

ADAM ASKS...

A QUESTION



By: Susan Joy Walters

1.



Zara just knew...

that something was wrong with Adam. She had sensed it for a while now, and had encouraged him a lot, but he still wasn't ready to talk about it. She just knew. Zara loved him so much, her little man. Her brave little, sensitive little, beautiful little man, who lit up her days and without whom, the world made no sense. So why was it even more difficult this time, what had shifted and why had Adam become so very quiet. It really wasn't like him at all, she simply couldn't figure it out, and that made Zara very sad. What Zara did know however, through experience, was that she would just have to continue to be patient and wait. When Adam was ready to talk, he'd let her know for sure. And when he did let her know, she was sure she'd be ready to listen. Zara was absolutely certain of this.

2.

Adam felt like the world didn't make sense any more. Only a month ago he was playing and hanging about with his friends at school, but now, well now everything had changed. Oh sure it had been fun at first, because he hadn't forgotten how weird things had been at school in the lead-up to the 'closure'. This extended closure he was on now, not the usual kind, like for school holidays at Christmas and such. All sorts of crazy new rules had been introduced, about hand-washing and how to cough properly and not getting too close to each other and stuff like that. Yeah, Adam and his friends were all well pleased to leave that nonsense behind them. But the novelty of every day at home since then had worn off by now. Adam's friends were bored and sad, and Adam was bored and sad too.

Zara knew that she was very lucky compared to some. Along time ago she'd learned that she really needed very little to get by and it was an early life lesson that had served her well. She lived her life simply, getting a lot of pleasure out of small things like crunchy red apples and early morning walks and warm bubble baths and the laughter of friends. Most of all though, she got pleasure out of being Adam's Mum. That's why the last few months had been so hard. Though Zara felt she'd done all she could to explain the situation clearly to Adam, and had kept things as light and as happy as possible for them, this time it clearly wasn't enough. Adam was older and beginning to really see the world he was growing into now. Perhaps he'd be coping better Zara thought, if there was a man around.



3.

Adam wished not for the first time, that his Dad was still here to talk with. 'He'd be able to help me sort it all out' he thought, because Adam's Dad was good like that. Once when Adam was quite a bit younger, he'd asked him, 'Dad why do rainbows smile like a sad face and not like a happy face? He remembered his Dad looking down and smiling at him then, and then ruffling his hair and then laughing out loud before saying, 'Well I'm not too sure about that my little Einstein, so how about we fire-up the Mac and see if we can find an answer to that question together'. They didn't find an exact answer, Adam remembered, but they sure had discovered a lot of fun facts about rainbows that day. Yeah, there was no doubt about it, Adam's Dad was good like that.



4.



Adam was ready...

'Are you nearly ready?' Zara called to Adam from the kitchen. 'We have to be there in 20 minutes Adam and I don't want to be late'. He didn't want to go of course, and in fact he'd much prefer to be left alone at home to get lost in Minecraft again, but he knew that wasn't an option today. His Mum had been really firm about it which was unusual for her. He knew she'd been worrying about him, but he couldn't understand why she wasn't worried about herself too. She'd said things like 'Adam, I'm as fit as a trout' or 'I'm as healthy as a horse' whenever they'd talked about the virus, but that didn't help Adam feel one bit better. He'd heard enough news and seen enough changes by now, to understand how serious it all was. So yeah, Adam knew that his Mum was just putting on a brave face for his sake.

5.

'Hello Adam, I'm Doctor Dolittle' said the man in the green leather chair, once Adam and his Mum we're seated on the couch. 'Hi', Adam said, looking first at his Mum, who just smiled at him and gave a little nod. 'Your Mum tells me you've been a bit sad and quieter than usual for a while now' the man continued. 'And so we're here today to see if together, we can better understand the reasons for that'. He looked at Adam then as if he wanted him to say something, but there wasn't anything he wanted to say, so Adam shrugged his shoulders and then looked over at the table near the wall across to his left. He'd noticed it as soon as they'd arrived, as it had more action figures and mini models of things on it than he'd ever seen before in his life. 'Dr Dolittle must really like to play a lot', Adam thought.

'Do you like action figures Adam?', Dr Dolittle then asked, and which for some reason made Adam feel a little bit embarrassed. He quickly looked away from the table then, shrugging his shoulders and saying 'Yeah, they're ok I guess', before again looking at his Mum, who was now looking at Dr Dolittle and smiling. 'Well as you can probably tell Adam, I love action figures', said Dr Dolittle. 'So how about we head over to the table and you can take a closer look at my collection'. Adam looked back at the table again. He really had never seen so many cool things like that in one place before. It was hard to tell from where he sat, but was that even a full set of the Justice League. 'Yeah, ok', said Adam looking away once more, and thinking 'it's better than sitting here answering questions'.



