

The Curious Pair



This is my column in this month's OC Family out today.



I always wonder how other couples' relationships work—what they talk about, if they brush their teeth side-by-side in the mirror every morning, how they decide on big-ticket items. It's the little things couples do in public that make me stare and stand too close, trying to eavesdrop on their conversations.

Like at Trader Joe's the other day, a couple was standing in front of the boxed fruit. The man was holding a box of Asian Pears and the woman was diligently trying to pry the perfectly square plastic box open (despite the galvanized tape) in order to...touch them, I guess. Calmly, the man used his long (freakishly, btw) index finger to lift the side so she could...yes, yes, she wanted to touch them and when she did, she immediately shook her head and waved them away.

He picked up another box and they began another hushed and passionate conversation about—Asian Pears. I tried to hear what they were saying, pretending I cared deeply about the Clementines sitting next to the pears. But they were enormously secretive and careful not to let the rest of us know what was so flippin' interesting about—Asian Pears.

Naturally, this made me think about my husband Larry and me. I can't even imagine having a conversation that long about pears. I remember once having a pretty lengthy conversation about how much we loved cheese, but it was more because we were hungry. We started asking each other outrageous questions like, "If you could make a deal that you never could eat cheese again, but you would then be able to fly, would you?"

Seriously, who would make that deal? Like, nobody, but that's the kind of thing Larry and I talk about.

So you can understand my fascination with this couple at Trader Joe's. Larry and I had lots of conversations about them. Asian Pears just seems like a very particular and much more sophisticated thing to talk about than cheese. I mean, we would have flown by those pears at breakneck speed and thrown them in our cart (period). No discussion.

It made me wonder if we're missing out on something. Don't things like this make you speculate about how different other people's lives are? Are they happier? Their kids more intelligent? I see couples on weekend mornings who've obviously been out with their baby joggers, sipping their lattes, the Times in hand, and I think, "Huh, are we the only ones who wave our children away on weekend mornings, muttering from under our pillows about cartoons and directing them to the special 'Saturday' cereal?"

I guess it comes down to perspective—appreciating who I am and what I value. Being able to say to myself, "We're a couple who sleeps in and gives our children sugary cereal on Saturdays." And, I suppose, accepting that Larry and I are the type of couple that talks about the couple who talks about the Asian Pears...and being okay with that. Which I most certainly am.