

Lilli Höch-Corona

King Archibald and the Gefühlsmonsters

Little colorful creatures
that no one has ever seen

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Preface



Does this sound familiar? A friend complains to you about a terrible other person – and somehow, as you listen, the impression arises in you that the friend also has a share in this problem ...

The first version of this fairy tale was written eight years ago. I had observed the theme of not being aware of one's effect on others again and again in others or in myself and I wanted to encourage people in a metaphorical way to rethink.

Here are a few episodes from my work that show where this topic has crossed my path in my career: In my work at school, I noticed that there were students who “bothered” some teachers and not others, regardless of whether the subject was interesting to them or not. Later, as a trainer for team development and conflict management, I was asked by teachers to get their students to interact better with each other. I almost always found that the way the teachers approached them played an important role. As a mediator, I experienced parents who felt misunderstood by their children and could not see their own part in it. Or that managers who asked me to mediate between their employees, were surprised when I asked to speak to the managers themselves.





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In my preliminary conversations on team development in companies I started to ask the managers at the beginning whether they would be willing to participate in coaching as well. This was often refused. If it then became clear that there was a lack of clarity in the communication of the manager or in the team roles, or that there was an unconscious aversion to individual employees, my hands were bound without permission to also work with the manager.

At some point, I began to negotiate the consulting of the manager together with planning the team development, which led to much more sustainable results of this work. The prerequisite, of course, was an attitude of non-judgment, respect for the leaders and the reasons for their behavior. Then, when a side-by-side approach emerged, together we were always able to find solutions for all involved. Sometimes that included a manager changing careers or employees leaving the team in mutual agreement.

Over time, I found it more and more unfortunate when people reached a dead end because of their bias toward counseling. Students observe teachers very closely and have a very fine sense of fairness, likes and dislikes. It is the same with staff members, who sometimes know us better than we know ourselves. How can we embrace these valuable impulses?



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All of us are sometimes unaware of how we affect others. Anyone who has children can tell you a thing or two about what precious and sometimes challenging “teachers” our children are to us ...

As a mediator, language is an important vehicle for me. My work is often a translation of the client’s words spoken in anger. There is a good reason that finding the words that express an issue, including the feelings triggered, without judging either party to the dispute, makes up the main part of a mediator’s education. This always requires an attitude of benevolence, in order to make a kind offering with these formulations, so that someone can understand something that they did not understand before. And: an offer can always be accepted or rejected.

Personal changes are only possible on a voluntary basis, in an atmosphere of respect, and if the persons can see and feel that the change is an improvement for them in the direction of their own values and wishes. This requires a lot of sensitivity and the understanding that there may be other ways than the ones I see as a counselor, or that the timing might not be the right one for the person being counseled.





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I have always enjoyed reading beautiful stories that made me think and gave me images I could relate to. For example, Clarissa Pinkola Estes'¹ image of the seal woman who falls in love with a human and has to shed her skin to do so. I think that's a beautiful image of how we adapt in relationships. And how we then sometimes must find new ways to live "our sealskin".

Ed Watzke² has encouraged us to tell stories in mediations to draw people out of their well-worn paths. There is the story of the lighthouse that is radioed by a ship in the fog, asking it to get out of the way – completed with impressive ranks of the inquiring captain. This story has made me and some of my mediation clients smile about such persistence while being on the wrong track, and has caused many a rethink.

Another example is Jorge Bucay³, whose therapy for a young man consisted entirely of storytelling and dialog about it. Hanna Milling's "Storytelling"⁴ is a treasure trove of stories for conflict resolution and counseling, carefully categorized by theme and impact, that has often been very helpful in my work.

