

extra fingers

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The really cool thing about a new fridge

You can buy all sorts of things for your children – sophisticated electronic gadgets, the very latest toys – or you can get them a fridge box. We'd just bought a new fridge after the old one packed it in. And within a few minutes of them arriving home from school, their eyes were already on to the prize. And it's not the big steel thing that keeps food cool! Once you remove the big steel thing, you have the simplest and best toy ever invented. So much so, later that night as Isabella and I were in the middle of a 'snuggle-cuddle chat', Karin told me "Issy wants you to get another fridge box. She wants you to ring the man up and see if you can get another one straightaway."

DAD to Isabella: "Do you really?"

ISABELLA, pleadingly: "Yes."

DAD: "You want me to get another fridge box?"

ISABELLA: "Yes I do."

DAD: "Okay. Well, I might be able to. But I might have to buy another fridge though."

ISABELLA: "Just say, 'Can you get a discount on a box?'"

DAD: "'Get a discount on a box?'"

ISABELLA: “Why don’t you pay five cents for it?”

DAD: “Well, I don’t know. I’ll have to see. What size fridge box do you want?”

ISABELLA: “The same [as the last one]!”

DAD: “The same size?”

ISABELLA: “Or bigger.”

DAD: “Or bigger? What’s so good about having it so big?”

ISABELLA: “Because then you can roll around more.”

DAD: “Oh, right.”

ISABELLA: “And we’re pretending that it’s a lift.”

DAD: “Oh, right.”

ISABELLA: “And if we have a second box we can make a train. It’d be so cool!”

DAD: “Oh, okay. Will it have railway tracks?”

ISABELLA: “Maybe.”

DAD: “Yeah. Will Amelie be allowed to play in it?”

ISABELLA: “Yes.”

DAD: “Well, what’s Holly’s role? What does she have to do?”

ISABELLA: “She’s the lift lady. And we were deciding if one of the sides of the lift box breaks then we could make it into a door so we can go inside.”

DAD: “Oh, that’s rather ingenious.”

ISABELLA: “But only if it breaks. Because we like to jump inside it like it’s a hole. And then we like to be bumped around [inside it] because it’s fun. Then we like to be pushed over so we go ‘pikhoo’ onto the floor.”

DAD: “Oh!”

ISABELLA: “Because it [the box] is actually bigger than a fridge.”

DAD: “It’s a little bit bigger than a fridge because the fridge came in the box. So it’s a tiny bit bigger.”

ISABELLA: “And it probably had all this stuffing in it to keep it—”

DAD: “Yes, it did.”

ISABELLA: “Why didn’t you keep that as well?”

DAD: “Because that would have been really messy. It would have broken up and gone everywhere.”

ISABELLA: “I’m so happy that we kept the box.”

DAD: “Yes, I know.”

ISABELLA: “You were the one who almost threw it away!”

DAD: “Well, I almost did. I didn’t know that you’d want a fridge box.”

ISABELLA: “Of course we would!”

DAD: “Well, what’s so good about them?”

ISABELLA: “They’re fun!”

DAD: “What about if I got you a little box? Would you like a little one?”

ISABELLA: “Oooh [as in yuk!]. I want a big box.”

DAD: “It’s always got to be big?”

ISABELLA: “Hmm-hmm.”

POSTSCRIPT

The first thing Zoe S, Isabella’s friend, said the minute she arrived at our place after Isabella had told her all about the fridge box

on the phone a few minutes earlier: “Where is it! Where is it!”

Karin tried to say hello, but Zoe ignored her completely.

Just make sure you don't die

AMELIE, while walking her to class on Wednesday morning: “We don't do horse riding anymore at our school.”

DAD: “Don't you?”

AMELIE: “No. A girl got killed doing it so that's why they banned it.”

DAD: “How did she get killed?”

AMELIE: “She was standing behind the horse and it kicked her in the head. That's why you shouldn't stand behind one. It can kill you really easily.”

DAD: “Yes, I suppose you're right. So now horse riding is banned for everyone?”

AMELIE: “Yes.”

DAD: “Well, I think it's sad that the girl died – really sad – but I don't see why horse riding should be banned. What do you think people should do when they're doing something that's fun but a bit dangerous?”

AMELIE: “I don't know . . . oh, yes I do. You have to make sure you don't die.”

Paper crisis

AMELIE, in response to two newly-felled trees in her local park that she and her sisters used to like to climb: “They must have run out of paper.”

As if I'm going to forget

ISABELLA was concerned at my taking photos of her climbing up our orange tree so she could pick oranges.

ISABELLA, peering out from the foliage:

“Dad, I've been scraped so many times by this tree that I'm hardly going to forget it. As if I'm going to need you taking a photo of me in the tree to remember *this* day. It's a waste of your 'clicking' time.”

Who can count at a time like this?

AMELIE, regarding two of her toes on her right foot that were hurting: “Dad, I have two toes in my shoe that are hurting.”

DAD: “Oh, do you?”

AMELIE: “Yes.”

DAD, spotting an opportunity to get her to count: “So, how many does that leave?”

AMELIE, now whimpering to reinforce her disquiet at the lack of empathy: “I don't know. None of *them* are hurting!”

Hard going

I was about to ride to school heavily-laden with two schoolbags, an old violin hanging off my handlebars, another schoolbag in the bike seat behind me and Holly's main violin on my back.

AMELIE: “That looks so hard, Dad!”

All they do is talk

ISABELLA, trying to describe one of the differences between kids and grownups: “Kids just like to play. They don't like to speak as much as adults. Adults sit and talk for ages. So annoying!”

DAD: “What's so annoying?”

ISABELLA: “Well, you go away, and then you come back and adults are *still* talking. You go away for four hours, come back, and the adults are standing right where they were talking. Or sitting.”

DAD: “Well, when did you see this?”

ISABELLA, melodramatically: “I have

experienced it! Now let's choose a topic [to talk about, after all, it was a 'snuggle-cuddle chat']."

DAD: "Oh gosh! Well, kids speak too."

ISABELLA, dismissively: "Topic!"

DAD: "Okay. Alright. Topic. Okay . . . um . . . um . . . how big is the universe?"

ISABELLA: "Oh god! Dad, there's no end, there's no beginning. You said that before so, choose a topic."

War: It's all dead and buried

"War would end if the dead could return."
Stanley Baldwin

I'd been reading from the local newspaper one or two lines about the very uncivil civil war in Libya when Isabella suddenly piped up.

ISABELLA: "Look, Dad! War is literally finished now. Okay? Well, I mean all the big wars are finished. We don't have *them* anymore. They went a long time ago even before you were a boy."

DAD: "Oh. So no big wars anywhere? Is that what you're trying to say?"

ISABELLA: "Yes."

DAD: "Oh. So, what are we left with then? Just really little wars or something?"

ISABELLA: "No, dead people. Now can I eat in peace?"