Three Children’s Stories About Connectedness
And Disconnectedness In A Post Modern Era

A Creative Honors Thesis
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## Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Camille, Queen Of The Junk Jungle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>How Little Neal Got Bigger – An Adventure In The Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Jacob Looks Like Jacob Looks Like Jacob</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Reader,

When reading the following three stories, please keep a few things in mind. First of all, these three stories are the product of a few years of ideas knocking around my head, and one wonderful semester spent writing children’s fiction under the wonderful eyes of Professor Hartman. Thank you so much Professor Hartman. These stories have evolved a great deal as I have written them – originally aiming at explaining and solidifying concepts of post modernity into something explanatory for children. As the stories were written and re-written, they focused in on how in our current day and age every person is flooded with images, information, and materials. I like to look at this “final version” not as final version, but as another draft in three stories that are still evolving toward a final point at which, they would hopefully be publishable material. For children, especially between the ages of six and ten years old (this was certainly the case for myself between the ages of six and ten), this flood is critical in defining how they see our world. These stories are aimed at children who are forming their ideas about the world they are finding around them – a world that fast presses in. They are meant to do what my favorite books as a child did: be amusing and informative. I hope they teach a sort of lesson while having value as entertainment all at once. The illustrations (there are three for each story) are samples of what I would like to create to accompany each page of each story, and I hope they give you even more insight into how I picture these tails.

Thank you for reading,
Camille, Queen of The Junk Jungle

Queen Camille lives with her best friend, Leo The Lion Knight, under Big Soft Recliner Mountain. No one can see The Lion Knight move or hear him talk except The Queen (and of course us Junkyard Angels), but he is always there for her as much as she is there for him, and she could not rule the Junk Jungle without him by her side.

Every morning when that Trickster Sun wakes up and begins to climb up over the edge of the Junk Jungle, Camille, with her old tin can crown atop her head and her Lion Knight by her side, watch from the Highest Hood on Racecar Peak -- for Camille is Queen of all of the Junk Jungle, and it is their responsibility to make sure that that Trickster Sun stays up in his place -- so all the junk of the Junk Jungle can transform back into treasures.

What is treasure, you may ask? All treasures shine, but aren't always bright. A treasure can be anything from a green glass bottle, to your favorite place mat. It could be a doll, or a tin can. Treasure shines in different ways to different people -- if you are looking at a treasure you will know it, because it will excite you, it will make you keep watching it, or touching it, or playing with it, or listening to it. A treasure will keep you -- and you will keep it. Everyone, no matter how small or how big, needs a treasure -- because a treasure is a beautiful thing.

Whenever a treasure is lost or left alone for long enough, it can lose its shine. Any treasure that loses its shine can stop keeping its owner, so its owner will stop keeping it. Treasures that stop keeping their owners are called junk, and when a treasure becomes junk, it is brought to the Junk Jungle by the truckload. We Junkyard Angels get into every old piece of junk that comes to the Junk Jungle, be it a glass bottle, an old pair of boots, and especially old toys.

We Junkyard Angels have been watching over the Junk Jungle forever, trying to turn junk back into treasures that will shine again. The secret to turning a piece of junk
into a treasure, as any good Junkyard Angel knows, is to leave it in the bright sunlight until it dries and sparkles, and you can touch it without getting your hands wet or sticky. So much junk is thrown out in the Junk Jungle that we must turn it back into treasure, or it builds and builds and builds, like on Knick-Knack Hill – but more about that later. Queen Camille and Leo the Lion Knight help us Junkyard Angels turn the junk of the Junk Jungle back into treasure. You see, we need that Trickster Sun to shine - and he loves to play hide and seek.

Years ago, when that Trickster Sun had been hiding behind his old friend the Rain Cloud for days and days and days, and we Junkyard Angels didn’t know what to do, we all heard a sound we didn’t recognize. We searched high and low, and found it coming from an old baby carriage up on The Highest Hood of Race Car Peak, at the very top of Big Soft Recliner Mountain.

As we Junkyard angels gathered around the carriage, we saw a little baby girl inside, soaked and dirty and crying with the rain. Next to her was a wooden painted lion cub, which she hugged tight in her little arms. To keep her dry, we gave her a piece of junk, a big old rusty tin can to wear on her head, and as soon as she saw it, she couldn’t look away. It made her watch it, and touch it, and turn it over and over and over in her small arms, and listen to the rain drops hitting it – and just like that, she stopped crying.

Suddenly, she looked up at the Rain Cloud from under her new crown. She looked at her lion. She winked. She laughed. And - WHOOOSH! - That old Trickster Sun’s friend the Rain Cloud raced away over the far edge of the Junk Jungle. That old Trickster Sun was caught red handed in the middle of the sky – and the little baby girl’s old tin can lost all its rust and glowed like a crown atop her small head. Suddenly the Junk Jungle hummed as never before - and we knew that this child and her lion would grow to rule all of the junk in the Junk Jungle.

We Junkyard Angels made a decision to let this little girl and her lion live in the cave under Big Soft Recliner Mountain, and taught her the secret of turning junk into treasure, and she grew and grew and grew. She loved to tell and to hear and to act out stories - making play clothes out of newspapers, swords out of car and radio antennas, castles out of refrigerators and ovens and couches and cabinets, hats out of melted vinyl records, and of course, she always kept her tin can crown because it wouldn’t let her go.
She became the best child anywhere at turning junk into treasure. She and her lion would whisper wild tales to each other about a Queen named Camille, and a Lion Knight named Leo, and then act the stories out in their cave under Big Soft Recliner Mountain.

As the little girl and her lion grew bigger each day, so did their stories and games, and then one day not long ago, as that Trickster Sun was beginning his climb up over the far edge of the Junk Jungle, the little girl and her lion crept up to the Highest Hood on Racecar Peak, and loudly proclaimed themselves Queen Camille and Leo the Lion Knight—lords over all of the Junk Jungle, keepers of that Trickster Sun.

