

# extra fingers

Newsletter number 3 • April 16, 2011

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## Pirates and footballers and murderers

**HOLLY**, referring to a newspaper headline concerning an Australian warship that had attacked a pirate ship: "Pirates? There are still pirates around today?"

**DAD**, trying to explain: "Well, they're not exactly the same sort of pirates that were around in—"

**HOLLY**, not listening: "That's so stupid! Why would they bother? I mean, it'd be so hard versing all the big gun ships that we have around these days. Gee. All pirates ever seem to want to do is have all these really long sword fights with a parrot as people swing by them on ropes."

**DAD**: "With a parrot? What are you talking about? They don't want to fight parrots!"

**HOLLY**: "No, I mean they want to go and have all these long swords fights while parrots are sitting on them. It's really stupid, Dad. (*Imitates a pirate fighting*) They're always going clang clang clang with their swords as a parrot is trying to sit very stilly (sic) on their shoulder somehow. Anyway, pirates love doing that for some reason and then they go and try and steal a ship off someone. What a life! That's very important to them, the taking over of other people's ships. Oh, and they love keeping out of the way of storms. They don't like storms. Nobody in the olden days liked storms but pirates hated them the most. Not that that stopped them from getting in them. They still got in them heaps of times. And pirates also liked to think a lot about ways of getting treasure . . . They

absolutely went crazy over treasure. They'd even chop off your leg to get it. Their whole life was filled up with treasure maps and fighting. They're like footballers in that way."

**DAD**, quizzically: "What! Are they? How?"

**HOLLY**: "Well, footballers are mad about a ball in the same way pirates are mad about treasure. They go crazy over their little funny-shaped ball in the exact same way a pirate goes crazy over a big treasure chest if they see sparkly diamonds and stuff in it. It's quite unbelievable, Dad! I mean, it's just a ball. But a footballer doesn't see it that way. They don't care much about the fact that it's just a ball. They run after it like it's gold or something. Then, if they do end up happening to get it, guess what they do?"

**DAD**: "What?"

**HOLLY**: "They go and bounce it on the ground for a bit because that, to them, is fun apparently and worth almost killing someone to get it. That's so crazy! Or, if someone else is trying to kill them to get it – and there's always someone trying to kill someone to get the ball in football games – they go and tap it along the ground if they can't pick it up. Footballers want the ball so much, Dad. And if one footballer gets the ball and starts running away with it, watch out! They get attacked. You know, like the way a big ant might try and make off with a fly's wing or head. It usually doesn't work because there's mostly all these little ants stopping him. Anyway, if a player gets the ball and can run

really fast they usually get to keep it and try and kick a goal if they can stop the fastest and meanest person from the other team from getting it off them. That's the last battle. And, after all that running and chasing and trying to get it between those sticks, if it doesn't go in the goals, footballers act as if they're going to die or something. They'd probably die for a ball. And it's got to keep rolling for some reason. They like the ball rolling along all the time."

**DAD:** "And you think their obsession with a football is just like a pirate's obsession with getting treasure?"

**HOLLY:** "Hmm. They'd probably murder you if they had to to keep their silly football. There are heaps of murderers around today."

**DAD:** "Are there?"

**HOLLY:** "Hmm. They're everywhere. And they don't even lock a lot of them up anymore. Some are in Iraq, some are in . . . oh, what's that country? You know that place. It starts with 'A'."

**DAD:** "Afghanistan?"

**HOLLY:** "Hmm. That's it. Afghanistan. And there are heaps in that Libya place too. I think we should get all our murderers out of jail and let them go over to those countries and have some fun. They could shoot and do anything they want in those countries. I'd hate it. So would you, Dad. And all my friends. But they'd probably really love it. Actually, there should be just one big spot on the world; it'd have to be a fairly large spot — a deserty sort of place — where all the murderers could murder all day if they wanted to. Yeah. That's what should happen. Everyone who wanted to murder someone could do it in one spot and that would leave the rest of us, who didn't want to murder someone, to do all the things we like doing."

