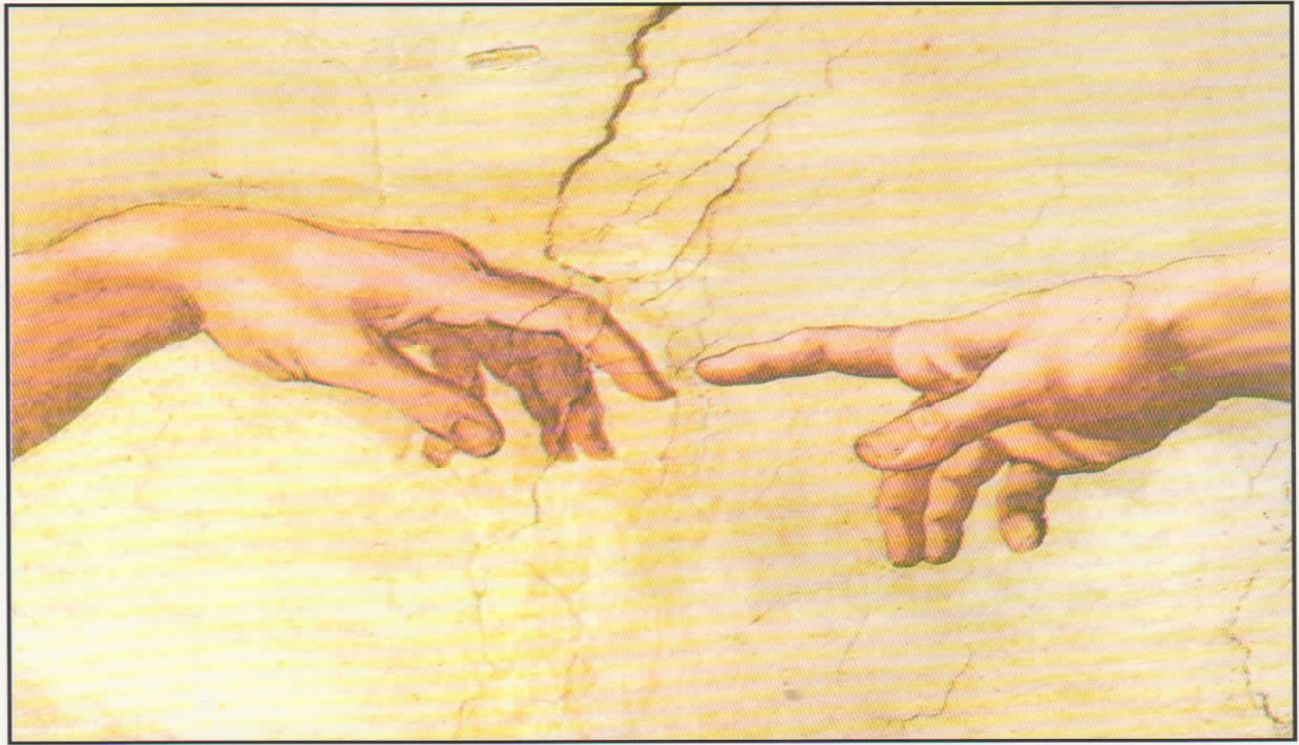


THE HERO'S JOURNEY



You Are The Hero
In Your Own Adventure

GARY MCAULEY

The Hero's Journey

You Are The Hero In Your Own Adventure

Gary C. McAuley

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A Personal Note

In 1998 I sold my business to a large nationwide company . I cashed out and had money in the bank . It had been a long and grueling haul , and not without a few low points . For instance , my brother loaned my small company money based on a large customer we had acquired . That one customer represented 90% of our income . Later he set up a straw man to steal that customer . At the time he claimed he ‘didn’t know” about the straw man stealing the customer. This left my company with a large debt and on the verge of bankruptcy . Other low points were lawsuits chasing customers who did not pay and a partnership with another company which turned sour. I went without payroll for years so I could keep the doors open. This led to a bitter divorce, and during that time my sister with whom I was close died of cancer.

I do not bring up these stories to cry you a song. Rather it is a preface to show how *The Hero’s Journey* helped me. Somewhere along the line of struggling with cash flow, potential bankruptcy, and personal issues like divorce and death, I was introduced to Joseph Campbell and his series of work. A friend of mine had watched the PBS series of interviews with Bill Moyers and told me about it. This was before easy computer access , so I went to the local library and looked up Joseph Campbell . I was astounded with what I read . I went to the local bookstores and bought virtually everything he wrote. I absorbed it; I bathed in it. It became a Daily Reader for me. It helped me slug through some dark and bitter times . Honestly , there were days I thought of giving up, closing the doors on my business and hiding out in some remote Third World village . But somehow I persevered. Joseph Campbell and his work allowed me to see the light and soldier on in the darkest hours.

After selling the business, I began to give talks in churches about Joseph Campbell and *The Hero’s Journey*. It was clear people were interested in what I had to say. In short order , I put my thoughts down to paper. This book is a longer version of the talks I gave in churches. *The Hero’s Journey* helped me through dark days. I hope it can help you as well.

Gary C McAuley

OVERVIEW

The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.
Joseph Campbell

The Hero's Journey is your journey. The Hero is not some superhuman God or Goddess that you can never hope to be. In fact, the true Hero in all stories is you. As you go about your daily activities of living, you are creating your own Hero's story. Every day you are engaged in an Adventure filled with ogres, wild animals, and dragons.

These creatures of the dark represent your Fears and Desires. The Hero story is told to help you maneuver, not only through your personal minefields but the various obstructions Life throws your way.

There are significant signposts in all these stories that have been written to help you know where you are on your heroic journey. When you have become a Master of Both Worlds (Chapter 12), you will know why someone comes into your life and gives you knowledge. Or when you are in your darkest hour, and your Fears and Desires are now large dragons in front of you, you will recognize them for what they are, and you will know what you need to do to defeat them.

*It is difficulties that show
what men (and women) are.*
Epictetus

In my particular case, in facing divorce and bankruptcy, I was dealing with the Fear of Failure. I also Desired to be successful in business as well as life. I was allowing Fear and Desire to cloud my decision making. When I embraced Fear and Desire, I realized they no longer had control over me. I also realized I could not control all aspects of the future. By *not struggling so hard* I found I could let go and allow for whatever the future might bring. By doing so, I was slowly becoming a Master of Both Worlds and allowing myself the Freedom to Live. I embraced my Fear and Desire, and I let go of controlling the future.

Let's start with one common story, part of life's journey, to show you a rough outline of some of the signposts of the Hero's Journey. Bear with me if you don't know the terms yet. They will become clear as you read the book. But in this initial Hero's Journey, we have a young baby named Timmy who Desires to walk.

Timmy, you see, can only crawl. But he has a Call to Adventure. There is a toy just out of reach. If he can stand and walk, he can reach it. His Mother in this story is the Supernatural Aid. She knows it is time for Timmy to learn to walk. She cannot hold him upright or carry him forever. Besides, he's getting heavy! Timmy must move on his own Hero's Journey. She also knows *he must do it alone*.

Performing a Hero's Journey – even something as simple as learning to walk - does not suggest Timmy is lonely or without friends or counsel. As the song goes, *You'll Never Walk Alone*, and so it is on the Hero's Journey. In Timmy's case, his Mother is right by his side, coaxing him along on this walking Adventure. And so are all his extended family, who will be the first to cheer when Timmy stands and walks. Yes, he walks by himself. He must do it alone.

But he is bathed in love as he does so. Even Timmy as a baby knows he must do it himself. He takes pride in accomplishment when he succeeds.

In learning to walk there will be a Road of Trials, as Timmy falls, hurts himself, scrapes his knee and more. There may even be a Belly of the Whale moment, a dark circumstance where Timmy gets way over his head, and his Supernatural Aid Mother has to bail him

out. Finally, Timmy learns to walk. It is the Ultimate Boon. His Mother, as well as his whole family, cheer his achievement. Timmy has successfully overcome his Fear and Desire and is becoming a Master of Walking. Now he is ready for his next Call to Adventure which is running! Timmy will follow the same pattern as he did before in his next and all future Adventures.

For the benefit of this book, I may refer to the Village and the Dark Forest. In many stories, a Hero leaves a Village and crosses a Dark Forest, as in *Little Red Riding Hood*. “Village” simply refers to your comfort zone; for Timmy, it is the Village of crawling. The Dark Forest refers to any Adventure you take where you leave the comfort of your Village. Timmy leaves the comfort of crawling for the Big Adventure of Walking. For Timmy, it is crossing a Dark Forest of unknowns.

In stories we read or watch on the big screen, the “Village” might be a farm or some place of safety and comfort for the Hero. The Journey may not be a Dark Forest as it is with *Little Red Riding Hood* or *King Arthur*. It may be the darkness of Outer Space or over the darkness of oceans, like Ulysses in *The Odyssey*. The Dark Forest, as well as an adventure over Dark Water or the Darkness of Outer Space, represents the Darkness in the path between Ego and the Heart. It also represents the Future we cannot quite see. All fictional Adventures demand that the Hero cross a Dark Something. It may be psychological, it may be physical.

*After nourishment, shelter, and companionship,
stories are the thing we need most in the world.*

Philip Pullman

In every culture, anytime, anywhere, there are three uniform conditions we can count on: music, dance, and stories. It is true whether we discuss the Tasaday people in the Philippine Archipelago, the Celtic tribes of Northern Europe, Romans, Greeks, Bushmen, Aborigines, or Inuit's.

In all cultures, there are three basic stories: Creation (how we got here), Death (where we go from here), and the Hero's Journey.