So now, every day, after making sure that that Trickster Sun has safely begun his climb up over the edge of the Junk Jungle, the Queen and her Lion Knight walk through the Old Food Plain at the base of Big Soft Recliner Mountain. What the Queen and her Lion Knight find is what has been left over, but what they find is always what they want. After breakfast, the Queen and The Lion Knight venture out into the tangle that is the Junk Jungle to play and perform their royal duty—making sure that that Trickster Sun stays up in his spot in the sky—so all the junk in the Junk Jungle can ripen into treasure.

The Queen and her Lion Knight have been seen chasing huge raccoons through Houseplant Grove, which sits right on top of The Iron Oven Caves. It has even been said that The Queen and her Lion Knight have caught up to and ridden the biggest, beastliest raccoon in all of The Iron Oven caves, and though no Junkyard Angel has actually seen it, the story is told nonetheless.

The Queen and her Lion Knight like to fish old boots and ancient tin cans out of Yellow-muck-sew Lake, which lies all the way at the end of Plywood Path. They take the wet, slimy junk, and swim it out to the big tree on Fertilizer Island, to hang it out to dry in the light of that Trickster Sun—and so let it ripen into treasure.

The Queen and the Lion Knight are both particularly fond of playing hide and seek with each other. They play among the Mattress Mazes near the Corrugated Cardboard Capital, or out on Knick-Knack Hill among the pocket watches, brass lamps, pillboxes, jeweled silver wear, earrings, ashtrays, luxury cars, ivory canes, china, silk robes, jeweled scissors, porcelain dishes, and every different kind of knick-knack you can imagine. Knick-Knack Hill is a hill because it is so close to the edge of the Junk Jungle—it is the spot on which people dump truckload after truckload of junk. Knick-Knack Hill
has the highest concentration of junk in all of the Junk Jungle, so it can be a very tricky place.

As each day ends, Queen Camille and her best imaginary friend Leo the Lion Knight return to the Highest Hood on Racecar Peak. There, they make sure that that Trickster Sun falls off the opposite edge of the Junk Jungle from which he climbed that morning - then it is off to bed in their cave under Big Soft Recliner Mountain.

One morning in The Junk Jungle, that Trickster Sun and his old friend the Rain Cloud, decided to play a game of hide and seek with The Queen and The Lion Knight. As always, the faithful pair sat atop the Highest Hood on Racecar Peak to see that that Trickster Sun was starting his climb, but as he peeked his bright head up over the far edge of the Junk Jungle, and Camille’s tin can crown began to glow, the Rain Cloud rushed over the whole sky, laughed loud with a clap of thunder, and began to hurl all his rain down onto the Junk Jungle in one big gush.

Breakfast was soggy. The Old Food Plain was turned to mush by the rain, and the only jar of jam they could find was eggplant flavored, the yuckiest flavor of all. As the Queen and her Lion Knight stood in the mush of the Old Food Plain, eating tiny, soggy bites, the Queen said: "I must eat my breakfast Sir Leo! I just must have it! How else can I be Queen of The Junk Jungle?" To this, the Lion Knight replied: "Yes Queen, I want our favorite breakfast too, but what about the rain?" But the Queen wouldn't listen, and she even almost dropped her old tin can crown as she rushed on to their next destination.

The Queen and The Lion Knight were hungry, and when they got to Houseplant Grove, no raccoons were in sight and the iron ovens were cold and slippery. When the Queen knocked on a big iron oven door, the raccoons snarled: "We all have colds today! We want to stay inside! Go AWAY!" As the Queen and her Lion Knight stood under the enormous leaves of the gigantic houseplants of houseplant grove, the Queen said: "I must chase the raccoons Sir Leo! I just must play with them! How else can I be Queen of the Junk Jungle?" To this, the Lion Knight replied: "Yes Queen, I want to chase the raccoons too, I wish they would come out, but what about the rain?" But Queen wouldn't listen, and she even almost dropped her old tin can crown as she rushed on to their next destination.
The Queen and the Lion Knight took the two largest umbrella plant leaves they could find and held them over their heads as they walked down Plywood Path toward Yellow-Muck-Soo Lake—which was all brown and rotten. The Queen threw out her fishing line, but she only got one rusty tin can filled with mud, and it was raining too hard to hang it up on the big tree on Fertilizer Island. Neither the Queen nor the Lion Knight wanted to swim in Yellow-Muck-Soo Lake in the rain, and the Queen said loudly: "I must fish for treasure Sir Leo! I must to swim! How else can I be Queen of The Junk Jungle?" To this, the Lion Knight replied: "Yes Queen, I want to catch treasures and go swimming too, I wish we could, but what about the rain?" But Queen wouldn't listen, and she even almost dropped her old tin can crown as she rushed on to their next destination.

By the time the Queen and the Lion Knight reached the Mattress Maze near the Corrugated Cardboard Capital, the mattresses were so swelled up with water, that they looked like they were going to burst. The Corrugated Cardboard Capital was a slick, brown mess, and even with their umbrellas the Queen and the Lion Knight were soggy and cold. The Queen squealed: "I must to play hide and seek among the mattresses Sir Leo! I must rule the Corrugated Cardboard Capital! How else can I be Queen of the Junk Jungle?" To this, the Lion Knight replied: "Yes Queen, I want to play hide and seek too, I wish we could, but what about the rain?" But Queen wouldn't listen, and she even almost dropped her old tin can crown as she rushed on to their next destination.

As they walked up Knick-Knack Hill, the Lion Knight looked at his feet, stepping over slippery knick-knack after slippery knick-knack after slippery knick-knack. Suddenly, the rain beat down so hard that the Queen could barely see, and with another loud laughing clap of thunder from the Rain Cloud, a big gust of wind ripped the Queen's houseplant leaf from her small hands, tossing it out over all the knick-knacks like a wet rag, and slapped it right into a pile of jeweled scissors, shredding it to bits. At this, the Queen yelled at the top of her small lungs: "I NEEDED THAT, SIR LEO!" and then ran up the hill through the pouring rain.

