

© 2006 Chris Beetow



Love spells

RECONSIDERED

A guide for magicians, Witches, clergy, and friends.

Some say that “no real Witch would ever cast a love spell to control another’s will.” This must come as a surprise to the many practitioners, past and present, who do a brisk business in love charms, philtres, and spells. An internet search on “love spells” returns over 28,000 hits; among the first ten I found were love-spells-pheromones.com which hawks love spells, “pheromone love oils,” and pickup lines like “That’s a nice dress. Can I talk you out of it?” Or there’s Aisha of magic-love-spells.com who will provide you with an “Isis Love Spell” for a one-time fee of \$113 — but if your lover is particularly headstrong, the “Power Ritual” ratchets up the volume to the tune of \$230. As any experienced Pagan knows, many people believe that *every* Pagan priest/ess does love magic. As a *Houngan*, I typically get asked for love magic at least two or three times any given week.

Proscriptions against love spells are relatively recent, and largely confined to Gardnerian and post-Gardnerian traditions. That being said, such rules are not without foundation. Love spells may have a long history, but so do slavery, female genital mutilation, racism, and a whole unseemly pack of other Stupid Human Tricks. In fact, there are lots of good reasons — both practical and ethical — to avoid love spells, both for yourself and on behalf of others. Understanding why such prohibitions exist — and why the demand for love spells continues nonetheless — will help you to make a wise and informed decision when the inevitable moment arrives when someone asks you to “lay a little mojo” on the would-be apple of their eye.

Love Potion #9?

Prohibitions against “controlling the will of another” presuppose “free will,” which is a relatively modern (or at least, post-Enlightenment) concept. For most of human history, people saw themselves as pawns, manipulated for good or for ill, by forces beyond their control. Love, like everything else, was in the hands of the gods, and love spells were seen as a way of propitiating those spiritual forces. “Free will” never entered into the equation; rather, your petition would likely be something like, “may the gods make him love me, instead of making him love her/him.”

But such “humans-as-divine-playtoy” views of the gods are out of fashion these days, gone with the days of priest-kings and arranged marriages. Instead, we tend to envision ourselves as free agents in control of our destiny — and to reject anything which might interfere with that independence of action, especially when it comes to matters of the heart. Such concepts of untrammelled freedom-to-choose may be empowering, but they are not entirely accurate. While we certainly have some semblance of control over our lives, we are also shaped by sociology, economics, biology, and a whole host of other forces, both known and unknown. For example, at 5’10”, I am not free to become a Triple-Crown-winning-jockey, nor an NBA center. Likewise, I have limited control over my hormones and the people whom I find emotionally and sexually attractive. We all know, deep down, that we cannot control how we feel about others ... and so, many of us seek to magically influence how others feel about them.

Can You Help?

There are few experiences more painful than being on the wrong end of unrequited love. Most people who are looking for love spells are hurting, and desperate to find a way of easing their pain. They don't need self-righteous pronouncements about how "love spells are tantamount to rape." What they need is compassion. If someone you care about asks you for a love spell, begin by encouraging them to talk about their feelings. Try to be sympathetic rather than judgmental; you may think they are being foolish or melodramatic, but imagine yourself in their place — their heart is breaking, and they are asking for your help.

Once they've purged some negative emotions, hopefully they'll find it easier to think clearly.

An important note: While you shouldn't judge emotions, you can and *must* judge how people *act* on those emotions. If your client's interest appears obsessive, you should encourage them to seek professional help. Not only is stalking bad form, but it is often downright illegal. It also can be a warning sign of serious danger; if your client is suicidal, making threats, or appears genuinely inconsolable, get them to a professional, right away.

If you don't see any of these red flags, you may proceed with relieving the symptoms of heartbreak. When somebody comes to me seeking a love spell, I often tell them to take a bath made with sugar, white flowers, condensed milk, perfume, and powdered eggshells. This "white bath" is intended to wash away the negativity that has almost certainly gathered around them, and help them ground and center. You may want to recommend meditation, a day trip, a visit to the spa, or something similar. I've found the best way to phrase this is to say something like, "Whether or not you need a love spell, I know that right now you need to get yourself feeling better." Often this is all it takes.

*Even if you are not taking money from your friend/covenmate/neighbor/family member, you are still offering advice and hence, in effect, creating a client-therapist relationship and all appropriate guidelines for such relationships should apply.



Once your friend gets back on their feet, s/he may be ready to say goodbye to the love affair and move on.

But maybe your covenmate comes back from the spa and says, "Dude, where's my love spell?" Now is the time to investigate causes. Ask for details: Why did this relationship break up? Why isn't the prospective target interested in a relationship? Feel free to draw your friend out with active listening and gently probing questions, or (if appropriate) say, "So what I'm hearing you tell me is that this person has cheated on you repeatedly," or "I'm hearing you say that you've fallen for unattainable people three times in the past year. Is that right?" You don't want to monopolize the conversation, or provide your friend with The Answer: they need to get there on their own.

Such a conversation may also help you to determine if your friend has deeper issues that need to be addressed. If, for example, you hear, "My partner left me because of my drinking problem," advise them to address that problem first! (If there's a major issue like this around, your friend probably won't want to hear about it, but using a love spell in such a situation is akin to putting a bandaid on a compound fracture: it won't help, and is likely to make things worse, not better.)

If your friend is obviously too emotionally dependent, or jealous, you may wish to proceed with spellwork that addresses those issues instead of a love spell. A spell to increase self-confidence or trust can do wonders at a time like this! Once such underlying issues have been addressed, your friend may be able to re-establish the damaged love affair — or be ready for a new, more fulfilling relationship.

