

MYTHIC PASSAGES

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I'm Mad at My Husband

by Creative Director, Honora Foah

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I'm mad at my husband. He is a really good husband, that is, he is good at being a husband, a friend, he thinks about me. When recently I was ill and in the hospital, he did everything at home without complaining, as well as taking care of me. He is a thoughtful father; the amount of time he spends plotting to make our son happy is astonishing. But I don't care. Now I'm mad. He doesn't like me the way I am, I make too much noise when I am happy (and when I am sad or angry for that matter). But today I am happy and his shutting me down is disheartening. I think, why do I try to do this? What is the use of being married? I'm pretty sure marriage is impossible.

But that's the fun of it. That is the mystery of it. There is a very practical aspect to marriage; it is very difficult to get through life without other people. Marriage gives you someone to count on being with you. When I was ill, I was flat on my back for four months. I really could not do for myself. I didn't necessarily need a husband, but I sure as hell needed someone. But is this practical aspect worth the daily face of failure that attempting to live with someone, to love someone, entails?

Luckily, in general I am a devotee of Alice who, if you remember, practiced believing six impossible things before breakfast. To live in our household, or to work at Mythic Imagination, this is probably an essential quality.

I'm pretty sure Mythic Imagination is as impossible as marriage. We keep showing up, and lo! the place is still there, the agreements, like the marriage vow, are miraculously still in place: for today we will continue to work. I have no idea how long this could last.

The most precious thing to protect within Mythic Imagination is the 'everybody in the pool' intention. While whoever is involved needs to connect in some way with story, mythology or archetype, that is a pretty low threshold for participation. The essential element of MII is interdisciplinary, inter/multi-cultural. How long can that last? How long will we be able to do that? I'm not even saying we have done a particularly good job of inter-everything yet, but that is the essential intention. The essential intention is to provide the opportunity for unexpected meetings, for the creative possibility. The world is in a mess. Our only way out is through something else — a more imaginative response.

Imagination is the most valuable thing on earth. It is the font of empathy and invention; it is the source of our ability to solve problems. Imagination needs food. It can work with anything, but it is good if it has some highly nutritive antecedents. Like Shakespeare, like mythology, like the wisdom of our ancestors. Mythology is the wisdom of human beings encoded in radiant, multi-dimensional stories, full of images, archetypes, koans, conundrums, experience, resolution, cautions. It is full of 'fer instance's and 'what if's. It lets you try out possibilities on someone else's dime.

Being with even one other person is impossible. Let's be gentle about why we can't find world peace. Nevertheless, we have to go ahead anyway, every morning attempting the next impossible thing. If we can be tutored by those who have come before and left the trail of breadcrumbs through their stories, if we can imagine, through stories, what the lives, the travails, the pleasures, the happinesses, the emotional eviscerations, the frustration, love, and passions of other people are like, perhaps we can leave room for the miracle that mends and reconciles us with each other (even our spouses), when we cannot really will it, when we cannot really get over our own egocentricity.

What has happened over the course of this afternoon with my husband? We didn't talk over our conflict, though we alluded to it. I am fine now. He is too. A little time has passed. My despair has given way to humor, the consolation of philosophy, the healing of writing a little bit of the story, and lo! all is well.

In no way am I trying to be glib about what is needed to reconcile us with each other, with the world, with our human condition. Quite the opposite. I am fully serious when I say it is my intellectual belief that all of this is impossible. Yet, over and over, in my marriage, in the daily recognition that Mythic Imagination Institute is in the world and standing (Okay, up on one knee), I see something to which I must give credence, something in which the obvious computation of impossibility is disregarded.

Myths are stories that have been worked by many hands over a long period of time. They are the best we can do to prepare our children for the inconsequent appearance of life. If life was a $2+2=4$ affair, logic would be sufficient. How far is that going to get you in marriage? Or war? Love? Politics? Music? To engage in any of these things without reference to the god that rules it, sets you up for a gruesome comeuppance. It is cruel and neglectful to deprive people of the best information we have about the nature of the gods. Whatever dimension one understands as the realm of the gods, whether psychological, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, all of the above, without connection to it, nothing makes sense, and the impossible is then impossible.

And it is also to realms of the gods that we need repair when we are in need of repair and creative force, when we need possibilities.

Let's go.

Honora Foah
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