

Indiscriminate Imagination

Seven-year-old Andrew sat on the playground of his elementary school. It was a cool spring Saturday with the wind blowing gently, tousling Andrew's deep brown hair. He sat on a step on one of the top platforms, his chin resting in his hand and his brown eyes watching the ground. Andrew peeked over his fingers to the shaggy blond-haired boy next to him. *He's not real, he's just your imagination.* Andrew reminded himself. "Grow up, Andrew!" he remembered his brother scolding him earlier that morning. Anger and sadness mixed inside his chest making him silent.

Andrew glanced at his imaginary friend. He blinked and the boy disappeared. He blinked again and he reappeared.

"You're not real!" Andrew burst out at his friend. But the boy just looked at him with a small rueful smile, "I know, Andrew." They fell back into their silence. Finally, the blond boy stood up.

"Let's play a game." he stated.

"What?" Andrew's head shot up, "Play a game?"

"Yeah."

"You're not even real!" Andrew yelled as he stood up. "You're just in my head! You don't exist, Ty! Don't you get it?! I need to grow up! I can't have an imaginary friend anymore! So go away and never speak to me again!" Andrew swiped his hand through the fake person, and he vanished in an instant.

Fuming, Andrew stomped down the steps to the next platform and sat down, leaning against a pole. He set his head against it and closed his eyes.

"I know I'm not real." Ty sat down beside him, "But maybe you don't have to completely grow up yet." Andrew opened his eyes and scowled.

"How are you back?" he asked through gritted teeth.

Ty shrugged, "I'm a part of your imagination. Truth is, you want me to exist. That's why I'm still here talking to you."

"It doesn't matter if I want you around, I have to grow up. Do chores. Do homework."

"True, but there's a time for everything." Ty shifted into a more comfortable position. "There is a time to do chores, and to finish homework. But there is also a time to play, a time to imagine. A time to be a kid." Andrew looked up at Ty, listening intently. "You can grow up later, right now, just be a kid." Andrew contemplated what Ty was saying. He did want to stay a kid a little bit longer. But...

"Avast! I'm Captain Ty! The most feared pirate of the land!" Ty stood up and raised a fist.

"You're no pirate, you don't have a sword." Andrew frowned. Ty looked at his fist and opened it, a sword appeared. Andrew's jaw dropped, "How is that even possible?"

"Well, you imagined I got a sword. I'm not real, remember? So, anything can happen. Come on, I know you want to play." Ty begged.

"I want you to leave." Andrew stated, scowling at the ground.

“No,” Ty shook his head, “Don’t you see? I’m still here. I’m still making fake swords appear. You want me to exist, you want to play!” He poked the brunette with the tip of the sword. Andrew looked up at his friend.

“Remember, all you have to do, is imagine it.” Ty encouraged.

Andrew grinned and stood up as a sword appeared in his hand and a black pirate hat landed on his head. He pointed the sword at Ty, “I’m Captain Andrew! More feared than you! Walk the plank!”

“Never!” Ty jumped up the steps to a higher platform, and the sword fight began.

The duo soon teamed up to battle the vile Blackbeard, who was trying to conquer the world. Together and with their crew of monkeys, they destroyed Blackbeard and his gang of obnoxious pirates.

Later, they found they were famous explorers trapped in a volcano. They climbed the rock wall and skipped steps to escape the red, hot, bubbling, lava. They struggled through the overgrown forest and swung across a massive ditch on long vines. When surrounded by a pack of hungry wolves, they used their flaming torches to scare the predators away. They explored the entire jungle and found the legendary golden statue of the flying penguin.

Then, they uncovered a shiny white rocket ship and blasted to space. On Jupiter, they discovered aliens the size of giraffes. The blue and purple spotted aliens attacked with their ray guns that shot strange black goop. They fled from the frightful planet and traveled to Mars where they found peaceful aliens. These benevolent creatures were shaped like three-foot red cubes that had white stripes on top. Yellow arms and legs flopped out of the sides of the

strange beings. They called themselves the *clubbers* and offered them chocolate popsicles that tasted like vanilla pudding.

“Hey! Let’s race around the track on our bikes!” Ty jumped down off Mars and ran over to Andrew’s red bicycle.

“But you don’t have a bike.” Andrew pointed out as he joined his friend.

“Sure, I do!” Ty pointed at the spot next to Andrew’s bike and a blue one appeared. Ty climbed aboard and a helmet plopped onto his head.

“Bikes are boring!” Andrew moaned, missing his alien buddies.

“We’re not on bikes! These are expensive race cars! This is the biggest race of our lives! If we win, we get the World’s Largest Chocolate Fountain!”

“And a thousand dollars!” Andrew cheered as he hopped on his “racecar”.

“On your mark,” Ty narrated.

“Get set...” Andrew piped in.

“GO!” The two boys chorused as they took off down the track. The wind blew against Andrew’s face as his legs pumped on the pedals allowing the bike to travel faster and faster. The small, doubtful voice in the back of his head spoke up again. *You need to grow up! Stop playing these silly games!* Andrew peered over at Ty. He examined his blond hair and thrilled hazel eyes. *He’s not real.* Andrew thought as they rounded the corner. The conflict once again rose in his chest. *Do I grow up or stay a kid?*

Then he remembered Ty’s impactful words, “*There’s a time for everything.*” For a moment Andrew closed his eyes. *When I go home, I’ll have homework and chores. But right now, at this time, I don’t. So, I don’t have to worry about that right now, that’s for another time.*

Andrew opened his eyes, *at this moment, I can be exactly what I am.* His heart beat quicker from the exhilarating ride. The cars they competed with revved their engines and tried to cut around them. Andrew peered over at Ty and smiled, *I can be a kid, a kid with an indiscriminate imagination.*