

Practical Cursing:  
A Magician's View  
*by Jaq D Hawkins*

The question of cursing in magic comes up periodically, usually either from an ethical point of view or as historical study. It is one of those subjects which makes some people uncomfortable, yet cannot be ignored.

Some time ago, I plowed my way through a thesis which someone I knew had written on the subject, and which was eventually published as a series by her boyfriend, who was editing a Pagan newsletter at the time. The author had done a fair amount of research from an anthropological study point of view, but I was disappointed in that the entire document, regarding a potentially interesting subject, seemed to consist entirely of scientific 'facts', out of context quotes from known authors, and a rather racist comment about blacks and Voodoo which demonstrated a complete lack of research on the Voodoo religion. What little attempt there was to include any practical information seemed to rely on the opinions of anthropologists, rather than any practical experience. For example, the anthropological view that a curse is more effective if the victim is aware of it is a matter of psychology rather than magic. If I were going to 'curse' someone, the last thing I would do is bring it to their attention which may inspire them to react or shield themselves in some way. Even the most incompetent magician can learn a few protective spells which may at least dissipate some of the energy which I had gone to such trouble to send them, not to mention the risks involved.

One who is considering 'cursing' another must deal with the question of ethics. Some people refuse to consider negative magic of any kind, but realistically, there are times when any of us has been wronged by another person or is under threat, and the ethics of most magical systems will allow for reasonable self-defense. Revenge is a separate matter, which I will come back to in a minute. The point is that for many magic users, there is an appropriate ethos for cursing.

Many are subject to rules like the Wiccan law of three fold return, or in some ritual magick systems the return is believed to be seven or ten times. I personally regard these beliefs as similar to the food restrictions which are put forth in the Old Testament. Certain animals were prohibited by divine providence, such as swine, but we have since worked out that these rules prevented the people of that time and place from almost certain food poisoning in epidemic proportions. The middle east countries where the religion is relevant has a hot climate, and at that time no refrigeration and little knowledge of food preservative methods. Pork would have been lethal, therefore religious 'laws' were enacted to prohibit self harm through ignorance.

It is a fact that any act of magic will have some effect on the person performing it, as the magic will involve the personal energy of the practitioner. How we dress up this basic physical law of magic as 'returns' is a personal matter. The person who feels the need to perform magic against another person must consider that there could be consequences which reverberate on themselves, and to determine safeguards. The most basic way to do this is to carefully plan the nature of the spell.

A spell to protect yourself from someone who is threatening or doing harm to you can be arranged so that it reflects the negative energy back to its source. This can be especially useful if you know that someone is trying to harm you magically, but do not know who it is. A reversal spell or an effective mirror spell may well reveal the culprit, as they begin suffering that which they have sent

to you. This can also be useful in cases of paranoia, where no one is actually sending the harmful energy, but it is being attracted by one's own expectation. If a reversal spell has no effect or things get worse, a thorough grounding of one's own negative energies is in order.

If someone has already done harm to you, it is natural and human to want revenge. The first thing to do is to acknowledge this, followed by calming down and thinking about whether the harm was actually intentional or sufficient to warrant an act of compensation. Not only will a curse thrown in the heat of anger be largely dissipated by one's own uncontrolled energies, but the act of calmly thinking about the degree of harm easily leads into thinking about what sort of retaliation may be pertinent. An appropriate retaliation may well be possible without danger of 'returns'. It is a matter of making the punishment fit the crime. For example, if someone has stolen something from you, a spell to make them lose something of equal value would be appropriate. Imagination is important in this decision making process. Would a spell to encourage something to happen which is very likely to come about anyway eventually as a result of the offending person's actions be of use? How can you allow for the possibility that the other person, perhaps a magician themselves, may protect against expected returns from you? What is actually required to achieve satisfaction in the situation?

Those who have read my books (*available through Capall Bann Publishing*) will know that I very strongly encourage individual spell construction to fit every purpose. This is especially important in the case of such a revenge spell. Unless the act of retaliation is very closely tied with the offence, the spell will generate negative effects which will certainly carry some backlash for the magician. One should continually question during the decision making process whether it is really worth doing an act of magic at all, or if some mundane action might as easily accomplish the purpose, yet once the decision to proceed is firmly established, it should be done with confidence in the integrity of the action.

A curse which is issued in anger or hatred attracts negative energy to the originator and is offensive to most deity forms, including most of the Loas of the Voodoo religion. Even my own patron goddess, Sekhmet, who is known for a form of retribution may well be insulted by such. On the other hand, a reasonable punishment which is issued as a parent might chastise a child may be ethically agreeable to one's own chosen deity forms. Or, if your reaction to the offence against you is too intense to apply this analogy or you do not choose to involve deity, a punishment which fits the crime from the perspective of jurisprudence could maintain the balance which will shield the originator of the 'curse' from any unhappy returns from what is meant to be, after all, a return in itself. From a practical point of view, a 'curse' is a reaction to an event and in the laws of physics, every action results in a reaction. Over reacting in the heat of temper could easily get out of hand. As Khan said in the film, 'The Wrath of Khan', "*Revenge is a dish best served cold.*" Although he was out-manuevered in the end by his opponent as anyone who takes on the mighty Captain Kirk must be, the philosophy is sound. Any act of magic, for any purpose whatsoever, is most effectively accomplished if allowances for all possibilities of paths the magic may follow are considered. If the magic involves retribution, gearing the intent to the offence is not only self-protective, but it also allows the situation to come to a conclusion and there, let the hostilities end.