

extra fingers

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 51 • DECEMBER 12, 2017

[VISIT THE WEBSITE HERE](#)



**Franz Reichelt
and his parachute**

Has anyone ever jumped off the Eiffel Tower?

AMELIE: "Has anyone ever jumped off the Eiffel Tower?"

DAD: "Yes. I know of at least one man who did. He thought he could fly."

AMELIE: "Whooh! Did he die?"

DAD: "Yep. Straight to the ground after only a few hopeless flaps of his homemade wings."

AMELIE: "Whooh! Did he have a strong religion?"

DAD: "No idea."

AMELIE: "Can't imagine anything else making you want to do that."

The man who died jumping off the Eiffel Tower in 1912 was Franz Reichelt, an Austrian-born French tailor, inventor and parachuting pioneer, who was testing a wearable parachute of his own design. Reichelt had become fixated on developing a suit for aviators that would convert into a parachute and allow them to survive a fall should they be forced to leave their aircraft. His initial experiments with dummies dropped from the fifth floor of his apartment building had been successful.

One ride

AMELIE: "Dad, can we go to the Royal Show? Please! I really want to go."

DAD: "Oh no, not the Royal Show. I can't stand the Royal Show. All that junk food, the crowds, the expense of it . . . the terribly expensive show bags . . . no way!"

AMELIE: "But it's not that expensive!"

DAD: "Yes it is! What are you talking about? Twenty-eight dollars just for me to go in whether I do anything inside or not? You call that 'not expensive'?"

AMELIE: "Please, Dad! It's free for me to get in."

DAD, sighing: "Oh!"

AMELIE: "I just want to go on one ride. One ride. I promise, Dad! I just want to go on the roller coaster and that's it."

DAD: "One ride?"

AMELIE: "Yes. I promise. I *really* promise. And for you to go on the ride with me."

DAD: "See? You're already changing the deal. And that's also what you say now, Amelie. Come tomorrow . . ."

AMELIE: "I promise, Dad. I really promise."

Later on that day, Amelie eagerly looking on, I purchased a ticket for myself online to save four dollars.

AMELIE: "Yay! We're going. Thank you, Dad. Thank you!"

One of the joys of reading Harry Potter

AMELIE: "I always love it in Harry Potter when the writing gets capitals and the words turn into yelling words. I always like it when I see the bigger letters coming up and I can't quite get to them because I can't read the littler words in front fast enough to get to them. I just always think, 'Aarrggh! What are they going to be?'"

Those calls

AMELIE, after picking up the phone at about six o'clock one evening, as told by Karin: "Hello. What? What? I can't understand you! What did you say? I can't understand a word you just said. None of it. What? Speak up! I still can't understand you . . . It sounds like rubbish. What! Alright. Okay . . . *(Completely fed up)* Oh! I still can't understand you. What's the point! Okay. I'll go and get my mum . . . *(To Karin)* Mum, there's someone with an Indian sort of voice on the phone and I think it's one of those selling people."

KARIN, moments later after grumbling all the way to the phone: "Hello."

Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep . . .

DAD: "Alright. But remember. One ride. Okay? Just remember that. And then we'll look at all the animals and free exhibits."

AMELIE, stridently: "One ride?"

DAD: "Yeah. That's what we agreed on yesterday."

AMELIE: "But, Dad. What if there are other rides?"

True fact

AMELIE: "Dad, did you know that you could bite your own hand off like it's a carrot but your body won't let you? True. Fact."

DAD: "What do you mean 'true fact'? It's not a true fact."

AMELIE: "It is, Dad. I was in Year Two, or maybe it was Pre-Primary, and I was listening into a conversation on a bus and this girl said it."

DAD: "Well that doesn't make it a true fact."

AMELIE: "Yes it does. Now give me your head and make it go flop. I want to weigh it."

Wooly sky

AMELIE, referring to a photo of the sky taken by Isabella out of the side window of our car: "It's like they've sheared a sheep and spread it all over the sky."

I always steer clear of temples

From a young age we're told a knock to the head in certain spots can be fatal.

