

extra fingers

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the photograph



the painting

You should have painted the London Bridge

I'd been painting the view from the door in our backyard art studio and felt satisfied with the results and so decided to leave it for fresh eyes the next day. Come the morning, it was time to add a leafy vine. That was my big mistake: bricks and doors I can do, vines and leaves are not my forté. As Amelie rather nonchalantly pointed out.

AMELIE: "Well at least someone hates it, Dad. I hate it."

DAD, without looking up from the painting: "Do you?"

AMELIE: "Yeah . . . you should have done the London Bridge."

DAD: "You think so?"

AMELIE: "Yeah. Everyone knows the London Bridge. At least then you would be doing something that everyone knows."

DAD: "That's true."

AMELIE: "No one would even know where your door is from."

DAD, forlornly: "That's probably right."

AMELIE: "What are all those blotchy bits?"

DAD: "They're leaves you can see through the glass door."

AMELIE: "But leaves don't look like that."

DAD: "I know. The sun is glistening off them, isn't it?"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "Well, I can't do 'glistening'. It's too hard."

AMELIE: "It's only yellow."

DAD: "For you it might be, but for me it's very difficult."

AMELIE: "Then do the London Bridge."

The nightmare of being read to

HOLLY to Amelie at around six o'clock one morning, after Amelie had suddenly screamed out in a loud voice: "What is it? What's wrong?"

AMELIE, now half-awake: "What?"

HOLLY: "You were screaming out just then and saying all kinds of nutty things. You must have been having a nightmare."

AMELIE: "Oh yeah. That's right. I was."

HOLLY: "What was it about?"

AMELIE: "I thought somebody was trying to read to me."

You never know

Isabella, in Perth's Hay Street Mall whilst Holly and Amelie were busking, immediately after a young couple had offered Holly a chance to play at their wedding: "But Dad. What if there's a big chopper there?"

DAD: "A what?"

ISABELLA: "A big chopper. You know. (*Uses hand to imitate chopping off a head*) You don't even know them."

DAD: "Well, I will be going with her you know."

ISABELLA: "Oh. Will you?"

DAD: "Yeah."

ISABELLA: "Oh. So if there is, will you be going straight home?"

DAD: "You mean, if there's someone going around with an axe in their hand trying to kill people?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah. Or a knife."

DAD: "Yes. We'll be turning right around and going straight home."

ISABELLA: "Good. Because you never know."

Anyone seen the calculator?

DAD: "Has anyone seen the calculator?"

HOLLY: "Nope."

ISABELLA: "Not me."

DAD: "Amelie?"

AMELIE: "No. Not me either. But if you look everywhere you'll find it, Dad."

DAD: "Yes. Thanks for that, Ams."

HOLLY: “Why don’t you just use the one on the computer, Dad.”

DAD: “No, I don’t like that one. I want to use my fingers rather than clicking all the time.”

After ten minutes during which I tried in vain to follow Amelie’s advice by looking everywhere I could imagine a calculator to be hiding . . .

DAD: “Are you sure, Issy?”

ISABELLA: “What?”

DAD: “Are you sure you don’t know where the calculator is?”

ISABELLA: “Yep. Oh, hang on. I do know where a calculator is.”

DAD: “Well why didn’t you say? I’ve been going around the house looking for it for the last half hour. Haven’t you seen me?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah, sort of. But you said you wanted the calculator.”

DAD, flabbergasted: “Yes, that’s right!”

ISABELLA: “And not the one I had in my drawer which is just any old calculator.”

Nits again!

DAD, in frustration due to Isabella and Amelie both having nits yet again: “Why can’t you keep yourself away from nit-carrying people?”

ISABELLA: “Well, I don’t know where they are because they don’t itch in my face.”

DAD: “Who?”

ISABELLA: “My friends.”

DAD: “They don’t itch in your face?”

ISABELLA: “No. They go into the bathroom [at her school] and itch. Because everyone does that. I go into the bathroom and I see nit-scratchers in there.”

DAD: “Why are they doing it in there for?”

ISABELLA: “So no one sees them and therefore everyone will keep thinking they don’t have nits and will want to keep playing with them.”

DAD, sarcastically: “Oh, brilliant!”

ISABELLA: “I saw my whole ‘friend group’ in the toilet doing this. (*Demonstrates vigorous head-scratching*) Except for Caitlin and Hannah. And all the other ‘friend groups’ were doing it as well. They say, ‘Oh, I’ve just got to go to the toilet.’”

DAD: “And they’re just scratching their heads? They go into the toilet together and scratch away?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah. They scratch away so the teachers won’t see them. And then they go and lock themselves in the toilet and do some more scratching.”

DAD: “I can’t believe this!”

ISABELLA: “I’ve only seen a few people scratch. I was singing in choir once – and we can’t move – and I had someone next to me doing this as they were talking to me. (*Demonstrates more vigorous head-scratching*) And I’m just like, ‘Na-ah. Get away!’ I was. And then she kept on hugging me and hugging me and I can’t move. I’m not allowed to because the teacher won’t let us. I say, ‘I think it’s a bit squishy here’, and she goes, ‘No, no. You stay there.’ And so I can’t move. I have to be next to a nit-scratcher. No one plays with you if they know you have nits.”

HOLLY: “Well, I announced it to the class in Year Two and everyone didn’t play with me. Except for Amy because she had the nits too. So we just had like a nit club.”

DAD: “Oh, for goodness sake! So, you can’t tell kids to keep away from you? You can’t say, ‘Let’s not do any hugs?’ You can’t do that?”

ISABELLA: "Daddy! They're my friends! I have to hug them."

DAD, defiantly: "No! Not if they're scratching."

ISABELLA: "I don't see them scratching because they go in the toilets and do it."

DAD: "But you know they are though! You said your whole 'friend group' was in there scratching away."

ISABELLA: "Not all of them."

DAD: "Oh! Poor Mum! It drives her to her wits end – her nits end."

ISABELLA: "I know. So she can go and blame my 'friend group' for itching in the toilet so I can't see them."

What? Just for waving?

ISABELLA, talking about her school principal: "Would she get paid?"

DAD: "It's not a voluntary role, Issy. Of course she'd get paid."

ISABELLA: "What? Just for waving?"

DAD: "She does more than just wave to you, Is."

ISABELLA: "Oh yeah. She sends apologies for not being able to be at Assembly too."

LAST WORD

Romantic

HOLLY, during tea, as Karin was putting some of her food she couldn't eat onto my plate: "Is that something romantic that you two do?"