The Creation and Death stories are essentially one story per culture. Each culture has a strong belief in how their ancestors arrived at their particular location on the planet, and one particular story to explain where they all go when they die.

For each culture, however, The Hero's Journey may be represented in literally thousands of stories. It is Jason and the Argonauts, it is Ulysses; it is King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table chasing after the Holy Grail. It is Prometheus stealing fire from the Gods as well as Cinderella dancing at a Ball.

Where do stories come from? Why? The oldest known *written* story – as far as we know - is *Epic of Gilgamesh* from ancient Mesopotamia (circa 2400 BC). But stories are no doubt much older, in the oral tradition, and may very well date back to our cave-dwelling days. Once we developed early guttural speech, we probably initially discussed survival; hunting and gathering, as well as shelter. At some point – perhaps around the same time as we now see cave paintings – the cave dwellers began to tell stories. The early stories certainly would have been about hunting, gathering, and survival. The stories may also have included dreams; one cave dweller telling another about strange and weird nighttime visions and what do these visions mean? The other cave dweller would agree; he too has strange and weird nighttime visions. These visions - dreams – may have provided gist for early stories. Dreams meander. The Adventures in Dreams may zig zag across the landscape in odd and even crazy ways. So do stories.

The early oral stories would be handed down generation after generation. Like making coffee through grounds and a filter, the stories become refined. Generations kick out the parts that aren't very interesting and keep the parts that resonate. We end up with stories that stick to our subconscious and give us spiritual food.

The psychologist Carl Jung would explain that stories are part of our *collective unconscious*; Hero figures are part and parcel of our psychological makeup. *Collective unconscious* refers to structures of the unconscious mind which are shared among beings of the same species. According to Jung, the human *collective unconscious* is populated by instincts and by archetypes: universal symbols such as

the Great Mother, the Wise Old Man, the Shadow, the Tower, Water and the Tree of Life.

Jung considered the *collective unconscious* to underscore and surround the unconscious mind, distinguishing it from the personal unconscious of Freudian psychoanalysis. He argued that the *collective unconscious* had a profound influence on the lives of individuals, who live out its symbols and clothe them in meaning through their experiences. The psychotherapeutic practice of analytical psychology revolves around examining the patient's relationship to the *collective unconscious*.

To hell with facts. We need stories.
Ken Kesey

From a factual point of view, we don't need stories. Why read *Wizard of Oz* to be told, simply, there is no place like home? Why not write the one sentence: *no place like home* and be done with it? Perhaps because a message needs to feed our *collective unconscious* in a different and very unusual – *dreamlike* - way. The story is told as an Adventure that zigs and zags across the landscape in odd and even crazy ways. The Hero's Journey stories seem to follow patterns which help educate our *collective unconscious*. Very much like Dreams.

The Hero's Journey is not an invention; it is an observation. The key is for you to begin to envision your own Hero's Journey and recognize the signposts as you move through life. I will connect the Hero signposts to our young man Timmy who is now running around his house. I will also introduce you to two other people: Helen, an employee with visions of owning her own business, and Larry, an insurance salesman. I will also connect the Hero signposts to a number of well-known stories, including *Wizard of Oz* and *A Christmas Carol*. I can use a thousand different stories because the signposts remain the same. That is the point Joseph Campbell makes in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. A thousand Heroes in a thousand stories follow similar patterns, and the reason is to educate our *collective unconscious*.

Why does a child want the same story read to him every night, to the consternation of the parent? Because that story is feeding something vital and important to the child's *unconscious*.

Ultimately, you will be able to connect the signposts, not only in stories you might read or watch but in your own life as well.

The signposts are as follows:

- A. Call To Adventure
- B. Refusal of the Call
- C. Supernatural Aid
- D. Crossing of the First Threshold
- E. Road of Trials
- F. Belly of the Whale
- G. Meeting with the Goddess: Atonement with the Father
- H. Ultimate Boon
- I. Refusal of The Return
- J. The Return
- K. Master of Both Worlds
- L. Freedom to Live

Joseph Campbell's order is slightly different, but Adventures are not linear. Life's Adventures zig zag. Your life has zigged zagged and so has mine. One signpost does not necessarily follow the next one. For example, Ulysses in *The Odyssey* spent years trying to get home, while the Sea God Poseidon toyed with him, keeping him away from his wife and son. Ultimately the signposts arrive as the Hero comes to term with Serenity of the Heart.

If this subject matter is of interest to you, I would certainly encourage you to delve into it further, as I did. It is well worth the journey.

Good luck! And let us begin the Adventure.

CALL TO ADVENTURE

*No, no! The Adventures first!
Explanations take such a dreadful time.*
Lewis Carroll,
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

All Hero's Journey stories begin with a Call to Adventure. For Timmy's Adventure in Walking, it's the Desire to reach for a toy.

In The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy lives on a farm with an Aunt and Uncle, along with some farm hands. She is well loved. But she feels something is missing. There is Somewhere Over the Rainbow that is calling to her. She Desires to leave the farm.

Let me introduce you to Helen, an office manager. Helen is a wonderful person and a great employee. She is very loyal and rarely takes a day off. But as she sits at her desk, the boss man berates her in loud tones, so that her colleagues can hear. The boss man is blaming Helen for something that has gone wrong. Helen's unhappiness spills over into her private life. Something needs to change. As the boss man continues to rant, she looks past him out the window. Across the street is a city park and she can hear children laugh and birds chirping. Helen Desires something better than her job. Helen may not know it yet, but it is a Call To Adventure.

*Life is either a great Adventure
or nothing.*

Helen Keller

The Call to Adventure is a spiritual Call to move from the Ego to the Heart. And all Hero stories can be quantified this simply. The Hero often does not see this. The Brain attempts to control the Ego. The Brain wants to dominate our life. Fear and Desire dominate the Ego. The Heart is in balance within us physically as well as spiritually. All Hero Adventures demand that our spiritual center moves from the Ego to the Heart. The Heart, in this case, represents Spiritual Serenity.

The kingdom of God is within you.

Luke 17:21

Now I will introduce you to Larry. Larry is a middle-aged insurance executive. He is drunk at a company party. He is one of those happy drunks you might meet in life. Larry is loud and thinks he is funny. He has been this way since high school. He has been very successful as an insurance executive for many years, but drink is now getting in the way. At the company party, Larry falls down and needs to be helped up. He is laughing, thinking he is the life of the party. His boss tells him to go home. Larry's wife is embarrassed. Larry is getting a Call to Adventure, but he doesn't know it. Yet.

There are two Calls to Adventure: one born of Desire, and one born of Fear. Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* Desires to leave the farm. Timmy, our crawling baby, Desires to walk and run. Helen, berated by her boss man, Desires for something better in her life. The other Call To Adventure is based on Fear; it is not an Adventure the Hero wants to go on.

Ebenezer Scrooge in The Christmas Carol is happy in his own miserly way. But he is visited one night by the Ghost of his deceased business partner, Marley. It is a Call to Adventure, one that Scrooge would prefer not to take. He is Fearful of this Adventure.

Timmy is now four years old and running around the house, while Timmy's Mother sits and reads the newspaper. Timmy's

Mother spies a column about a boy who recently drowned at a local lake. Timmy's Mother talks to her family about it. The family readily agrees that Timmy needs to learn to swim. Mother asks Timmy if he'd like to learn to swim. Timmy answers with a resounding *no*. Timmy hates water. He doesn't even like baths. He has no intentions of learning to swim. This is a Call to Adventure based on Fear. Nevertheless, Timmy's Mother has decided she is going to make Timmy take this Hero's Journey plunge in swimming.

There can be a Call to Adventure that is a mixture of both Fear and Desire. An example is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Hamlet is happy. He is the Prince of Denmark. He has a stable home life with a Mother and Father. He has a wonderful woman, Ophelia, in his life. But things change abruptly; his Father is murdered, and his Mother remarries in short order: "the funeral's bak'd meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables..." In this Call To Adventure, there is Desire to find the truth of his Father's murder, and Fear of what he might find.

Years earlier, Helen had found that she was pregnant with her first child. She was excited, but it was a mixture of both Fear and Desire. The Desire to have a child, and the Fear of the unknown; *am I ready? Will I be a good Mother?* Many Adventures we take might combine both elements of Fear and Desire. You can say the following with both Fear and Desire: *Oh my gosh, I'm pregnant!*

An Adventure may be psychological and personal, as it is for Hamlet and Scrooge. The Adventure may be physical, requiring a long journey far from home, as it is for Ulysses, Jason and the Argonauts, and Dorothy who must travel all the way to Oz. They all find after their long journeys they had Serenity in their Hearts all along. It is a two-foot journey from the Ego to the Heart. And once we achieve the Serenity of the Heart we can harness our Fear and Desire.

I use the term 'Serenity' to capture the thought of an equitable balance within one's own heart. Other words you can use are 'spirit,'

'peace' or 'tranquility.' You are certainly welcome to come up with your word or words to describe the concept of being Spiritually well centered.

We can calculate the Call to Adventure this way: if the Hero chooses the Adventure, it is born of Desire. If the Adventure is forced onto the Hero, it is born out of Fear.

While the great stories often focus on one Adventure at a time, our own Adventures are many and sometimes simultaneous. We learn to walk, we learn to run. We learn to swim, we are learning at school. We might be finishing up an accomplishment of walking - a Desired Adventure - or start a new project - swimming - that is fraught with danger and Fear (the beginning of an Adventure not of our choosing). As an adult, we may be starting a relationship with a new partner and at the same time we are starting a new job. We may be Mentoring other people, even our own children. In these cases we are starting several Hero's Journey's all at once, we also participate in other people's Hero's Journey's as well.

