

## Searching

by [Lisa Dordal](#) in the [August 2024](#) issue

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When my niece tells me she wants to be a scientist  
when she grows up, I respond—because of the whole science  
and girl thing—with *so much* enthusiasm, immediately  
asking what kind of science—she’s five; I figure she’s  
got it all planned out. *Plain science*, she says, only I hear *plane*  
science as in vortex, wing span, and Newton’s many laws;  
spacecrafts and the moon (surely there’s a moon in her future).  
Meanwhile, her brother, two years younger, darts around  
the playroom—bookcases, play tables, overstuffed chairs—  
like he’s a fish in some lucky kid’s aquarium loaded  
with ceramic caves, Roman ruins, ancient shipwrecks.  
*I’m here!* he shouts. *Over here!* His only need: to be found.  
My niece says again: *plain science*, a trace of sadness now  
on her face, disappointment. The way I imagine Jesus  
might have looked all those times the disciples failed to grasp  
his teachings. Just last week, a boy in my Sunday school class  
announced that his dog is half greyhound. Of course  
I asked about the other half; the boy looked blank, a little sad,  
and said: *There is no other half*. My niece scans the room,  
like she’s searching for something she can’t yet name,  
before delivering a new word—a gift—with the gentle  
determination of a priest placing a communion wafer

into the outstretched hand of a parishioner: *Regular*, she says.  
*Regular* science. She's here, on the ground, wanting only  
to be heard, while her brother tries his hardest to be found—  
among caves, castles, treasure chests. *I'm right here*, he says.

*I'm right here.*