

# THE GIRL WHO PLAYED

*Manaal Asim*





Immerse yourself in the story about the re-discovery of fun. Walk through the process of figuring out another meaning to life. This story is connected with an analysis in regards to adults finding new ways to make their lives and free time more playful. You will go back and forth between a tale and real-life examples of humans shifting their priorities to bring enjoyment to their surroundings.

Read and learn together.



## Author's notes

*"This report is based around the troubles and mundane aesthetic of adult lives, and how someone tackles it. I wrote this report in two voices: the experiences, and the references. Reading the 2 side by side helps the reader understand how fun can be incorporated into their lives to add more excitement to it. It shows how designers have used playfulness as a tool to create new experiences for users so the world becomes a little less grey."*



It is 8 am.

The piercing beeps of the alarm go off, forcing her to turn to her side to grab a hold of her phone to turn it off. The room has a cold eeriness, making it difficult for her to get out of bed. Nonetheless, she gets up to continue her morning routine. She uses the toilet, then goes straight into a hot shower. Whilst brushing her teeth, she stops for a second and stares at her reflection lifelessly in the fogged-up mirror.



*The foundation of our existence lies in following a routine; it is a structure that defines most people's adult lives. It is a way of living in certain societies which follow the 9-5 job schedule where their days revolve around their jobs and everything else lies around them.*



It is 9 am now. She changes into her clothes for the day, checks the outfit once and grabs her puffer jacket. She takes a banana from the top shelf in the kitchen as her daily morning snack before picking up her keys by the door to leave.

*Mason Currey discusses the duality of life within these routines through his book "daily rituals". (Currey, Daily Rituals 2018)*

*"The book's title is Daily Rituals, but my focus in writing it was people's routines. The word connotes ordinariness and even a lack of thought; to follow a routine is to be on autopilot. But one's daily routine is also a choice or a whole series of choices. In the right hands, it can be a finely calibrated mechanism for taking advantage of a range of limited resources: time (the most limited resource of all) as well as willpower, self-discipline, optimism." - (Farnam Street, Daily rituals: How artists work 2019)*

Her mornings always follow the same pattern.  
She could write an exact itinerary based on  
it and manage to follow it daily without fail.  
Each day, she stands at the same bus stop,  
awaiting the 9:20 bus that takes her to the  
university.



*The concept of routine is not just a physical  
action but it can be catered through the  
spaces we interact with; most office spaces,  
follow a specific time to enter and leave, and  
a specific area to sit and work. These  
industrial placements allow for uniformity  
between workers and inherently, cause them  
to follow the same routines.*

It's the same route, passing the same buildings, stopping at the same stops, with the same traffic jams of course to mess with the timetable. In a city like London, the bus is never completely peaceful but her earphones blur the chaos for her. Still, she finds herself gazing out the window, with a blank expression feeling disconnected from her own body.

*The movie 'Playtime' (Tati, Playtime 1967) is a comedic commentary on the industrialised, modern France through modern architecture. The movie displays how a structured environment reacts to the whimsy of human interactions and how the two clash using Mr Hulot.*



*(Bhagat, An architectural review of playtime  
(1967) 2023)*

Her life moves like clockwork: wake up, attend university, exercise, return home for meals and sleep. It's as though someone is constantly rewinding the same mundane TV show scene.

*Through the movie one can realise the difference a person makes to a space, whether one uses it for the intended purpose, or navigates around it to create this quirky setting. A person's use of a certain space can affect the outcome of it completely. For Mr Hulot, the office building is not a space to work, yet it is a maze, he walks around it and interacts with it as a completely new environment, similar to an exploration of a new playground.*

'Boring' the word is stuck in her mind as she sits at her desk, examining her dull life. When did her life change into being this mundane routine which was essentially... boring?

*It picks up how a person with just their existence can challenge the industrialised way of working. Every home is the same, every office is the same, every cubicle is the same, and most people in the movie interact with these spaces in the same robotic way. Only Mr Hulot is presented as this anomaly to clash with this perceived 'normality'. This is an insight to the viewers that people have the will to alter spaces and view them differently. To explore something which may even seem inaccessible just to add an extra bit of fun insights for them.*

Memories of her childhood start flooding her mind. As a child, she had always been so excited to do things. Every day was a new journey; a new experience. Even if it was the same as going to school every day and eating the same lunches, it never felt robotic. As a child, she packed her bright pink bag covered in flowers, and eagerly ran into the classroom to sit with her peers. She excitedly learned new things and played with her friends.



