

extra fingers

Newsletter number 27 • May 27, 2013

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Hoot, me? There'll be owls

DAD: "Issy, can I use the computer for a second please? I have to select our seats for tomorrow's flight back home."

ISABELLA: "Oh good! Can you make sure you get window seats this time? I want to be able to look out of a window."

DAD: "It won't matter."

ISABELLA: "What?"

DAD: "It won't matter. Because we're going to be flying at night."

ISABELLA: "Yeah, so?"

DAD: "Well, think about it. We won't be able to see anything. It'll be all black outside."

ISABELLA, her eyes beginning their familiar roll: "There'll be owls outside. I'll see lots of owls."

That's so unfair

ISABELLA: "Dad, in jail, does even a murderer get to watch TV?"

DAD: "Hmm-hmm."

ISABELLA: "But why? That's so unfair! They've murdered someone. I've never done that and I never get to watch TV!"

We got rid of our television about four years ago.

A few minutes later . . .

It could solve a lot of their problems

ISABELLA: "Could a homeless person get to tour a jail if they wanted to see if they liked it? Because if they could it might solve a lot of their problems."

Apollo 13: just wanted to know about the ring

The whole family had watched the movie *Apollo 13* the night before.

DAD: "So, who liked *Apollo 13*?"

ISABELLA: "I thought it was sort of sad."

DAD: "Did you?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah. Because they all nearly died. And you also never found out what happened to the wife's ring."

DAD: "The what?"

ISABELLA: "The wife's ring. It went down the sink."

DAD: "Oh, Issy. That was such a minor part of the movie, darl."

ISABELLA: "I really wanted to know because what if someone thought she wasn't married? And she actually was."

DAD, appealing to Karin and Holly: "I can't believe it. That was the most minor part of that movie, wasn't it? The ring going down

the sink. Don't tell me that was all you cared about, Issy. The ring going down the plug hole."

ISABELLA: "It's what happened."

DAD: "Yes, but, what about—"

ISABELLA: "It was her wedding ring."

DAD: "Yeah, but, there were men trapped in space."

ISABELLA: "I know. But you find out what happened to them. You never find out what happened to the wife's ring."

DAD: "Well, don't worry about the ring. It's gone!"

ISABELLA: "It was her wedding ring! And it must have been so special. I was hoping the next day, when the launch was about to happen, that someone would have asked where her ring was."

DAD: "That's what you were looking for, wasn't it? It's always about marriages with you, isn't it, Is? Or weddings."

ISABELLA: "I just wanted to know, Dad."

We're going to be needing a lot of new words

DAD to **ISABELLA**, after she'd said she wanted the word 'complaintative' to become a new word: "Well, all you have to do is get enough people to say it often enough and it soon will be. Because that's how it works. If you can get enough people using the word you want included in the English language then it will become a word. Simple as that. There are new words being created all the time and the meaning of an old word is sometimes being updated too. That's what happened with the word 'misogynist'. According to a representative from the *Macquarie Dictionary*, Julia Gillard's recent use of that word in parliament to criticise Tony Abbott has made them alter their definition of it because, in their opinion, people are mostly using it to mean an entrenched prejudice against women rather than hatred of them. Has anyone at your school been talking about Julia Gillard's recent speech in parliament? It's been getting a lot of airplay on the radio and it's been on the internet a lot."

ISABELLA: "No. No one's said anything about it. I didn't even know she made a speech. Everyone's just been talking about that man who fell to earth. That Austrian dude."

DAD: "Oh, you mean Felix Baumgartner? The bloke who became the first person to break the sound barrier by jumping from the edge of space?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah, him."

DAD: "Oh. But what do you think of the dictionary changing its meaning of the word 'misogyny'? Do you think it should have?"

ISABELLA: "I don't know. What does that word mean again?"

DAD: "Well, up until recently it's always referred to a man who's hated women."

ISABELLA: "Oh. So, what if there's a man who only hates one woman? What about him?"

