

# extra fingers

Newsletter number 40 • November 15, 2014

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## At least she got 'waves' right

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, guess what Amelie got wrong in her science test today?"

**DAD:** "What?"

**ISABELLA:** "What the Sun was. The question wanted to know whether or not the Sun was alive and she said it was because it moves."

**DAD,** just about to mention the Gaia hypothesis: "Well—"

**ISABELLA:** "She was so lucky she didn't get 'waves' wrong."

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

**ISABELLA:** "There was another question about whether or not 'waves' were alive and she could have so easily got that wrong. Luckily for her she didn't. She said they weren't alive, they don't eat anything and they don't reproduce. So at least she got 'waves' right."

# I've never worried once

I'd been looking for a pair of pants for some time and finally found them.

**DAD:** "Don't worry. I've found them."

**ISABELLA:** "Why do you always say, 'don't worry' for? I've never worried once."

## Can he just have a proper voice

I wanted the girls to see a video of an astronaut on the Moon conducting an experiment where he proves Galileo was right when he said all objects regardless of their mass fall to earth at the same speed. There were a number of YouTube clips of the same video footage and so to start off with I played the first few seconds of each clip to see which one was the best quality. As I was testing one of the clips, though, Isabella became tired of trying to hear the astronaut's voice as it was very muffled due to it having travelled from the Moon.

**ASTRONAUT:** ". . . in my left hand I have a feather, and in my right hand a hammer—"

**ISABELLA:** "That voice! Can he just have a proper voice!"

## Don't be too upset with him

Isabella and I were out one afternoon and we noticed an old man driving on the wrong side of the road coming quite quickly toward us.

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, don't get too upset with him."

**DAD:** "But he's not allowed to do that."

**ISABELLA:** "Yes I know. But you can't expect him to get those things right. He's an old man. He just thinks he's doing the right thing. But he isn't."

## You needed me too

**ISABELLA,** talking about her Society and Environment homework: "Dad, I got ticks for just about every sentence of my paragraph."

**DAD:** "Yeah, well, I pretty much wrote all the words in those sentences so the most important thing now is that you learn from how those sentences were put together."

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah, well, you wouldn't have even known what to do if it wasn't for me."

**DAD:** "Well of course I wouldn't have known what to do. You had to bring the question home, didn't you? How could I have done that? I'm not in your S&E class."

**ISABELLA:** "That's what I'm trying to say, Dad. You needed me too."

## Stick with 'the nerve'

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, one of the kids in my musical theatre group didn't even know what the word 'audacity' meant. And she's in Year 10."

**DAD:** "Well, do you know what it means?"

**ISABELLA:** "It's something to do with hearing, isn't it?"

**DAD:** "No."

**ISABELLA:** "No, no. Not hearing. It's, like, 'how dare they!'"

**DAD:** "Yes. That's right. The nerve of them. The hide."

**ISABELLA:** "Hide? I don't know what that means. Because that sounds like Hide 'n' Seek to me."

**DAD:** "It just means the nerve of someone to say or do the thing they were saying or doing. In other words, the effrontery."

**ISABELLA:** "No, not 'in other words'. Not if your 'other words' are going to be anything like that last word you said, Dad. Stick with 'the nerve'."

## It's possible

I'd just gotten out of the shower . . .

**AMELIE:** "Dad, you've got all this red on your back."

**DAD:** "Yeah I know. I've been in the shower. It was the hot water."

**AMELIE:** "Well, I'm not so sure about that, Dad."

**DAD:** "No, take my word for it. It was the hot water."

**AMELIE:** "Hmm, I was thinking something else actually. I was thinking it might be sunburn."

**DAD:** "No, that's impossible."

**AMELIE:** "Why?"

**DAD:** "Well, for one thing it's night time."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah. What else?"

**DAD:** "And our bathroom has a roof over it."

**AMELIE:** "Well, it's still possible."

**DAD:** "Is it? How?"

**AMELIE:** "Well, if we didn't have a roof and it wasn't night time then it would be."

**DAD:** "Yeah, but—"

**AMELIE:** "Dad, it's possible! That's all I'm saying. It's possible."

# When Kevin Rudd was little

**AMELIE:** "Dad, when Kevin Rudd was a little boy was he called 'Kevin'?"

## Ashamed

**AMELIE**, very quietly to me, after I'd returned home from the local supermarket with an item that was wrong: "Mum's really ashamed of you."