*Playfulness is an internal construct. Samantha Warren, a Professor at the University of Portsmouth studied how an organisation introduced play (Samantha Parsley 2005). They brought in pool tables and scooters which made minimal differences since it felt forced. This company also brought in dolls around to keep as decoration. The act of play rose when workers began to place these dolls into funny situations such as on the toilet or where the coffee would be. This artful disruption gave the space a more fun feeling. The authenticity brought by people interacting with each other in a lighthearted way is what creates fun.*

To her, a pencil was not just a writing tool, but a yellow magic wand to cast spells on her enemies. The building blocks in class were not just to make buildings, but a bright decoration to adorn her cubby.

*Play provides so many opportunities to grow together from childhood until adulthood.*

*Cas Holman said, "If we can play together, then we can live together". (S2 Ep4, Cas Holman, Design for Play, Abstract: The Art of Design, 2019) She is an American toy designer who enjoys creating things to allow children to think.*

A piece of paper was not for just learning, but for creating multicolour aeroplanes which flew across the classroom at great heights. Everything given to her had multiple opportunities for use. There was not a moment where she felt bored as she saw the colour and the life in everything.





*(Lange, Cas Holman's search for the Ideal Playground 2019)*

*She believes in open-ended play to allow the user to create their own results as their brain is thinking on their own instead of having to follow instructions. This aspect of play lets the participant incorporate their creativity without having to be constrained by a rule set.*

*She says that the world is designed for adults, that is why it is so dull and goal-oriented. When sitting with this statement alone, one questions why the adult world is like that. Why is the world designed for adults that way?*

The colours slowly faded as she grew older. The happiness and the imaginative ideas slowly dispersed away from her mind; she stopped looking for the potential of excitement around her. Where did this feeling go?

*She brings it back down to school, that schools are designed for factory workers as they follow the same pattern since industrialisation. Children are taught to follow this robotic way of learning throughout their school lives and continue to work like that as such. Their learning is not a gauge of intelligence, it is a routine to follow as they keep growing up. Even a lot of toys do not allow for children to learn as there is a right way and wrong way to play; Holman aims to change that notion.*

Having to follow such a manufactured routine seemed so draining all of a sudden. She sees herself and her surroundings once again, and it seems as though her eyes placed a translucent shade of grey on everything, creating a dullness within her surroundings.

*Designing for children to her is designing for people. To change the way adults view play, they have to learn to view it in a new light from childhood, which is why she advocates intuitive play. Letting children play as a way of learning, changes their outlook on education as a whole, as they are involved in the studies at their level, and develop their ways of thinking at their own pace without having to worry about outcomes. This style of intuitive play is pushed so it is not viewed as a moment of vulnerability when not having an outcome, but instead a positive aspect as it promotes the people engaged to enter a flow state of learning and having fun.*

She looks up at her lecturer and sees the same grey aura emitted through him. It is hard to pay attention as she constantly finds herself zoning out to avoid the brooding atmosphere within the room.





*(Waddoups, Cas Holman's toys empower children to ask big questions 2020)*

*Holman has created many toys such as Geemo (2007): a magnetic loose toy which children have to find ways to connect to create their designs as there are no indications on which ends can connect vs which ends cannot.*

*She also created the Rigamajig (2011): another open-ended toy which is a large-scale building kit with no instructions. It allows players to create whatever they can think of using the correct tools to visualise their ideas.*

She stares directly at the plain grey wall to her right, not being able to imagine anything on it; the wall itself seems lifeless.