One man in his time plays many parts.
William Shakespeare

It sounds like we are juggling a lot, but these are normal paths to take. A baby becomes a child and a child becoming an adult is achieving numerous Holy Grails simultaneously. And so are you.

REFUSAL OF THE CALL

*We are plain quiet folk
and have no use for adventures.
Nasty disturbing, uncomfortable things.
Makes you late for dinner!*
J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

When every Adventure begins, there may be a moment of Fear in which we Refuse the Call.

Marley tells Scrooge about his seven years of chained misery since he died. Marley tells Scrooge he will be visited by three ghosts. Ghosts? Years of Chained Misery? Scrooge wants no part of this Adventure. Scrooge wishes to Refuse the Call.

There is a knock at the door. Larry answers. It is a man with a registered letter. Larry looks at the return address. It is a registered letter from his wife's attorney. She wants a divorce. After signing the required document, the delivery man leaves and Larry sets the letter down. He cannot believe that after many years of marriage this is where their relationship is going. He Refuses to open the letter. He is not ready for this Adventure. He pours himself a stiff drink.

Refusing the Call To Adventure may occur even in Adventures we Desire. Helen, our employee, sits at home, scratching out business ideas on paper. She envisions leaving her job. She Desires to be a successful business woman and independent. But there is Fear in doing so. It means living without a paycheck. It means issuing paychecks to employees and somehow finding the money –

start up costs – to do so. It means renting office space, office overhead and finding suppliers she would need to pay. Yes, it would be financially difficult. As Helen sits and ponders her business future, she hears her daughter singing in her bedroom. Helen would not just be putting herself through this arduous Hero's Adventure; she would be subjecting her family to it as well. Helen sits the paperwork down. She sighs, dejected. She puts the paperwork away. Helen Refuses the Call to Adventure.

During both the Call to Adventure and the Refusal of the Call, the Hero may still be spiritually living in their Ego, dominated by Fear and Desire. Fear of the Adventure and what the unknowns may be. If we are embarking on a new Adventure we may cross a fork in the road when we must make a serious decision on which path to take. Fear and Desire will dominate the moment and may help us determine whether or not we are ready for the Adventure

“To Be Or Not To Be...” Hamlet has a Call to Adventure: to determine if his Mother and Stepfather had a hand in his Father's Death. He can Refuse the Adventure. He can pretend that nothing is rotten in the State of Denmark. Hamlet is at a bitter fork in the road.

*The things of this world exist;
they are; you can't refuse them.
Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching*

Timmy's Mother takes him to a local park where children laugh and play in a shallow pool of water. She wants to encourage Timmy to enjoy the new Adventure of swimming. But Timmy ignores the shallow pool. While Timmy is quick to embrace some Adventures – walking and running - he wants no part of this swimming Adventure. Timmy Refuses the Call.

Keep in mind some Adventures may take years to come together. Larry's issue with alcohol began in high school. And even though Larry has repeatedly been told by his wife as well as some

friends that he needs to reduce the alcohol consumption, he does not stop. Persistent Refusal of the Call may well be a guaranteed disaster, however, for Larry and the loved ones around him. If there is an alcoholic or someone addicted to drugs in your family, you know this to be true.

*The cave you fear to enter
holds the treasure you seek.*

Joseph Campbell

A Master of Both Worlds will know when the time is right to overcome the Refusal of the Call. As we achieve some Holy Grails, we understand and grasp the importance of all the signposts and use them to our advantage. It is standing back and seeing the signposts as you move along in life that will help make you a veteran Master of Both Worlds. When will you know to overrule the intuitive Refusal of the Call? The following signposts will help you decide.

SUPERNATURAL AID

*A mentor is someone who allows you
to see the hope inside yourself.*
Oprah Winfrey

Timmy's Mother is a Mentor when it comes to Timmy's initial Adventures; magically grabbing his hand when he's first learning to walk and about to fall. So is his extended family as well as pre-school teachers. They all take turns as Mentors. Part of Mastering the World is accepting and embracing the Mentors who are often willing to help you in your various Adventures.

Timmy's Mother takes him, against his will, to swimming lessons. Standing in his swimming suit, Timmy looks at a shallow pool and a small group of young swimmers. There is an Instructor ready to help Timmy and the other swimmers. The Instructor is another Mentor in Timmy's young life. Smiling, the Instructor tosses colorful toys into the shallow water, just out of reach of Timmy. The Instructor knows how to entice a curious young boy into the swimming pool.

*The greatest good you can do for another
is not just to share your riches
but to reveal to him his own.*
Benjamin Disraeli

Mentors are those we embrace to help us on our Adventure. In stories, as well as life, *Supernatural Aid* may refer to Mentors which come from surprising and unexpected sources. Shakespeare's Fools, for example, are often wise in their counsel. In stories, the

Supernatural Aid may come disguised as being poor and dressed in rags. The Hero sometimes misidentifies and dismisses the Fool before coming to understand the gifts the disguised Mentor brings. The Supernatural Aid in stories may also be a wise old man or a wise old woman. Perhaps they are dwarves or elves. They simply represent characters that have already made it through or are at least familiar with the particular Dark Forest we are ready to walk through. They are Mentors.

In the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, a young Arthur meets Merlin, a beggarly old man. The wise Merlin helps Arthur on his journey to becoming King.

Scrooge in his nightmarish sleep encounters the ghost of Marley. His former business partner now takes the role of Supernatural Aid and Mentor. Marley tells Scrooge in no uncertain terms to "Change Your Ways."

Supernatural Aid is the Celestine Prophecy part of the Adventure: the chance meeting with people who seem to come into our life to give us knowledge. After giving us information, they may very well depart, and we never see them again.

For example, Helen is invited to a party but doesn't want to go. It's been a long day at the office, and she is tired. At the last minute, with the insistence of a friend, she goes. *"But I'm only staying for a little while,"* Helen says. At the party, Helen is introduced to some people, and one happens to be a woman who has owned a business for years. Here is a chance meeting with a person who gives solid and important information that can help Helen on her journey. The business woman, in this brief meeting, is inspiring. She gives Helen her business card and says *"call anytime. I will be glad to help."* Helen tells her co-worker the next day, *"you'll never guess who I met last night, and what she told me!"*

It might seem like Twilight Zone material in hindsight when we just 'happen' to meet a person or people whom we may never see again but gives us key information we will need for our Adventure.

This is why it is referenced as *Supernatural Aid*. But let's examine human beings and that moment at the party. The conversation between people who do not know each other will appear superficial. What they are doing is subconsciously tossing out various topics to one another until something clicks. Once it clicks, sparks fly! And key information is passed along.

In the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy meets a number of Mentors and Supernatural Aid. There is Professor Marvel, Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion. In their own ways, all of these characters give her Mentoring and Supernatural Aid during her Hero's Journey.

AND: some of these characters are also on their own Hero's Journey: Scarecrow in search of a brain, Tin Man a heart, and courage for the Lion. Dorothy is as much a Supernatural Aid and Mentor to these three, as they are to Dorothy. Even though their goals are various, the four along with Toto find common cause to work together.

One for all, and all for one!
Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*

While young Timmy needs to learn to swim by himself, he is surrounded in love by his Mother, the Instructor, and even the other swimming kids who in their way are helping each other. And when one of the swimmers swims, the other Mothers, Fathers, Grandparents, Instructor, and swimmers cheer him and her on. The swimmers find common cause to work together.

*The mind is not a vessel to be filled,
but a fire to be kindled.*
Plutarch

Larry's Boss invites him into his office. Larry thinks this will be another sales type meeting: making goals, performance bonuses. But it is not. With a heavy heart, Larry's boss tells Larry he is going to have to let him go. His job performance lately has been poor, and

there has been negative feedback from some of Larry's customers. Larry is also prone to not show up for important meetings. Larry tries to argue, but his boss is firm.

Larry's boss feels very badly about this. Larry used to be his top salesman. Larry has been with the firm for fifteen years. What Larry's boss doesn't understand is that in his way he is a Supernatural Aid to Larry's journey. By letting Larry go, he is nudging him out of the Village and onto his new Adventure.

While Supernatural Aid may come to us unexpectedly, we can also gather Mentors as we progress on our Hero's Adventure. After the surprise meeting with the business owner, Helen may make a point of contacting other Mentors: business owners, bankers and more. She collects people who will help her on her Journey.

The encounters with Mentors and Supernatural Aid may occur over a period of months or years. It may come abruptly. Once the Hero feels she has gained enough knowledge of the Adventure ahead she will know she is ready to make the commitment to leave the Village behind and enter the Dark Forest.

*To be great, truly great,
you have to be the kind of person
who makes the others around you great.*
Mark Twain

"I don't need any help. I can do it myself."

These words come from the Ego, and most of us have said it at some point in our life. It is a classic phrase from someone who Refuses Mentors or Supernatural Aid. Let's recap with some of our characters, both fictional and real:

Timmy is quick to dispatch Supernatural Aids and Mentors as soon as he can walk and run. *I can do it myself, Mommy!* Timmy may even resent Mommy trying to help him with mundane tasks like

getting dressed or tying his shoes. Timmy is your normal child living in his Ego and rejecting the Mentors around him.

For years Larry has been offered help and counseling by a number of good friends as well as his (soon to be) ex-wife. But Larry has always rejected the help and counsel. Larry does not believe he has a problem. And if he does have a problem, he can handle it himself.

Scrooge tries to reject the counsel of both Marley and the three Ghosts of Christmas. Scrooge does not think he needs any help. Bah, humbug!

Helen is smart enough to know that in starting her own business she needs all the Mentors and Supernatural Aid she can find. Helen is well aware she cannot do it alone and it will take a team of good people to help her succeed. Helen demonstrates she is becoming a Master of Both Worlds by simply asking for help.

