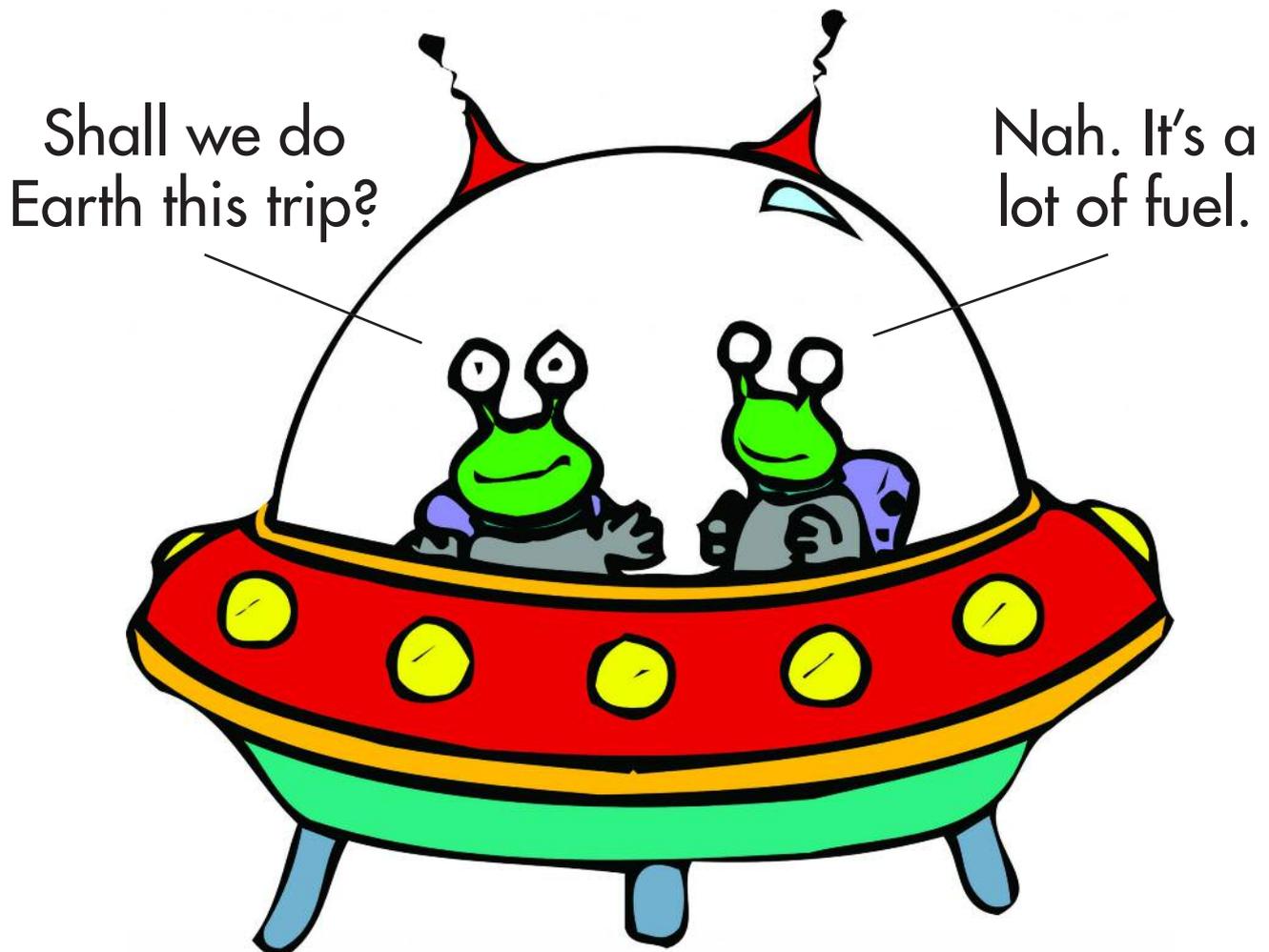


extra fingers

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Not worth the petrol

AMELIE: "Would there be any aliens here?"