## I think you'll make the right choice

I'd come into Isabella's bedroom one night to see how she was feeling after she'd gone there to lie down because her stomach was hurting.

**ISABELLA:** "Please stay, Dad."

**DAD:** "Well I'd like to, Issy, but I think I should go back into the kitchen now to help clean up."

**ISABELLA:** "Dad! Which one's better? Out there washing and cleaning up? Or being in here with me and looking after me with my sore stomach? (*Almost with a wink in her voice*) I think you'll make the right choice."

## You're speaking now

I was in the midst of a conversation at the dining table . . . well, trying to!

**ISABELLA**, yelling out from the loungeroom: "Dad, what's 'creative' mean again?"

**DAD**, yelling back: "I've already told you."

**ISABELLA**, yelling back: "No, I mean I know what the word means and all that. I just want to know what sort of things you'd like me to do rather than watching a movie."

**DAD**, yelling back: "Well, the usual things, Issy. You know. You can draw something or write a story . . . that sort of thing."

# That could take ages

**ISABELLA**, reading from *The Curious Case Of Benjamin Button* by F. Scott Fitzgerald: “[Chapter Three] ‘He was as puzzled as any one else at the apparently advanced age of his mind and body at birth. He read up on it in the medical journal, but found that no such case had been previously recorded. At his father’s urging he made an honest attempt to play with other boys, and frequently he joined in the milder games – football shook him up too much, and he feared that in case of a fracture his ancient bones would refuse to knit.’ ‘His ancient bones would refuse to knit?’ I don’t get it. He has ancient bones even though he’s just been born?”

**DAD**: “Yes I know, Issy. But with this book you’re going to have to get used to that sort of thing. It’s a work of fiction, remember. And you’re just going to have to what is called ‘suspend your disbelief’. Alright?”

**ISABELLA**: “What does that mean?”

**DAD**: “Well, you know what ‘suspend’ means, don’t you? Imagine if someone at your school got suspended for some reason. What would happen to them?”

**ISABELLA**: “They’d be, um, made to stay at home. They’d be taken out of school.”

**DAD**: “Yes, exactly. That’s right. For how long?”

**ISABELLA**: “I don’t know. For a bit.”

**DAD**: “Yeah, just for a little bit. So, in this case for a little bit you have to not believe things that you know are true. It’s only while you’re reading the book. Like, in this case, you’re going to have to accept that he was born with bones that a baby wouldn’t normally have. In other words, Benjamin Button was born old and to enjoy the story you’re just going to have to accept that. You know what I mean?”

**ISABELLA**: “Just for the time it takes me to read the story?”

**DAD**: “Yeah. Only while you’re reading the book. You have to suspend your disbelief for just that amount of time. Obviously once you’ve stopped reading the book then you can go back to believing how you used to believe.”

**ISABELLA**: “But that could take ages. I’m a very slow reader, Dad.”

**ISABELLA**, yelling back: “Yes, but—”

**DAD**, yelling back: “Gee it’s loud down there, girls! It’s so loud I can’t even hear Uncle Steve or Mum. Can I please just be able to speak up here?”

**ISABELLA**, yelling back: “Of course you can. You’re speaking now.”

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## THE LAST WORD

# Turning zero?

**AMELIE**: “Can a baby turn zero? Because I think it must be able to.”

# His jaw fell onto my knee

**AMELIE**, complaining to Karin: “Mum, look what Angus did!”

**KARIN**: “What? Did he bite you?”

**AMELIE**: “No, his jaw fell onto my knee and it really hurt.”

**KARIN**: “How did his jaw fall onto your knee?”

**AMELIE**: “No, my knee came up and (*demonstrating Angus’s open mouth*) his face fell onto my knee.”