1 Clarissa Pinkola Estes "Women who run with Wolves" page 256ff

2 Ed Watzke: "Wahrscheinlich hat diese Geschichte gar nichts mit Ihnen zu tun"

3 Jorge Bucay: "Let Me Tell You a Story: Tales Along the Road to Happiness"

4 Hanna Milling: "Storytelling – Konflikte lösen mit Herz und Verstand"





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Through these experiences I grew a desire to write a fairy tale myself. My intent was to metaphorically draw attention to the dilemma between self-perception and the perception of others, and to recount the benefits of dealing with one's own feelings with humor. Even or especially if this feels very difficult or just impossible at the beginning. Getting to know one's own feelings – and all of them! – is the basis for self-acceptance, for love and for getting along with others.

Ideally, children are welcomed at birth and meet adults who love and guide them to thrive with their own desires and potentials, so that they know what they need for their well-being and how they can contribute to their community.

This process is very easily disrupted, and not only children born during or soon after war times do not have this safety net within themselves. (To expand on this is beyond the scope of this book.) Emotions then sometimes appear unexpectedly as an “attack” and are so difficult to handle that we often choose not to feel them⁵. Our environment, however, perceives them, and this can result in conflicts that are challenging to deal with.

5 More about this in my book “Sometimes Feelings are Monsters”





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I was drawn to making a not so helpful behavior lovingly understandable, so that it is acceptable through metaphorical contemplation. That is what I wish for my story!

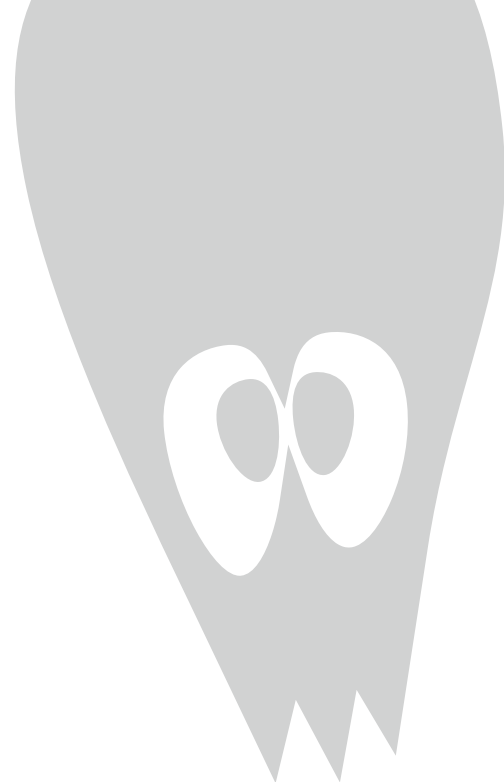
In my work I have encountered more men than women who showed traits like King Archibald. Therefore, the hero of this story is a king.

I hope that the twinkle in my eyes and the loving look at the behaviors we sometimes exhibit in the course of our personal development shine through.

Whether we show these behaviors as leaders to whom the king alludes, as parents, or simply as the person we are and strive to master life.

Of course, it could just as well be a queen visiting another queen, and her husband would be the one to help her get to know better these *little, brightly colored creatures that no one has ever seen ...*







Once upon a time there was a King ...

Once upon a time there was a king named Archibald, who had a lot of stupid loyal subjects. Unbelievable, how much mischief they created! When the king was in a generous mood, they took it the wrong way and were suspicious. When the king was angry, they didn't even see what they had done wrong and instead gathered in secret behind his back, weaving tales of ill will.

Many times had Archibald summoned a grand assembly of the people, intending to guide his subjects on how to live happily and content in his realm. He meant nothing but kindness towards them! Yet, what did they do? It seemed they had beans in their ears, misunderstanding everything he said and refusing to see the wisdom in his words.

And then his third queen had left him – understand these bewitching women, if you can! Although he was such a benevolent king, and nothing pleased him more than doting on his beautiful queen, she had accused him of lacking empathy for her royal emotions, and that was much too bad.

The king was so desperate that he decided to embark on a journey of wander and wonder, seeking advice beyond his kingdom's borders. He had heard of a distant kingdom where the royal subjects were