*These new ways of thinking, when given to children through such toys allow them to grow with a new mindset of understanding not only the importance of play but also the importance of pushing boundaries and taking risks in life without the fear of a result. Adults these days in most aspects of life follow specific routines and rules which hinder their creative minds. Learning in this way instead can help people grow up to keep play of a higher importance within their daily lives.*

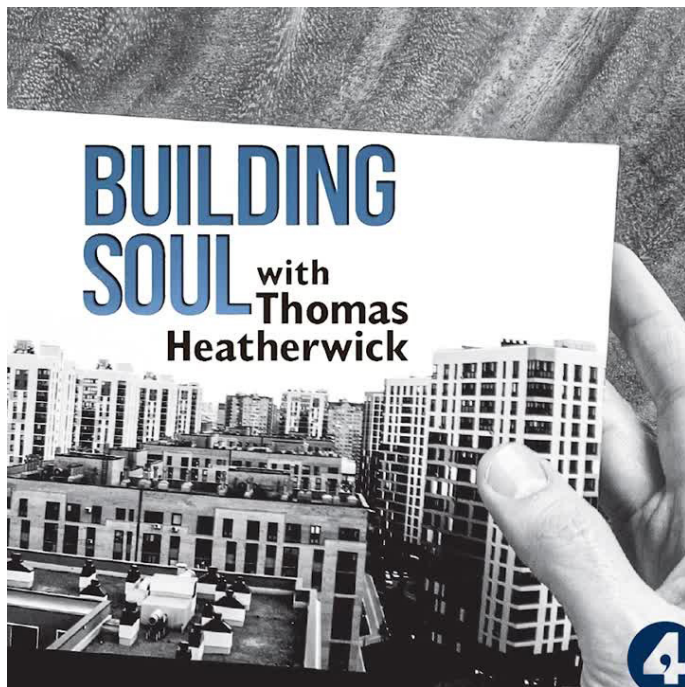
She looks at the seats; everyone looks robotic, doing the same thing, listening and writing notes at the same time whilst staring at the screen covered in words ahead.

*Spaces play a big role in affecting the person using it. The design of a space allows for an upfront visual interaction at first and certain parts of it such as the colours, the layout, and the style, affect different parts of the viewer's brain; further interaction adds to more effects.*

How did being stuck in this space for hours feel all right to her before? There's no life in this full lecture hall.

*There is an inherent connection between how human psychology reacts to the infrastructure surrounding us. Built infrastructure can affect one's mental and emotional state. This is discussed in a podcast called 'Building Soul' by Thomas Heatherwick (Heatherwick Studio, 2023) where he discusses 'Why Boring Buildings Are Bad for Us'. He says, "We are living through a global blandemic of building design" and wants to bring back buildings that 'are not soulless'. (min 2:20)*





*(Heatherwick Studio 2023)*

It is almost as if she receives a revelation that day, to try and reconnect with her youth, and change the trajectory of her life. The yearning for excitement feels more important than ever, compelling her to find it herself. Her old schedule and learning environments had failed to reveal this to her, and she is ready to change that. How, though?

*He invites physician and researcher Alexander Coburn (Tom Pooley, BBC Radio, 2023) to explain how people evaluate buildings. They focus on 3 major things: coherence, fascination, and homeyness. Coherence allows one to notice how easy it is to comprehend a space. Fascination describes how captivating and attractive a space is. Homeyness is the comfort the space provides to the user within.*

It is time for her to rediscover the world she lives in, to embark on a journey to reconnect with the fun she lost within her.

*Heather Wick pushes the idea that people require these 3 aspects within building structures to enjoy their surrounding space, yet they are surrounded by towering, minimalistic pieces which affect them beyond visual disinterest. He states that people don't enjoy being around boring spaces as such as their arousal levels fall. They do not feel comfortable in these spaces which can induce more stress as well.*

She decides to make the most of her upcoming free time by beginning this journey of embracing her surroundings in a new way.

*When a building is boring within a community, people do not feel attached to the space to call it their own. He continues by saying that people lose attachment between the place and its culture when the buildings fail to represent it.*

*It continues with the feeling of loss in terms of homeliness and identity connected with the surroundings. The reason these buildings are tagged by graffiti artists is to recreate that connection, add some fun and complexity and make people reconnect with the space.*

This time she wakes up by herself in the morning on a Sunday. She rolls out of bed excitedly to complete the many plans she made for the day. She goes to the bathroom, putting on her music playlist as she showers. She dances about, in line with the melodies as she washes her body. Already feeling free for the day, she changes into her gym clothes, grabs her water bottle, and is ready to go.



