

THIS (PLAYFUL) LIFE

She was no spring chicken and neither was he. It was Saturday, late in the day. My husband and I had decided to pick up some groceries and select a DVD for the evening. Going our separate ways, I entered the grocery store and began to shop rather mechanically, bored with the task. It was then, rounding the end of the cereal aisle, that I caught sight of her...

She was bent forward, peering around the corner, gazing along the aisle with a mischievous grin. She was bent so close to the shelves I almost collided with her. "Oh, I beg your pardon!" I said. She turned to me briefly, smiling broadly. "He doesn't know where I am" she whispered.

I followed her gaze, down the row filled with foil-wrapped coffee and exotic teas. Not a child in sight, only an elderly man peering intently around in smiling anticipation. I looked back at her and she smiled, put her finger to her lips and slipped out of sight.

Hide and seek? Chasey for the elderly? As I continued shopping, my heart lifted.

At the checkout, they were queued behind me. "Did he find you?" I asked her, keeping my voice low in unspoken female conspiracy. "Yes," she said with a smile "he did." As she spoke, I caught sight of a young mum in the next aisle. Her children were bored, scratchy and loudly insistent. She looked tired. I was filled with sympathy for her, and gratitude for the silly game I had witnessed...

I don't ever want to forget that moment in time, and the promise it holds for all of us when we are done with the demands of being young. If I ever meet that old couple again mid-game, I'm going to ask if I can play too.



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