As the Lion Knight chased up the hill after his angry Queen, his mind began to chase after what had happened that day. As he stepped over a forgotten dinner plate, the Lion Knight thought about breakfast. As he stepped over an old fancy leather horse
saddle, the Lion Knight thought about the raccoons in the Iron Oven Caves under Houseplant Grove. As he passed a huge old boat, way too big for Yellow-Muck-Soo Lake, he thought about how it had been too brown to swim in.

The Lion Knight wanted his favorite breakfast too. He wanted to ride the raccoons too. He wanted to swim in Yellow-Muck-Soo Lake too — but the junk in the Junk Jungle was very soggy. The Queen was so wrapped up in what she wanted to do she almost lost her old tin can crown everywhere they went! She wasn't keeping it like she always had! It was their royal duty to watch that Trickster sun so the junk could turn into treasure, and a proper Lion Knight always fulfills his royal duty.

As Leo the Lion Knight reached the Porcelain Peak of Knick-Knack Hill, he saw the Queen standing in the rain with out her old tin can crown. All she could do was think about how much she needed her breakfast, needed her raccoon ride, and needed her swimming. She stamped and she shouted and she yelled and she threw a royal tantrum off of the top of the Porcelain Peak of Knick-Knack Hill, echoing out over the mush of The Old Food Plain towards her home under Big Soft Recliner Mountain. All the junk of Knick-Knack Hill rumbled beneath her feet. With one stamp, one teacup moved one inch. With three stamps, three soup bowls moved three inches. With ten stamps, ten dinner plates moved ten inches. And suddenly - WHOOSH! - The Porcelain Peak went sliding right down the side of Knick-Knack Hill, Queen and all.

As the pile slid down the side of Knick-Knack Hill toward The Old Food Plain, the junk was all around the Queen, and as we Junkyard Angels watched helplessly, we knew it wasn't just an avalanche - it was a "junkalanche". Now, a "junkalanche" can be quite dangerous. The Queen was surrounded by junk, forgotten and wet and yucky with the rain. Each piece of junk used to be treasure, which used to keep its owner as its owner kept it. A "junkalanche" is dangerous because every piece of junk that tumbles down Knick-Knack hill in a "junkalanche" isn’t treasured by any one, so it has nothing to lose in tumbling down the hill. When it rains and rains and rains, a "junkalanche" is not uncommon on Knick-Knack Hill, but this was the biggest "junkalanche" in the history of the Junk Jungle — and Queen Camille was caught right in the middle of it.

When the Queen and the junk pile rumbled to a halt on the Old Food Plain, the Queen stood up and looked around. She felt a little silly having thrown such a tantrum,
and now it had gotten her in trouble. On every side, piled in a high wall surrounding the Queen, was junk – pianos, tires, bottle caps, thousands of things that had stopped keeping people, so people had stopped keeping them, and now, Queen Camille was trapped! Worst of all, when she felt her head, she found that she had lost her old tin can crown! It must have fallen off in the “junkalanche”! Queen Camille had been so busy thinking about herself that she had stopped keeping her old tin can crown, and now it was probably just one more piece of junk in the soaking tangle of the Junk Jungle! What was she to do?

The rain poured down into the circle of junk, and began to collect like all the junk had collected. The water slowly rose around the Queen, and she looked desperately for a way out. She looked all around, up and down, everywhere, but saw no way out and her old tin can crown was nowhere to be found! Suddenly, she heard a familiar voice.

“Queen Camille!” It was Leo the Lion Knight, come to save his Queen! He stood just outside of the wall of junk, looking in at her through the center of an old tire. She called out to her best imaginary friend - “Help me Sir Leo! I need you!” He called back “I need you too my Queen! Here!” and he tossed the Queen what she had stopped keeping, and what she needed most – her old tin can crown!

The Queen caught her most prized treasure, and she watched it, she touched it, she turned it over and over in her small hands, and she listened to the rain drops hitting it as she placed it atop her head. She looked up at Sir Leo and smiled. She winked. She laughed. And - WHOOOSH! - That old Trickster Sun’s friend the Rain Cloud raced away over the far edge of the Junk Jungle! That Trickster Sun was, once again, caught red handed, mid sky. The sudden burst of sunlight hit all the junk in the high wall surrounding the Queen, and in no time it was sparkling and dry, and most of all, beautiful. All of the junk that had built up on the Porcelain Peak of Knick-Knack Hill all day in the rain was now transformed into treasure and we Junkyard Angels heaved a huge sigh of relief. The Queen and her Lion Knight were once again lords of the Junk Jungle – junk, treasure, sun and all.

Queen Camille climbed to the top of the wall of glowing treasure, Her old tin can crown glowing atop her head, and gave Leo the Lion Knight the biggest hug she had to give. Then, Camille Queen of the Junk Jungle, chased her best and most imaginary
friend Leo the Lion Knight all the way across the Old Food Plain laughing, back up to Highest Hood on the Racecar Peak of Big Soft Recliner Mountain — where her crown, now ripened into treasure by that Trickster Sun, glowed brightly atop her head for all us Junkyard Angels to see. After all, she was Queen of the Junk Jungle — and her old tin can crown was her treasure, because it was beautiful.
How Little Neal Got Bigger – An Adventure In The Internet

Little Neal is more than a little curious. Neal is six years old, and like all good six year olds, he is full of questions. Neal always asks his older brother Sam, who is thirteen, his questions. Sometimes Sam is happy to answer them, and if Sam doesn’t know the answer, he tells Neal: *I’ll just ask the Internet!* Then he disappears into their dad’s office, where the computer sleeps on their dad’s desk. Neal doesn’t know exactly what the Internet is, but he knows that Sam loves to go on adventures in it. Sam always says that it is huge. He says that the bigger it gets, the smaller the world gets. Neal doesn’t really understand what Sam means, but he does know that the internet is inside the computer and that it tells Sam the answers to all his hardest questions while Neal waits in the living room, so he thinks that it must be pretty great.

