you did a drawing that was really wrong? I mean, so, so, so, so wrong. It didn’t end up looking anything like how it should. Would you get in big trouble?”

DAD: “Well, I think you would. I mean, people would have paid big amounts of money to a developer based on their drawings being very close to how the building should look at the end.”

ISABELLA: “That could be really sad for the drawer.”

What about pinching yourself?

DAD, trying to help Isabella with an English assignment that involved analysing poetry: “Well, Rene Descartes once said—”

ISABELLA, rolling her eyes: “Oh god!

DAD: “He thought that the only way you could know for sure you existed was through the fact that you thought.”

ISABELLA: “Oh god, Dad! That’s so stupid. What about pinching yourself? That’s a lot quicker than thinking about whether you think or not. Just go and pinch yourself. If it hurts, you exist. If it doesn’t, well . . . you’re dead. Next question.”

DAD: “What do you mean? It’s their fault.”

ISABELLA: “Yeah . . . I know. But it could really hurt their feelings. They might have tried really hard but in the end it just ended up looking all stupid for some reason. Like lots of drawings end up doing.”

Do you have a mum?

Karin’s hardly ever at the girls’ school. Just like I’m hardly ever making school lunches or toast for their breakfast. We do different things. And only ever rarely do we swap. It’s slowly evolved over time though with unintended consequences. Speculation is rife, it would seem, as to whether Isabella actually has a mother.

As told by Isabella:

A classmate of Isabella’s to Isabella, as I was apparently walking past Isabella’s classroom and just after one of her teachers had waved to me: “(Leaning over and in a quiet voice but unwittingly elevating her question’s seriousness) Um . . . no offence, Issy. But do you actually have a mum? I mean, I know this is a really tough subject and everything, but do you still have a mother? Because she’s never at parent-teacher interviews or up at

the school. For anything. She’s never around. It’s only ever always your dad on his bike.”

A few days earlier . . .

ISABELLA, talking about one of her teachers: “This is what she said, Mum. I mean it! She said, ‘Now, Isabella. Is it just Dad that’s at home? Because it’s only your dad I see.’ Honestly, Mum. You have to go up sometimes!”

Being succinct

DAD, in the midst of trying to help Isabella with some of her homework: “Alright, looking at the rest of your assignment. The ‘double coincidence of wants’. Do you know what that is?”

ISABELLA: “When . . . I know it, just let me think about it . . . When the two people entering a trade want what the other person has to give.”

DAD: “Each want what the other has to trade.”

ISABELLA: “What was wrong with my answer?”

DAD: “Well I’m not saying there’s anything

wrong with it. It's just quicker and more succinct the way I've put it. Do you know what 'succinct' means?"

ISABELLA: "Um, quick."

DAD: "Yeah, brief."

ISABELLA: "Because if you synch an iPod . . ."

DAD: "It's got nothing to do with synching an iPod. What were you going to say?"

ISABELLA: "Well, it's kind of quick because it's [the iPod's] quick at loading things."

DAD: "Issy. Are you serious?"

ISABELLA: "No, no. That's how I actually worked it out. I'm not kidding. That's what it reminds me of. I just remember this big bar going across as I'm synching an iPod. It's really quick. I'm not kidding. I'm not! That's how I worked it out. I didn't even know what that word meant."

Speculating about heaven and an afterlife (but not for that long)

ISABELLA: "You know what, Dad? Everyone dies eventually. You can't live on forever otherwise you'll get really bored of life."

DAD: "You think so?"

ISABELLA: "Ye-ah . . . god!"

DAD: "Well, what about if you were to go to an afterlife for eternity? Let's say there is an afterlife and you went there for eternity. How boring would that be? Because, remember, you can never get out of there."

ISABELLA: "No but, Dad. That probably won't happen."

DAD: "Won't it? Why?"

ISABELLA: "It doesn't really seem possible in this world. That there's a heaven up in the sky when we've already looked through the sky and all the space."

DAD: "Hmm."

ISABELLA: "So, it doesn't really seem like there is a heaven. I don't want to be offensive or anything, but it just doesn't seem like that's the case because we've already looked through the sky and there is no heaven that we can see. Unless it's throughout space or something. Or in space or something. I don't know where it is. Um . . . yep. So let's just cut out the heaven bit (whispering) for now. Okay?"

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: "Whooh! 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: "Whooah! 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."



THE LAST WORD

Does the Queen have to sign something?

ISABELLA: "Mum. How does someone get to be King? Does the Queen have to sign something?"