

# extra fingers

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## Can't do this, can't do that!

**The nanny state, as it is so oft referred, has managed to almost outlaw much of what we, as adults, enjoyed as kids, even if it meant skinned knees and the odd broken bone. Welcome to the not-allowed-to-do-that world of Issy and Amie.**

I was waiting just outside the school grounds with Isabella and Amelie for Holly's violin practice to finish and was reminiscing about my time as a boy.

**DAD:** "When I was a boy you could do anything you wanted. You could go anywhere you wanted to. I could go all over my suburb, Stockton. On my bike. I could go to cricket, um, I could 'double' someone on my bike, with no helmets. I used to take a cricket bat and pads with me on my bike. And gloves. And we used to go skateboarding in our school. When no one was there we'd actually put garbage bins on top of our skateboards and then stand on top of them and go down hills. There were no adults around. No helmets, no knee pads, we'd skin our knees and we'd do that all the time."

**ISABELLA:** "There are so many pads now. There's pads for everything! (*Lugubriously*) Even in hockey."

**DAD:** "Yeah."

Isabella: "I got hit but I didn't really care. We always have to wear shin pads. They're so hard to run with."

**DAD:** "Yeah."

Isabella to Amelie, who had decided to try and play on some play equipment at her school: "Amie, you're not allowed on that."

**DAD:** "You're not allowed on anything, are you? Here we are, we're at your school

outside school hours, I'm a parent, and I could easily supervise you but you're not allowed to play on any of this equipment. All you can do is sit here on the grass in the school grounds."

**ISABELLA** again to Amelie: "Amie, you know you're not actually allowed to do that. If Mrs Jensen saw you she'd come out and tell you off."

**AMELIE:** "I wish I could never go to school."

**DAD:** "Why?"

**AMELIE:** "I don't like school."

**DAD:** "Why don't you like school?"

**AMELIE:** "It's not fun. Sometimes I love school, sometimes I don't."

**DAD:** "Okay, well do you want to only go on the days when it's fun?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**ISABELLA**, in a rare display of despondency concerning school: "Which day is that?"

## Hard work

**ISABELLA**, on being a police officer: "The best thing is they get to know about stuff."

**DAD:** "What do you mean?"

**ISABELLA:** "Like, they get to know deep

inside things. You know how you get eager to know something about someone?”

**DAD:** “Yeah.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, they get to know first.”

**DAD:** “Yeah, but there’s more to it than that.”

**ISABELLA:** “It’s pretty hard, actually.”

**DAD:** “You think so?”

**ISABELLA:** “You have to deal with people who would be really scary.”

**DAD:** “Like who do you think?”

**ISABELLA:** “They might have guns and stuff. Which would be really freaky. And you can get killed.”

**DAD:** “Yeah. But they do other things, don’t they? They don’t just have to deal with people who are going to kill them. What would be harder than being a police officer?”

**ISABELLA:** “Probably a person that works in a plane.”

**DAD:** “Why would theirs be harder?”

**ISABELLA:** “No, it wouldn’t be harder. It’d just be one of those hard jobs.”

**DAD:** “Yeah. Because what do they have to do?”

**ISABELLA:** “They have to deal with people who think you might kick them off the plane. I’ve heard that before. One man said, ‘Don’t kick me off the plane!’ And they’re like, ‘No, we’re not going to kick you off the plane.’ And they have to give food, and they have to satisfy people . . .”

**DAD:** “You’re talking about the flight attendants. What about the people who fly the planes? The pilots?”

**ISABELLA:** “Oh no, that’s not too . . . oh, I guess it is quite hard because if you crash, a lot of people are going to say, ‘You were the one that crashed the plane! Get off me!’”

**DAD:** “Would they say that? Would they be alive? Or—”

**ISABELLA:** “Oh yeah. They could die! But flight attendants would die too.”

Get off me? It left me wondering if Issy thought a plane crash was little more than a kids’ rumble, as if a plane crash was a matter of telling the owners of all the flailed bodies on top of her, especially the captain’s, to stop crushing her.