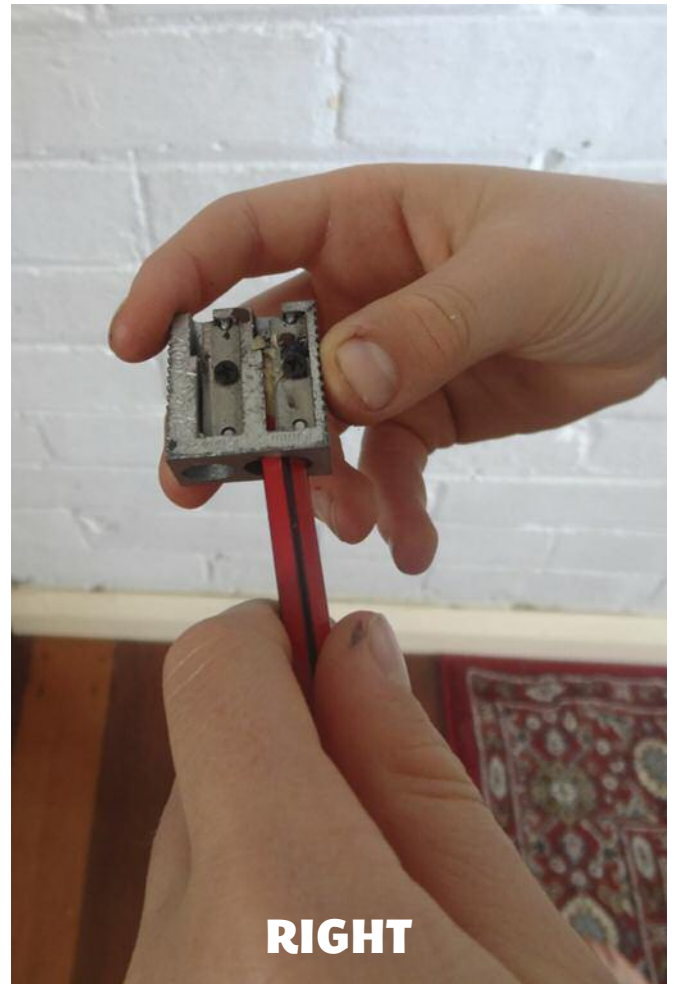


# extra fingers

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## The long and almost short of it



### DAY ONE OF THE FAMILY HOLIDAY TO LONDON

**AMELIE**, at Perth airport, during a discussion with Holly about pencil sharpeners: "Yeah, I sharpened my finger once."

**HOLLY**: "Your finger? That was a pretty stupid thing to do?"

**AMELIE**: "No. I was trying to get it all long and pointy. Didn't work though. All I got was this really long cut."

# Opposites don't attract

During a 'play' at our house, one of Amelie's friends had annoyed Isabella so much that she was at the end of her tether. It all came to a head around lunchtime.

**AMELIE'S FRIEND** to **ISABELLA**, whilst she was sitting across from her at our dining table: "Why are you staring at me for?"

**ISABELLA**, eyebrows raised in utter contempt: "Because you're opposite me."

## THE FAMILY HOLIDAY TO LONDON PART ONE

# Tell the world, why don't you?

(as told by Holly)

Amelie was in a toilet at Changi airport as a message come over the loud speaker. Isabella was in the next cubicle and Holly was in the wash area.

**AMELIE**: "What's that man doing! He's talking so loudly!"

**ISABELLA**, very embarrassed: "Amelie! For goodness sake! Can you keep it down a bit?"

**AMELIE**, about twenty seconds later: "He's still talking!"

*After another twenty seconds . . .*

**AMELIE**, cursing a toilet paper dispenser: "Oh, come on! It's not that hard. Just come out!"

**HOLLY**: "Amelie, will you shut up? You don't have to tell the whole world your problems."

**AMELIE**: "Holly! Stop interfering."

# What if his wife came over?

**ISABELLA**, referring to a guard who was marching at The Tower of London: "So he has to do that all day, does he? He has to march up and down on that one path all day and make that stomping sound with his boots?"

**DAD**: "Hmm-hmm."

**ISABELLA**: "Whooah!"

**DAD**: "Well—"

**ISABELLA**: "What about if his wife came over?"

**DAD**: "What's that?"

**ISABELLA**: "What about if his wife came over? What about if she came over and said, 'Do you love me?' Would he still have to keep on marching and not answer his wife?"

*A few days later . . .*

# Simple question

We'd learned from a local bobby that the Prince of Wales was about to pass by us on his way to board a military vessel on the Thames.