*There should be more permanent ways of being able to transform spaces which stray from the 'typical' way.*

It is 9 am.

Entering a rock climbing space for the first time since childhood, she finds herself instantly mesmerised by the design - towering walls curving about, all covered in different coloured holds of different shapes and sizes. Pieces extrude out of the walls to create different shapes and styles, flowing with each other as she pans her view higher and higher. It goes up to the ceiling and back down; every part of the space can be interacted with.

*They felt as though when a human gets too comfortable in a space and fully adapts to it, they begin to deteriorate as their daily life passes the same way. There is nothing new happening for the body of mind to learn about.*

Just the view of the space and seeing people traverse along it, taking over these walls, sparked excitement within her to do the same. It's reminiscent of a life-size version of Connect the Dots where one uses their body as the lines to connect the holds creating an array of pathways to create and follow.

*Arakawa and Madeline Gin are two self-taught architects who looked at changing the normal style of a housing property so it can affect the residents differently. They wanted to combat one of the major Human design flaws, death (Dante A. Ciampaglia, 2021).*





*(Cilento, ArchDaily 2010)*

She claps her hands together, watching the chalk create a small whoosh of smoke, and begins to climb. Attempting to grip the wall in different ways, travel up and down, left and right seems like an innate feeling.

*One's body needs to be constantly adapting and adjusting to being stimulated which promotes longevity. Allowing oneself to be part of a space which may not be 'normal' gives the body and brain permission to react in another way.*

Something about a man-made rock climbing wall is industrial yet natural resembling a space for a monkey to climb and swing about. She manages to emulate the sensation that animals experience on a day-to-day, carrying her body around the courses.

*One of their most famous pieces is Reversible  
Destiny Lofts – In Memory of Helen Keller.  
(Arakawa and Gin, Reversible Destiny Lofts, 2005)  
This combatted against the boring nature of a  
living space.*

*Driven by their philosophy of 'procedural  
architecture,' the project challenges and  
stimulates the senses. Residents and guests  
navigating these spaces encounter environments  
designed to unlock the full potential of the body,  
providing experiences that may evoke the  
perspectives of both children and the elderly.*

For once after a long time, she feels connected to her brain and body just by doing a simple task such as climbing, stuck in a flow of wanting to conquer every route possible. Her fingers grip the holds, her legs stiffen for stability, and her eyes scan the terrain above to choose where to go next. It feels like a performance except it is for nobody but herself. She visualises herself successfully climbing the routes, contorting her body in ways to adapt to the hold. Even if it is the same action, it is always portrayed differently as no movement matches the other.

*Design like this forces people to step away from their usual routines  
thus allowing their minds to work in new ways.*

Of course, physical activity is different from sitting down in a working space, but humans feel the most stimulated when doing something which requires different parts of themselves to have an action to do. It shows her a contrast to the mundane nature of her usual routine. For 2 hours she was attached to the walls, focusing on nothing other than climbing, having achieved a state of flow, without any other care or worry. She falls off the last course, panting, feeling exhausted. Her back slowly gives up as it isn't used to this. It is only accustomed to her sitting for 8 hours a day in front of a screen.

*Work similar to these architects can be seen in MVRDV + ADEPT's Dynamic Ku.Be House of Culture in Movement.  
(Hernández, 2016)*

*This dynamic space is described as "What would otherwise be a simple, mindless journey through the building turns into an exploration and discovery of movement. Here it's you that defines the route, however, you want: climbing, sliding, crawling ... jumping."*



*(Indesignlive, Ku.be House of Culture and  
movement Copenhagen, by MVRDV & Adept:  
Indesignlive 2019)*

Her body was not always like this and it made her sad to feel this way. She used to be very sporty apart from just the gym. The new activity reminded her of her athletic self in the past. She would go wrestling and for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu four times a week for years.

*That is simply the basis of a fun and mentally stimulating environment so that the users have a more knowable experience within the space. A place where one has to use their mind and body together allows one to connect with oneself in new ways. This is also healthy for people, as it encourages them to be active by using their senses on their surroundings constantly.*

It reminded her of how she'd spend her days with others, being active, and having fun. During classes, she trained and fought with other people. Similar to a dance, she mirrored her partner's motions, attempting to take the lead at times.