Little Neal knows that he sometimes annoys Sam, because like all good thirteen year olds, Sam likes to sleep late. So sometimes Sam isn’t so happy to answer all of Neal’s questions - like when Neal gets up very, very, very early on Saturday morning to watch cartoons. Neal watches cartoons, and when he thinks of a question, he runs upstairs to Sam’s room, and asks him. Little Neal finds his questions in all kinds of places, but he especially gets them from the TV.

One very, very, very early Saturday morning, when little Neal turned on the TV and a man in a blue jacket with a microphone said he was *Live from China*. Neal’s eyes got very big. *Where was China?* So Neal ran up to Sam’s room and burst inside with his question spilling out of his mouth: *Sam! Sam! Sam! Where is China?* Sam pulled the covers up over his head and moaned *Go away Neal! Go ask the Internet!* Neal begged and begged and begged, but Sam would not get out of bed. He just kept repeating like a broken record: *Go ask the Internet Neal!* So Neal went to see if he could ask the Internet.

Little Neal was more than a little confused about the Internet. He had never actually seen Sam go on an adventure in the Internet, or ask the Internet a question before, but he knew that the Internet was inside the computer, and that to get inside, you had to press the button on the side of the computer that said *ON/OFF*. Now, sometimes, funny things happen when you’re all alone very, very, very early in the morning, and
when Neal pushed the *ON/OFF* button on the side of the computer, a funny thing happened to him.

When little Neal touched the button that said *ON/OFF*, he felt a shock shoot between his little finger and the computer. He almost jumped right out of his socks! He was startled because he didn’t think his little finger could possibly have so much power in it. He held his little finger and looked at it a long time, and when he looked up, he realized he wasn’t in his house any more.

Little Neal was scared - but like all good 6 year olds he was also very curious. He looked all around him as if he were in a dream. Neal saw the biggest, oldest, and most beautiful tree he had ever seen – on each branch were thick bunches of dark green leaves surrounding enormous flowers with white petals as big as five little Neals! The petals seemed to glow, and little flashes of color ran over each flower like the colors the TV makes on a white wall in a dark room. The lowest branches bowed low enough for Neal to climb up into them, and they were very sturdy and didn’t bend easily – *perfect for a tree house* – Neal thought. The trunk of the tree was so thick that ten little Neals couldn’t hold hands and stand around it. The bark was grey and knotty, and when he looked extra close, Neal saw letters! He sounded them out – *I, N, T, E, R, N, E, T – Internet!* Internet, Internet, Internet. He said it over and over and over again to himself, and every time he did he felt less and less frightened!

Internet, Internet, Internet.

Little Neal could hardly keep from jumping for joy – he was more than a little excited. *This must be where Sam comes every time he goes to ask the Internet a question for me!* Neal walked all around the enormous tree, looking around him in amazement – there was nothing but a field that stretched until it met the sky. Growing out of the endless ground was lots of very tall, wavy grass, which was bright green and very thick. Neal thought it was beautiful because it was so green and so thick and went on until it met the sky in every direction. It was the biggest field he had ever seen. The Internet seemed to stretch on forever, and Neal longed to explore and find the answer to his question.

*HMMMM*, Neal thought as he sat down against the tree to think, and looking up into the branches he saw the tree was a bright green apple tree! Like all good 6 year olds,
LITTLE NEAL FINDS
THE ENORMOUS TREE
OF THE INTERNET
little Neal loved bright green apples, so he grabbed one of them that was hanging just above his head and began to pull. He pulled and pulled and pulled, but he couldn’t pull down the bright green apple no matter how hard he tried. He let go of it and looked more closely – and he saw that written on the apple was a word!

Little Neal could hardly believe his eyes! He sounded out the word – C, H, I, N, A – CHINA, NA – China! China!! China!!! Neal had wanted to know where China was! That was the whole reason he came on an adventure to the Internet in the first place! His eyes got very big and twinkled with excitement. The tree was the Internet! Sam was right! It was huge! It could answer his question about China!

He grabbed the apple with both hands and pulled as hard as he could, with all his weight. This time, the bright green apple came off the branch with ease, and he shined it with his sleeve. Neal examined the apple, and it looked just like a normal bright green apple, so he took a bite. He chewed. Suddenly, as soon as he swallowed his first mouthful of apple, another very strange thing happened. Without trying to move even one muscle, Neal looked up at the sky, down at the ground, spun in a circle and heard himself say:

*China has 1,306,313,812 people.*

As soon as he finished the last syllable in the word people, Neal held still to listen and make sure he was done talking. He felt like he was a puppet and someone had moved his strings and made him say the words he had just listened to himself say. He was a bit worried, but he also didn’t want to go back home and tell Sam that he had gone on an adventure to ask the Internet his question, and that he couldn’t get the answer.

*Sam will be so proud of me if I can get the Internet to answer my question on my own - I just have to find out where China is and one of these apples must be able to tell me!*

Little Neal didn’t care how many people China had - He wanted to know where China was. He looked at another bright green apple on the next branch and on its side he saw the word China. He quickly pulled it off the branch, and took a bite. Suddenly, little Neal looked up at the sky, down at the ground, spun in a circle and then heard himself say:

*The Great Wall of China is 25 feet tall.*
Little Neal was frustrated. He bit down on his lip. Now he not only didn’t know where China was, but he had even more questions! What was the Great Wall of China?

Little Neal pulled down the next bright green apple, and then the next and the next and the next, moving in circle all the way around the trunk of the enormous tree of the Internet. Each bright green apple told him something about China, but after eating so many that his stomach was full, he still had no idea where it was. Every time he looked up at the branch he had just pulled one of the bright green apples down from it seemed that two more bright green apples were poking out of the thick green leaves where only one had been before!

Little Neal hung his head and looked up at the huge tree that was the Internet. He hopped up in a low branch and sat there looking out at the endless grassy field surrounding him. It was huge. The endless green field he had been so excited about before looked different now—it looked huge and scary, and little Neal wanted to go home.