DAD: "Depends on what you mean by aliens."

AMELIE: "Well, people from outer space."

DAD: "I don't know. Who would know?"

ISABELLA: "Well, they'd have to have a good reason to come here."

Amelie's friend, **ALEX:** "Maybe they'd come here just for fun. Just to have some fun."

ISABELLA: "Oh, they wouldn't waste all their petrol coming here just to have fun. They just wouldn't do that."

Trouble with Art

AMELIE, showing me her Art portfolio: ". . . and I drew this picture of a horse in my spare time and she [her Art teacher] actually got angry with me. Just for drawing a horse. Something that I really love to draw. But, I didn't care. I told her it was in my spare time and I wanted to draw it and that was it, really."

A few seconds later . . .

AMELIE: "And here's a reflection I did. I hate reflections! What do you like the most about your art or the art process and why? 'I loved feeling the warm soapy water and agitation. I liked pressing through the moist clay and laying the wispy wool down.' So stupid! And here's a fish I did. I really liked doing this fish. But she made me do another one. She said she hoped I would do another one, which is the same really as you needing to do another one. Now it looks gross. I get in trouble with my teacher all the time. Like, every day. It's incredible!"

He's really bad at magic

AMELIE, describing her last week in Year Four: "Mum, you should see the Year Two kids. They're getting a party, they're getting fizzy drinks, they're getting food, they're getting movies, and all we're getting is a magician. A really hopeless one. We've had him before, Mum. He's so bad. We always say, 'It's at the bottom! It's underneath!' He's really bad at magic."

I've been to all his concerts

ISABELLA: "This girl in my class, um, said, 'I really like Shakespeare' because she's got a Shakespeare quote. Then she's [another girl is] like, 'Me too. I love Sakespeare (sic). She said 'Sakespeare'. And then she was, like, 'I've been to all his concerts recently'. And she [the first girl] was, like, 'Wait!' And then she said, 'Which concerts have you been to?' And she was, like, 'I don't know. It was just a recent one.' So funny. And then Amie goes, 'What! He doesn't do concerts. He does really good poems and good writing.'"

Prime thought

AMELIE: "Mum, do you know the person who first thought of the idea of eating meat?"

KARIN: "No, I don't know that, darling."

AMELIE: "Would it have been a prime minister or someone like that?"

I'd just swim to the side

HOLLY: "Amelie, I'll take you swimming if you do the washing up."

AMELIE: "Alright."

DAD: "Hols, are you allowed to supervise Amelie at your age? Do you know if sixteen's old enough?"

AMELIE, interrupting: "Yeah, sixteen. You're allowed to. Anyway, I've never even drowned. And even if I was to drown I'd just swim to the side."

Pretending feels good

DAD: "Are there any kids in your class who don't believe in Santa?"

AMELIE: "Hmm. Some."

DAD, feigning surprise: "Really? How many kids believe in Santa and how many kids don't? Do you know?"

AMELIE: "I don't know."

DAD: "Hmm. Do the kids in your group all believe in Santa?"

AMELIE: "Not really. Some of them don't."

DAD: "Oh."

AMELIE: "Like Caitlin, she's not really sure. She doesn't think Santa's real."

DAD: "Oh."

AMELIE: "But she likes pretending he is."

DAD: "Right."

AMELIE: "She doesn't actually believe in him but she just likes the thought of Santa coming."

DAD: "Hmm. And what about you?"

AMELIE: "Well . . . not really. But, um, because, yeah I know you guys do it for me but, I still, um, pretend that Santa is there. I always pretend that you don't do it. Santa does."

DAD: "Oh!"

AMELIE: "I always pretend that. Because that's what I think. But I can't believe that I could believe that! The reindeers came in a sled. That is so magic!"

DAD: "So are you able to pretend and then believe in the pretend really well?"

AMELIE: "Yeah I am."