*The Situationist movement in the 1950s took place to challenge the current norms of society (Hemmens & Zacarias, 2020). They believed that one could change mundane views on life and start living in situations deliberately to avoid confining expectations. Situationists used fun as a tool by including elements of playfulness to create disruption.*





*(Situationist International Movement Overview 1968)*

It is about dominance, and seeking victory. This is just a new space to lead in life as one would normally. It's down to when cheetahs and leopards fight against each other to prove who is the leader of the pack. The focus is on nothing else but the opponent. It is a lighthearted situation during classes, but the joy of winning is always the same. It is fun! It produces endorphins and is an immediate form of gratification.

*This rebellion against capitalistic and industrialist standards took place by adding play through techniques such as psycho-geography. In this, people would let their brains unconsciously make directions for them around cityscapes instead of following maps, to bring out more spontaneity within them. Playgrounds became battlegrounds, using psycho-geography to explore unconscious desires by reimagining public spaces, often with a dash of liquid courage.*

Finishing a rock climbing course reminds her how she would feel after a successful spar. She would scream with joy after taking down her opponent, releasing all of the dopamine, as she lay down on the mat struggling to catch her breath.

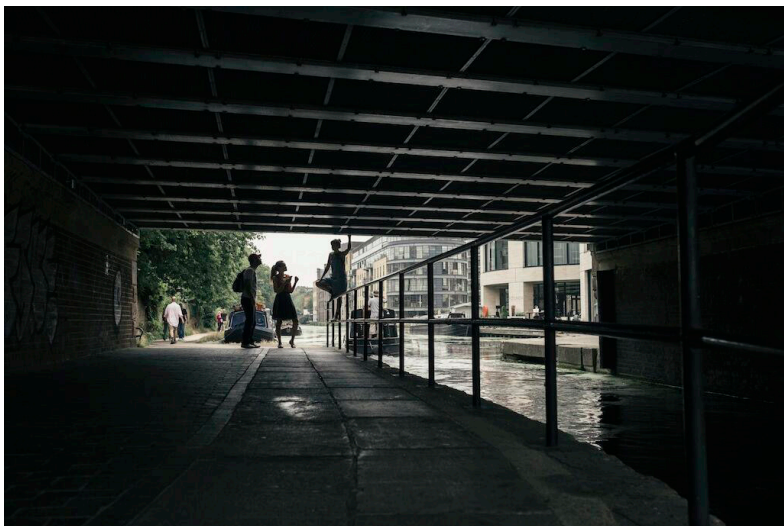
*Enter Simon Johnson, the urban game designer, advocating for 'urban drift' - a dreamlike city experience through play (Simon Johnson, 2016). He orchestrates games in the most unlikely places, turning mundane spots into havens of fun. It is about disrupting the norm and challenging the boundaries of everyday life in the cityscape. This allowed participants to embrace a new way of expressing themselves. Their belief in the transformative power of play can be seen in their statement that "the greatest civilisations come from play."*

She can still remember the jiu-jitsu gym vividly. It remained to be a box with white foam walls and floors, but the people within it made it feel so different.

*This movement brought spark to others including Simon Johnson who wanted people to experience the city in a dreamlike state by creating urban games. He challenged the boundaries of a cityscape, and the norm of following mundane routes by adding a new purpose to them, making it more fun. For example, using a car park to play snakes and ladders by going up the stairs and down the ramps (Igfest, 2008). This new idea of what is usually seen as a boring, liminal space, adds a playful look to it without changing the actual space.*

Sometimes the space isn't the problem, it's what is done with it. The way one interacts with a space can change its atmosphere wildly, even if no physical changes are made to it. At the end of the night, that gym would still be an empty box, but it was something so much more exciting to her.

*Hidden City uses the cityscapes as a treasure hunt, where you would take new routes by following clues. For example, following a game like this makes one look at Oxford Street as more of a maze than just a street with shops (HiddenCity Limited, 2011). They interact with a space differently.*



*(Hiddencity relauches its London-wide  
adventure games)*

It is 12 pm.

