

The Heroine's Journey of Clary Fray in Cassandra Clare's *The Mortal Instruments*

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Abstract

American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales, and lyrics. Stories involving paranormal magic and terrible monsters have existed in spoken forms before the advent of printed literature. Fantasy literature as a distinct type emerged in Victorian times, with the works of writers such as Mary Shelley, William Morris, and George MacDonald. The tradition established by these predecessors has continued to thrive and be adapted by new authors. Famous fantasy writers include J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Philip Pullman, J.K. Rowling and Cassandra Clare etc. J. R. R. Tolkien played a large role in the popularization and accessibility of the fantasy genre with his highly successful publications *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Cassandra Clare another famous fantasy writer worked for several years as an entertainment journalist for the Hollywood Reporter before turning her attention to fiction. This article attempts to explore the heroine's journey of the protagonist Clary Fray in Cassandra Clare's *The Mortal Instrument*.

Key Words: Fantasy, Monomyth, Chosen One, Heroic Journey, Shadowhunters.

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One of the reasons we're often drawn to tell stories about adolescents who discover they're gifted in some special, often supernatural way, I think, is that they function well as allegory. It's the time in your life when you feel you don't belong and you're not like your parents, and you're not like anyone else, so who are you? And it's also the time when you discover that talent, that gift that makes you you. (Cassandra Clare: *Bringing the Shadows to Light*)

The monomyth or hero's journey, is the basic format for most myths, epics, and fantasy novels. Joseph Campbell termed the 'monomyth', the theory that in all cultures throughout history, people have told the same story over and over again, just with different heroes. In monomyth theory, whether by some higher power or force, or simply because of their particular bloodline, characters are chosen for some great destiny that often includes a fight between the forces of good and evil. The Chosen One is a heroic child like Harry Potter or Luke Skywalker destined to fight the forces of evil.

Heroine's journeys are equally common in fantasy, originating mainly in fairytales rather than in the longer epics. Anderson's "The Little Mermaid", the myths of Cupid and Psyche or Demeter and Persephone are all perfect heroine's journeys. Cassandra Clare writes urban fantasy novels about the demon-fighting Shadowhunters. She adds that her series are a combination of urban fantasy, adventure and romance.

Cassandra Clare's Shadowhunters novels encompass the bestselling series *The Mortal Instruments*, *The Infernal Devices*, *The Dark Artifices* and *The Bane Chronicles* and the upcoming *The Last Hours* series etc. The Shadowhunters are a magical race of beings that are half angel and half human. Their efforts to protect the world from demons and other supernatural forces are portrayed in all the Shadowhunters novels.

Like many works of fantasy, Cassandra Clare's series *The Mortal Instruments* offers a strong young woman embarking on the heroine's journey and fits into the monomyth theory. *The Mortal Instruments* follows Campbell's hero cycle, fusing magic and mythology touch us deeply

on an emotional level and urge us to find order and meaning in our world. Cassandra Clare acknowledges that she was deliberately writing a classic hero's journey and that it centers around a female heroine named Clary instead of a male hero.

The heroine's most typical quest is rescue of family members and her best friend. The protagonist Clary spends *City of Bones* questing for her mother Jocelyn who has been kidnapped, then after Simon, her best friend who has accidentally turned into a rat and then after Jace, her boyfriend who has been kidnapped. Jace calls Clary "the girl who walked into a hotel full of vampires because her best friend was there and needed saving" (*City of Lost Souls* 522). He adds, "You came for me . . . when almost everyone else had given up" (*City of Lost Souls* 523). As she rescues Simon and Jace over and over, while saving her mother, Clary's family sphere becomes the motivation for a much larger epic. At last, she becomes the saviour of all the Shadowhunters, teaching them to bond with the Downworlders and save them as well.

Clary Fray grows up in Brooklyn, living a normal childhood. When her geeky friend Simon takes her to Pandemonium Club, she sees three powerful teens destroy a demon and she comes to know that those three teens are not seen by others. "Clary turned back to Simon. "Do you see those two guys over there? By that door?" Simon squinted, then shrugged. "I don't see anything" (15).