*When you're finished changing,
you're finished.*
Benjamin Franklin

The effects of this are obvious: if a person rejects Mentoring and Supernatural Aid that person does not grow or change. They stay in their rut. The Master of Both Worlds embraces the words of the Supernatural Aid and Mentors. To enter an Adventure without roadmaps leads to problematic situations where one gets lost, and the journey takes much longer and is often more painful than necessary.

*Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes.
Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow.
Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally
forward in whatever way they like.*
Lao Tzu

CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD

*And suddenly you know
It's time to start something new
And trust the magic of beginnings.
Meister Eckhart*

Timmy stands by the edge of the swimming pool. He is being coaxed by both his Mother and the swimming instructor to jump in. Timmy stares at the water. There are other kids in this swimming pool. Even they try to coax Timmy into the water. Timmy sees other kids his age already paddling about. Finally, Timmy jumps into the water and joins the other kids. Timmy has crossed the First Threshold into his swimming Adventure.

Crossing The First Threshold may be the scariest moment of the Journey. It is when you leave your comfort zone. You have taken the leap of faith, and you are leaving the Village behind and entering a Dark Forest.

The Ghost of Christmas Past yanks Scrooge from his bed and takes him on the first leg of his three-part journey. Scrooge is forced to leave the comforts of his bed. Scrooge has crossed the First Threshold.

Helen gives notice to her boss; she is quitting. He is stunned. He didn't think she would ever leave. Helen is aware she will miss the Village; her co-workers who have given her friendship and comfort.

In angry tones, her boss asks her to reconsider. But she has resolve. It is an Adventure she Desires. She is entering a path into a Dark Forest. Helen has crossed the First Threshold.

*You're off to great places
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting
So...get on your way!*
Dr. Seuss

With the loss of both his job and his wife, Larry reconsiders where he is in life. At first, he blames the insurance business and the customers. He thinks his wife has problems. He finds counsel with his drinking buddies. He announces to them he is Free At Last! Free of a marriage, free of that job. His drinking buddies are his Mentors and Supernatural Aid. Larry enters a Dark Forest of drinking, unaware how lost he is.

*You enter the forest at the darkest point, where there is no path.
Where there is a way or path, it is someone else's path.
You are not on your own path. If you follow someone else's way,
you are not going to realize your potential.*
Joseph Campbell

As you start your new Adventure and cross the First Threshold, one character you may meet is a Threshold Guardian. This person is designed to prevent you from entering the Dark Forest. It may be an inner voice that tells you not to go on. In all likelihood, it is someone in your life who attempts to block your journey.

In Wizard of Oz, Dorothy and Toto find themselves, magically, in Oz. They must make their way to Emerald City. But the Wicked Witch of the West stands in their way. She does not want Dorothy to make that journey. The Wicked Witch is now taking the role of Threshold Guardian.

Helen's boss is a Threshold Guardian, telling her she's nuts to quit. So are several of her co-workers who will miss her. *What if you fail, they ask. You have a family to consider. What are you thinking?* Her co-workers genuinely care for Helen. They think they

know what's best for Helen by taking the role of Threshold Guardians.

*Great spirits have always encountered
opposition from mediocre minds.*
Albert Einstein

Timmy will not meet Threshold Guardians when he is learning to swim. He is surrounded by Mentors such as the swimming Instructor and swimming friends. But Threshold Guardians will show up in his life soon enough. They are often the school bullies who stand in the way of younger kids, preventing them from entering the bathroom or playing on the playground. Life for a young kid is often full of Threshold Guardians.

Ebenezer Scrooge takes the role of Threshold Guardian himself. Despite the overtures of the Supernatural Aid characters, Scrooge is dragging his feet throughout the entire Adventure. He keeps telling himself he does not want to go on this Adventure.

It is part of our journey: we must overcome this good friend or relative or our internal voice that loves us and is trying to prevent our entry into the Dark Forest. For if we are to achieve our next Holy Grail and cross the Dark Forest, we must overcome the Threshold Guardian.

*I have accepted fear as part of life –
specifically the fear of change...
I have gone ahead despite the pounding
in my heart that says: turn back...*
Erica Jong

Are we ready? Are we prepared? If we are, and we have found the inner resolve, we will move beyond the Threshold Guardian and leave the Village behind.

THE ROAD OF TRIALS

*In the midst of life's journey,
I found myself in a dark wood,
for the right path was lost.
Dante, **The Divine Comedy***

The Hero has left the comforts of the Village and has fully entered the Dark Forest of the new Adventure. In becoming a Master of Both Worlds we understand and acknowledge there will be a Road of Trials.

In all stories told – comedy or drama – the Road of Trials is the most common part. It is Charlie Chaplin, the tramp in silent films, encountering obstacles as simple as a pair of roller skates or finding himself in a boxing match or on an assembly line. It is Little Red Riding Hood on a simple walk to Grandmother's house. It is Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, or Homer's Iliad and the Odyssey. All characters encounter a Road of Trials.

A horrendous tornado rips Dorothy, Toto, and their entire farmhouse up and Over the Rainbow to the Land of Oz. There, she must follow the yellow brick road and encounter a variety of obstacles, not least of which are flying monkeys and a Wicked Witch. For Dorothy, it is a Road of Trials.

As Timmy learns to walk and then run, he falls, quite often. There are bumps and bruises. As Timmy learns to swim, he is frustrated, because there is also trial and error to learning the right

techniques in water so he can stay afloat. For each Adventure Timmy goes on, there is a Road of Trials.

*I didn't fail the test.
I just found 100 ways to do it wrong.*
Benjamin Franklin

Helen now has her own business. She is excited. But the excitement soon wears off. Her old boss sues her over an employment contract dispute. A new employee, Helen finds, is stealing office supplies and petty cash. As she acquires a new customer, an old customer leaves for better pricing with a competitor. The hours are long. There are business meetings in the evening such as the local Chambers that she feels obligated to attend. Helen feels overwhelmed. Her old friends – employees all – do not quite understand the problems of an employer.

*These are the times
that try men's souls.*
Thomas Paine

scrooge has a fitful series of dreams, with the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Christmas Yet To Come. It is terrifying. These dreams force Scrooge to face bitter truths about himself. For Scrooge, it is a Road of Trials.

Larry goes on binge drinking. Then he wakes up, realizing he really does need to stop drinking. He attends some AA meetings. He stops his drinking for a couple of days. Then his old drinking buddies show up at inopportune times. Larry's Road of Trials includes Mentors at AA, drinking buddies (Threshold Guardians) who tell him to drink up. For a drinking man, sobriety is a perpetual Road of Trials. Larry has to leave these drinking buddies behind, but they keep calling him back. They do not understand the Dark Forest he is in. They think he should party on and enjoy life.

*Even if you are on the right track,
you'll get run over if you just sit there.*

Will Rogers

The Road of Trials is harrowing for everyone, and we all emerge as changed people. Since we know this part of the journey so well - as we have all fallen, banged, cut and scraped ourselves both physically and psychologically as we walk any and all our various Adventures throughout life - let me quote Joseph Campbell on this, and we can get a little deeper into this part of the Dark Forest:

"And so it happens that if anyone - in whatever society - undertakes for himself the perilous journey into the darkness by descending, either intentionally or unintentionally, into the crooked lanes of his spiritual labyrinth, he soon finds himself in a landscape of symbolical figures (any one of which may swallow him)..."

And:

"...in the vocabulary of the mystics, this is the second stage of the Way; that of the purification of the self, when the senses are 'cleanses and humbled' and the energies and interests 'concentrated upon transcendental things..."

And so we enter our dream world and where dreams will lead us.

"...In the vocabulary of more modern turn: this is the process of dissolving, transcending, or transmuting the infantile images of our personal past. In our dreams the ageless perils, gargoyles, trials, secret helpers, and instructive figures are nightly still encountered; and in their forms, we may see reflected not only the whole picture of our present case but also the clue to what we must do to be saved."

Mentors can be physical characters who help guide us along. So are Dreams, which likely were the first source of stories. As we cross any Dark Forest, Dreams are there to help guide us along. Dreams are, in fact, Mentors and Supernatural Aids. Unfortunately,

many people discount Dreams as '*Fools on the Hill*,' weird nighttime stories without meaning. A Master of Both Worlds takes advantage of every Mentor who crosses his or her path, both physically and psychologically.

A young boy like Timmy is a long way from Mastering Both Worlds. He may not grasp it for years. He will enter new Adventures like swimming or school with Fear and Desire and not see the Road of Trials up ahead.

Because her Mentors warned her, Helen is keenly aware there will be a Road of Trials ahead in owning a business. But even she was not aware of potential lawsuits and employee theft right out of the gate. These incidents catch her off guard. Mastering Both Worlds demand that you tackle the Trials one after the other. You learn to expect the unexpected.

*The art of life
is a constant readjustment
to our surroundings.*
Kakuzo Okakura

The same would hold true for Larry. He knows in giving up the drink there will be a Road of Trials. He will be better able to handle the Trials if he is aware going into the Adventure. Mentors in this regard will caution him about how tough it is to give up drink when you hang around the old drinking crowd.

REVOLUTION NUMBER THREE

One interesting note I have found in reading many stories both new and old is how often the number three emerges as a series of trials. There are three spirits who transport Scrooge. There are the three temptations of Christ, as well as the three temptations of Buddha. There is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the Holy Trinity. Psyche is put through three tests to win back the love of Cupid.

Pythagoras believed the number three was the first true number. Three is the first number used in geometrical figures – the triangle. The Number three is a sacred number in many religions. In rituals, many actions are performed three times. Number three is even used by Fortune Tellers as a number of good fortune. It is considered the number for harmony, wisdom, and understanding. Three is the number of Divine.

