

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.