"Clary?" It was Simon's voice. "Why are you in here by yourself? What happened to the guys . . . Clary stared at him, then looked behind her, where Jace, Isabelle and Alec stood, . . . Clearly he wasn't surprised that neither Simon nor the bouncer could see them. Somehow neither was Clary. Slowly she turned back to Simon, knowing how she must look to him, standing alone in a damp storage room, her feet tangled in bright plastic wiring cables. "I thought they went in here," she said lamely. (23 – 24)

Jocelyn is so worried and she tries to drag Clary off to the country. One of those teens, Jace Wayland, seeks Clary out later to tell her she has the sight and is clearly more than she seems. However, at that moment, demons invade, destroying her home and kidnapping her mother.

Clary's quest begins with her mother's kidnapping, as Clary struggles through three books to save her. Of course, the mother is usually absent during the heroine's story. The mother, who was the childhood protector, cannot continue shielding her daughter from everything or there will be no adventure. Sheldon Cashdan explains it in *The Witch Must Die* as,

The mother's exit, paradoxically, is empowering in that it forces the children in the story to confront a cruel and dangerous world on their own. Lacking a mother or protector, the hero or heroine must draw on inner resources that might not have been tested were the mother still around. (22)

This is particularly true in *City of Bones* where Jocelyn has more than sheltered Clary from the hazards of the demonic world and threat of Valentine. She has hired Magnus Bane to erase all of Clary's paranormal sightings and memories of them in order to keep her completely innocent. She seeks to blind Clary of the sight and strip her of her magical perception as well as her heritage. In this way, the mother becomes too protective, to the point of stifling the heroine and preventing her from adventuring. With Jocelyn's kidnapping, Clary is released, and discovers the world of magic and evil for the first time.

The first gift Clary receives from the magical world is the Sensor, which she takes from Jace, her first guide. The Sensor is an appropriate tool as heroines often receive tools of perception as their talismans on magical adventures like golden compasses, magic mirrors or spectacles. Of course, Clary doesn't use the sensor to see the magical world but to combat her enemies, and she shoves the sensor into a demon's mouth, slaying it with the protective runes. This signals that Clary will certainly not be a passive damsel on her adventure.

In the first book, *City of Bones*, she uses her new power of perception to sweep away glimmers and to see the Shadowhunter world for what it really is. Perception is a significant part of her life, joined with her prophetic visions, magical sight, and lost memories of the Shadowhunter world. Visions and images define her. Clary keeps a sketchbook because, as she explains, she thinks in pictures, not in words. When she pushes aside a glamour, she imagines cleaning it away like old paint under a rag of turpentine. Sarah Cross explains in her essay on Clary as "Clary is every bookish, fantasy-loving girl who grows up wielding a pencil and a sketchbook instead of mutant powers or a sword" (20). She may be ordinary, but she can use her abilities from our world to change everything.

The child on the Chosen One's path leaves his or her unsatisfying birth family to find a better one, a 'real' one. Clary's impulses are exact, as generally happens in Chosen One stories. She has the perception of a Shadowhunter, and with it the magical gifts. She eventually discovers that she is an uniquely powerful one among Shadowhunters. She is not the daughter of Jocelyn Fray the prosaic artist and her husband Jonathan, the dead soldier. In fact, her father is the famous and villainous Valentine, and her mother was once his revered and powerful wife. Even Clary's stepfather, Luke, is a werewolf.

With her mother kidnapped and Luke rejecting her, Clary must find another guide and she finds the ancient warlock Magnus Bane, her first mentor. Magnus comments: "Every teenager in the world feels like that, feels broken or out of place, different somehow, royalty mistakenly born into a family of peasants. The difference in your case is that it's true. You *are* different" (*City of Bones* 231). He has been hiding Clary's memories at her mother's insistence. Like Gandalf and other great wizards, he provides help whenever the heroes cannot solve their own problems. Cassandra Clare notes that "In writing about Clary, I am writing about the feeling that a lot of teenagers have that they are different somehow, alienated, unlike others. Only Clary actually very literally is another kind of species of human" (2).

The mentor's task is to give the heroine a talisman to protect and strengthen her. Magnus offers her part of her birthright by handing her the Gramarye of runes, which will teach her to understand the hidden world. Later, everything seems clearer, and she has gained stronger powers of understanding and remembrance. She soon begins writing runes, not only from the book but from heaven itself runes only the angels know.