Looking for Ms. Perfection

Not every relationship ends with a walk in the sunset, buoyed by an uplifting theme song and rolling credits. Yet people who know perfectly well that professional wrestling is faked, that real-life police work bears little resemblance to *CSI: Beverly Hills*, and that there were no Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, still base their romantic expectations on pop culture plotlines. Folks who make this mistake are likely to have continuing romantic difficulties no matter how many love spells they conjure up.

The myth of the “Soulmate” has caused all sorts of pain and suffering. According to this persistent legend, everyone has a “Soulmate” — One Ideal Love with whom they can be happy, and No One Else Will Do. But “looking for Princess Charming” can lead to an never-ending trip on the Romance-Merry-Go-Round, where you keep finding your True Love only to bail out when you discover that she likes roller derby, bites her nails, leaves off the toothpaste tube cap, and listens to hip-hop. A related myth is “Till Death Do Us Part.” By this standard, all True Relationships last a lifetime; and any which does not has “failed.” A more useful standard might be, “Did I grow as a person because of this relationship?” I have seen many relationships end because the people involved had learned everything they needed to learn from being together, and were now ready to take those lessons and move on. The people involved did not “fail,” any more than someone who graduates has “failed” high school.

And then there is, “True love conquers all.” Of course, love is a vital part of a relationship — but love, whether true or not, is not a panacea. Many times people seeking love spells will talk about how “I have done everything I could and still X doesn’t love me.” A bit of digging often reveals that they have been tolerating (and most likely, enabling) unacceptable behavior on their partner’s part, all the while blaming themselves. All relationships involve sacrifice, but they should not involve one party doing all the giving while the other party takes and takes. Love may *not* be enough to cure a partner’s wandering eye; overcome the hurdles of a long-distance relationship, or stifle burgeoning career demands.

Sometimes, even people who love each other very much simply can’t make a relationship work. Although regret may be in order, blame is probably unnecessary, and attempts to force the issue with a love spell are almost certainly ill-advised.

Ethical Love Spells

Most modern magicians distinguish between love spells designed to control another and spells designed to make *you* more attractive. This is a wise distinction. Love spells aimed at a specific target are 100% effective — but only on the person casting them. If your friend was interested in Mr./Ms. X before you did that ritual for her, s/he’s going to be totally obsessed when it’s done. Spells to transform oneself are also generally longer-lasting, and much more useful, than spells aimed at another.

For women who wish to acquire more beauty, I have recommend working with Erzulie Freda, the Haitian *lwa* of love, beauty, and luxury. Have your friend light a pink candle for Freda and buy Her a small bottle of nice per-

fume. For one week, she should take a bath in which she has placed a single drop of this perfume, along with a little bit of sugar (to make her “sweeter” to others). Tell her to burn the candle while she is taking this bath, asking Freda to give her some of her beauty. (If she don’t have a bathtub, instruct her to prepare this bath in a clean white bowl and then pour it over her head while she’s taking a shower.) Soon she will find others commenting on how much better she looks. (One caveat: tell your friend to be sure to ask Freda for beauty — *not* for love. Freda is a very romantic and idealistic spirit, but one whose love affairs are frequently tinged with tragedy.) Once Freda helps her out, your friend should be sure to thank Her with a gift: pink roses are always appreciated.

Another spell involves communications, and works especially well for men who find themselves tongue-tied around people they are attracted to. The *lwa* of communications, Legba, can help get the message across. Ask your friend to take twenty-one pennies to a crossroads and leave them there as a gift for Legba. Have your friend tell Legba that he wants Him to “open the doors.” Or have your friend ask Ogou, the *lwa* of war and iron, to give him the courage to speak his mind. If your friend lives near train tracks, direct him go there and pour Ogou a small of-

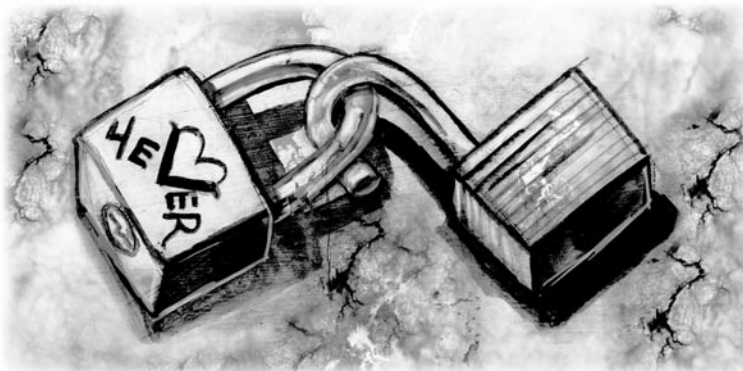
fering of rum on the tracks, otherwise, he can just pour it on the ground. Ogou can be particularly helpful to men seeking to impress the opposite sex — he’s well known for his love of pretty ladies.

Another all-purpose spell that is good for both genders is to clean house, both physical-

ly and psychically. A simple magical floorwash made with water, a pinch of salt, and a few dashes of Florida Water will help get rid of some of the negativity and “bad vibes.” Start washing at the back of the house and work towards the front, finally sending the bad stuff out the front door. For homes with wall-to-wall carpeting, fumigate by sprinkling the carpet with frankincense mixed with a pinch of salt and then vacuuming, back to front, as described above. End by putting a pinch of salt at each corner of the bedroom. This will help ensure that the environment is cleansed of negative energy and ready for more positive outcomes.

Love is hard work — especially if someone is trying to control a reluctant or unsatisfactory partner. Making oneself ready for love is the most effective love spell of all.

— Keazn Filan (*Houngan Coquille du Mer*) is an initiate of *Societe La Belle Venus #2*, a Vodou societe located in Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York. Her book *The Haitian Vodou Handbook*, will be published by *Destiny Books* in 2007.



© 2006 Chris Beetow