ISABELLA: "Why don't people just push hard on their temples if they want to commit suicide? Why don't they do it that way? People come up with all kinds of really strange and difficult ways to kill themselves but, that's a way. I always stay right away from my temples just in case I kill myself."

Why me?

DAD to **AMELIE**, in the middle of giving her tips on how to approach an upcoming athletics carnival: "Look, I'll repeat the plan to you again and I'll try and make it a bit more succinct. First hundred, you let the really fast runners go off ahead of you. But not too much that you lose contact with them. Over the second and third hundreds, you just let them be that same

distance ahead of you. And in the fourth hundred, if you've timed your race right, you'll then catch up to them just near the end and go past them, with about ten or twenty metres to spare at the finish line. That should be the plan. That you come through fast at the end. Okay?"

AMELIE: "What about, um, hurdles? I've got huddles, too."

DAD: "I know. Okay, in the hurdles, the trick there is to not run up to the hurdle and see it as a high jump. So you don't go really fast at the hurdle and then do these really little stutter steps just before it and jump high and over the top. The idea of the hurdles is to keep your speed going and just clear the hurdle. Now because you've had no experience with the hurdles . . . I don't know why you're doing the hurdles because you've never done a hurdle in your life, have you?"

AMELIE: "No."

DAD: "Right. That's really not the perfect situation. You've not done a single hurdle in your life and you're representing your school in the hurdles."

AMELIE: "I've never done it and I don't even know how to do it."

DAD: "Yes. Well, see this is a problem. What you're going to do is you're going to . . . you're going to see these things that you've got to jump over. You know what a hurdle is, don't you?"

AMELIE: "Are they really high?"

DAD: "No, not that high because they're not a high jump. They're just an obstacle that you've got to get across. Now you can't run around them. You know that, don't you?"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "You've got to stay in your lane. Okay?"

AMELIE: "Are they going to be really far apart?"

DAD: "Yeah, far enough apart that you'll be able to do a fair few steps in between them."

AMELIE: "Do you just, like, leap in the air or, like, so when you run you just leap over them?"

DAD: "Yeah, you've got to make sure you get over them, right?"

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "And because you've had no experience—"

AMELIE: "It's really dumb."

DAD: "Yeah. You're not really going to know how to leap over them properly, are you? The best way is to just clear them but because you're inexperienced you're going to have to make *sure* you clear them. Which means you are going to lose a bit of that fluent stride that you might have been able to generate just before the first hurdle. For example. Do you understand what I mean?"

AMELIE: "Ahhh . . . no."

DAD: "Okay, what part didn't you get?"

AMELIE: "All of it."

DAD: "What? None of it?"

AMELIE: "Yeah. Say it again."

DAD: "Okay."

AMELIE: "They might explain it to us when we're at the carnival."

DAD: "Well, they'd want to. They picked you for the race."

AMELIE: "Why did they pick me for hurdles?"

DAD: "I don't know."

Doesn't even make sense

Amelie to Dad: "Today, I had to go to a different toilet. I had to go to a staff toilet. Because the Junior School toilet was broken for some reason. Anyway, I was in there and there was this grey-haired lady and she said to me, 'You're not supposed to be in here.' And I said, 'Well, what am I supposed to do? My toilet's broken, I couldn't walk to any other toilet because I was busting, and this was the nearest one.' And then she said, 'Well just remember next time.' And I was thinking, 'What? What is that supposed to mean? That doesn't even make any sense!'"

AMELIE: "I'm a bad jumper and I don't know how I'm going to do it. I probably won't come first."

Why are you telling me if you can't tell me?

AMELIE: "Dad?"

DAD: "Hmm."

AMELIE: "Yesterday, um, Ebony said, 'I can't tell you something because Ella told me not to'. I'm, like, 'Well why are you telling me?'"

DAD: "Yes, exactly."

AMELIE: "And then she said, 'Because, um, I can't.' And I'm, like, 'That doesn't make sense. Why are you telling me if you can't tell me?'"

DAD: "Yeah why even say that to you? Don't you think that's just about trying to get you to sort of be insisting . . ."