Women's powers often come, not from fighting, but from crafting. This too is Clary's power, as she grows from an artist with a sketchbook to a creator of powerful runes, summoned from heaven itself. Sarah Cross explains that Clary

finds a way to turn her natural talents into the tools of her survival . . . she draws a better world into existence and she never lets the word *impossible* stop her. In Clary's hands, the stele truly is mightier than the sword. (33)

In *City of Ashes*, Clary puts her enormous power into an Opening rune and blasts open the door of Jace's cell. She later creates a Fearless rune and gives it to Jace to protect him. When she creates it, she thinks of her mother and when a soft voice in her head challenges her, she responds, "I am Jocelyn Fray's daughter" (*City of Ashes* 282). As she imagines her mother's paintings, the voice fades away. On Valentine's ship, as she tears it open with her mother's stele, she even hears her mother's voice inside her head.

At the same time, Clary meets the Silent Brothers, described as being warriors of the mind rather than the body. They are the ones who aid Clary with their advice and lead her to find her lost memories. Magnus Bane also does the same, offering her the Grey Book and runes of her Shadowhunter heritage.

At the climax of *City of Glass*, Clary risks her life portaling to the lake to warn the other Shadowhunters that there is a threat. Clary uses for her final trick against Valentine and kills the evil force of patriarchy. By defeating Valentine the Patriarch, Clary can usher in a better world with peace between Downworlders and Shadowhunters.

Clary struggles with her rune powers. In *City of Fallen Angels*, she finally tries and her first foray into the dark side terrifies her. She revives a Shadowhunter from the dead and is horrified at his agony. Luke warns her that she needs to train and not only use her power for big moments. He comments, "Think of Magnus: His power is a part of him. You seem to think of yours as separate from you. Something that happens to you. It's not. It's a tool you need to learn to use" (*City of Fallen Angels* 137).

In *City of Lost Souls*, Clary comes to realize the world isn't as black and white as she had envisioned. With Jace in danger, she would break any rule, betray any loyalty to get him back. First, she bargains with the fairy queen and steals magic rings from the Institute. She keeps the rings for herself. Along with the fairy rings and her drawing magic, Clary gains a sword at last, generally a masculine icon. Sword seller Diana Wrayburn offers her one of gold and obsidian with a blade of black silver. It's a match to Sebastian's light-bringer sword Phaosphoros. Hers is

Heosphoros, dawn-bringer. The dawn of course symbolizes hope along with youth and newness an end to the darkness that's lingered for so long. Diana tells her, "If you flinch from it, you give it power over you . . . Take it, and cut your brother's throat with it, and take back the honor of your blood" (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 147). Later, Clary tells her mother, "I need to find a way to be partly a Morganstern and to have that be all right, not to pretend that I'm someone else" (*City of Heavenly Fire* 219).

Clary is a warrior of the light. In the battle, Simon gives her the sword "and in that moment, she was no longer Clary, his friend since childhood, but a Shadowhunter, an avenging angel who belonged with that sword in her hand" (*City of Lost Souls* 485-486). The sword, named Glorious, was once given by the Archangel Michael to lead God's chosen in battle. Clary stabs Jace with Glorious, burning away the false images and blurry glass through which each has been seeing the other. Further, their battle against Sebastian and the demon realm cannot be won by force of arms. In the demonic realm of Edom, it is Clary who scrawls protective runes on herself and walks directly into the flames, guiding Jace's fire safely into her own sword, which only lights up at its true bearer, herself.

In Sebastian's stronghold, the darkest place of all, Clary opens a Portal so that Jace can snatch and use Jonathan Shadowhunter's weapon, the skeptron and destroy all the demons "like an avenging angel" (*City of Heavenly Fire* 557). Sebastian offers to save her world by breaking the link between realms so he can no longer attack it, if she will rule by his side. "Ever since you discovered the Shadow World, haven't you secretly wanted to be a hero? To be the most special of a special people? In our own way we each wish to be the hero of our kind" (*City of Heavenly Fire* 589). She declines it by stabbing him with her blade, containing heaven's fire.

The novel portrays Clary as the chosen one because she possesses unique talents. She can create runes that no other characters have ever seen before, and she convinces the Shadowhunters in the Accords Hall to let her use this special talent to defeat the evil forces. She binds Downworlders and Shadowhunters and she created new runes that help the Shadowhunters fight Valentine, Sebastian and the demonic army. She is the key to the destruction of evil by the forces of good.

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