What if he's going, 'Oh, she's so annoying and makes really weird sounds with her mouth'? Would he be a misogynist for saying that?"

DAD: "No, that'd be okay. He wouldn't be a misogynist."

ISABELLA: "It's not okay. You shouldn't hate. And what about if a woman hated every other woman in the world? What would she be called?"

DAD: "I don't know."

ISABELLA: "Well, we're going to be needing a lot of new words, aren't we?"

Everyone thinks you're really mean

ISABELLA, during a discussion about what kids do in their lunch breaks: "We usually just sit around in groups. You know, in circles. That's what our group does. Like, the other day, we were talking about what mum we'd like to have out of all the mums and everyone picked Mum."

DAD: "Oh, that's nice. What about dads? Do you ever talk about what dad you'd like to have? I bet I get chosen all the time."

ISABELLA: "Oh, Dad! No way! Everyone thinks you're really mean because you make me do music practice, eat good food all the time and ride a bike to school. You never get picked!"

Could be real, could be not

DAD: "Issy, would you like to fly in the sky like a bird?"

ISABELLA: "Hmm."

DAD: "You would?"

ISABELLA: "That'd be fun."

DAD: "Would it?"

ISABELLA: "Yep."

Dad: "Why?"

ISABELLA: "Because it's fun. And I'd like to do it. There!"

DAD: "Well, what would be the most fun? To fly in the sky like a bird, or go zipping along and through the waves like a dolphin?"

ISABELLA: "I don't know. Probably flying."

DAD: "Would you like to be a seagull?"

ISABELLA: "Well, not really. Because . . . well, I don't know. For a day, yeah."

DAD: "What do you reckon you'd do?"

ISABELLA: "Um, I don't know. Peck at my enemies."

DAD: "Really?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah."

DAD: "You'd go and do that?"

ISABELLA: "Well, for some of the day."

DAD: "Yeah."

ISABELLA: "And for the rest of it I'd just fly."

DAD: "Yeah. And then you'd spend the other time pecking at your enemies?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah."

DAD: "Who would your enemies be?"

ISABELLA: "I don't know. Whoever they were when that happened [when she became a seagull]."

About a minute later, still discussing seagulls.

DAD, talking about a seagull's priorities: "If I

was where the space rockets blasted off from to go into space, right?"

ISABELLA: "NASA."

Dad: "NASA. If I was there and some seagulls were as well, right? And I was eating a packet of chips. I don't think the seagulls would care less about a space rocket blasting off. They wouldn't care one bit! Even if NASA was in the middle of its countdown. Ten, nine, eight."

ISABELLA: "Well, if—"

DAD: "The seagulls would be looking at me, a whole pack of them — there would be fifty of them easily — they'd be looking at me eating the chips and just hoping they'd get one. That's what I reckon."

ISABELLA: "Well, if the dude in the rocket had chips then they would be quite interested."

DAD: "They'd be quite interested in what?"

ISABELLA: "The dude. If the dude in the rocket had a packet of chips."

DAD: "Yeah, but they wouldn't be interested in the dude in the rocket ship going into outer space; they'd be just interested in the dude having the packet of chips. That's all."

ISABELLA: "I don't know. Probably."

DAD: "Not probably, darl. Definitely."

ISABELLA: "Well, some seagulls might have feelings towards space. They might think that space is really cool and they might want to go there one day."

DAD: "Yeah, but I don't think they do though. What makes you think—"

ISABELLA: "That's what you think, Dad."

DAD: "Yeah, but why do you think the way you do?"

ISABELLA: “Well, in those movies they always have, like, the ants and the flies having feelings.”

DAD: “Yeah, I know. But they’re movies. They’re cartoons.”

ISABELLA: “I know. But they just seem real to me. They’re, like, real. They seem much more real than what you say.”

DAD: “Hmm.”

ISABELLA: “And one more question.”

