

extra fingers

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Another sign of our times

ISABELLA, eyes rolling as she referred to a sign on Cottesloe Beach that had a graphic of a man falling backwards into a squiggly line to warn people they'd encounter water: **"Oh, who would not know?"**

Makes me feel so good

ISABELLA: “I think some people can be very clever with their words, Dad. Like, in Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling said, ‘The light spilled through the door.’ Like, as it opened it . . . She said something like that and I love—”

DAD: “It’s lovely, isn’t it?”

ISABELLA: “Her expressions. There’s something about them that makes me feel really good. And the way she explains everything in such detail it’s just . . . I really admire it actually.”

Be careful

ISABELLA: “You’re going to have to be careful when Holly’s driving, Dad. I’m not going to be in the car with you and Holly when Holly starts to learn.”

DAD: “What?”

ISABELLA: “Because if you get mad with her for any reason she can kill you. And me. She can just suddenly be a really bad driver and crash into something. So you’d better watch it, Dad. Don’t go saying anything about her music practice and how she hasn’t done any before you go in the car with her.”

I hate that question

Holly’s friend, **AMY**, to **AMELIE:** “How are you?”

AMELIE, exasperated: “Oh, I hate that question. Why do you always have to say, ‘how are you?’ I really hate it!”

AMY: “What do you mean?”

AMELIE: “Well, it’s rude kind. It’s rude because I don’t like it and—”

AMY: “Yeah.”

AMELIE: “It’s kind because I know you’re being kind. Therefore it’s rude kind.”

ISABELLA, interrupting: “And don’t bother asking Dad, Amy.”

AMY: “What’s that?”

ISABELLA: “Don’t bother saying to Dad, ‘how are you?’”

AMY: “Oh. Alright.”

ISABELLA: “Because he’s just going to always say ‘good’. He always says ‘good’. When it comes to that question it’s the only word he knows. Even if he was vomiting he’d still say he was good.”

Sleepover etiquette

ISABELLA, in the middle of talking about two parties she’d recently gone to: “Well, at each party there were kids who’d been invited to stay on for a sleepover. At the second party I was invited to do that but at the other one, I wasn’t. At the first party, I wasn’t invited to sleep over and so the girl whose party it was was trying to hide a whole mountain of pillows. I was thinking, ‘Come on! I know the pillows are there.’ And every time they’d [the girls who’d been invited] would go in the party girl’s room they were always whispering. But then, at the other party — the one I had been invited to sleep over at — by the end of the party everyone except two people had changed into their comfortable clothes while the other two girls were still in their nice clothes just awkwardly standing around and staring at some muffins.”

It’s all so boring

DAD to **AMELIE**, waiting for the *Dream to Fly* documentary to start in the Planetarium at Perth’s Scitech: “It’s about flight. The history of flight.”

AMELIE: “Have you seen this [movie] before?”

DAD: “Once. Issy, have you seen The Planetarium with its new screen?”

ISABELLA: “No. Doesn’t look that special.”

DAD: “‘Doesn’t look that special’? They spent over a million dollars on this.”

ISABELLA: “Well that’s really silly.”

Some jelly to lie down in now, please

AMELIE, after having loads of fun on all the rides and attractions at the Perth foreshore as part of Perth's Australia Day celebrations: "They should make it so that you can watch all the fireworks in jelly and you never get sticky."

DAD: "That would cap off a really good day, would it?"

AMELIE: "Yeah. That's what they should do, Dad."

DAD: "Really silly?"

ISABELLA: "They should have gotten a better exhibition. That exhibition, the Ingenious one, is so silly."

DAD: "Why?"

ISABELLA: "Tell them I don't like it all. They should have a whale one. They should have an under-the-sea one where there's, like, sharks and shark music. I hate this one. I don't want to build a paper aeroplane and then shoot it through hoops. You can do that at home."

A little while later . . .

ISABELLA, talking about The Planetarium, "I hate the stars."

DAD: "You hate stars? But stars are great!"

AMELIE: "They're so annoying!"

ISABELLA: "And it's, like, here's the constellations. I don't want to know that. And they say, 'Why don't you look outside?' I'm never going to do that."

DAD: "Well why? Why don't you want to do that?"

AMELIE: "It's so boring!"

ISABELLA: "Because it's so annoying. I never see a star. I only see one little planet."

AMELIE: "I can never see a planet, Dad. I can never see anything!"

DAD: "Venus is up there all the time."

AMELIE: "Dad, it's so boring just looking at the stars."

DAD: "No it's not! Stars are great."

AMELIE: "No they're not. They're just boring. They're so tiny and they don't even move."

How tall is it from the ground to the sky?

ISABELLA: "How tall is it from the ground to the sky?"

DAD: "Well there is no starting point for the sky."

ISABELLA, not listening: "From the ground to when it starts? To the first cloud."

Do all the traffic lights go from red to green?

ISABELLA, on the way to the airport: "Do all the traffic lights go from red to green?"

DAD: "Yeah. Of course they do."

ISABELLA, disappointed: "Oh!"

AMELIE: "They should go, 'Ready . . . Set . . . Go!'"

If you want I'll keep talking to you

DAD, talking on the phone to Amelie after having rung home from my work to speak to Karin: "So, what do you think you'll do now?"

AMELIE, after taking a very deep breath: "Well, I'm going to take another big breath and then, if you want, I'll keep talking to you."

Would I be up to the Sun by now?

ISABELLA: “Dad, if every crumb of food you ever ate, every smidgeon of food you ever ate you grew a metre, would you be in outer space by now?”

I’d been concentrating on something at the time and this had been about the fifth such question from Isabella that evening.

DAD, half looking up and a bit frustrated: “What? What was that? Oh, I don’t know, Issy. Um . . . yeah. Maybe. Why not? (*Looking back down again at what I was doing*) Actually, I don’t really know, Issy.”

ISABELLA: “Dad, just calm down and tell me the truth. Just calm right down for a second and think. You can go back to what you were doing in a second. Would I be up to the Sun by now, or not?”

DAD: “Oh . . . um!”

ISABELLA, very sternly: “Da-ad! What did I just say?”

Nobody loves us

HOLLY: “Dad? Do you know when the post comes?”

DAD: “On a Monday it can be quite late. As late as three o’clock in the afternoon.”

HOLLY: “And, on another day?”

DAD: “Oh, sometimes by one o’clock.”

THE LAST WORD

Just checking

AMELIE, very earnestly to **ISABELLA:** “Is the [‘Creature from the] Black Lagoon’ only in lakes? Or can he be in bedrooms?”

HOLLY: “No, no, no. But what days does it come?”

DAD: “Well what are you talking about, Hols? What do you mean? It comes five—”

HOLLY: “What days does it come? Only one?”

DAD, taken aback: “The post?”

HOLLY: “Yeah.”

DAD: “No, Monday to Fridays.”

HOLLY: “Oh.”

DAD: “Inclusive.”

ISABELLA: “But we don’t get that many letters because nobody loves us. We get a few from these weird companies.”

AMELIE: “I never get letters except for the one from Hannah K about ‘Have a good Christmas; I’m in Thailand’. Stuff like that.”

ISABELLA: “We get millions of emails but no letters. It’s really sad actually.”

DAD: “Well emails are replacing letters.”

ISABELLA: “In those movies I love it when they go to the post box every day and they say, ‘Check the post box!’ and they get massive amounts of letters.”

AMELIE: “Like parcels.”

ISABELLA: “I just really want that. I always go to the post box and it’s rusty and there’s nothing in it. It’s really sad.”