**DAD:** "Which, presumably, is everything other than murdering."

**HOLLY:** "Stealers could have their place too, I

suppose. All the people who wanted to steal could just steal all day in one spot as well, I guess."

**DAD:** "But wouldn't that just lead to no one caring about possessions? Everyone would just expect someone to take what they had."

**HOLLY:** "Hmm. Anyway, at least we'd all be left alone. That's the main thing."

## Smoking people

**AMELIE:** "Dad, what if you were driving and you were a smoking man and you died right then? You know, you went, 'arrghhh!' and died? You'd already be dead."

**DAD:** "Yes, that's right."

**AMELIE:** "Well, if you hit a pole or something it wouldn't matter anymore, would it?"

**ISABELLA:** "Amelie! 'Smoking people' don't just die like that. They take ages to die. Not as ages as someone who doesn't smoke, but still . . . it takes a very, very long time."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah, I know. But what about if a 'smoking person' only smoked one smoke? Would they only die a bit before a person who didn't smoke?"

**ISABELLA:** "Like Dad did when he was a boy?"

**AMELIE:** "Did Dad used to smoke?"

**DAD:** "Well, to be honest—"

**ISABELLA,** interrupting: "Don't you remember, Dad? You said that when you were little you breathed in the smoke from a cigarette once and it filled up your cheeks."

**DAD:** "Yes, I do remember saying that. I couldn't bring myself to breathe it into my lungs so I just exhaled it."

**AMELIE:** "You're going to die now, Dad. You have to."

**ISABELLA,** laughing: "Yeah, but probably only about a minute before he would have

normally. That's not really that bad. You can hardly do anything in a minute so I don't think Dad has to worry that much."

**AMELIE:** "What's a minute?"

**ISABELLA:** "It's sixty seconds."

**AMELIE:** "You mean, counting up to sixty?"

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah."

**AMELIE:** "Like in hidies?"

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah."

**AMELIE:** "Then he'll miss out on a game of hidies."

**ISABELLA:** "Oh, Amelie! Only the finding part."

## No white bits

**AMELIE**, referring to a girl in her class whose drawings had 'no white bits': "They were pictures of a bird, Dad. Two birds."

**DAD:** "Two birds? And they actually had no white bits? None at all?"

**AMELIE:** "Hmm-hmm. Around the blue [as in the sky] and stuff."

**DAD:** "No white bits around the blue and stuff?"

**AMELIE:** "Yep. Because she pressed on her pencil really hard."

**DAD:** "Oh!"

**AMELIE:** "And my art teacher got really happy with her."

**DAD:** "Did she?"

**AMELIE:** "Mmm."

**DAD:** "Do you do many white bits?"

**AMELIE:** "Well, she [the girl in her class, Sally] did the black parrot and I did the kookaburra."

**DAD:** "Yeah, but what about your drawings? Do you have any white bits in them?"

**AMELIE:** "Shannon Carmody does white bits. Because she really doesn't want to do her work."

**DAD:** "Right. So there were lots of white bits in her work, was there? Because she was ready to run off or something?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**DAD**, trying for a third time: "Yes, but what about you? (*Looking at one of Amelie's drawings*) Oh, there are a few white bits in this drawing of yours, aren't there?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**DAD:** "But white bits are okay, aren't they?"

**AMELIE:** "Hmm."

**DAD:** "I mean, it's not *that* bad to have white bits."

**AMELIE:** "You have to cover up all your white bits."

**DAD:** "Do you?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah. My art teacher, she comes and covers them up. I don't like that teacher."

**DAD:** "Oh. Don't you?"

**AMELIE:** "No. Lots of people go to the toilet in Art because they don't really want to do Art."

**DAD:** "Oh! But how can they make themselves go to the toilet? Are you trying to say they might be making it up about going to the toilet?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**DAD:** "They don't *really* have to go but they do anyway?"

