"Nostalgia is denial**--denial** of the painful present. And the name of this fallacy is called 'golden age thinking'**: t**he erroneous notion that a different time period is better than the one one's living in. It is a flaw in the romantic imagination of those people who find it difficult to deal with the present" – Paul, *Midnight in Paris* (2011)

In extreme cases, daydreaming is regarded as a behavioral disorder, particularly in the realm of psychology. It is said daydreamers are out of touch with reality**,** ~~and~~ completely absorbed into their own invented worlds. The act can be distracting, and dangerously so, for adults and children alike. A young girl may spend so much time with her head in the clouds, her retention whittles away and her grades begin to slip. An office worker can become so preoccupied with the task of transforming his cubicle into a medieval castle, project deadlines fall subject to negligence.

As a child, even as a young man, I often wished that I'd be whisked from this reality, swept off by some unknown and powerful force into a whole new world. In this world, I would be a hero. I would be legend. In this world, I would have free roam and travel to each of its corners. I would meet fascinating characters, each with their own impressive backstory, and encounter mesmerizing creatures the world over. Her voice the rouser of my ambition, the spirit of adventure need only beckon me, and I would not hesitate to heed her call. I have imagined myself the captain of some fantastic and incredibly large vessel: the stuff of dreams, really. It would be capable of both plowing the raging seas and weaving a path through the endless skies. No domain could deny it passage. Aboard it rides a fearsome, powerful crew willing to follow me into the depths of Hades, all of us slaves to the spirit's alluring pull.

My attention is snatched back ~~in~~to reality by a phone notification ~~from my phone~~, a text from my cousin Demetrius. 'How appropriate' I think to myself, as I recall his status as a fellow mind drifter. Mind drifting, a much more profound experience than simply daydreaming, is what I called our childhood pastime. Though I still engage in the activity at 21, it's not quite as frequent as it once was. At some point I progressed to living vicariously through videogames and movies. He was texting me to see if I was ready for our ~~online~~ session of DC Universe, an online role-playing game where we assumed the role of super heroes. In this game I am super human in a world recently prophesied to fall at the hands of an unknown alien force. My character started off as a normal pedestrian who was granted, along with the rest of the world, super powers with which to save the world, or doom it. This game gave me free roam of a virtual Earth, a wealth of super powers at my disposal. Movies and the advent of sandbox videogames—games that gave me free roam of their virtual worlds—had, for me, formed a bridge. It was this bridge that allowed me to almost literally cross over into another world.

One thing I always loved about movies, particularly live-action films with a touch or more of fantasy, was how they took you to other places. Other time periods, planets, whole realities even. James Cameron's "Avatar" (2009) brought to life to a lush and savage planet named Pandora. Pandora harbored many twisted and exotic version of Earth's own animals and

plants alike. The film is a smorgasbord of visual delights and wonders. A large, sleek creature bearing resemblance to a panther, with strange antennae protruding from its hind-head and a mouth that split at four corners, stalks a helpless group of herbivore as they graze; though the herd has the upper hand in sheer numbers. The flora is huge in stature, and some even give off an ominous palpation, suggesting the panther-like creature is not the only predator around. The natives, called Na'vi, are even more visually impressive. They have taut blue skin and are much taller than humans: a good three-foot advantage over the average man. Their lanky physiques lend to a seemingly weak appearance, yet they could hold off 15 grown men with ease. A testament to Pandora's fertility, the tribe shown most commonly in the film lives in a colossal oak tree as tall as any eye can see. Hometree, as it was called, captured the eye with its heavy bark twisting and churning into great, indestructible knots. The whole planet is a sight to behold, a living, breathing world.

Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* films (2003-2011) transported us to the Caribbean vast and vibrant Caribbean seas set somewhere between 1720 and 1750. A mixture of realism, fantasy, and pirate folk-lore, viewers are immersed in a world where piracy runs rampant and curses are not just fairy tales concepts told to keep children in line. The Flying Dutchman endlessly roams the surfs; a foreboding wooden juggernaut combing mercilessly through waves. Captain Davy Jones and his relentless crew of fish-man pirates incessantly search for victims to send to a watery grave. The still waters of White Cap Bay afford sanctuary for the mermaids who call it home. They lay in wait for the next assemblage of unwitting sailors to mistake their beauty for frailty. The sea-goddess Calypso, newly resurrected, wrenches the seas into monstrous maelstroms. The storms an ode to the one raging inside her own heart, and a result of the discovery of her lover's betrayal. Meanwhile, the Taverns of Tortuga are alive with singing, dancing, the clinking of glasses and the jovial laughter of pirates and adventurers. Festivities are thrown in honor of both failed and successful ventures; either to lift broken dispositions or celebrate fruitful conquests. Their spirits high from the atmosphere and camaraderie, they prepare to set sail once more, take on the aforementioned terrors and leave their marks on the vast and open world.

Movies fed my imagination and allowed me to journey to places I couldn't quite dream up on my own. Videogames took that a step further and granted me interaction with these worlds. I have explored multiple interpretations of cities that rested amongst clouds. I have experienced the simulation of freely flying through an open world. I have fought through hoards of eerie personifications of the darkness in a human heart, have partaken in epic battles with the Gods of Greek mythology, interacted with near countless alien races. I have used the powers of stealth to trick enemies. I have teamed up with other gamers to save entire civilizations from destruction, swung through the streets of New York as a famous Marvel superhero, travelled to unfathomable depths and hunted large leviathans of the sea. I have scaled mountains and taken down fierce dragons. I have conversed with a dancing scarecrow. I have captured fairies in bottles, probed the confines of a labyrinthine volcano and solved its puzzles to find a sacred jewel. I have constructed fortresses and defended them from oncoming attackers. I have thrown balls of fire, bolts of lightning, and torrents of water and summoned a murder of crows all from the palm of my hand. I have played through significant events of the American Revolutionary

War. I have sauntered through the streets of Renaissance-era Venice, searched through the venerable antiquities of ancient, fallen civilizations, and flew through space on jet-propelled ship that resembled the Black Pearl. Simply intoxicating.