Little Neal felt very, very, very little indeed. He looked in every direction in hopes of spying the edge of the Internet and a way to get home, but it seemed to go on forever. It was beginning to get dark, and Neal wished that Sam would come, and show him which apple to pick, and play with him in the tree. Even though he was surrounded by more answers to his questions than ever before, Neal felt like never asking a question again. So he sat out on the end of the lowest branch with his back resting on one of the enormous white petals of one of the enormous, glowing, white flowers and started to cry.

That’s when little Neal noticed something more than a little strange. It was like when some one whispers while someone else shouts; the person whispering always seems to be saying something more important. Neal rested his hand on the softness of the enormous flower petal. He lifted his hand. He put it back. When he touched it, it would glow just the slightest bit extra bright. He stood up and walked around the enormous, glowing, white flower, letting his hand slide along the petals as he walked. Neal found where two of the enormous flower petals edges met and saw that it was like a curtain in his living room at home. Neal pushed both his hands through the flower petal curtain, then he buried both his arms up to his shoulders, then he pushed his head through, and then his chest and stomach, then his legs and last of all, both of his feet.
Not so little Neil explores one of the enormous glowing white flowers.
Little Neal looked at where he was and still felt very little – even tiny. He was all alone inside of an empty, enormous, glowing, white room that was no bigger than his house. Neal looked all around him in amazement. He looked up, and then down, and then he spun in a circle and suddenly a very strange thing happened - suddenly, the big white glowing room wasn’t empty anymore! Neal saw a glowing white shoe floating in the air above his head! As strange as this was, Neal was enchanted. He felt like a moth on the front porch at night, which couldn’t stay away from the glowing of the porch light. Neal could not look away from the glowing white shoe.

*Do you have a question for me?* Said the shoe, which could talk because all shoes have tongues.

*Do you know where is China?* Asked little Neal.

*China? I’ve never heard of China before,* the shoe said with soul, *but the neighborhood pool, now there’s a place I’ve heard of!*

Little Neal put on a frown and looked at his feet. But to his surprise, he saw a map under his shoes! He saw his street, with a dotted line leading from his house past three of his neighbors’ houses, to the neighborhood pool! Neal got down on his hands and knees below the glowing white shoe and traced the path he took every summer day after camp with Sam. Neal looked back up above his head but the glowing white shoe was gone! He stood up and looked around. The room was empty, so he pushed back out through the flower petal curtain and was back in the branches of the enormous tree.

Little Neal looked up through the branches and saw another enormous, glowing, white flower that glowed a little bit more than the one he had just been inside. He had a little bit more of his curiosity back, as any good 6 year old should when they see something that glows. Like a moth to a flame, Neal climbed up and up and up through the branches until he reached the enormous, glowing, white flower. Neal pushed both his hands through the flower petal curtain, then he buried both his arms up to his shoulders, then he pushed his head through, and then his chest and stomach, then his legs and last of all, both of his feet.

Little Neal looked at where he was, and felt bigger – but small. He was inside a medium sized, glowing, white room that was no bigger than his garage. He looked around in amazement, and this room was definitely empty. But to make sure, Neal
looked up, then down, and then he spun in a circle. When Neal looked up again, there was a little glowing white bicycle floating above his head. Again Neal was enchanted, and he couldn't look away from the glowing white bicycle.

*Do you have a question for me?* Said the bicycle, which could think because all bicycles have gears that are always turning.

*Where is China?* Asked little Neal.

*China? I've never heard of China before,* the bicycle said with a squeak, *but your school, now there's a place I've heard of!*

Little Neal put on another frown and, again, looked at his feet. Just as before, but still to Neal's surprise, a map had appeared under his shoes. He saw his house and his whole neighborhood, and a dotted line leading from his house down a short and straight path to his school! He got down on his hands and knees below the glowing white bicycle and traced with his finger the way he biked every school day with Sam. He looked back up but the glowing white bicycle was gone. The room was empty, so he pushed back out through the flower petal curtain and was back in the branches of the enormous tree.

Again little Neal looked up through the branches and saw another enormous, glowing, white flower that glowed a little bit more than the one he had just been inside. Neal was feeling a lot more curious, and even was forgetting why he had been crying. Neal climbed up and up and up through the branches until he reached the enormous, glowing, white flower. Neal pushed both his hands through the flower petal curtain, then he buried both his arms up to his shoulders, then he pushed his head through, and then his chest and stomach, then his legs and last of all, both of his feet.

Little Neal looked at where he was, and felt much bigger—almost big. He was inside a small sized, glowing, white room that was no bigger than his bedroom. He looked around in amazement, and this room too, seemed empty. But, just like before, to make sure, Neal looked up, then down, and then he spun in a circle. Sure enough, when Neal looked up again, there was a little glowing, white car floating above his head. Again, Neal was enchanted, and he couldn't look away.

*Do you have a question for me?* Said the car, which could give him a bump in the right direction because all cars have bumpers.

*Where is China?* Asked little Neal.
China? I've never heard of China before, the car said with a push, but your Grandma's house, now there's a place I've heard of!

Little Neal put yet another frown on his face and, yet again, looked down at his feet. Just as Neal expected, a map had appeared under his shoes. He saw his house and his whole neighborhood, and his entire town, with a dotted line leading from his house down a big long twisty highway, to his Grandma's house! He got down on his hands and knees below the glowing-white car and traced with his finger the way his mom and dad took him and Sam to Grandma's house every Saturday morning. He looked back up but the glowing-white car was gone. The room was empty, so he pushed back out through the flower petal curtain and was back in the branches of the enormous tree.

For the first time in a while, little Neal took a look around him. He had forgotten to look down as he had climbed from one enormous, white, glowing flower to the next. Now when he did look down, he couldn't see the ground! But when he looked up, he could see the top branch of the tree, and on that top branch, Neal saw the most beautiful, glowing, white flower of them all. It glowed so bright that the branches all around it seemed to glow too, and Neal felt sure that inside that flower, the highest flower in the whole Internet, he could find what he was looking for. He climbed as fast as he could, never taking his eyes off it, and before he knew it, he was on the highest branch of the enormous tree. Neal pushed both his hands through the flower petal curtain, then he buried both his arms up to his shoulders, then he pushed his head through, and then his chest and stomach, then his legs and last of all, both of his feet.