AMELIE: "Yeah."

DAD: "For her to tell you? Do you think that's what that's about?"

AMELIE: "Yes. Because I hate it when someone tells you something and then you really want to tell someone else but you can't. I want to tell you something but Ebony told me not to."

DAD: "You want to tell me something?"

AMELIE: "But Ebony told me not to."

DAD: "Well you better not. (*Amelie laughs*) But you really want to tell me, don't you?"

AMELIE: "I really want to."

“Amelie said dying is a talent. That’s not true. No one has a talent for dying. Absolutely no one.”

ISABELLA

DAD: “Does it hurt inside? *(More laughter, this time with pain)* How much do you want to tell me? What’s the feeling?”

AMELIE: “I really want to tell you.”

DAD: “Sorry?”

AMELIE: “I really want to tell you.”

DAD: “And what happens inside you? When you know you can’t.”

AMELIE: “Urging forwards . . .”

DAD: “It’s urging forward inside you?”

AMELIE: “Yeah.”

All of them?

DAD to **AMELIE**, watching the Philae probe land on a comet for the first time in human history: “Look! Look at that! They’re on the comet. How’s that?”

AMELIE: “Are they?”

DAD: “Yeah.”

AMELIE, as the camera panned to show a crowd of people in the control centre applauding the achievement: “All of them?”

DAD: “No, not all of those people, darl.”

AMELIE: “I was going to say, ‘That’s amazing!’”

Don’t forget

Amelie’s friend, **EMILY** to **DAD**: “I’ve got a hole in my heart. Will I be able to go on the Abyss*?”

DAD: “Better ask your mum.”

AMELIE, visibly disappointed: “Oh!”

DAD: “Well, it is a hole in her heart, Ams. Come on! What do you want me to say?”

AMELIE, unyieldingly: “Please!”

Four and a half hours later . . .

AMELIE, leaning out of the car window as we dropped off Emily: “Don’t forget to ask your mum.”

EMILY: “What?”

AMELIE: “The hole in your heart.”

EMILY: “Oh yeah.”

AMELIE: “So you can find out if you can go on the Abyss.”

EMILY: "Okay."

AMELIE: "Don't forget!"

*Adventure World's very hairy roller coaster ride

There'd be somebody

AMELIE: "Dad? You don't have any talent for music but you do have a talent for Jacob's Ladder*. Going up and down Jacob's Ladder. Everyone has a talent for something."

ISABELLA: "Not everyone."

AMELIE: "What?"

ISABELLA: "Not everyone has a talent. There'd be somebody in this world who doesn't have a talent. There'd be somebody somewhere sitting out in a desert who doesn't do anything and therefore doesn't have a talent."

AMELIE: "Well they could have a talent for just sitting around and not doing anything. That could be their talent."

ISABELLA: "How is that a talent?"

AMELIE: "It could be a talent. Why not?"

ISABELLA: "Because it's not a talent. Dad, explain it to her please! What kind of talent could someone have if they're just sitting around in a desert?"

AMELIE: "They could have a walk talent."

ISABELLA: "A walk talent! Anyone can walk."

AMELIE: "Yeah but they might do it really well. Like, better than everyone else. Or they could have a talent for surviving."

ISABELLA: "Not if they're just about to die."

AMELIE: "You're making it really really hard for me, aren't you?"

Thirty minutes later the conversation was still raging on . . .

HOLLY to AMELIE: "So, you're saying that sitting on the ground is a talent?"

AMELIE: "Hmm-hmm."

ISABELLA: "She [Amelie] said dying is a talent. That's not true. No one has a talent for dying. Absolutely no one."

* A well-known staircase of steps used for exercise in Kings Park, Perth

He's still alive

AMELIE, on the way to school: "Dad, that's the guy at our school that smokes lots of cigarettes and drinks alcohol. See him? He hasn't died yet. He's still alive."

LAST WORDS

Amelie one-liners

AMELIE: "Did everything run smoothly after Hitler died?"

AMELIE to KARIN: "Would you be brokenhearted if I married Dad?"

AMELIE: "I'd rather die than cut an elephant in two."