



The Hero with a Thousand Faces

By Joseph Campbell

Adapted Notes
By Michael Mervosh

Part I

THE ADVENTURE OF THE HERO

* * * * *

CHAPTER ONE

DEPARTURE

1. The Call To Adventure

The story of the Frog King, from the Grimm's Fairy Tales – about the beautiful princess who loses her golden ball into a deep wellspring. The frog gets a promise from the princess to be her companion, and goes down to the depths of the well and brings the golden ball up to the surface in his mouth.

The blunder of the dropped ball brings about the arrival of the herald, and the start of the adventure (for her, of adolescence).

The princess does not honor the deal. The frog – the unconscious herald, later comes knocking at her door. Eventually, she annihilates the frog, who then turns into her prince.

One of the ways adventure begins is through an apparent blunder. A blunder – apparently the merest chance – reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood.

But blunders are not merely chance, but the result of suppressed desires and conflicts. They are ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspecting springs. And these may be very deep – as deep as the soul itself. The blunder may amount to the opening of a destiny.

The frog comes up to the surface of awareness to the princess, as it were, by a miracle, is the *herald*; the crisis of his appearance is the “*call to adventure*”.

The arrival of the herald makes the beginning of the awakening of the self. In the fairy tale, it marks the departure of childhood and the coming of adolescence.

The call brings up the curtain, always, on the mystery of transformation – a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand.

Typical of the circumstances of the call are the dark forest, the great tree, the babbling spring, and the loathly, underestimated appearance of the carrier of the power of destiny. (Yoda)

The frog, the little dragon, is the nursery counterpart of the underworld serpent who represents the powers of the abyss, the unconscious.

All moments of separation and new birth produce anxiety.

The frog, the serpent, the dragon – all represent the ‘rejected one’, which is also representative of the unconscious deep (“so deep, that the bottom cannot be seen”) wherein are hoarded all of the rejected, unadmitted, unrecognized, unknown, or undeveloped factors, laws and elements of existence.

The herald or announcer of the adventure, therefore, is often dark, loathly, or terrifying, judged evil by the world; yet if one could follow, the way would be opened through the walls of day into the dark where the jewels glow.

Or the herald is a beast (as in a fairy tale), representative of the repressed instinctual fecundity within ourselves, or again a veiled mysterious figure – the unknown.

The spontaneous appearance of the figure of the herald in the psyche signifies that one is ripe for transformation.

There is an atmosphere of irresistible fascination about the figure who appears suddenly as guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the hero’s life.

That which has to be faced, and is somehow profoundly familiar to the unconscious – though unknown, surprisingly, and even frightening to the conscious personality – makes itself known; and what formerly was meaningful may become strangely emptied of value.

This is what happened to the world of the king's princess, with the sudden disappearance into the wellspring of the golden ball, which had been her favorite toy.

Thereafter, even though the hero returns for a while to his familiar occupations, they may be found unfruitful. A series of signs of increasing force then will become visible, until the summons can no longer be denied.

The first stage of the mythological journey – which we have designated the “call to adventure” – signifies that destiny has summoned the hero, and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown.

This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, a lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight.

The hero can go forth of his own volition, or he may be carried or sent forth by some benign or malignant agent. The adventure may begin as a mere blunder, or one may be casually strolling through life, when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures one away from the frequented paths.