Finally, little Neal didn't feel little — he felt big. Inside this glowing, white flower that looked enormous on the outside, Neal had found a room that was no wider than his bed, and no taller than Sam. This room was not empty, but instead, on the floor in front of him, sat a computer just like the one that slept on his dad's desk. A computer just like the one Sam always used to ask the Internet Neal's hardest questions. Neal held onto his little finger, and thought about how much power was in it. Then, with a powerful 6-year-old surge of courage, Neal reached out, and pressed the button on the side that said ON/OFF on it.

This time, little Neal was in for a little bit different kind of surprise. There was no shock between Neal's little finger and the button that said ON/OFF on the sides, but there
was a shock that shot across the front of the computer screen, and Neal watched in amazement as the glowing of the screen moved to the white petal wall, and the entire flower folded around Neal and the computer glowed extra, extra, extra bright, and unfolded. The enormous, glowing, white flower opened wide, and Neal was left with the computer, safe in the center. Neal gazed out of the flower, off the top of the enormous tree, over the entire Internet. He could see out over the endless green field much farther from this high up, but he still saw no end to it, it just stretched on and on and on until it met the sky.

Suddenly little Neal heard a little voice!

_Hello_, the voice said. Neal turned toward the little voice, and saw a little boy on the computer screen. At first, Neal thought it was a mirror, but when he looked closer at the little boy in the screen, he saw that the little boy looked different from him in many different, little ways, like the shape of his face and the color of his hair and his clothes.

_Hello_, said Neal timidly, _my name is Neal. Do you know where China is?_ 

_Hello Neal, my name is Wen, I speak Chinese, but the Internet is a magical place - and I do know where China is. China is my home._

Little Neal put on a big smile. He looked up out of the enormous blossoming flower he sat in with Wen, and in the sky, he saw another map! First he saw his house on his street, and then his street became very small. Then he could see his whole neighborhood, and then his neighborhood became very small! Then he could see his whole town, and then his whole town became very small! The smaller all these places became, the more of the world Neal could see, and finally the whole world was small enough that he could see every place there was to see. Neal also saw a dotted line going from his tiny, tiny, tiny street stretching half way around the entire world, and ending in China. Neal looked back at Wen inside the computer, and Wen had not disappeared like the shoe or the bicycle or the car – Wen in the computer was still there. Little Neal didn’t feel little at all – in fact he felt big and the Internet felt little.

_Thank you! Thank you! Thank you Wen! _Neal said, his eyes big and sparkling.

_Thank you Neal! _Wen said. _I have been looking for the Untied States of America all day!_ 

_Really? _Said Neal. _I have been looking for China all day too!_
Little Neal and little Wen sat together at the top of the Internet, and both felt very big indeed. They talked all about trying to find each other. Neal told Wen his whole story, and about Sam and his house and his neighborhood pool and his school and his Grandma. Wen told Neal all about how he had been trying to ask the Internet where the United States of America was all day, and about his brother and his house and his neighborhood pool and his school and his Grandma. They talked and talked and talked, and soon they both lay down on the soft white flower, and watched each other, and the huge map in the sky, and with big yawns, both drifted off to sleep with each other on top of the Internet.
Jacob looks like Jacob looks like Jacob

"Image" is closer than you think to "Imagine"-

When Jacob was six years old, his bushy brown hair always stuck up off his head, his bright purple T-shirt always had a Tyrannosaurus Rex on the front, and he always wore blue jeans with brightly colored patches sewn onto the knees. But the funniest thing about Jacob when he was six years old was that he just loved images. He loved to stare at pictures of the creatures of the jungle in National Geographic Magazine. He loved to sit and watch Cowboys fight Indians on the glowing glass screen of the TV. He loved to look through the family photo album and spend hours watching the faded pictures of his Mom and Dad, and their Mom’s and Dad’s, and their Mom’s and Dads. He loved to watch for images everywhere, completely captivated by how detailed they were, and lucky for him almost everywhere he watched for an image – he could find one.

When Jacob woke up every morning, he saw a tiger on his wall. It was a poster he had from the zoo, and the big cat looked at him and grinned. The tiger watched Jacob as he got out of bed, changed for school and tied his shoes, just waiting for an opportunity to pounce when Jacob wasn’t looking. For this reason, Jacob always kept one eye on the tiger on his wall when he was in his room, and always closed the door when he left so the tiger wouldn’t get loose in the house.

While Jacob ate breakfast every morning, he would watch the pictures on the back of his Dad’s newspaper. As Dad flipped the pages, men in suits discussed important world issues in that newspaper. While Jacob ate his waffle or eggs or cereal, he would always watch to see if those important men’s mouths were moving, or whether they wanted to discuss something important with him.

On the bus ride to and from school every school day, Jacob’s bus drove down busy streets full of people and shops and houses. He loved to stare out of the window and watch for any billboards he could see. His favorites were the ads for toothpaste, soap, or makeup, because these particular ads always had giant, beautiful people on them smiling at him. Jacob watched each billboard go by his bus window very closely, to see if one of the beautiful giants might wink at him.
At Jacob’s school, his favorite day of the week was Friday because every Friday his class had an hour of “magazine time”. During “magazine time”, the teacher would always bring out a big pile of old magazines. Everyone in the class would take one that looked interesting to them, and cut out pictures of what they liked the best to put in their “magazine time envelope”. Jacob tried to pick a different kind of magazine each week – one week he would pick an animal magazine, the next a people magazine, and the next a travel magazine. Jacob’s “magazine time envelope” was the fullest in his class. Jacob always made sure to put a piece of white paper in his “magazine time envelope” separating the people from the animals. He wanted to make sure they wouldn’t fight in the folder all week while it sat out of sight in his desk.