**ISABELLA**, minutes later: "Amelie, shh! Prince Charles is about to go by."

**AMELIE**: "Yeah, so?"

**ISABELLA**: "Well he's the prince."

**AMELIE**: "Yeah. So?"

**ISABELLA**, frustrated: "Well, look! Simple question. Do you want to see Prince Charles, or have lunch?"

**AMELIE**: "Lunch."

**ISABELLA**: "That's just crazy!"

## They're boring

**AMELIE**, at the Natural History Museum, complaining about all the rocks on display: "Why do they have so many rocks for?"

**HOLLY**: "What do you mean?"

**AMELIE**: "Well, they're boring."

**HOLLY**: "Are they? How come?"

**AMELIE**: "They don't move and you can just see them outside."

## Never look a gift shop in the mouth

Isabella had waited for an hour to look inside the gift shop at the Natural History Museum and she wasn't about to leave without a fight.

**HOLLY**, after Isabella had been in the shop at least fifteen minutes: "Come on, Issy! You have to come. Dad wants to show you something good in the marine section."

**ISABELLA**: "Well he can try and get me out if he wants. That's his choice. Just say to him he can try and make me come out if he wants to, but I'm not going to."

## But I've already written it in

**ISABELLA**, after we'd left the Natural History Museum: "Dad, can we now go to that really good vegan restaurant again? Please!"

**DAD**: "No, darl. There's no way. I'm exhausted and there's absolutely no way I can possibly walk all that way. It's way too far for all our tired feet."

**ISABELLA**: "But I've already written it in my visual diary. I'm going to have to cross it out now. You know how you said you wanted me to go 'we went to . . .' instead of 'today we're going to . . .' because then I would have done it? Well, I did that [wrote it in] and now I'm going to have to cross it out."

## Who invented the smile?

**ISABELLA**, at The Museum of London: "Dad, who came up with the smile? Because we go like this (*effects a smile*), but we could have gone like this (*quickly rearranges her face to effect a clueless expression*)."

## Amelie's visual diary entry for London Day 5

December 8, 2012

“We left our house and went on the train to go to the museum. Mum said I could get some shoes from Harrods and I asked her if I could get a toy and she said if we get time. So I'm very excited but I'm not sure what's for dinner.

P.S. I went to an ice rink. We skated. I had hot chips.”

## Sharp, Dad!

As we were walking by the Houses of Parliament, a Bill paving the way for gay marriage in Britain was being heard. Before entering parliament though to listen to some of the debate in the House of Commons – a rather lengthy process due to the many security checks you had to go through – Isabella felt the need to voice her concern about how long it might take.

**ISABELLA**: "Dad, this will be short, won't it?"

**DAD**: "I don't know. How would I know? I can't guarantee that, Is. This is a great opportunity for us to see an historic Bill being discussed and so I don't want to be focusing on the time. Alright? That would spoil it. Let's just watch and take it all in."

**ISABELLA**: "But, Dad!"

**DAD**, frustrated: "Yes, Issy! What is it?"

**ISABELLA**: "I'm missing lunch."

**DAD**: "Yeah . . . so?"

**ISABELLA:** “Well when I’m at school I have lunch at 12.30.”

**DAD:** “Yeah . . . so?”

**ISABELLA,** pausing for effect: “Sharp!”

## Squirrel Park

**ISABELLA,** on the way to Squirrel Park\*: “I really can’t wait to get there, Dad.”

**DAD:** “Well, that’s great, Issy. Because we’re almost there.”

**AMELIE,** ever the contrarian when she wants to be: “What! But I don’t want to go to a park.”

**DAD:** “Don’t you? Why not?”

**AMELIE:** “Because . . . because all you ever do there is . . . look.”

\*Formally known as Kensington Gardens before I’d told her it’d be full of squirrels.

## It wouldn’t be everywhere if it wasn’t really good

**AMELIE,** as we were walking through the Underground on the way home from Squirrel Park: “Dad, can we go to that?”

**DAD:** “Go to what?”

**AMELIE,** pointing to a poster featuring the movie, *Quartet*, that was on one of the walls in the Underground: “That! It’s everywhere. It must be really good because it wouldn’t be everywhere if it wasn’t really good.”

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### THE LAST WORD

## Do your best

**AMELIE,** offering encouragement as Karin was preparing to pose for a photo at a cafe: “Do your best, Mum. Do your best.”