It is Past, Present and Future. Birth, Life, and Death.

You might be familiar with the expressions *third time lucky*, or *third time's the charm*. In stories, heroes and heroines are sometimes offered three choices or three tests. They overcome difficulties on the third try.

The number three appears to be a very 'round' number in literature. And while I've seen no research on this particular point, perhaps there is truth in the 'roundness' of the number three. Two trials may not be enough as you Master Both Worlds. Perhaps it takes all of us at least three episodes in the Road of Trials to gain confidence we are on the right path.

BELLY OF THE WHALE

*This Monstro! I've heard of him.
He's a whale of a whale!
Why, he swallows whole ships alive!*
Jiminy Cricket, Pinocchio

Like Jonah in the Biblical story, there is a point in the Hero's Journey where the Hero may reach the darkest junction in his Road of Trials. If the darkness of the ocean/outer space/forest represents the subconscious, the darkness of the whale's belly represents the bleakest moment.

It can also signify where our spiritual energy lies. We begin all Adventures with our energy center in our Brain (the Ego), and our goal is to move the spiritual energy to the Heart and live through the Heart (Serenity). The spirit can also move to other parts of the body including our stomach. It is that gnawing feeling in the pit of our stomach when we face some Fear in our life. In a sense, we are living in our belly, and the mythological whale simply is a physical manifestation of those feelings.

Ebenezer Scrooge is taken by Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come into town. Scrooge overhears people talking about his Death. These people Scrooge knew dismiss his death. Debtors are relieved. Others come to his house to steal what they can. The Ghost delivers Scrooge to a graveyard. Scrooge can barely see the gravestone. Finally, Scrooge makes out his own name. He breaks down and cries. In the darkness of that graveyard, Scrooge is in the Belly of the Whale, a low point in his Road of Trials.

Larry wakes up drunk on a park bench. A cop is tapping his foot and tells him he has to move. Larry looks at his watch. He can barely make out the time. It is six in the morning. He tries to get up, but cannot. He blacks out. The cop gets his partner, and together they help Larry into the police car. Larry is arrested for drunk and disorderly. Once a highly paid salesman, Larry is now unemployed, divorced, a public nuisance and arrested. When Larry wakes up in his cell, his first thought is he needs a drink. Larry is in the Belly of the Whale, a low point in his Road of Trials.

*The scariest monsters are the ones
that lurk within our souls.*
Edgar Allan Poe

Dorothy is in the middle of a Dark Forest. Lions, Tigers, and Bears, Oh my! She is then taken by flying monkeys to the witch's castle, where she is imprisoned. Dorothy has to watch an hour glass as she awaits her fate with the Wicked Witch of the West. Dorothy, in the darkness of that cell, in the dark part of the witch's tower in this Dark Forest, is in the Belly of the Whale.

Helen has faced a Road of Trials in her excursion through the Dark Forest of business ownership. But the worse is yet to come. Her largest customer files for bankruptcy, owing her considerable money. Her payroll clerk, whom she relied on, mishandled the payroll accounts with the state. Now the state is demanding penalties and interest on the payroll tax that apparently was never paid. Helen is out of cash; she does not have the funds to meet payroll this coming Friday. These good people left their jobs to take a chance with her and her startup company. And now she is letting them down. Will she have to close her doors? Will her employees be able to get their old jobs back? She can't sleep at night. In bed, she stares at the ceiling. Her stomach hurts. Her whole world is crashing down. Helen is in the Belly of the Whale, a dark moment in her Road of Trials.

*Hell is empty
and all the Devils are here.*
William Shakespeare

Timmy's family goes to the beach. Timmy has been swimming for three whole months now, and he considers himself an expert. Before Timmy's Mother can stop him, he is running right into that big ocean and tackling a wave. Immediately the wave slams him, and the undercurrent yanks him out in the ocean. As his Mother frantically yells his name she cannot see him. She wades into the water where she last saw him, but he is nowhere near. Timmy cannot hear as he is underwater and trying to fight the current. His head hits something hard. He is dazed and begins to lose consciousness. He blacks out. In his swimming Adventure, Timmy is in the Belly of the Whale, a dark moment in his Road of Trials.

There is a combination of physical forces and psychological forces in stories. They often represent the same thing. Belly of the Whale. The fear in our belly. The storms we encounter can represent the storms in our spirit. Calm waters reflect the calm waters of the spirit. The natural forces in our being.

MEETING WITH THE GODDESS/ ATONEMENT WITH THE FATHER

*Yin and yang, male and female, strong and weak,
rigid and tender, heaven and earth, light and darkness,
thunder and lightning, cold and warmth, good and evil...
the interplay of opposite principles constitutes the universe.*
Confucius

At some point in all our lives, we come to terms with events we cannot control. We also come to terms with Death. In older stories, it is often told as mystical marriages of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess and defeating a Father figure. It is also a spiritual marriage of both the feminine and the masculine within our own body. In all cultures, there is a ying and yang of the physical world. Depending on the culture, it is either Mother Nature and Father Sky or Father Nature and Mother Sky. For this book, I will use Mother Nature and Father Sky. You are welcome to switch the genders for your situation. It works both ways!

*To me the definition of true masculinity - and femininity, too –
is being able to lay in your own skin comfortably.*
Vincent D'Onofrio

In this step, the person must confront and be initiated by whatever holds the ultimate power in his or her life. In many myths and stories, it is a father or a father figure who has life and death power. It is the center point of the journey. All the previous steps have been moving into this place, all that follow will move out from it. Although this step is most frequently symbolized by an encounter with a male entity, it does not have to be a male; just someone or something with incredible power. The feminine energy, then, are physical forces that surround us.

Underwater, Timmy loses consciousness. The waves and currents of the ocean are far stronger than him. *By no longer struggling* with an ocean he cannot possibly defeat, his body relaxes and floats to the top of the water. Timmy's Mother – the Supernatural Aid - spots him and immediately wades over to his body and pulls him from the water.

The human race has always been at the mercy of nature. Mother Nature can be as wicked as the meanest stepmother in any fairy tale. She can unreasonably cause problems for the Village, by hiding the local game (buffalo, salmon, eland, elk, bear, etc.) for weeks on end, or present the Village with an early frost, which kills the local vegetation. Worse, Mother Nature can present the Villagers with frightening wicked storms, destroying whole Villages in a single night, and forcing the distraught Villagers to rebuild again and again.

Mother Nature can also grant remarkable gifts that would rival any Fairy Godmother, providing horns of plenty of food for the Village, or periods of good weather, ensuring their survival for the next year. Thus is born in stories female characters who are unreasonably wicked, and magically giving, sometimes in the same story; Wicked Stepmother, Fairy Godmother. The ying and yang of Mother Nature.

Light is the left hand of darkness...how did it go?

Light, dark. Fear, courage. Cold, warmth.

Female, male. It is yourself. ...both and one.

A shadow on snow.

Ursula Le Guin

In Wizard of Oz Dorothy lives on a productive farm. Dorothy is then overwhelmed by a horrendous tornado. After finding herself in Oz Dorothy must deal with both Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, and the Wicked Witch of the West. The ying and yang of Mother Nature. In one story we see the physical side of Mother Nature: productive farm, tornado; and the mythological side of Mother Nature: good witch, bad witch.

*And into the forest I go,
to lose my mind and find my soul.*
John Muir

Larry is released from jail. When he returns to his apartment he finds an eviction notice. His Landlord, unwittingly, is another Supernatural Aid in Larry's Adventure. The Landlord is pushing Larry out of the Village. Larry takes the early morning arrest and the eviction notice as final straws. He collects some camping gear from his apartment and swings by a store to get additional supplies. Unemployed, homeless and divorced, Larry heads out to the wilderness. His friends might think he is running away. From Larry's point of view, he is going on a sabbatical. He wants to find his own Walden's Pond. Far away from his drinking buddies and alcohol, he is going to try to find Serenity. In the arms of Mother Nature.

*The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside,
somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God.
As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, then there will be comfort
for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances may be.*
Anne Frank

Even though the business day is hectic, Helen abruptly leaves the office and walks over to the park across the street. She sits and watches as people go by. She listens to the laughter of the children and the birds singing in the trees. She calls her husband who listens patiently. They talk over the pluses and minuses of the situation.

He tells her he loves her, regardless of what she decides. They hang up. She gazes at the blue sky overhead. She realizes that she cannot control all events. *By not struggling* so hard with business problems, she has to simply allow events she cannot control to unfold as they shall.

*Tension is who you think you should be,
relaxation is who you are.*

Ancient Chinese Proverb

As Helen sits on the park bench, she recalls edicts from her karate self-defense classes; rather than fighting you relax and use the power and force of your opponent. Helen knows that regardless of what happens, she has a choice. Helen sighs deep, breathes deep, and meditates as she sits on that park bench. She is resolved to not struggle so hard. It is a *Que Sera Sera* moment. Whatever will be, will be.

*Life is a balance between what we can control
and what we cannot.*

I am learning to live between effort and surrender.

Danielle Orner

SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME

In some stories, the Holy Grail takes the physical form of a Handsome Prince or a Beautiful Princess. These stories may suggest to some there is a physical person out there who will complete us. It is not true, as many find out through broken relationships. These human characters in fables and stories are simply human manifestations of the Holy Grail or Golden Fleece.

These characters are portrayed as Serene. The Handsome Prince is Serene. The Beautiful Princess is Serene. They actually are mirror images for us to hold up to ourselves. While we need people and we are a clannish, group-oriented species, there is not another human that can grant us Serenity. They will not complete us individually in that way.

Robert A. Johnson refers to the Prince and Princess characters (using Jungian principles) as anima and animus. They reflect the

traits of the opposite sex we carry within us.