After school every school day, Jacob would go home and watch a movie before his Mom or Dad said he had watched enough for one day, and turned the TV off. He was always glued to the screen, his eyes following the characters glowing out of that magical box. He watched all kinds of movies, but his favorites were Cowboy movies, Martian movies, and Detective movies. He hung on every scene, watching each character come alive and say and do things that he had never heard of before. He memorized their lines and jokes, and would try to act like them at the dinner table.

Most warm evenings and even on some chilly ones, Jacob would take the big flashlight from the hall closet and walk out to the big stream that curled through the woods behind his house. His favorite tree in the whole world was a willow tree, whose branches leaned way out over the big stream, letting some of the leaves droop and touch the surface of the water. In the summer Jacob could climb into the tree and lower himself down from the low branches to swim and play, but only if his Mom or Dad was there. Most evenings, when he came alone with the big flashlight, Jacob climbed up into the willow tree and lay on his stomach on a big branch that hung out over the water. As it would get dark, he would turn the flashlight on and shine it on the water so he could look at his reflection. He liked how it moved and wavered with the flow of the big stream. He liked to imagine that the reflection was another Jacob, who would look up out of the water and Jacob lying in the tree branch, looking back at him.

As Jacob got older, he didn’t lose his love of images, in fact, it got stronger. It was so strong that Jacob was no longer satisfied with just looking at images – he wanted
to make his own. For this reason, Jacob asked for an art kit for his seventh birthday. His Mom and Dad got him a big box full of colored pencils, colored pastels, black charcoal, white chalk and many different sized erasers. They also got him a big pad of white paper, and Jacob’s Dad helped him build a desk just his size to sit at and draw on. Jacob felt so excited that he was going to get to create his own images, that his Mom and Dad had to make him stop drawing to eat and go to bed.

Jacob drew and drew and drew. He drew his tiger poster. He drew pictures he cut out from his Dad’s old newspaper, which he found in the garbage. He tried to draw his favorite ads he saw on the way to school from his memory. He set up all his cut out magazine pictures in a scene on his desk to draw one by one and then all together. He drew his favorite Cowboy and Martian and Detective from the movies he watched after school riding horses and flying through space and hunting down bad guys. Jacob even found a smaller pad of paper and would pick out a few colored pencils to take with him to his willow tree by the big stream. He would lie there in the dark and make drawing after drawing after drawing of his reflection until it was so dark that his Dad would tell him he had to come inside.

Jacob liked to draw very much, so he practiced and practiced and practiced. He had lots of images to draw, but he couldn’t get his drawings to look quite right. They just didn’t seem as real as his images. When he drew his tiger, it somehow didn’t look like it was going to pounce on him when he wasn’t looking. When he drew the important men from the newspapers, they didn’t look as if what they were talking about was very important. When he drew the beautiful giant people on his favorite ads, they didn’t look like they might wink at him. When he drew the images from his “magazine time folder”, he didn’t have to separate them because they didn’t look like they would quarrel in their envelope. His Cowboys and Martians and Detectives didn’t ride very fast, or go very far through space, or ever catch the bad guy.

Every time Jacob tried to draw himself in his willow tree by the light of the big flashlight, he was surprised to see a baby in the water. The baby always had a little tuft of bushy brown hair that stuck up off his little head, a bright purple T-shirt that had a Tyrannosaurus Rex egg on it, and little blue jean overalls with brightly colored patches sown onto the knees!
Olympia

TYPE

JACOBS

WRITER
That must be what I looked like when I was a little baby! Jacob would think to himself. He would open up to a new blank sheet in his drawing pad and begin to draw his reflection in the big stream. He drew his reflection again and again and again, but it wasn’t ever quite right. He just couldn’t draw his reflection on the paper the exact way he saw it. Jacob was frustrated, and for this reason, he would crumple up his drawings and throw them down into the water below him, where they would catch the current and float out of the pool of light from the big flashlight, down stream into the night.

After a while, Jacob decided drawing wasn’t for him. His love for images stayed strong though, and for this reason, on his eighth birthday, Jacob asked for a camera. His Mom and Dad went to the store and bought Jacob a camera called a Polaroid camera. The Polaroid camera was perfect for Jacob. As soon as he clicked the big button on the top, the camera would buzz and make a twirling sound and spit out the photo he had just taken, which would magically materialize before his eyes. Jacob’s Dad even bought him a whole crate of film for the camera, so he would never run out of film.

Jacob took photo after photo after photo. He took a photo of his tiger poster. He took a bunch of photos of the important people in his Dad’s old newspaper, which he found in the garbage. He tried to take photos of his favorite ads he saw on the way to school from the bus. He set up all his cut out magazine pictures in a scene on his desk, and took photos of them one by one and then all together. He would pick out his favorite Cowboy and Martian and Detective from the movies he watched after school, and pause the movie so he could take photos of them riding horses and flying through space and hunting down criminals. Jacob even took his Polaroid camera with him to his willow tree by the big stream. He would lie there in the dark and take photo after photo after photo of his reflection in the water until it was so dark that his Dad would tell him he had to come inside.

Jacob loved taking photos so he practiced and practiced and practiced. He had lots of images to photograph, but he couldn’t get his photos to look quite right. Each photo looked smaller and less detailed the actual image. The images in his photos looked flat and lonely. When he took a photo of his tiger, it somehow didn’t look like it was going to pounce on him when he wasn’t looking. When he took a photo of the important men from the newspapers, they didn’t look as if what they were talking about was very
important. When he took a photo of the beautiful giant people on his favorite ads, they didn’t like they might wink at him. When he took a photo of the images in his “magazine time folder”, he didn’t have to separate them because they didn’t look like they would quarrel in their envelope. His photos of his favorite Cowboys and Martians and Detectives didn’t ride very fast, or go very far through space, or ever catch the criminals.

Every time Jacob tried to take a photo of himself in his willow tree by the light of the big flashlight, he was surprised to see a boy in the water. The boy had bushy brown hair that stuck up off his head, a bright purple T-shirt that had a Tyrannosaurus Rex on it, and a pair of blue jeans with brightly colored patches sown onto the knees!