6.

Zara stayed seated on the couch when Adam and the Dr. made their way over to the table, feeling the relief that just being there was for her. The rapid spread of the global pandemic and the panic which ensued had impacted upon everyone, of that she had no doubt. As Adam however was the single highest priority in Zara's world, each day she focused purely on keeping them both safe and well. It was a great source of comfort to her in fact, that Adam was her reason to get up in the morning and it kept her focused on her 'day at a time' philosophy, one that had served her well in the past. 'If only Geoff were here, things would be so much easier', Zara suddenly caught herself thinking. Then, feeling her eyes welling up, she consciously returned her full attention to Adam at the table.



7.



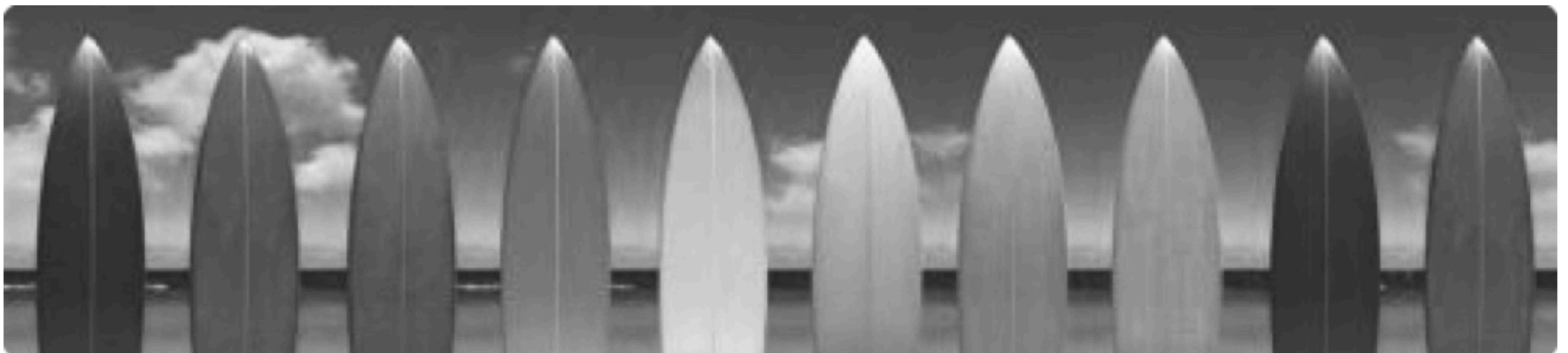
Seeing is believing...

Adam could hardly believe what he was seeing. Laid out in front of him were bridges and buildings and boats and bulldozers, trees, flowers, plants and food items, fairies, princes, wizards and more fantasy figures than he could name or count. Cars and trucks, planes and cranes, and hundreds of other random things, like mirrors, feathers, stars and bones. He saw a windmill, a fountain, a cave, a mountain, a fireplace and a lake, and mixed up with all of it, every kind of animal he could think of. 'Wow Dr Dolittle!' said Adam as he stared at it all, 'you must have been collecting these treasures your whole life long'. 'Ha ha, yes Adam actually I have' the Dr. laughed, and then said, 'now how about you choose three treasures from the table that you like the most'.

8.

At first Adam thought he'd never be able to choose, because there were just so many treasures and in truth he liked them all. As he stood there trying to decide however, he suddenly saw something he immediately wanted. A little silver bucket filled to the top with sparkling sand had caught his eye and so without thinking about it any further, he reached out and picked it up. 'That's a good choice Adam' said the Dr. smiling, 'and it's one of my favourite things as well'. Adam looked even more closely at the bucket of sand now that he was holding it, and then thought about the last time that he and his Mum & Dad had spent a day at the beach. He remembered how they had all built the sand castle together and even included a moat, which they filled up with seawater from the bucket.

'What else do you like Adam?' Dolittle asked, nudging him gently out of his daydream. Adam knew the answer straight away he realised, but would now need a minute to again find the item he was thinking of. Scanning the back right hand corner of the tabletop intently, Adam finally found it, a perfect miniature surfboard painted in the colours of a rainbow. He knew it was beyond his reach though, and so pointing at it while shyly looking up at the Dr. he said, 'the surfboard please sir, that one there that looks like a rainbow.' Zara who was still watching on quietly from the couch, smiled to herself as she understood the significance of a rainbow coloured surfboard to Adam. 'Thank you' she whispered to Geoff, who she truly felt was there in that moment, and then her eyes filled with tears once more.



9.