She is at home getting ready to go to watch a movie at the cinema. She watches movies at home often during her downtime as it brings her comfort, so there had to be another way to do the same activity. She wears a pair of comfy trousers, a crop top, and a jacket to match. She leaves 5 minutes before the movie is meant to start as the cinema is only 2 bus stops away. It is surprisingly convenient as to how close the cinema is; the thought just never crossed her mind before to visit.



*People can change the way we see spaces by stepping out of the box like this and using their imagination to change things to be more playful than they may seem*



The cinema is a completely different experience from being at home. A massive room, fully blacked out so she can see nothing but the screen which towers over and around her. At 1 pm the movie starts and all of her senses are directed towards the film. It is an even bigger escape than seeing a movie through a screen since all of her attention is on only one thing. Nothing else can be seen in the background. It is just her and the film.

*Catherine Price conducted a TED talk called "Why Having Fun Is the Secret to a Healthier Life" (Price, TED, July 2022) where she unravels the true meaning behind the need for fun in a human being's life.*

For 2 hours straight her hand is shovelling popcorn into her mouth as her eyes are glued to the film. She reacts with the rest of the crowd. Her toes curl during certain scenes, and her eyes widen during others. Her brain has escaped into the world in front of her, feeling the same emotions the characters are. She smiles as the protagonists kiss, and sheds a tear when they are ripped away from each other. She feels continuously excited to see what will happen next.

*She delves into the statement that the problem with most people is they consider fun as an activity, not a feeling, and use it to describe what they do in their free time, even if it isn't providing the joyous feeling fun is meant to give.*

Movies are already fun and captivating since there is usually a storyline which is not in your day-to-day. It is a visual that you can immerse yourself in without actually being in the space.

She enters into the flow state of just enjoying one thing without having to focus on anything else.

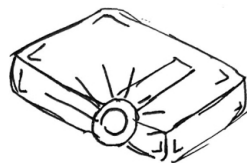
*When looking back at things we found fun as children, it is deeper than light-hearted pleasure. It is a feeling which brings out liveliness from within. It produces a radiating energy from the person, resulting in a positive experience. People resonate with this deep feeling when thinking about their childhood but forget about the importance of it now.*

Watching a story unfold in front of her allows her to escape from reality which can be boring and mundane normally. She was no longer present in her usual routine. She had left everything behind for a few hours.

*Price mentions how to be able to bring this profound energy back into one's life as doing so helps decrease the feelings of stress and loneliness. She explains how fun is about 'doing things for the sake of doing' without having to focus on the outcome, as there is no worry about what the result could be. The process itself is an enjoyable moment, allowing oneself to connect with what they are doing, whether it be with others or on their own.*

She reconnects with her thoughts as the screen goes black, and the lights turn on. She is back in the real world, feeling a little sad that the escape has ended, but happy to have had fun for the time being. After a long time, she felt no need to think of anything else. No worries, no stresses.

She feels at peace since she can now think about the new world she experienced through a projector screen.



*She states how life nowadays is draining; fun is the only feeling to directly combat that as the feeling re-energises a person. Having this balance allows for long-term happiness as one can have more opportunities to relax and really 'live'.*

She reaches home again and notices herself thinking about nothing but the next upcoming plan. For once her brain is only focused on the present. It feels relieving as the daily pressures have left momentarily. Her only goal is to enjoy the day and she feels pretty accomplished for now, excited to see what's next.

*By embracing these moments, humans get a chance to enrich their lives more with stimulating experiences, which allow them to be present in the world in a new way, being able to rebel against their usual routines by breaking the rules of 'responsible adulthood' and getting the chance to go with the flow of their surroundings.*

She takes a breather to reflect on the first half of the day; the soulless feeling within her is no longer present. She can see her surroundings in a brighter light, as the grey undertone disappears. Her mind at this time is usually struggling to take in everything about the day, but this time the activities sit in her head relaxed. She feels a calming breeze surround her as her heart rate slows down; her troubles are not present for the moment. It reminds her again of being a child but this time positively. She feels the childlike pleasure she once had transforming her views. Her inner self gleams out with a bright innocent radiance. This is all she needs.