_That’s me!_ Jacob would think to himself. He would hold his Polaroid camera up to his eye, and aim it at the reflection he saw of himself in the water of the big stream below him. He took his own photo again and again and again, but each time he snapped a photo, he just couldn’t get the photo of himself to look quite right. Jacob was more frustrated every time, and for this reason, he would crumple up his photos of himself and throw them down into the water below him, where they would catch the current and float out of the pool of light from the big flashlight, down stream into the night.

After a while, Jacob decided photography wasn’t for him. But this time, he wondered about his love of all the images he saw everywhere. He just couldn’t make his own images! By the time Jacob reached his ninth birthday, he had almost given up. On the evening of his ninth birthday, after he had blown out his candles and eaten his cake and opened his presents, Jacob grabbed the big flashlight from the hall closet and walked out to his willow tree. He lay in the branches throwing rocks into the water trying to hit his reflection, which he could see clearly in the pool of light. Jacob threw his last rock at his reflection, and it exploded in waves. As the explosion from the impact of the rock formed back into his reflection, Jacob saw himself in a way he never had before. The boy in the water wasn’t a boy - he was a young man! He had bushy brown hair that stuck up off his head, a bright purple T-shirt that had dinosaur bones on it, and a pair of blue jeans with brightly colored patches sown onto the knees!

_That must be me!_ Jacob gasped. The young man wasn’t looking back at Jacob as his reflection in the big stream usually did – but instead was sitting, typing out word after word after word on an old typewriter. The typewriter was the kind that doesn’t plug into
the wall, and each key was connected to a lever that hit the paper and left the mark of that
letter on the paper. Jacob was mesmerized by this reflection, and watched closely, trying
to focus on the words the young man was typing, but he couldn’t make them out. Jacob
lay in his willow tree, watching his reflection and wondering what his image in the water
was typing on that old typewriter.

He watched and watched and watched. He yawned and closed his eyes for just a
second, and suddenly, he thought he heard birds chirping. Jacob looked down at the
water and saw his reflection was gone, and he could see the bottom of the stream because
the sun was shining. It was morning. It was morning and he was still in his willow tree!
He must have fallen asleep! Jacob quickly hopped down out of the tree, and was about to
run home, for his parents were sure to be worried, but something shining in the water
c caught his eye. He turned around and looked out into the big stream and there, under the
water, he saw something shiny just under the surface of the water. Whatever it was, it
cought the morning sun and sparkled as the water ran over it. Jacob had to see what it
was. He took off his shoes and his socks and his pants and his shirt. In only his
underwear, Jacob stepped out into the big stream and waded over to whatever it was he
saw shining below the surface.

Jacob reached down into the water and found a shiny piece of smooth metal. The
piece of metal was connected to a sort of oddly shaped box, which was half buried in the
mud and grit in the bottom of the big stream. Jacob dug his hands into the mud, pushing
his arms under the surface of the big stream all the way up to his shoulders. He wormed
his hands under the edges of the oddly shaped box and pulled with all his might. He
pulled and pulled and pulled, and finally the water washed the mud away, and from the
bottom of the big stream, Jacob pulled out a wooden box with a shiny metal handle like
the one on a suitcase. He let the water run over it and rinse the mud and grit off, before
he pulled it to the shore and under the shade of his willow tree. When Jacob popped open
the latch and looked inside the box his eyes grew very big with excitement. Jacob had
discovered an old typewriter, in its case, in the bottom of the big stream. It was just like
the one he had seen himself using the night before! He quickly closed the box and,
careful not to drop his new treasure, he walked home as fast as he could.
This type writer is the greatest because when I write on it, it takes me anywhere I want to go. I can hunt the tiger on my wall, or race my favorite cowboy across the desert on my favorite horse, or have tea with my favorite beautiful giants, or climb the biggest mountain in the world, or catch a great white shark, or talk to a Tyrannosaurus Rex, or fly through space with martians, or swim across the whole Atlantic Ocean, or meet the president, or own a candy factory, or catch the true thief, or play the harmonica, or live only in the trees, or dig a whole big hole all the way through the earth, or brew magic potions, or wrestle a lion. It is great.

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Jacobs Type Writer
Jacob’s Mom and Dad helped him clean the old typewriter very carefully with water and a rag, and then with oil to make sure all the clicking metal parts would still work. Jacob’s Dad helped him set up the typewriter on the desk they had built for him to draw on, and he even bought him a brand new ink ribbon so the letters Jacob typed were dark and black and clear. Jacob found that each image he loved so much was actually made up of words, and that each word was full of letters. For each image Jacob loved, he would type the letters of the words of the image — and there they would sit, perfect on the page. His sentences were just right. Jacob could describe the exact details of his favorite images and pictures, while also changing them the way he wanted, and making them as good as, and sometimes even better than, the image he had started with!

Jacob typed and typed and typed. He wrote about his tiger poster. He wrote a bunch of stories about the important people in his Dad’s old newspapers he found in the garbage. He wrote about his favorite Ads he saw on the way to school from the bus. He set up all his cut out magazine pictures in a scene on his desk and wrote about them one by one first, and all then together in one long story. He would pick out his favorite Cowboy and Martian and Detective from the movies he watched after school, and write great adventures about them riding horses and flying through space and hunting down criminals. Jacob even took his typewriter with him to his willow tree by the big stream. He would lie there in the dark and write about his reflection in the water until it was so dark that his Dad would tell him he had to come inside.

Jacob wrote and wrote and wrote. He found that with his words, he could describe an image much more clearly than he could with his drawings. Within each image, he found hundreds of words that could describe it perfectly! He also found that with his words, he could make his tiger follow his Cowboy, or make the beautiful giant people on the billboards talk to the Martians! His words let him make anything he wanted happen to his images! He wrote more every day — and as he grew older he began to write about things that were more than just the images he loved. He began to write stories about different people he had never even seen images of. He began to write about places that nobody had ever taken a photo of or drawn. He even wrote a story about himself when he was six years old and he lived with his Mom and Dad, with a big stream
that curled through the woods behind their house. Now he especially loves to write the story about how he loves to write, and he hopes that you do too.