### E-NEWS BONUS STORY

## Black holes

**AMELIE,** during a snuggle-cuddle chat: “Ow! Ow!”

**DAD:** “What? I’m not doing anything.”

**AMELIE:** “I can’t get the rug.”

**DAD:** “Oh, it’s not that bad. It doesn’t require you saying ‘ow!’. ‘Ow!’ is if you’ve stepped on something sharp.”

**AMELIE:** “I remember Holly stepping on a pin. It went right through her foot.”

**DAD:** “Well, that is an ‘ow!’ But not being able to get the doona is not an ‘ow!’”

**AMELIE:** “Yeah, but, I don’t know what to say.”

**DAD:** “Well, just don’t say ‘ow!’ because that’s for sharp things.”

**AMELIE:** “I can say what I want thank you very much.”

**DAD:** “You can, but it’s better to say, ‘Oh, I wish it would come across.’”

**AMELIE:** “No, that’s a stupid thing to say.”

**DAD:** “Is it?”

**AMELIE:** “Hmm.”

**DAD:** “It’s accurate though. Don’t you think?”

**AMELIE,** moving on: “Dad, can we talk about black holes?”

**DAD:** "If you want to, yeah."

**AMELIE:** "Mum told me that they are a star and if you're in a rocket ship and you're too close to one – that you're around them – they'll suck you in."

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

**AMELIE:** "And no one knows where you go."

**DAD:** "No, but you wouldn't survive."

**AMELIE:** "How do you know that?"

**DAD:** "You'd probably get smashed to bits. Or, spaghettified. Which means stretched to bits. Because the pull inside a black hole is so strong and it's really dense and (*pauses*) you know light?"

**AMELIE:** "Hmm."

**DAD:** "Light goes so fast. It travels at 300,000 kilometres a second. Which is really quick."

**AMELIE:** "Hmm."

**DAD:** "But, even going that fast it can't get out of a black hole. And that's why the hole is described as a black hole. Because no light can get out of it."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah, but, what do they look like?"

**DAD:** "Well, they're black. You can't see them."

**AMELIE:** "Whooh! So you don't know if you're near one?"

**DAD:** "If you were, you would start to feel this big strong pull."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**DAD:** "You know, like a magnet."

**AMELIE:** "Hmm."

**DAD:** "You'd start to feel that. And then you'd go, 'Oh, hang on!'"

**AMELIE:** "And then you would just die?"

**DAD:** "Yeah. You wouldn't be able to get away from it."

**AMELIE:** "Hmm."

**DAD:** "So it's not a good idea to go near black holes, no."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah but what if you don't know? You said that you don't know."

**DAD:** "Yeah, but there are no black holes anywhere near where we are."

**AMELIE:** "Hmm. Where are they?"

**DAD:** "So far away, darl. A long, long, long way away. They think there's a big one at the centre of our galaxy. The Milky Way."

**AMELIE:** "Oh! What does it do?"

**DAD:** "Well, it's sucking in stars I think."

**AMELIE,** in a whispering voice: "Whooh!"

**DAD:** "I think. Big ones. It's gobbling them up."

**AMELIE:** "Well, they'll have to stay right away from it. Dad, can it suck in planets?"

**DAD:** "Yeah."

**AMELIE:** "What! Can it suck in Jupiter?"

**DAD:** "Oh yeah."

**AMELIE:** "Oh god! Is it tiny?"

**DAD:** "No, I think it's pretty big."

**AMELIE:** "What about a small one?"

**DAD:** "Well, there aren't many small ones around. They're all pretty big. Depends on what you mean by small and big."

**AMELIE:** "We need to see one on *YouTube*."

**DAD:** "Oh, you won't see it because it's black, darl. It's not what you think. You can't actually get a photograph of one or anything like that."

**AMELIE:** "Daddy, *(takes in a deep breath)* these are the three things that I'm afraid of."

**DAD:** "Hmm-hmm."

**AMELIE:** "Like, scared of. I'm scared of heights."

**DAD:** "Yep."

**AMELIE:** "I'm scared of the water, and I'm scared of the Earth. Like, in space. Because what if you die? I wouldn't want to go. I don't really like any of those things."

**DAD:** "Oh you mean leaving Earth and going into space?"

**AMELIE:** "Mmm . . . It's just scary. I mean here we're safe."

**DAD:** "Yeah."

**AMELIE:** "We're nowhere near a black hole."

**DAD:** "No."

**AMELIE:** "Dad, say Earth was near a giant big black hole and it sucked us in."

**DAD:** "Hmm."

**AMELIE:** "What would happen to us?"

**DAD:** "We'd be dead, darl."

**AMELIE:** "Oh my gosh!"

**DAD:** "Mmm. But we're nowhere near a black hole."

**AMELIE:** "What if there was a black hole out there? Like, just say, right now and we were talking, and it just sucked us in?"

**DAD:** "No, well, see, we can't see a black hole but we can find where they are with instruments, if there was one. And we haven't found one so there's none around."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**DAD:** "So we're safe."

**AMELIE:** "Oh that's so lucky."