Well that's two Adam thought to himself, looking backwards and forwards and feeling very pleased with the little silver bucket he held in his left hand, and the rainbow coloured surfboard he held in his right. Backwards and forwards, from one to the other, Adam slowly took in all the tiny details of each piece. He took his time as the Dr. and his Mum looked on, and then when he was finished turned back to the table, excited again now because he still had one more item to choose. As the loaded table presented a mind-boggling number of options, it would have been perfectly understandable if Adam had been unable to make a choice between any of them at all. A young man of hardy bearing however, all Adam felt was that it was important simply to be happy with the next choice he made.





All is well...

Adam kept looking and looking over all the remaining treasures, for what seemed to him to be a very long time. When he finally did see it, the first thing he wondered was how on earth he'd not seen it in the first place. The little tan and white dog was positioned so that it looked like it was staring directly back at him. Standing almost upright on its two back legs with its two front paws reaching skyward, the puppy stood on a patch of bright green grass, head all askew, and with a bright blue butterfly settled near its feet. He had a vibrant red collar around his neck with a shiny gold name tag attached, and when the Dr. handed it to Adam, he could even read the name on the tag which said Boris. Adam looked hard at the happy little dog and knew that he was also happy with his choice.

11.

Seated back on the couch next to his Mum a little while later, and with the sparkling silver bucket, rainbow surfboard and red-collared Boris now in his lap, Adam was surprised by how happy he felt. Their time spent with Dr. Dolittle had passed very quickly really, mostly Adam thought, because the Dr. had asked lots of good questions. Adam found he had questions too, once they started talking, and both his Mum and Dr. Dolittle were really interested in all of them. They talked about lots of things and about his Dad as well, which made Adam feel sad and happy at the same time. Mum explained that she understood just how Adam felt, because even though they hadn't seen Dad for a long while now, on the inside she felt he was always very close, just as if he was standing right next to her.

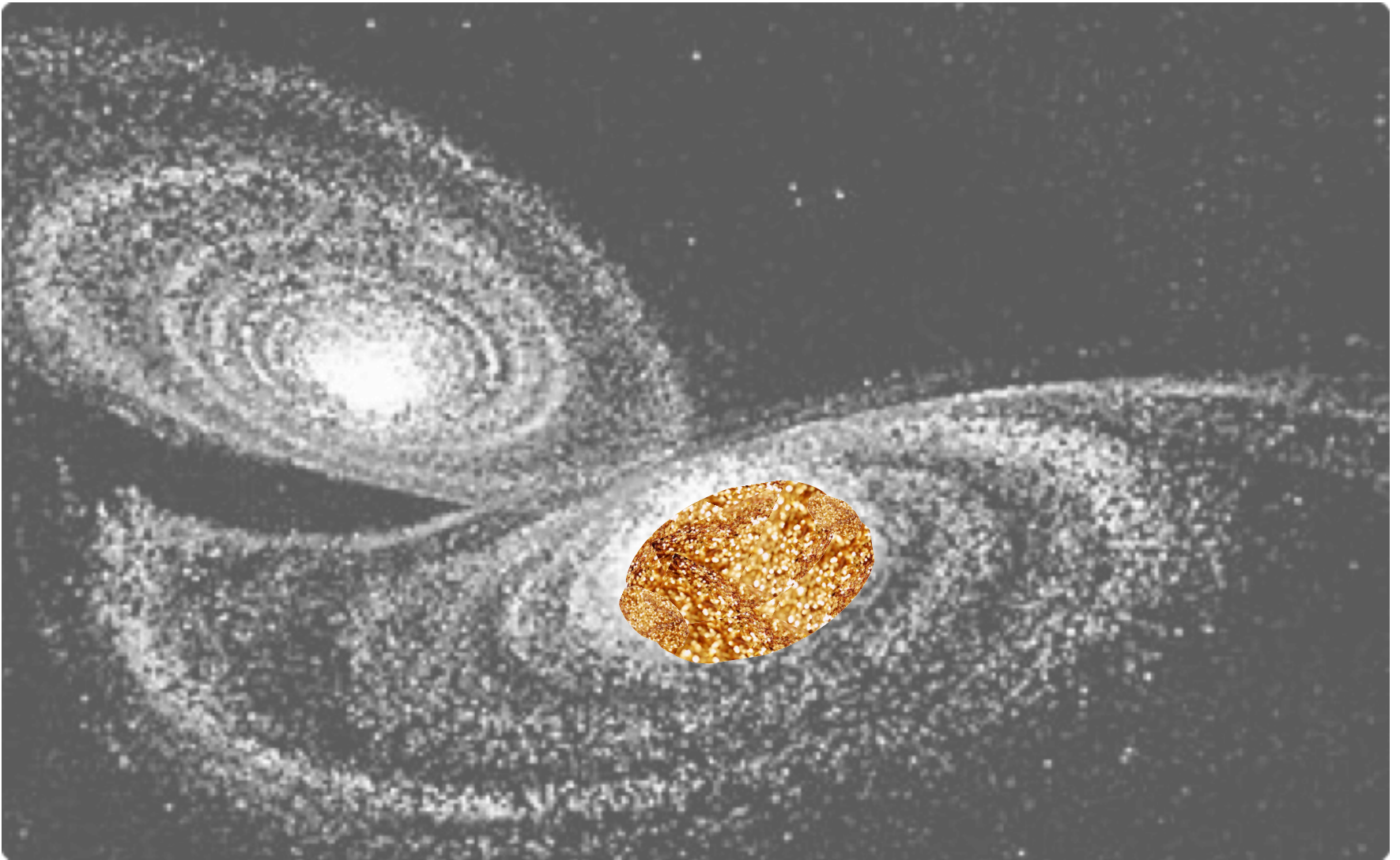
Zara was amazed at how quickly Dr. Dolittle was able to form a connection with Adam. She watched carefully as he asked a number of questions around why Adam had chosen his three favourite things. What did they mean to him, what did they remind him of, what could he see as he was looking at them and more. Zara really liked Dr. Dolittle's manner with Adam as well. She appreciated how gentle he was with him, and also liked the fact that he spoke without talking down to him, as some adults are inclined to do. Zara also knew the exact moment when she realised things were going to be ok again. It was when in the middle of explaining why he liked Boris so much, Adam stopped and looked at Dr. Dolittle, and in his most serious little voice said "Dr. Dolittle, when are we all going to die?"



