

Reflections ...



Mergel: Hey Simon, what's it like being real?

Simon: I'm not sure how to answer that. I've never been imaginary, so I can't compare it to anything.

Mergel: Well, you don't have anybody imagining you, do you?

Simon: Actually, sometimes I do. People who know me, or who read what I've written, sometimes imagine me, perhaps when they're thinking about me. Who knows, maybe someone reading this might be imagining me right now. Ginny says she imagines me a lot, especially when she's away on business. And during the day I imagine her, too.

Mergel: So you're both imaginary?

Simon: I guess, when we're being imagined by someone, we're imaginary to them, in that way. Lots of what we think about real people, we're actually imagining. Like, how someone might act, or feel, or behave, if they were in some situation we're imagining.

Mergel: But what if no one's imagining you? Do you need someone to be imagining you, all the time?

Simon: No, I don't think so. I guess real people are more on their own.

Mergel: Well, I'm on my own too. I do what I want to, when I want to

Simon: ... But only when I'm imagining you ...

Mergel: How can you be sure of that?

Simon: Merg – you're right! I guess, now that I think about it, I don't know that at all. I just imagined it must be true.

Mergel: And since imagination plays havoc with what's real, you're probably wrong.

Simon: Come to think of it, at the moments when I'm all alone, just doing my own thing in private, with absolutely nobody else in the world having me on their mind in any way, I certainly still exist; I'm just off in my own little world. So, maybe imaginary people are the same way.

Mergel: Hey dumbhead, it's not *your own* world – because that's where I live! I'm there too, especially when you lose touch with reality, which seems to happen often. We imaginary guys help fill those voids, paper over the gaps, and repair the defects. That's why I'm a contractor. We can even rebuild reality to make it better and more fun, because the first step toward any solution is always imagination. But fixing reality is a full time job, and the pay is lousy.

Simon: The real world needs a lot more such repairmen.

Mergel: All it takes is imagination, but that's scarce nowadays. Real people are too busy or inhibited to practice it very often, so they don't get good at it. Sort of like playing the trombone. Maybe I'll start an imagination fitness program; I'm already your personal trainer. If real people spent more time imagining stuff, or even imagining each other, their imaginations would stay in shape.

Simon: You never know who's imagining what. Real people may not have someone else imagining them *all* the time, but we're never sure when or whether someone is. In fact, many people believe there's a God behind the scenes, watching over everything that happens to them and what they do. Sort of like the Great Imaginer in the sky. Isn't that similar to what imaginary people have, with their imaginer?

Mergel: *You*, making analogies of God to imaginers! Give me a break! You sure don't watch me very carefully; you miss a lot. Besides, lots of real people don't believe that God guy actually exists, while the imaginers of us imaginary people *always* exist in reality. So, imaginary characters, like me, are constantly grounded in a reality we know is true, while real people are deluded because their all-seeing imaginer may not even really be there!

Simon: I never thought about it in that way.

Mergel: There are lots of things you never think about! Because if that God guy isn't real, that means he's one of us imaginary people. So it's no wonder that he's special and can do impossible things and why you can't see him. Too bad he never learned Photoshop.

Simon: Maybe it's just a prejudice that real people have, thinking that somehow we're more special than imaginary people.

Mergel: Yeah, we imaginary guys sure don't have that prejudice. I never imagined you were anything special.

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