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The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa

Clyde W. Ford

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"Discovering a deeply meaningful African myth is like finding an old snapshot of myself in a place long forgotten.... These myths are more than just folk tales or fables.... Here are epics as grand as Gilgamesh, heroes as hardy as Hercules, heroines as vexing as Venus." And yet, as Clyde Ford discovered, the great myths of Africa were left out of the key works of modern mythology, missing from the sacred stories of world culture. Taking it as his mission to reclaim this lost treasure, he has written a fascinating and important book--one that both brings to life the ancient tales and shows why they matter so much to us today.

African myths convey the perennial wisdom of humanity: the creation of the world, the hero's journey, our relationship with nature, death, and resurrection. From the Ashanti comes the moving account of the grief-stricken Kwasi Benefo's journey to the underworld to seek his beloved wives. From Uganda we learn of the legendary Kintu, who won the love of a goddess and created a nation from a handful of isolated clans. The Congo's epic hero Mwindo is the sacred warrior who shows us the path each person must travel to discover his true destiny. Many myths reveal the intimacy of human and animal spirits, and Ford also explores the archetypal forces of the *orishas*--the West African deities that were carried to the Americas in the African diaspora.

Ultimately, as Clyde Ford points out, these great myths enable us to see the history of African Americans in a new light--as a hero's journey, a courageous passage to a hard-won victory. **The Hero with an African Face** enriches us all by restoring this vital tradition to the world.

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