DAD: "You're able to do that?"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "I think that's a ten-years-of-age thing. I think it gets harder to do that as you get older but at ten you can know something's not real but believe it to be real and really feel it to be real. The belief you have. You know what I mean?"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "That's a pretty amazing thing to be able to do. I don't think adults can do that very easily."

AMELIE: "I don't do that with God. Definitely not."

DAD: "No."

AMELIE: "I say, 'He's not real. He's not real.'"

DAD: "Right."

AMELIE: "But sometimes I do pray just to make me feel better about things. Like, say if something's died like, um, say if the guinea pigs died."

DAD: "Yep."

AMELIE: "I pray to them. To make me feel better I pretend that, in my pray, I pretend that heaven is real."

DAD: "Hmm."

AMELIE: "It's weird. But it does make me feel good."

. . . Or plotting people

AMELIE, on the way to Adventure World:

"I can't believe that Brianca said that farmers are environmentally friendly because they use horses for transport. That is such a lie! They use tractors and quad bikes. This is not environmentally friendly! They use, like, quad bikes and cars to round up sheep. They don't use horses. They only use them sometimes. Only to exercise them. That's why they want them. Oh my god! And she said they're great people. They're not always great people."

DAD: "No, they aren't. But that goes for any profession. But, you're right."

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "You can't make a statement that says they're all good."

AMELIE: "No because they mightn't treat their

animals very well. You never know. Or they could be, like, murderers or bad people. Or something like that. Or plotting people."

DAD: "Plotting people?"

AMELIE: "People who plot murders of other people. Or something."

Everything is bad. It's official.

We were on our way home from the airport after dropping off Aunty Jen and I'd asked who wanted to go to the markets to buy some food. Initially, there was little enthusiasm from Holly, Isabella and Amelie. But then Amelie offered that she'd like a spinach and ricotta wrap sold at one of the stalls.

DAD: "So, a spinach and ricotta wrap could change your mind? If you were promised that?"

AMELIE: "Maybe."

HOLLY: "I think it could change my mind too actually."

DAD: "Oh, you've got to be joking! You like spinach and ricotta rolls that much that you would endure the markets?"

HOLLY: "Yes. Yeah."

ISABELLA: "Yeah, it's actually brilliant."

HOLLY: "It's so good. Oh!"

ISABELLA, salivating: "Oh, that roll!"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "But they're very unhealthy."

AMELIE: "I know, but it's so good."

HOLLY: "Dad, they're so nice!"

One for the pizza

Karin thought it would be good to go to an art market in Fremantle. Amelie thought so too and eagerly climbed in the car.

AMELIE, about an hour and a half later, begging Karin to leave: "Out of ten, Mum, what kind of time are you having?"

KARIN: "Oh . . . um . . ."

AMELIE, impatiently: "What?"

KARIN: "Oh . . . eight."

AMELIE: "Zero for me. No, one. Because of the pizza."

DAD: "Yeah, because they're full of salt."

HOLLY: "Shush! I like them."

AMELIE: "I like them too."

ISABELLA: "See? That's why we don't go."

HOLLY: "I know. Everything's going to kill you."

DAD: "Not quite, darl."

HOLLY: "Yeah it is."

ISABELLA: "Yes!"

AMELIE: "You have too much salad you might get sick."

DAD, laughing: "I don't think we've ever said that."

AMELIE: "Yes you . . . yes, someone said it."

DAD, laughing: "Someone said it?"

ISABELLA: "What I'm doing right now is bad. I'm sitting down so I'm going to die."

HOLLY: "Oh yeah, sitting down's a problem."

AMELIE: "Slumping, that's bad. Sit up straight."

ISABELLA: "I'm probably breathing in a million different chemicals that are bad for me and I'm going to die. Everything is bad. That is official."

Wasted lives

AMELIE, during a car trip one afternoon: "We're lucky we don't have an old grandma with us. It would have taken ages. No offence. But it would have."

Why add to it?

Amelie: "Imagine if you were a murderer and a stealer. Because you'd already be in so much trouble just for killing someone. Why would anyone want to add to that?"

