

extra fingers

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Dead loss

HOLLY, comparing the United States to Australia: “America’s a very different country. It’s nothing like here. Our country [she meant Western Australia] is full of dead trees.”

AMELIE: “We’re known for our dead trees.”

**THE TRIP DOWN SOUTH
JULY 2012**

Relief

ISABELLA, as we were walking along the jetty at Busselton: “Dad, don’t go near the edge!”

DAD: “It’s okay, Issy. Trust me. I know what I’m doing.”

ISABELLA: “Dad, please! I don’t want you to.”

You're making me scared."

DAD: "Darling, that's really nice of you to care, but seriously I know what I'm doing and I promise you I won't fall in."

At that point Isabella put her arms around me and breathed a big sigh of relief as I'd moved away from the edge of the jetty.

ISABELLA: "You had my iPod."

All that shh-shh noise

DAD, as we arrived at our accommodation in Yallingup: "Well, girls. Looks like we're going to be right on the beach. You can't beat that."

ISABELLA: "Oh no! *(Makes the sound of the ocean)* All that shh-shh noise."

Trying to do some nice peace

AMELIE: "Stop it! Stop it, Holly! You're always teasing me . . . Stop it."

HOLLY, spoken like a true older sister: "But I don't want to."

AMELIE: "Holly! I'm being serious. I'm trying to do some nice peace here and you aren't making it very easy."

We haven't heard the umpf-umpf sound

I'd gone out to the car looking for something and had been away from our accommodation for a few minutes.

HOLLY: "I think Dad's been kidnapped."

ISABELLA: "No, we haven't heard the *(makes the sound of someone trying to speak through a hand that had been put across their mouth so as to block their cry for help)* umpf-umpf sound."

You try and build a whole city

ISABELLA, after I'd complained about a missing street sign in Busselton: "Dad, you try and build a whole city and get every road right. Every single one. It's not that easy, you know."

What about my river!

AMELIE, in Pemberton, as her Uncle Steve was attempting to show her a plant that had a very distinctive smell: "I don't care about your smell. I've got a river for you to see."

Taste testing sharks

AMELIE, after she was told that sharks aren't usually very interested in eating people: "What! Aren't they?"

UNCLE STEVE: "No. It's usually a mistake. They mostly just taste people by biting them to see if they like them and then spit them out."

AMELIE: "Oh, that's so mean! Putting people on the bottom of the sea just to taste them."

I'd never be a builder

ISABELLA: "Do you have to practice to be a builder?"

DAD: "Yeah, of course."

ISABELLA: "What with? What kind of stuff? Plastic blocks?"

DAD: "Well—"

ISABELLA: "I'd hate to be a builder. Because what if you got what you were building wrong? Like, if you build a cubby for a kid and you get it wrong, they scream. I bet that's what would happen if you got a house wrong. Imagine building a house all wrong. That would make a person really scream at you, wouldn't it? That's why I'd never be a builder."

Why can't they hurry up?

DAD: "I guess court cases confuse you quite a bit when you're young."

ISABELLA: "Hmm-hmm."

DAD: "They can go on for a long, long time. It's rare that you ever get one that's short."

ISABELLA: "I've seen short ones."

DAD: "Have you?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah."

DAD: "When did you see a short one?"

ISABELLA: "In a movie."

DAD: "Well, a movie will always have short ones. Because they've compressed the time."

ISABELLA: "Remember 'My Castle' or something?"

DAD: "Oh, *The Castle*. Yeah, that was short. But that's because it's a movie. Real life's different to movies. You know that. Because in real life things are day after day after day; it takes time for things to happen. But in a movie, they've only got two hours. That's how long movies go for. In a court case in a movie, it might only go for, I don't know, ten or fifteen minutes. You always think that it's fast, don't you? You just go into a courthouse—"

ISABELLA: "But why don't they do that?"

DAD: "Why don't they what?"

ISABELLA: "Hurry up."

Kids' brains

ISABELLA: "School is really weird. Like, you don't need to be educated. (*Thinking again*) Or do you?"

DAD: "Why wouldn't you?"

ISABELLA: "You would still have your kid brain if no one had educated you. You'd still believe what you believed."

DAD: "Would that be a good thing?"

ISABELLA, hesitantly: "Maybe."

DAD: "In a grownup body?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah. You'd still wonder and you'd still have things. You don't have to think about the Earth as what other people think about it. You can think of it as flat. It just doesn't make sense that we need to learn things. Because we can just be anyone we want to be. But everyone has to get educated."

DAD: "Yes."

ISABELLA: "I wish we could just have, like, a friends' school. Not an educating school. (Following a long pause, and in a tone of voice that sounded like a car accelerating) Sad! And then after school we have to go straight to university, and then we have to get a job, and then, eventually, (sounding like a car decelerating) we go to a retirement home. At least we get some free time then. Like now, I hate going to school."

Deaf sentence

AMELIE, listening in to a discussion Isabella and I were having on the life of Beethoven: "Did he die of hearing aid?"

ISABELLA: "Hearing aid? How could he have died of having a hearing aid, Amelie? He most probably didn't even have a hearing aid."

AMELIE: "No, you know. Deaf sentence."

Once bitten

ISABELLA, just after she'd finished watching an advertisement Scitech (where I work) had done and uploaded to YouTube for a feature exhibit, Rescue: "Well, it looked good in the ad, Dad. All the rescuing and taking off in a real helicopter and everything. But then you go and see it and it's nothing like that. Who made it?"

DAD: "I don't know."

ISABELLA: "Because whoever did should make one that's really boring so that it's a lot more real."

Stars are just dots

AMELIE, referring to the way stars are sometimes drawn: "Stars are just dots. That's how you see them in the sky. They're not, like, triangle and triangle."

Achievement Legend

ISABELLA, referring to the Achievement Legend on her school report that she received recently: "'C' stands for Consistently. That's the best one you can get."

DAD: "Is it?"

ISABELLA: "Yeah. Consistently means you're doing really well, Dad. Then, after that, there's 'U' for Usually; 'S' for Sometimes; 'R' for Rarely and . . . oh no! 'NA' for Not Applicable. Oh my god! I'm so glad I didn't get that!"

LAST WORD

This had better count, Dad

ISABELLA, playing soccer after she'd just chased very hard after a ball in an attempt to beat me to it: "This had better count as me having done exercise, Dad."