All men carry feminine traits, and all women carry masculine traits. A step in finding Serenity of the Heart is not just in finding and spiritually marrying a physical person, but also finding and spiritually marrying the interior psychological force within us that carries the power of the opposite sex. Men marry the Serene feminine within, and Women marry the Serene masculine within.

Heroes in stories sometimes have to face a fire breathing dragon that is hiding the beautiful Serene Princess or perhaps gold in his cave. There are no decisive conclusions by mythologist what the dragons represent. To me, dragons simply represent any obstacle (Fear or Desire) we have to overcome. Often in stories the dragons change in size. Dragons can become huge as a mountain, or as small as a lizard. Isn't that like an obstacle we might face? Once we overcome the obstacle it is no longer a large dragon but a small friendly creature?

Imagine the size of the obstacle little Timmy faced when he first learned to walk, or run, or swim. Each of these obstacles may very well have seemed like a huge dragon standing in front of him. But as he conquers each Adventure, that same dragon becomes a friendly little pet lizard. Look, Mom! I can walk! I can run! I can swim!

*Ninety percent of this game
is half mental.
Yogi Berra*

If female characters in stories represent the Power of the Goddess – both a Mother Nature and the feminine spirit - the male characters represent the forces of both the psyche and Father Sky. The psyches are Ego (a Self-centered aspect of the psyche), Superego (Conscience) and Id (Impulsive acts seeking pleasure; the Reptilian Brain).

Early in the story of Wizard of Oz, Dorothy impulsively runs away from the farm. Her Id is in charge. Her Superego - conscience – convinces her to return to the farm. After the tornado

and the Road of Trials along the Yellow Brick Road, Dorothy finally confronts the Great and Powerful Oz, a loud and brash Ego of an authoritarian figure. It is Toto who pulls back the curtain to expose this Egotistical authoritarian figure to be a small, meek man. The Ego is exposed as a lot of hot air. When Oz tries to take Dorothy back to Kansas in his hot air balloon, he cannot control it. He doesn't know how it works. This is a fine example of the Ego.

While we cannot control all physical forces – a tornado for Dorothy or Helen facing a customer who files bankruptcy – we can control our own emotions – Id, Superego, and Ego. Serenity of the Heart removes the decision making from the Ego and the Id and the Superego. We relax into our decision making rather than rush forward with our reptilian brain. We take a deep breath. It is the obvious Mentoring we might give a child: *look before you cross the street*. A Master of Both Worlds knows they can control their own emotions. A Master knows there are natural forces they cannot control.

FATHER SKY AND DEATH

*We are all visitors to this time, this place.
We are just passing through.
Our purpose here is to observe,
to learn, to grow, to love...
and then we return home.
Australian Aboriginal saying*

The ultimate Father Sky issue is Death. All of us walk a Hero's Journey into Death. We do not take any physical goods with us. And all our Adventures - from crawling baby to running child, to the children we may have ourselves, are preparing us subconsciously for that walk into Death.

*He who claims he knows about Death doesn't know.
He who knows he doesn't know is the one who knows.
Variation of 1 Corinthians 8:2*

In stories, it is very common for the Hero to face Death, whether his name is Ulysses or James Bond. While cliffhangers help sell popcorn, it is playing on a deeper, emotional *collective unconscious* level for all of us. How does the Hero handle Death? What we want to see is the Hero acting *Heroically*, dealing with Death with Serenity. He has come to terms with Death and faces it Fearlessly. It is Atonement with the Father. It is the ultimate moment when we control our emotions and Serenely face the ultimate Adventure in our lives.

Is Death the end of our Adventures? Perhaps it is only the end of one Adventure and the beginning of another. While there are as many 'Death' stories as there are cultures and there are assuredly many varied beliefs on this subject, this much we can agree on: wherever we go from this physical life, we do not take our wallets with us. Credit cards will not be needed, nor traveler's checks. We do not take our sports cars or our house. Wherever we go from this physical world, all we take is our souls. And ideally, Serenity of the Heart.

*There are far better things ahead
Than what we leave behind.*
C. S. Lewis

WHERE THE HEART LIES

Where is that spiritual center inside ourselves? There are many opinions. Let me offer one here. When I ran track in high school my coach - who was by no means spiritually aware - told me to pretend I had a string attached to my solar plexus area that extended to the finish line. Pretend that string is pulling you.

He said, *“don't run from your head. Your mind will tell you to be afraid. And don't run from your legs. Your legs will tell you you're tired. Run from the solar plexus.”*

After high school and getting involved with theater I took some dance classes. The dance instructor said:

“Find your balance in your solar plexus region. It is the balance area to do all your turns and all your dance steps. Don't dance with your head. Your mind will tell you to be afraid. And don't dance with your legs. Your legs will tell you you're tired.”

It was an exclamation point after the comments the track coach had said earlier in my life. Later I took a course in Eastern Religion and found in both Shintoism and Taoism that the Spiritual Heart lies in the solar plexus area, not the pump on the left side of the body that we call the 'heart.'

Robert A. Johnson - the Jung philosopher - mentions that the Holy Cross itself reflects Doing and Being, with the center of the cross representing the physical center of our spiritual being. This center of the cross - if placed against a human body - would represent the very center to which I am alluding.

Try a physical exercise, which requires balance. Use the solar plexus as your fulcrum. Place your energy center there. It is where you will find ultimate physical balance. It is also - according to some religions - the true Spiritual Center of the body.

Now try the same balancing act with your head as the fulcrum part of the body. Try the physical pump we call the heart. Try your legs. Try other points. You will find you cannot achieve a decent balance.

Try meditation, and center your spirit in the Heart of the solar plexus. See if it centers your spirit.

*Fall in love
with taking care of yourself.
Body, mind, soul.
Anonymous*

What we have learned, after all our Adventures, the great leap Crossing the First Threshold, embracing the Mentors and the Supernatural Aid, the Road of Trials as well as meeting with the Goddess and Atonement with the Father, is the philosophy of what we can control and what we cannot. We can control our emotions

(Dorothy running away), but we cannot control outside forces *(tornadoes)*. Knowing the difference moves us a giant step closer to being Master of Both Worlds.

APOTHEOSIS/ ULTIMATE BOON

*It's hard to beat a person
who never gives up.*
Babe Ruth

After successfully navigating many Adventures, from learning to walk, swim, even starting our own business, we learn to navigate that fine line between emotions and Serenity of the Heart. It is the ability to take life as it hits us and make the best use of our time.

Ebenezer Scrooge has been through a horrendous Adventure of nightmarish dreams. He wakes up Christmas morning grateful he is still alive. He rushes out and buys goodies and celebrates the holiday with the surprised Cratchits. He is a changed man. God Bless Us, Everyone! Scrooge has found Serenity in his Heart. It's the Ultimate Boon.

Timmy is making a sand castle in the sand. Although it was only a few minutes ago he had blacked out in the ocean, he has that remarkable childlike ability to forget the past and move forward. For Timmy, that big wave was only a minor setback. He is playing and happy. His Mother is relieved. Timmy is ready for his next Adventure. It is the Ultimate Boon.

Larry has been camping in the wilderness for how long? He does not know. Maybe weeks. He comes into town only to buy supplies then leaves again. He has been sober as long as he has been camping. It is astounding how clear headed he is. He looks at a snow-capped mountain in the distance. He breathes the freshness of the air. He has, for the moment, found Serenity in his own Heart. It is the Ultimate Boon.

*He who lives in harmony with himself
lives in harmony with the universe.
Marcus Aurelius*

We sigh in relief: 'ah!'. It is a variation of the Eastern Religion's 'Aum,' which means one with spirit. We find that balance in our lives if, only for a moment, before we go on to the next Adventure

After all her adventures in Oz, Dorothy is in the Emerald City, left behind by the Wizard of Oz and his hot air balloon. Glinda, the Good Witch, arrives and announces to Dorothy she had the power to go home all along. It has taken Dorothy a horrendous journey through the land of Oz to find she always had the power inside herself. It is the Ultimate Boon.

All the achievements and all stories whether it be the Holy Grail, a Golden Fleece, or the human characteristics of the Handsome Prince or the Beautiful Princess simply represent the achievement of Serenity of the Heart. We may travel all the way to Oz, or to the farthest reaches of a galaxy, but the simple truth is this: Serenity of the Heart is inside a small box inside ourselves.

Achieving Serenity of the Heart is the Ultimate Boon. It is the end of the story.

Or is it?

REFUSAL OF THE RETURN

*You cannot travel the path
until you have become the path itself.*
Buddha

Larry sighs as he breathes the deep mountain air. He hasn't felt this calm and healthy in years. But he knows what waits for him in the city; his drinking buddies and all the liquor stores and bars. If only he could stay in the wilderness forever. He could Refuse to Return. If only.

Helen sits in the park, still frozen to her park bench. She is trying desperately to find solace. Maybe she can run away from her business problems and hide. Hawaii would be nice. She thinks about the most Serene moment in her life. It was a luxurious trip to Hawaii years ago. Hearing the gentle ocean and smelling the salty air, Helen would sit in the sun and feel her bare feet in the warm sands. How peaceful it was. Yes, she can run away. She can Refuse the Return to reality.

Once someone has found Serenity, who wants to return to the real world? It is why Monks stay in monasteries, and Nuns stay in nunneries. It is why Buddha's Father told him not to go into the

local Village for fear of spiritual contamination. It is why there is a Forbidden City in China in which the royalty never leave. One option for you or I, or the Hero, is to stay in a church or temple or even the great outdoors. These sanctuaries serve as temporary wombs to protect us and reinvigorate our souls.