DAD: “Hmm.”

ISABELLA: “Um, if you got your skin after you died and, say you had your skin – you’d just taken out all the bones; like you’d emptied all the bones out—”

DAD: “Hmm.”

ISABELLA: “Um, and you just had the skin. Could you blow yourself up? Like, go (*pretends to blow up her skin*) and then blow yourself up so you’re really big and so, like, you’re floating? Like, you know how with a balloon you go (*makes the sound of someone blowing up a balloon*), or you put helium in it, could you get your skin and do that?”

DAD, trying hard not to disparage her idea outright: “What happened to the bones again?”

ISABELLA: “Well, you emptied the bones out so you just had your skin.”

DAD: “So you have no bones in your whole body?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah, you just have your skin.”

DAD: “But how would you get the air into yourself?”

ISABELLA: “You’d blow it in. Or, get helium.”

DAD: “Where would you be blowing it into?”

ISABELLA: “Your neck. And then into your body.”

DAD: “Well, you can’t blow into your neck. You’d have to have some other special thing blowing into your neck, wouldn’t you?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah. Like a person going (*makes the sound again of someone blowing up skin*).”

DAD: “Yeah now the problem with this is you’d be dead. Because after getting the bones out you’d be this blob on the floor, right?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah, well—”

DAD: “And your organs would have to come out as well. There’s blood and all kinds of stuff inside you.”

ISABELLA: “You just empty it out.”

DAD: “I know. But then you’re dead.”

ISABELLA: “Yeah.”

DAD: “And so now what you’re asking me is whether the skin could be like a balloon?”

ISABELLA: “Yeah, like you could blow it up.”

DAD: “For the whole body?”

ISABELLA: “Yep.”

DAD: “Um.”

ISABELLA: “Well, just to your neck.”

DAD: “Actually, you know what. I don’t think it would work.”

ISABELLA: “Think?”

DAD: “No, I’m really sure it wouldn’t work, darl.”

ISABELLA: “Well, they haven’t tried it, so, who knows? Could be real, could be not.”

Trading fun for safety

ISABELLA, on the way to school: “Dad, did you have traffic lights when you were little?”

DAD: “Yes.”

ISABELLA: “Like ours?”

DAD: “Hmm-hmm. Except our traffic lights didn’t have the beep sound on the poles because, when I was little, people didn’t think very much about blind people.”

AMELIE: “I can’t believe you never used to wear seatbelts. You just slid around. But that sounds so cool – not if you didn’t want a cracked head. Remember how you got a cracked head when you were little, Dad, because you fell out of a car as it was going?”

DAD: “How could I forget?”

AMELIE: “Yeah. No seatbelts are good if you want to slide, but they’re not good for stopping heads from cracking open.”

DAD: “Hmm. So should we wear seat belts then?”

AMELIE: “HmMMM. That’s hard for me to decide. Probably.”

Some consolation

I’d stubbed my little toe on a stool in our kitchen and Isabella had her arm around me consoling me.

ISABELLA: “Oh, Daddy! Are you alright?”

DAD, grimacing: “Well, it still hurts, but I think the pain is starting to ease off a bit now. Thanks for your concern, Is.”

ISABELLA: “Poor Daddy! Would you like me to stand on it for you?”

DAD: “Obviously not.”

ISABELLA: “But why? It would make it go numb and then you wouldn’t be able to feel anything.”

DAD: “No, I’ll be alright, thanks.”

ISABELLA, disappointed: “Oh!”

I just want to stay home

DAD: “Would you like to be the prime minister one day, Ams?”

AMELIE: “What are you talking about?”

DAD: “When you’re older?”

AMELIE: “No.”

DAD: “Why not?”

AMELIE: “I just don’t want to. I just want to not have to go to places every day. I just want to stay home.”

LAST WORD

Wisdom of the young

AMELIE: “Why don’t we have funerals for people now because then it won’t be so sad when they die?”