**AMELIE:** “Yeah. They just sit there all in class and then they go off to the toilet with someone.”

**DAD:** “They’re always doing that because they don’t like Art?”

**AMELIE:** “Yeah. Because the teacher says you have to ‘go’ with a friend. You’re made to.”

**DAD:** “Yeah, but you wouldn’t want to get out of Art, would you?”

**AMELIE:** “Well, it’s boring.”

**DAD:** “Why’s it boring?”

**AMELIE:** “Because you just *draw* there!”

## Just lunch

**AMELIE**, laughing while peering into one of my bags – the same one I’d used to take her ‘Show and Tell’ item to school – as I was about to head out the door to go to work: “Dad! You can’t show that! It’s just your lunch.”

## Practice makes perfect

**HOLLY**, referring to all the times I yell at her: “Dad’s like a good training session for me. There’s a few teachers yelling at me now and so it’s been pretty good practice. Other kids get a fright when a teacher yells at them, but I don’t. I just stand there and think of them being like Dad.”

## Netball makes no sense

**HOLLY:** “Dad, guess what? I defended a ball today.”

**DAD:** “Did you? Oh, that’s great, honey. And what was that to do with?”

**HOLLY:** “Oh, netball. I was playing netball today. I don’t know who or what I defended it from; all I know is I defended it. And guess what, Dad? After the teacher knew I was okay and everything, she said, ‘Good work, Holly! Really good work.’ And I thought to myself, ‘Gee. I didn’t even do anything.’ It all happened so quickly, Dad. The ball was

coming right at me and before I knew it it’d hit me right on the top of my head. I went, ‘ow!’ when that happened. Then the person who threw it at me said sorry. They went, ‘Sorry about that, Holly’. And I just said, ‘Doesn’t matter’. And then my team got all caring as well. They said, ‘Are you alright, Holly?’”

**DAD:** “And of course you were.”

**HOLLY:** “Oh yeah. I was fine. It didn’t hurt at all. There was nothing I could do about it, Dad. The ball had already hit me on the head before I even knew it was coming my way.”

**DAD:** “Oh right.”

**HOLLY:** “Yeah. That’s what I mean about not being able to help defend it. I didn’t have a choice. I think, for once, my team was very happy with me today. I think, because I stopped the ball from going to the opposition, I’d done something important.”

**DAD:** “Yes, I’m sure you had.”

**HOLLY:** “Alison and I are always the Wing Attack (WA) person in our team.”

**DAD:** “Oh! Wing Attack! That sounds pretty good to me. Is it?”

**HOLLY:** “Nah. Not really. We’re only Wing Attack because we’re both clueless about what you have to do in Netball. I’m usually just standing there chatting to someone really innocent-like when, out of the blue, a ball is coming right at me. It’s crazy, Dad. Before I even know it, a ball can either be donging me on the head or about to dong me on my head. Alison thinks it’s hilarious. But not everyone thinks it’s funny. There’s usually someone yelling at me for not catching the stupid thing. I can’t imagine why it’s so important to them that I *always* catch the ball when it’s coming my way. Who cares if I catch it or not? What’s the big deal? It’s so strange, Dad. For some reason some people have to yell or scream at you if you don’t catch the ball. It can be really really important to them for some reason. They can

get so mad at you over it and then, for no reason at all, they're not mad at you anymore because the ball has gone off in another direction. It's a very strange game, netball. *Really* strange!"

## Finding out the hard way

**ISABELLA**, after forgetting her water bottle for a bike trip and me telling her that she'd now have to find out the hard way what the lesson was: "Oh, but I hate finding out the hard way. It hurts."

## Hand me downs

**AMELIE**, as told by Holly: "Holly, can I trace over your hand?"

**HOLLY**: "But you have your own hand."

**AMELIE**: "Yeah, but I have lived with it my whole life and now it is boring so I want to trace over yours. I'm going to give some [of her traces] to my friends too because they might want some to colour in because they might be bored of their hands too."