For Timmy, it is all laughable. Despite his ordeal with the ocean wave, he is already back in the ocean, playing in the waves. His Mother is yelling for him to get out; one terrible ordeal with an ocean wave is enough for her for one day. It is also time to go home. But Timmy doesn't want to go home. Home means preschool and no ocean. He doesn't want to go back to the real world. Go to preschool instead of swimming? He has found Serenity in the ocean waters, and he won't leave. He dunks his head and pretends he cannot hear his Mother. He Refuses to Return.

And we have all been there: Serene moments in our lives where we are in tune with our own bodies as well as the universe. We feel at peace. The Ego is dead. We find this Serenity in our Hearts. We are balanced within ourselves and with those around us.

Next morning, however, the alarm goes off. Car horns honk as we drive to work. Authoritarian figures are angry. Our kids are unhappy. Even our dog barks at us. And we think: where are those feelings of Serenity I had yesterday?

THE RETURN

*Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalk
again;
we had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life.*
Jack Kerouac

One of the great inventions in the history of man was the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg (circa 1440). Due to this invention, books flourished. Newspapers became possible. Literacy spread throughout the human population.

Stories and books became a big business. A side issue to that business was what could sell. No question the *Happily Ever After* stories sold very well. The *Happily Ever After* stories end with the Ultimate Boon. The Hero finds Serenity of the Heart and what is important to his or her life.

*Scrooge finds Serenity of the Heart on Christmas morning.
He is a changed man. It is the Ultimate Boon.*

*Dorothy finds her Heart belongs in Kansas. She now realizes
what is important in her life. There is no place like home. It is the
Ultimate Boon.*

Modern romances often end with a Wedding. The couple encounters a Road of Trials during their romance but All's Well That Ends Well, and they are married at the end of the story. It is the Ultimate Boon. But a Wedding in real life is not the end of the story. It is only beginning another chapter and many more Adventures.

There is a Return from the honeymoon and now a new Road of Trials begins with marriage.

Storytelling prior to Gutenberg often did not end at the Ultimate Boon. The stories were longer and might end with the Death of the Hero. These stories gave us the bigger picture of Life.

Jason of the Argonauts wins the Golden Fleece after performing three tasks for King Aetes of Colchis. It is the Ultimate Boon. But their Adventures are far from over. On their Return journey, the Argonauts encounter obstacles including Talos and Sirens. Jason and the Argonauts have many more Adventures after the Golden Fleece.

Beowulf kills the terrible monster Grendel as well as Grendel's Mother. Beowulf is celebrated. It is the Ultimate Boon. Beowulf lives on for many more Adventures after the Ultimate Boon and ultimately dies honorably fighting yet another monster.

For King Arthur, pulling the sword from the stone was only the beginning of his Hero's Journey. He and the Knights of the Round Table ultimately find the Holy Grail. It is the Ultimate Boon. But that is not the end of the story. There is the journey home which is another Road of Trials, as well as many more battles to be fought. King Arthur dies in battle on the island of Avalon.

Because the modern *Happily Ever After* stories fill up our lives, both in books and movies, many people may expect this kind of result. Adventures should stop at the Ultimate Boon. Worse case is the physical caricature of the Handsome Prince or Princess: once you've won their Heart, you will live Happily Ever After (See Chapter 8).

Becoming a Master of Both Worlds involves knowing there are more Adventures after the Ultimate Boon. There are more trials, more tribulations. More Fears and More Desires.

But I don't want a life with Fear and Desire. I want to get rid of those dragons!

The truth is encountering obstacles is what life is, and we become a better person for overcoming those obstacles. Think of children at a playground. All playgrounds are actually obstacles for the children to overcome: monkey bars and Jungle Gyms. Children don't even see these obstacles as a problem. They relish the opportunity to encounter and conquer those obstacles.

In that moment of time – children gleefully running to a playground – they are Master of Both Worlds and they have the Freedom to Live. They are living Life in the moment and refuse to allow Fear or Desire to dominate their Spirit. What we need to do is recapture that joy and thrill of encountering obstacles. It is the correct path.

There are few moments in life more exciting than overcoming yet another obstacle. Many people place obstacles in front of them just to see if they can overcome it. People who rock climb, or climb mountains is a fine example. The thrill of conquest of that obstacle. When that rock climber stands on top of the mountain and sees the view, knowing what he has just conquered, is a Master of Both Worlds and has the Freedom to Live. More importantly, during the climb the rock climber is Master of Both Worlds as he is focused on the task at hand, and he has tamed both Fear and Desire. He is one with the journey.

And what does that rock climber want to do now that he's reached the peak of the mountain? Plan for the next mountain to conquer, of course.

Think of an obstacle in your life, or one you might have to encounter. Imagine attacking that obstacle with excitement, as a child might at a new playground, or a rock climber preparing for another ascent. You are being challenged. And you are excited to be up to the challenge. You are focused and one with that journey.

Finally, Larry leaves Mother Nature and returns to the city. Larry is calm and Serene as he walks through the city. He is able to carry Serene feelings with him. He passes by a bar, acknowledging the small victory he has presented himself by not giving in to

temptation. But Larry knows he will never be free of the Desire for alcohol. And yet he can enjoy the Serenity he has for the moment and only this moment of sobriety. Larry believes he is up to the challenge. Larry has Returned.

*The human heart dares not stay away
too long from that which hurt it most.
There is a return journey to anguish
that few of us are released from making.*
Lilian Smith

Helen leaves the park – her temporary sanctuary – and walks over to a travel store. Is she going to buy a ticket and get out of town? No, she grabs a Hawaii brochure. She walks back to her office, her staff wondering where she has been. The staff informs her the phones have been ringing off the hook. Helen walks to her desk and tacks the colorful Hawaii brochure on the wall where she can see it. For Helen, this photo is like rosary beads; a way for her to imagine Serenity in a maddening world. Give me the phone messages, Helen says. I will return them one at a time. Helen believes she is up to the challenge. Helen has Returned.

*What are you going to do, Indy?
I don't know. I'm making it up as I go.*
Indiana Jones, Raiders of the Lost Ark

Any Fear or Desire we overcome will remain within us. It will rear its ugly head on occasion. The older stories tell us that. Commercial stories often do not. A large part of finding Serenity of the Heart is acknowledging what Fears and Desires we have and - in effect - swallow them before they can swallow us. Once we recognize them, we can challenge them.

Timmy has returned from the ocean and now faces more Road of Trials as he enters school. While Timmy has already achieved a number of Ultimate Boons in his young life – walking, running, swimming – he now faces additional challenges. With each achievement, Timmy can feel confident in achieving the next Ultimate Boon. Timmy is up to the challenge. Timmy has Returned.

MASTER OF BOTH WORLDS

*It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles.
Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you.*
Buddha

Master of Both Worlds is balancing the material and the spiritual. It is balancing the achievements of all your Hero Adventures and acknowledging your Fears and Desires. You are excited to challenge those Fears and Desires every day. You are capable of swallowing those Fears and Desires before they swallow you.

A friend invites Larry over for a party. There will be women there, and Larry has been lonely. He'd like to go, but he knows the alcohol will be flowing. Larry knows there is a Road of Trials. This is a test. Larry is up to the challenge. Larry can be a Master of Both Worlds. Swallow his Desires before his Desires can swallow him. Larry agrees to go to the party.

*To regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development.
To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie
into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the soul.*
Oscar Wilde

It is late Thursday and the staff has gone home. Payroll is due tomorrow. Helen does not have the payroll money. Helen calls a Customer who has recently placed an order with her sales rep. After

a brief chat, Helen thanks him for the order. She then asks if it is possible to get paid in advance, perhaps for a discount. The customer is puzzled and asks questions. Helen is up to the challenge. Helen responds truthfully about her situation. She does not cry or pout. She does not beg. She Serenely tells the truth. Customer accepts the situation, tells Helen briefly about business trouble he had in the past and responds positively. She can swing by and get a check. The customer also places an additional order, as he was thinking about doing so anyway. Helen hangs up. She can now make payroll. At least that gets her through tomorrow. She has handled this moment in a Road of Trials Serenely. Helen is becoming a Master of Both Worlds.

*They asked her, "how did you free yourself?"
She answered, "by embracing my own power."
Yung Pueblo*

Timmy is in high school now. And here comes yet another Adventure: Timmy must give a speech in front of the class. Timmy has a Fear of Public Speaking. Timmy's Mother reminds him of all the accomplishments he has achieved in his young life – for example, how he had been afraid to swim and yet he overcame that fear. Timmy is now an excellent swimmer. Timmy acknowledges that. By simply acknowledging his past victories, Timmy is becoming a Master of Both Worlds. Realizing that Fears and Desires may remain with him, but their size is often psychological.

Timmy's Mother brings up the fact that Fear of Public Speaking is actually very common. She offers the example of one of the great 20th Century actors, Laurence Olivier. Olivier fought the Fear of Public Speaking his whole life. Call it Stage Fright. He accepted that Fear and lived with it, refusing to give in to it. Every night that he went on stage he had to deal with this Fear. By accepting the Fear, and conquering it, Laurence Olivier found greatness as an Actor. He swallowed the Fear before it could swallow him. Olivier became a Master of Both Worlds. He had the Freedom to Live.

Courage is knowing what not to fear.

We are attracted to stories where the Hero must overcome obstacles. That may be one definition of an Adventure: overcoming obstacles. These obstacles may be physical or psychological. The Hero attaches either Fear or Desire to the obstacles. Even if we never encounter the exact same obstacles as the Hero, the stories are playing into our *collective unconscious*. A Thousand Heroes with a Thousand Adventures facing a Thousand Road of Trials allows our subconscious to grasp how to handle the Hero's Journey ourselves.