*Inviting more fun allows one to alter their normal routines to be more exciting and invigorating since they get to forge deeper connections with themselves and the world. This new lens lets the body escape from what would have been a rather mundane lifestyle as people can take charge of prioritising more cheerful moments.*

It is 6 pm.

She's on her way to her friend's home for a game night and then dinner.

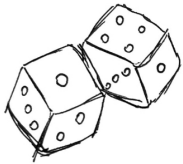
Such a playful time, games night. On arrival, she notices that the table is laid out with an array of options. The next few hours are filled with her constantly playing multiple games: Cards Against Humanity, Uno, Snakes and ladders, Ludo, and Pictionary. Game after game after game. Not one moment steers away from these playful hours.

There is no seriousness with fun games. Everyone laughs about their wins or losses, makes fun of other players, and gets caught up in the moment in a positive way.

*A study was conducted (Proyer & Ruch, 2011) with 268 adults to understand the importance of playfulness for adults through a global cognitive evaluation. This evaluation showed that adult playfulness was best predicted by humour, the appreciation of beauty and excellence, low prudence, creativity, and teamwork. The results showed that more playfulness in adults is directly related to positive psychological functioning within them.*



She jumps with excitement as she rolls the winning dice for snakes and ladders, making faces to her friends at their loss, basking in the achievement. She is ready for the next game, but she yawns since usually this time she is on her way home, exhausted and hoping to catch rest. Her eyes start feeling heavy as well, it's only 8 pm yet her body is prepared to end the day. Regardless, she ignores this feeling. A feeling of rush comes her way as she gets back in the zone for the next game, ready to conquer it with her teammates.



*A BBC podcast called “Sounds- Why We Play” (Jolyon Jenkins, BBC Radio, 2022) discusses the importance of play within different aspects of adult life. The speakers within the podcast examine how different activities and situations such as improv, urban games, and new dynamics connect with a human need for fun.*

It feels like playing games as a child. Even though they are indoors, it reminds her of the laughter whilst playing tag, or the giggling whilst trying not to be found during hide and seek. Seeing her friends smile and enjoy themselves shows her a side of their childlike selves along with her own.

*Improv is an activity done with other people. An empty room can be converted into a space for improv as it only requires communication with others. Improv itself is counted as a fun activity for many as it is acting without preparation. There is no idea for what the outcome will be and the actors are meant to flow with their partners to create an entirely new situation for themselves.*

She sees herself playing Ludo as her younger self, who has nothing to be worried about other than her friend chasing her along the board. The only thing important for her at the time is to get her pieces to the finish line. She is playing and only playing. Her eyes soften and her smile widens as this memory pops into her head; she clings to this calming feeling before snapping out of the zone.

*It is an open-ended aspect of acting which is quite fun as it requires people to think playfully, be "silly" and be fluid. An example of a starting point of improv: is to react happily regardless of the negative news given to you by the other person.*



*(The Compass, why we play, adulthood and the  
importance of play 2023)*

The setting changes at 9 pm

It's the same table and the same people, but the task is different since it's time to eat.

*This can be a hilarious concept that one may not see in a conversation throughout their daily lives, but would in a room participating in improvement. The response is of course, silly, but this playful atmosphere lets people react without worrying about the consequences of their words.*

Dinner is an important meal for her. It is the only time when she can sit and truly enjoy her meal. This time it was being shared with 5 others. Sitting around the same round table with friends on a Sunday, all sharing the same meal, with the same cutlery, drinking the same drink, except it does not feel mundane. She glances down at her plate, filled with roast chicken and potatoes, some stuffing, and a bit of gravy, almost salivating, excited to begin.

*Such reactions are celebrated in improv, and there should be ways to translate this attitude into other times of one's day with their relationships outside of the room. The comfortability of being playful within a space can soon disperse into other environments this way.*

Everyone engages in conversation and it keeps flowing as the plates get emptier. Laughs and giggles erupt from the left and right floor of the room. She is surrounded by joyous conversations and happiness. Some friends even get seconds so the dinner setting lasts longer. It felt so wholesome.



