

"The gift of confidence, "a Magic Amulet", mythically implanted into the mind of a child."

In many mythological stories, the hero's or heroine's first encounter on the Adventure is with a fascinating personage. Whether it is a Spider-Woman of the American Indians or the fairy godmothers of the European folklore tradition, these characters give the hero or heroine a Magic Amulet to carry with them, which can be called upon in a moment of direst need.

... the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass. (Campbell 69)

The hero receives a Magic Amulet, insurance, that no matter how challenging the adventure, assistance is always close at hand. Remember Buddha's thunderbolt used as a last resort against the sticky-haired monster. The hero is warned not to waste the Magic Amulet or use it frivolously but he or she knows that it is there if needed. The image is one of reassurance that imparts the confidence that lies at the heart of the courage of a hero.

The function of the idea of the Magic Amulet was brought home to me through an experience with my daughter. She was four years old and starting school for the first time. She was about to leave the comforts of home and venture out by herself into a larger, unknown world. This was a challenging experience for my daughter as well as a trying experience for her parents. The event in question occurred in the middle of the night. I woke up to whimpering sounds coming from my daughter's bedroom. I tiptoed into her room. There was enough light from the street coming through the window and I saw my daughter murmuring and rolling around in bed. I quietly asked her what was wrong and whether I could be of any help. My daughter was asleep, but she told me a monster was after her. Now what could I do to help my daughter come to grips with the challenge of a monster in a dream. I didn't want to wake her up. The idea I came up with was the Magic Flashlight that when flashed upon a monster in the dark corner of a room would change that monster into a chair with clothes thrown over the back. Without waking my daughter, I touched her hand and said that here was a Magic Flashlight that could make monsters disappear. Shortly after my daughter settled down and I was able to get back to bed. During the entire experience my daughter never woke up.

In the morning, I was curious what had happened. I went downstairs and there was my daughter all nicely dressed up for her first day at school sitting at the table eating her cereal. I asked her if the Magic Flashlight had made the monster disappear. Without a moment's hesitation my daughter turned her head and looked at me like I

was some kind of idiot. "Flashlights don't make monsters disappear," she said, "it just blinded him for a minute so I could get away!" and she returned to eating her breakfast.

I was flabbergasted. All the magic of my flashlight had been stripped away by a four-year-old and turned into a reality-based strobe light. My daughter as well as her parents survived the first day of school and many other firsts since then. Many years later I asked my daughter if she had ever used the Magic Flashlight again. She thought for a moment and said no. But she did remember other dreams where she was being pursued by monsters. These times, she said she seemed to reach a point in her dream where she'd had enough, so she just stopped and turned around to face the monster only to have the monster disappear. Now that is magic! Within the depths of her mind, my daughter learned that when you stop and face challenges, they are either cut down to size or made to entirely disappear. Her need for a Magic Flashlight had passed. She learned that when you face a challenge it can be overcome. The essential message of the images of the Magic Amulets of mythology is, just that, a sense of confidence that any challenge faced can be overcome, especially when on an adventure in the realm of the mind.