When we overcome one obstacle, another might present itself. Perhaps the reason for these obstacles, and for Fear and Desire to exist, is so we can know ourselves more fully. Think back on your own life and all the obstacles you have overcome.

It is easy to dismiss accomplishments. Once Timmy learned to walk, he would dismiss the accomplishment. *Of course I can walk, Mother.* I have met people who have accomplished a great deal – perhaps winning a championship in karate, and they will dismiss the accomplishment. They seem to be saying it was no big deal, or that was yesterday and yesterday's gone. By no means should we live in the past, but we need a mental resume of our accomplishments; even learning to walk, let alone becoming a black belt in karate. It helps give us resolve that we can confront the next Adventure in our life. It is Mastering Both Worlds. Each of these obstacles had Fear or Desire attached to it. You overcame these obstacles. By doing so you became a stronger person. You had to Master Both Worlds; the psychological as well as the physical.

There can be no Light without Darkness. For each Adventure we cross, for each Ultimate Boon we accomplish, we are better prepared for the next one. Ultimately, once we are a Master of Both Worlds, we understand there will be another obstacle for us to overcome, and we enter each Adventure with calmness and, as best as possible, we remain Serene regardless of the storms we will inevitably encounter.

*Tension is who you think you should be,
relaxation is who you are.*

Ancient Chinese Proverb

When we do not hide, we find methods of achieving Serenity. Some people carry rosary beads. Some chant 'Aum.' Some have a quiet Mantra they murmur. Some have religious beliefs to help carry them through. Perhaps they tack a picture of a Serene photo in front of their desk. Some have a quiet corner in their homes where they seek spiritual relief from the stresses of the day. Some may listen to music. It is to remind themselves of the Serenity in their Heart.

FREEDOM TO LIVE

*If you want to be happy,
live in the now.*

Anonymous

A Master of Both Worlds knows moments of true Serenity are rare. That Fear and Desire are twin dragons floating along beside us like mythological creatures and can spring forward on a moment's notice. But these Fears and Desires can be pets and tamed. Once tamed, they help us overcome the next set of obstacles.

The Master is living in the now and does not live in the past or the future. The only Truth is this moment right now as you are reading this sentence. All other matters fade into the mystic.

*No man ever steps in the same river twice,
for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.*

Heraclitus

Helen decides to relish the obstacles in front of her. Attack them like a child at a playground. There is an excitement to overcoming an obstacle, no different than a rock climber who reaches new heights. Helen looks at the picture of Hawaii often. It is her rosary beads in the hectic office.

Helen finishes the phone calls, telling creditors to be patient. She chooses to go without payroll, to help the cash flow of the company. The phone rings. Helen answers it. It is her bankruptcy attorney. Another obstacle is being thrown at her. As a Master of Both Worlds, she listens to the phone call. She takes a deep breath.

She laughs, catching her attorney off guard. Somehow she has survived this far, she will get through the next Adventure as well.

*Make the best use of what's in your power
and take the rest as it happens.*
Epictetus

Timmy sits in the back row. His teacher – another Mentor in his life – beckons him to come forward and give his speech. Other students turn and look at him. He hesitates. He has no choice in this Adventure. He finally gets up. The walk to the front is a Hero's Journey full of unknowns, Fears and Desires. He stands in front of the class. He takes a deep breath. He gives his speech. With each new Adventure Timmy is getting stronger.

*When I hear somebody sigh, 'Life is hard,'
I am always tempted to ask, 'Compared to what?'*
Sydney Harris

Larry goes to the party, does not drink and has a good time. It gives him certain strength and power that he was able to stand around other people drinking, not touch the drink and still be good ol' Larry. He drives home sober. He has just encountered an important Road of Trials and he passed. He smiles with satisfaction. For each obstacle he overcomes, he is getting stronger.

Timmy gives his speech in front of the class. He loses his place in the speech and improvises, making a joke and cracking up the audience. They laugh as did he. He finishes the speech. His teacher thanks him. He succeeded! And yet another Holy Grail in his young life has been achieved. He is slowly becoming a Master of Both Worlds and will have the Freedom to Live.

*Give every day the chance
To become the most beautiful day of your life.*
Mark Twain

A Master of Both Worlds is aware Serenity lies in the Heart, and all of us have the power to reach it. We have the capability to

achieve it anytime, we want, in any Adventure we encounter. The trick is to find that center and maintain it through all of our Adventures. It allows one the Freedom to Live. Once we do, we will find that, like Buddha, life can be amusing. Others who are imbalanced in their spiritual hearts attempt to yank us to their level. Fear and Desire attempt to overpower us. In truth, as we walk our various Adventures, Fear and Desire will win on occasion. The Freedom to Live is when we know it and understand it. We embrace the next obstacle. We are rock climbers grateful for the chance to show our mettle. We are children excited at visiting a new playground.

CONCLUSION

*A diamond is merely a lump of coal
that did well under pressure.*

Unknown

Stories that resonate with us are touching an unconscious spirit. If a story touches a whole culture, it is touching the *collective unconscious* of those people. This *collective unconscious* is teaching us something on a level that facts cannot touch. It is the way – I believe – that dreams are touching us. And so the stories are told in a dreamlike fashion; meandering tales that zig and zag across the landscape.

Because isn't that what life is like? You set out on a course of action, like *Little Red Riding Hood* on a simple walk to Grandmother's house, and Life has a way of throwing you off course. A Master of Both Worlds is keenly aware, and prepared to meet any and all obstacles. It gives the Master the Freedom to Live.

*A wise man adapts himself to circumstances,
as water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it.*

Chinese Proverb

Larry meets with his ex-wife for lunch. He has been sober for six months now. He has a job with another insurance agency. He is doing well. Larry Desires to get back with his wife. It is another Adventure for Larry. He does not know the future. But it is an Adventure worth pursuing. With both Fear and Desire Larry asks her out for a dinner date. She accepts. He leaves that lunch knowing he is a better, stronger person for the Adventure of alcohol. He is not

finished. There are more exciting Adventures in front of him. He is prepared. He is a Master of Both Worlds. Larry now has the Freedom to Live.

*Life is what happens
while you're busy making other plans.*
John Lennon

Helen hasn't been feeling well lately. She has been sick a lot. Helen has chalked this up to her daily Road of Trials at work. She goes in to see her Doctor, to make sure there is not something more serious in her health issues. The Doctor tells Helen she is pregnant. She laughs. She calls her husband who is surprised and pleased. It is wildly unexpected and the timing – business wise - is remarkably poor. She has so much on her plate as her business demands more of her time.

Helen and her husband know this is the beginning of yet another Big Adventure. One they certainly were not counting on.

But Helen is prepared to weather the various storms before her, both mental and physical. There will be Fear and Desire, conflicting emotions as she embraces this new Adventure. She knows there may be one or more Threshold Guardians who will act as Doubting Thomas. They may even be ones who are near and dear and believe they have her best interests at heart. There will be Mentors. She will gather them. There will be a Road of Trials: morning sickness and perhaps even depression.

She takes the news of the pregnancy Serenely. Does that mean that the pregnancy occurs without misfortune or pain? No. But being a Master of Both Worlds, she is prepared for any and all obstacles. She knows her personal Fears will pop up once in awhile, like dragons and demons. She will need to deal with them one by one. Physical pain may consume her from time to time.

These are physical forces outside her control. She is prepared for these storms. And ultimately after nine months, she will weather a large tornado in her life: the pain of labor and the actual birth of this child.

With the birth, she will achieve yet another Holy Grail in her life. It will be the Ultimate Boon. A new born child nestled in her arms. Is that the end of the Adventure? Heavens, no! For immediately she is starting yet another Adventure: the raising of a child. There's no time to rest. There is no break between these Adventures, for the child is crying and needs her full attention.

She is both on her own Hero's Journey as well as a Supernatural Aid/Mentor to this child. There will be a pain - both physical and psychological - in raising this child. There will be falls, bangs, cuts, and scrapes. There will be angry moments between them.

And many times it will be difficult to maintain Serenity. But she is a veteran. She accumulates Mentors in all her Adventures. When she meets the Threshold Guardians, she will know them for who they are. She walks the Dark Forest Serenely. Fear and Desire will envelope her from time to time, but she will recognize them too. And she will know from past Dark Forest walks how to handle them.

*The chief beauty about time
is that you cannot waste it in advance.
The next year, the next day,
the next hour are lying ready for you,
as perfect, as unspoiled,
as if you had never wasted or misapplied
a single moment in all your life.
You can turn over a new leaf every hour
if you choose.
Arnold Bennett*

She is prepared. She is Master of Both Worlds, and she has the Freedom to Live.

AFTERWARD

You are on a great Adventure called Life. Your Life is not a Dress Rehearsal. You are on Stage from the moment you arrive. You will have many Calls to Adventures; some born out of Desire, some born out of Fear. Some Adventures you pursue, some you would rather forego. There may be a Refusal of the Call to Adventures, and there may be Threshold Guardians. The point is for you to understand where you are on the Adventure.

Road of Trials? Yes. Mentors and Supernatural Aid that can help you along? Yes. Belly of the Whale? Perhaps. But you relish any new obstacles as a chance for you to shine. There will be many Ultimate Boons in your life. There will be a Return and more Road of Trials as you become a Master of Both Worlds. Once you capture Serenity of the Heart you have the Freedom to Live. You are capable of weathering all storms that come your way.

Write it on your heart
that every day is the best day in the year.
He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day
who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety.

Finish every day and be done with it.
You have done what you could.
Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in.
Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day;
begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit
to be cumbered with your old nonsense.

This new day is too dear,
with its hopes and invitations,
to waste a moment on the yesterdays.

Ralph Waldo Emerson