

extra fingers

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The Sometimes Place

No iPods, just iPads

Sometimes bad, sometimes good

DAD: "Have you ever heard of hell, Amelie?"

AMELIE: "Yes."

DAD: "Do you think it's really hot in there and the people who go down there burn forever?"

AMELIE, looking downcast, and not answering the question and instead imagining what hell would be like: "I know. It's not really that good [there]."

DAD: "Who told you about hell?"

AMELIE: "No one did."

DAD: "Well, how did you know about it?"

AMELIE: "Oh, I don't know! People just talk about it."

DAD: "Well, who goes to hell?"

AMELIE: "The people who are bad always."

DAD: “Always bad?”

AMELIE: “Always, always, always bad.”

DAD: “Do you know anyone who’s always bad?”

AMELIE: “I’m not always bad.”

DAD: “So you’re not going to hell?”

AMELIE: “No. I’m not always bad.”

DAD: “Okay, so—”

AMELIE: “I might go to the ‘sometimes place’. ‘Sometimes bad, sometimes good’.”

DAD: “Oh, so you might just go down to hell for a bit?”

AMELIE: “No, I wouldn’t go down to hell. I would go to the ‘sometimes place’. Where they wouldn’t have iPods. They wouldn’t have iPods, but they would have iPads.”

DAD: “Right.”

AMELIE: “They would only have iPads and nothing else. Just iPads.”

DAD: “If you’ve only been a bit bad?”

AMELIE: “Yeah.”

DAD: “Well, that’s not so bad then.”

AMELIE: “Yeah, you would have the same as the good people, but just iPads. No iPods, no iPhones, no anything like that.”

The true purpose of bike tyres

AMELIE, at an intersection on our way home after school one afternoon as a steady trail of ants made their way past the front wheels of our bikes: “Dad, watch out.”
Dad: “Watch out? What for?”

AMELIE: “Those ants down there. If you go straight you’ll go right over them.”

DAD: “Oh, yeah. You’re right. There’s quite a lot of them, aren’t there? Alright. I’ll go around them instead then. Okay? I’ll miss them that way. What about you though? What are you going to do? Aren’t you going to be going right over them as well if you don’t go around them?”

AMELIE: “Nuh.”

DAD: “‘Nuh’. What do you mean, ‘Nuh’?”

AMELIE: “I don’t have to go around them.”

DAD: “Yes, you do. You’ll squash them if you go straight. Just like I will if I do that.”

AMELIE: “No, I won’t. (*Pointing to one of her front tyres**) See? My wheel has gaps.”

DAD: “Yeah, so?”

AMELIE: “Well, the ants can go between the gaps. That’s what the gaps are for, Dad. The ants can go through them and run out the other side.”

*Amelie has mountain bike tyres.

Crispier times ahead

DAD, one morning: “Well, girls. It’s almost April now.”

HOLLY: “Yeah, so!”

DAD: “Well, what kind of mornings do you think we might get in April?”

HOLLY: “I don’t know.”

DAD: “You don’t know? Oh, come on, Hols. You know what normally happens in April. The mornings get crispier. We’re going to have crispier mornings in April.”

ISABELLA: “Great!”

DAD: “See? Issy’s looking forward to them.”

HOLLY: “Are you mad, Issy? He’s going to make us ride in the cold and he’s trying to get us all excited about that.”

ISABELLA: “Is he? Oh. I thought he meant we were going to get chips to eat.”

Something Dad should be interested in

AMELIE, ones morning, as we were about to ride to school under a blanket of grey clouds: “But I could frost to death out there if you make me ride, Dad. Aren’t you going to be a bit interested in that?”

Yeah, but what does it do?

AMELIE, as we were about to leave for Serpentine Falls: “Dad, where are we going?”

DAD: “Serpentine Falls.”

AMELIE: “Serpentine Falls?”

DAD: “Yeah.”

AMELIE: “Oh . . . What does Serpentine Falls do?”

DAD: “Um . . . well . . . it doesn’t really do anything.”

AMELIE, with a puzzled look on her face: “But it has to.”

DAD: “Does it? Why?”

AMELIE: “Because we’re going to it.”

They’re in cartoons and everywhere

AMELIE: “Why do robbers always wear that ‘robber mask’ thing for? You know, the black thing?”

DAD: “Well, it’s to hide who they are.”

AMELIE: “But everyone already knows who they are; they’re robbers. They’re in cartoons and everywhere and they’ve always got that mask on.”

Adulthood is so complicated

One afternoon recently I was simultaneously trying to glance quickly at a street directory whilst driving through very busy peak-hour traffic in an attempt to get Isabella to a musical rehearsal on time.

ISABELLA, in the backseat of the car: “I’m so scared of becoming a grownup.”

DAD: “Really?”

ISABELLA: “Because then you have to drive places and have people saying things like, ‘Yeah, can you just drive me to this place? I know it’s a bit of a toughy, but could ya?’ And then they give you this complicated map and you’re just like, ‘Where would you go?’ And then you’d have to cook dinner every night and it’s just going to be so complicated.”

DAD: “You think so?”

ISABELLA: “And you have to work and get a house and . . . it’s just going to be so hard . . . Well, it looks hard. And you have to make sure you don’t get fired from work. (*Sighs heavily*) It’s just complicated.”

DAD, trying to offer some comforting words but not really believing any of them: “Well, you change into a grownup pretty slowly. You don’t go—”

ISABELLA: “You don’t go ‘shoom!”

DAD: “No.”

ISABELLA: “Which is good. Grownups always think that years are so short. But they’re so long! They always say, ‘Yeah, you’ve only got another year until this.’ And I’m, like, that’s so long though! Because they might say, ‘Global Warming. They’re going to start working on it in a year’s or three year’s time and that is so long.”

DAD: “Hmm. Yeah, it looks so different the world from when you’re a kid to when you’re a grownup, doesn’t it?”

ISABELLA: “What if you wanted to go to a place around on the other side of the world and you didn’t know that language? I mean, what would you do? Like, what if you wanted to visit Paris but you just didn’t know what to do, you didn’t know where to go and you just lost track? Have you ever seen Mr Bean’s Holiday, Dad?”

DAD, trying to concentrate on the road: “Um . . . I don’t think I have. Oh, okay, [referring to a car up ahead that had been pushed onto a median strip] this guy’s got a problem. His car’s failed. That was the hold up.”

ISABELLA: “See, Dad?”

LAST WORD

The perfect husband

AMELIE, on finding the right man to marry: “I want to find someone who doesn’t pollute.”