*Epicureanism (Long & Sedley, 1987) is a philosophy by the ancient Greek Philosopher Epicurus (341-270BC) which encourages including simple forms of pleasure within one's life as pleasure is believed to be the highest good.*

The way a dinner is composed allows it to be more than just eating a meal, it is a time to connect and bond. Dinners are designed to be social, not just a time to gain sustenance. She feels connected with those around her as they share an activity. This understanding allowed her to connect not only with others but also with herself, and be present within the space.



*It advocates that moderate amounts of pleasure allow a person to live a tranquil and peaceful way of life which has a long-term positive effect on the being.*

She laughs all night, chatting and catching up with others. Time passes quickly and the moment to leave arrives. On the way home, all she could think about was how that event was so different to her 'normal' downtime and having dinners usually. Despite dining regularly, this experience feels completely different. Typically even while eating, her mind races thinking about how her next day will be, and what work she has to do. She's never felt truly relaxed while eating till today.

*Epicurus brought attention to the factor that people should look to achieve contentment in their lives through freedom, friendship, and intellectual pursuits. The philosophy also looks at allowing people to stop worrying about unnecessary fears so they can focus on a tranquil, modest way of life which comes from the concept of 'ataraxia'.  
(O'Keefe, 2009)*



She already began longing for the feeling again, waiting to figure out the next time she would be blessed with the experience. It is fun because although it is a similar action, it does not happen all the time. Why is her 'normal' so different to what she truly enjoys? She wonders to herself why but thinks it is more appreciated if it does not happen often. Humans cherish experiences which do not happen daily as it is 'scarce' to them.

*This philosophy even influenced stoicism and current modern ethical theories such as research by Roman philosophers such as Lucretius (99-55BC) and Cicero (106-43BC).*

This connection with her friends allows her to be in a space of complete relaxation and fun. Her friends allow her to thrive with them, by bringing out the energy she has been in search of. Having someone around, lets her relate to them; she gets to break free from her thoughts and be in the moment.

*Epicureanism pushes people to search for a relaxed and balanced life, which involves a modest amount of fun which can bring mental calmness to a person. Even though the level of fun is described to be kept at a relaxed pace, it allows people to bring more balance between work and downtime whilst still keeping the concept of pleasure to be the most important aspect of living. It puts forth the idea that enjoying life is necessary, thus having fun should be made a constant throughout.*



*(Petiprin, Epicureanism: The ancient philosophy that  
won't go away 2020)*

It is 11 pm.

She reaches home, physically exhausted but mentally awake. She looks back at her whole day and it reminds her of her childhood. Her school days were filled with games, eating with others, and exciting things to watch and read. These were all things she missed having as an adult as they gave her the same happy feeling. She starts to dread that the next day may be the same as how it has always been, but this discovery makes her want to change this path even more. Slowly but surely she wants to learn how to incorporate this fun feeling into her daily life, whether it be around others or just with herself.

*Lynn Barnett Moriss is an Associate Professor at the University of Illinois (College of Applied Health Sciences) whose areas of interest include analysis of play and its relation to development. She tested how playful people are by creating a unit to score them based on their spontaneity, cheerfulness, activeness, and comedic look and devised that people who scored higher and were more 'playful' looked at life differently than ones who scored lower (Moriss, Play & Culture, 1990).*

She tucks herself into bed at midnight and gets to think a bit more before going to sleep. A new drive has been discovered within her to learn how to make her surroundings more enjoyable, whether it be through experiences or creation. She wants to be able to share this positive experience with others, and that's a new journey for her to embark on the next day.



*Playful adults seem to be better at dealing with life's ever-changing nature with its highs and lows. They could cope better with stress and handle life with greater ease. Having a more playful outlook on life allows a person to navigate themselves better as they are more likely to look at things in a lighthearted way.*

The world needs a little more fun; people need enjoyment to stay happy. Enjoying oneself allows people to feel as though their time is being used worthwhile. Incorporating fun things and being present positively allows so many mental and physical doors to open.

There is honestly no point in continuing a mundane lifestyle if you are not happy with it. She understands finally that her being a robot is the farthest from living.

*Spaces are meant to foster an environment where joy is created naturally, not force it.*

*Situations where people can enhance their playfulness benefit them overall. Through understanding ourselves and our environment, we can continue to develop an enjoyable experience for everyone and further understand its importance within our day-to-day lives.*

*The End.*





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