12.

On the inside, Dr Dolittle let out a sigh of relief. For he felt, as soon as Adam had asked the question, that he'd be able to help him now. The Dr. looked at Zara reassuringly then and he could tell from her face that Zara was feeling relieved too. From past experience, Doctor D. had learned that it was often the same with the younger children. There was a worry or a fear hidden away in the deepest part of their mind, but once you gained access, well then a kind of snowball healing effect usually occurred, and quite quickly. The Doctor focused the rest of their time together on Adam's question now, and by the hours end, had discovered a perfectly logical reason as to why he'd asked the question in the first place. 'Children's minds truly are remarkable' the Dr. thought... although, not for the first time.





Life goes on...

The change that Zara witnessed in Adam, following their meeting with Dr. Doolittle, was remarkable. His beautiful optimistic outlook and sense of curiosity had returned, both of which had her answering what seemed to her a zillion questions a day. From “Mum how many different insects are there in the world?” all the way through to “Mum, how big is the universe?”. She did her best of course, finding good books for them to read and googling together until they found answers, yet always with a sense of sadness that Geoff wasn’t still around to help them both. Yet, he was with them in spirit, Zara was certain. She only had to look at Adam to be reminded of his father and of how very alike they were. Geoff would be so proud of their brave little boy and the man he would become. Zara was sure of this.

14.

Adam really liked words he decided, so much so that he thought maybe he'd be a writer when he grew up. It was quite easy to understand after Dr. Dolittle had explained it to him, the way he'd confused that new word Coronavirus with that other word Coronary. That was how his Dad had died, because of coronary that is, not because of coronavirus. Adam had heard a lot of people talking about it after his Dad's funeral but he didn't like to hear people talking about his Dad's heart that way, saying that there was something wrong with it and stuff. When they were at the Doctors, Mum and Dr. D explained to him that he had just misunderstood. His Dad had an injury in his heart which simply couldn't be fixed, and he certainly didn't start or spread the new coronavirus everybody was talking about.

Adam felt a little bit funny for not figuring this out for himself at first, but more than that he soon felt a lot better just knowing that everyone wasn't going to die after all. Well, not in the way the world was imagining it at the moment, that's for sure. Adam could accept that everybody would die one day of course, to make room for new people in the world. He'd also learned though, that because of the injury, his Dad and therefore his Mum and him, were just unlucky. Mum reminded Adam while they were with the Dr., that his Dad's heart was perfect in the way that a good heart really works. That his Dad loved his Mum and Adam so very much, and he cared a lot about other people as well. Yeah, Adam absolutely remembered that his Dad had a really good heart, and that made Adam super proud.



15.

Zara felt Adam wasn't the only who'd learned something at the office with Dr. Dolittle that day. Stephen, as Dr. D had asked her to call him before they left, had been so kind and thanked Adam so sincerely for helping him understand. He told Adam that communication was one of the most important aspects of his work and that he was impressed with how clear Adam had been and therefore how good he was at it. He also told Adam he believed it meant that he could achieve anything he wanted in life. Zara smiled to herself once more as she recalled Adam's final words to Dr. Dolittle before they left. "Dr D, when I grow up, I want to marry a beautiful girl just like my Mum and have a good heart just like my Dad". "Thank you Geoff" Zara whispered to herself, "we have a young son to be very proud of".

THE END

