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He's My Father Too:  
A Hero's Need for a Father's Acceptance in *He-Man*

The *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* series was popular in the early 1980's, generating several children's book spin-offs. The story chronicles the quests and saving powers of He-Man, an indestructible, muscle-bound hero who is disguised as Prince Adam in everyday life. In one episode entitled "Prince Adam No More" written by Paul Dini, the prince gets jealous when his father, the king of Eternia and unaware of his son's true identity, chooses He-Man as his personal escort on a state affair. Prince Adam's stubbornness and refusal to summon He-Man puts him in the position to have to journey with his father and Man-At-Arms himself, a decision that puts them all in danger. Even as the character double of a hero, Prince Adam exhibits a trait common to children in the need for fatherly acceptance. Ironically, it is only when the prince himself practices acceptance—the acceptance of his heroic self inside personified by He-Man—that he fulfills his identity and earns the respect of his father.

When the king informs Man-At-Arms and Adam that he has chosen He-Man as his personal escort, Adam is dejected, telling his father he hoped to accompany him instead. The king rejects his son, however, saying, "I'm afraid on this trip I'll need someone a bit more experienced and reliable" (Dini). Prince Adam hangs his head, at this moment hating his heroic self, wishing he could be free of the burden of He-Man.

Adam goes to the Sorceress, who, along with Man-At-Arms and the wizard Orko, is the only character to know of the boy's secret powers. He denies He-Man, justifying his clumsiness in everyday life as a disguise to keep He-Man a secret from their enemies. When the Sorceress reminds him of the incredible responsibility he has, Prince Adam replies, "More than anything, I want to...make my father proud of me" (Dini). It is clear here that the young man is crestfallen, confused into thinking that he and his heroic identity are disconnected. Falsely assuming that his father's acceptance of He-Man is a denial of him, Adam is ready to cast the heroic self off. He is unwitting to the fact that to do so would be an even more devastating denial of the self than what he thinks his father feels.

Unfortunately, Adam does not heed the Sorceress's advice and does not turn into He-Man before the trip. He feels stripped of his son-ship even more when his father tells him they'll "have no room for [his] antics on this trip." Quick to pledge his allegiance to his father and earn reciprocity, Adam replies, "I know, Father. You can count on me" (Dini). Adam has never been this confident in the series and one knows that trouble is looming. Furthermore, it is exactly that – trouble – that Adam, the meek and humble side of the personality, will not be able to protect his father from. When the transport vehicle is attacked by the shadow beasts, Adam hastily leaves his father's side, saying, "Stay down, Father! I'll handle this!" (Dini). Leaving his father's side to challenge one front of the attack leaves his father vulnerable from behind. Sure enough, the king is

captured and taken to Snake Mountain, and Prince Adam and Man-At-Arms are left behind.

When the two characters come out of a freeze Beast Man has put on them, the king and the villains are long gone. Prince Adam is not only scared for his father's life, but he is also humiliated in the face of his friend who has always supported him and his secret identity. Adam tells Man-At-Arms that he "wanted to show [his] father that [he] could be a hero too." Humbly acknowledging his own failure does not mitigate the firm reprimand the now father-like Man-at-Arms gives him. He says to Adam, "Look, son, you were given He-Man's powers for a reason, to help others. No one ever said you could use that power to make yourself happy" (Dini). They seem like callous words, but at this point in the story, Man-At-Arms sees not just Adam, but a broken identity in need of fixing. He knows that only a combination of Adam's love for his father and He-Man's penchant for the heroic will save the king now. Prince Adam relents, changing to He-Man in order to save the king and Eternia.

On a spiritual and emotional level, the story of Prince Adam looking for assurance from his father is a story any child can relate to. What Dini's "No Longer Prince Adam" shows, however, is more discreet than this. A more complete message to a child is that it is only through the wholeness of identity that the full child comes out. Only when we combine all of our faculties inside do we rise to full son- or daughter-ship. The gentle Prince Adam learning of his inadequacy without his bold and heroic double introduces a child to the multiple

nature of the individual and the importance of accepting and integrating that multiplicity.

#### Work Cited

Dini, Paul. "Prince Adam No More.". Dir. Gwen Wetzler. *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. 1983. DVD. Bci, Eclipse, 2005.