Your reading this far informs me that my obsession has not scared you away. Perhaps you too occasionally float away from yourself, from one world into another. Perhaps you too quiver with excitement when the advent of new world to peruse presents itself.

All right, I'll calm down. I've often wondered how this mania formed in the first place and unfortunately, I've yet to come up with a sufficient answer. Studies of daydreamers describe subjects as out of sync with the real world. Avid daydreamers are said to live socially deficient lives. Research pegs daydreamers as communicably insufficient and sometimes unstable. Quite frankly, I consider myself as stable as the next man and having read this I'm sure you can attest to my communication skills. I suppose if I sought professional help from a psychiatrist I might be convinced it developed as a form of escape**, e**scape from a stressful childhood spent in a rough neighborhood**, a** childhood I once considered devoid of color or adventure, breeding an insatiable appetite for inter-temporal/inter-dimensional travel, a desire to realize dream worlds and unimaginable encounters.

This is by no means a sob story. I have no desire to solicit any overflowing fountains of sympathy. On the contrary, in spite of some bumps along the road, I was a happy child. And a content young man as well. Sure, my fantasies interested me far more than our lovely planet once, but that stemmed more from boredom than anything else. I held no qualms against this reality and still don't. No, I didn't have very much growing up but…I had my imagination. That was good enough for me. As a young man, I adored this mental sustenance. My mind would consistently engage in binge consumption of worlds. I collected games, movies, and books in addition to other forms of media and stored them up like fine wine; I was a connoisseur of realities.

However, the inescapable flow of time eventually carried me to the underbelly of imagination's prime contender: growing up. Time stops for no man. It stops for no woman, no child, and certainly not a hapless mind drifter. And so it was, the progression of age brought with it the heft of responsibility, heavy, and cumbersome, and abundant; the task of bearing it leaving little to no room for anything else. And so I'm sad to say that for a time, I parted with my beloved hobby, making brief and unsatisfying conjugal visits to where it lay holed up at the back of my mind.

Unfortunately, this is the natural way of things. At one point or another, most of us, I think, come to a crossroads in life. It is at this junction where we must choose between sustaining imagination for the sake of dreams and responsibility for the sake of well-being. Mind you, I do not mean to say that those who tend to their imaginations are not responsible, nor am I inferring the reverse. In fact, for a lucky minority, the two go hand-in-hand. Rather, what I mean is that for those of us who are not so lucky, there comes a time for us to 'grow-up' and establish the means for building a life. To do otherwise is simply impractical, ludicrous even.

I found myself at the crossroads a few years back and the right choice seemed obvious. I had always known that I would involve myself in the realm of science and had come to believe that my infatuation with realities outside this one would only hinder my success in whatever field I chose. The choice to 'grow up' seemed a natural one. Countless others before me had done it. As a matter of fact, I have, for lack of a better word, enjoyed the company of men who haven't quite grown up yet. I thank them for their example because they made the decision even easier. I didn't want to be that: a kid stuck in a grown man's body. Ever negligent of time's immutable flow and aging in body but not mind.

Then I made a joyous discovery. I don't have to lose touch with my imagination to be successful. I don't have to completely abandon my art of mind drifting to establish a life for myself. New research has shown that daydreaming, or any other form of fueling the imagination (gaming, reading, movie marathons) when indulged moderately, actually help improve productivity.

I've also learned to take a sort of pride in my 'out-of-sync' quality. We don't live in a perfect world, this much is clear to all. The world we inhabit is complex. Its complexities, like ivy branches creeping up a brick wall, move slowly but in plain sight, and almost untraceable too, until they become strong enough to crack the foundations of the wall beneath. These complexities create both the aspects of the world make it such a sight to behold when regarded in its entirety; they also create its darkness. The world is as full of beauty as it is rife with injustice, inhumanity, and downright ugliness. Mind drifting grants me a brief reprieve from this grisly visage, giving me time to re-center myself and prepare to do my part in making the world a little less ugly (or a lot less if I play my cards right). Sometimes it is necessary to remove oneself from the problem in order to come back to it refreshed, and from another angle.

Being a part of the working world, I've re-employed my cherished wine collection and can attest to the validity of its work-boosting properties. Using it as a very temporary escape, I come back to the world anew; producing an overflowing fervor to aid me in actually saving the world. Achieving a perfect balance is still a work in progress but work I'll gladly engage in. I handle each bottle with care, entertaining my apetite with modest portions so as to steer clear of inebriation. The urge to over-indulge is offset by ardor of a different nature.

As an adult, I find myself hungry for an adventure of my own. I don't expect to sail through space on pirate ships, or to even fend off waves of mythical creatures. I want a real adventure. I want to see the world for what it is; to see what I may have missed as a kid, preferring to keep my head in the clouds. I'd like to determine just what my place is within it and what I can do to improve it. I also like to think I'll even chance across something incredible…

What would have made this even better would have been more "reporting" on the growing research showing how important imagination—even day dreaming—is, not only to our creativity, but our productive output, even in strict business/corporate environments. You wouldn't need to go overboard on this, but those studies are impressive.