DAD: "Well, yeah, grandmothers are usua—"

AMELIE: "Older."

DAD: "Well they are older."

AMELIE: "They've wasted their life because they are from an older generation. But they don't live forever like us."

DAD: "What do you mean 'they've wasted their life'? They haven't wasted their life."

AMELIE: "No."

DAD: "They're just older."

AMELIE: "No, no just, like, they've already wasted their life."

DAD: "Oh, well, not wasted. They've—"

AMELIE, strangely buoyant: "I'm going to waste my life soon!"

DAD: "Yeah, but, not waste. It's the wrong word."

AMELIE: "Everyone wastes their life."

DAD: "Yeah, I think it's the wrong—"

AMELIE: "It's like, um, you have a box of chocolates and you've eaten them all."

DAD: "Yeah but the word 'waste'. It's the wrong word to use. Because 'waste' means that—"

AMELIE: "You've spent [too much time] doing silly things in your life."

DAD: "Yeah, well, you've used your life up—"

AMELIE: "Unnecessarily."

DAD: "It's implying that you've used your life up unwisely. That's what it's implying."

AMELIE: "No, do you know what I mean?"

DAD: "Yeah well they've lived a lot of their life already."

AMELIE: "Yes! I couldn't find any other word so I just used that."

Christmas Day

I don't want to put all this expression into it

Amelie: "Dad, I don't like it when you put the camera on me . . . I mean, I do like it, but . . . I like the presents but I don't want to put all this expression into it. I just like to open them myself."

Christmas Day, the afternoon

You're so close to being a kid it's not funny

ISABELLA to Amelie, in the middle of talking about how children typically behave: "... kids are always like that. They're always exaggerating stories and they're also always so impatient and can't wait for anything."

AMELIE: "Oh, you're such a big teenager now, aren't you, Issy? But not really. You're so close to being a kid it's not funny."

What's after 'R'?

AMELIE, discussing R-rated movies such as *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*: "What's after 'R'? 'S' and 'T'? I think it's 'S' and 'T'."

DAD: "No it's 'X'."

AMELIE: "Oh! 'S' is like 'X' though. They sound almost the same."

I've said 'please' twice

For the first time in my life, I felt I didn't have a choice. I had to switch from 97.7 Classic FM to some horrible station.

One of **AMELIE'S FRIENDS** on the way to Adventure World: "Can I have 94.5? Please, please! I've said 'please' twice."

The chips are the best bit

DAD to **ISABELLA**, on the way home: "Issy, these wetlands here at Bibra Lakes are quite wonderful to go to. We should go the next time we go to Adventure World until seven o'clock."

ISABELLA: "Oh, I don't know, Dad. The bush looks quite scary. There might even be snakes."

DAD: "No, it's not scary. There's a place where you can easily view the birds that wouldn't have snakes. It's not all bush you know."

AMELIE: "Issy, it's so boring. It is so boring! All I did [when I went] was walk along. With a bag of chips. The best part — the only good part — about the lakes is the chips you might get."

It's a new generation

ISABELLA: "I really want to have a proper photographer at my party. I really want to have one of those instant photograph cameras where you can get photos straight away. You should see them. They're so cool. You can take a photo of someone and then get it printed out right away and then just give the photo to the person. That's what they have at all my friends' parties."

DAD: "Oh yeah. We used to have them when I was a boy. People used to do exactly what you're saying. But if I remember rightly the photos used to fade after a while because the ink wasn't properly absorbed by the photographic paper the photo was printed on. They've been around for ages, Issy."

AMELIE: "Oh come on, Dad! It's a new generation. People don't do that sort of thing now."

DAD: "What's that?"

AMELIE, frustrated: "Oh! People don't do the fading photos anymore. It's a new generation!"

LAST WORD

Belated hello

AMELIE to **KARIN:** "Mum, this was a while ago, right? Actually, a really long time ago. But, Alexi's mum said to say 'hi' to you."