



Curses

Magic spells which are placed upon people with the intention of harming them. The misfortune intended by curses can range from illness, and harm, to even death. Curses are declared to be the most dreaded form of magic, often called black magic, and are believed to be universally used. The principle purposes for them to be "laid" or "thrown" are for revenge, and also for protection of homes, treasures and grave sites. Curses can become effective immediately or may be dormant for years. Curses laid on families have been known to have plagued them for generations.

History of Curses:

The use of curse has been practiced by many cultures. The most universal method of laying on a curse is by effigy, which is an image or representation of the victim, or the person who is wished to be harmed. Waxed effigies were common in ancient India, Persia, Egypt, Africa and Europe, and currently are still used. Also, effigies can be made of clay, wood and stuffed cloth (poppets). Often the effigy is marked or painted to look like the victim. It is thought that the closer the effigy resembles the victim, the more the victim will suffer when the effigy is harmed or destroyed. The theory behind the harming or destroying an effigy to do harm to a victim is pure sympathetic magic. As the effigy is harmed, so the victim is harmed. Likewise, when the effigy is destroyed, so the victim dies.

The ancient Egyptians often used waxed figures of Apep, a monster who was the enemy of the sun. The magician would write Apep's name in green ink on the effigy, wrapped it in new papyrus and throw it into a fire. As it burned he kicked it with his left foot four times. The ashes of the effigy were mixed with excrement and thrown into another fire. The Egyptians also left waxed figures on tombs.

Like blessings, curses have universally been bought and sold throughout the centuries. With the exclusion of the neo-Pagan Witches, witches and sorcerers throughout history have performed both blessings and curses as a service to others because both are calling upon supernatural powers to effect a change. They have rendered these services to clients for fees, or in carrying out judicial sentences. Plato mentioned in the Republic, "If anyone wishes to injure an enemy; for a small fee they (sorcerers) will bring harm on good or bad alike, binding the gods to serve their purposes by spells and curses."

Waxed figures were popularly used during the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Europe by numerous witches. King James I, of England, described such activities in his book *Daemonologie* (1597):

“To some others at these times he [the Devil] teacheth how to make pictures of wax or clay. That by the roasting thereof, the persons that they beare the name of, may be continually melted or die away by continually sickness.

They can bewitch and take the life of men or women, by roasting of the pictures, as I spoke of before, which likewise is very possible to their Master to perform, for although, as I said before, that instrument of waxe has no virtue in that turn doing, yet may he not very well, even by the same measure that his conjured slaves, melts that waxe in fire, may he not. I say at these times, subtilly, as a spirite, so weaken and scatter the spirites of life of the patient, as may make him on the one part, for faintnesses, so sweate out the humour of his bodie. And on the other parte, for the not concurrence of these spirites, which causes his digestion, so debilitate his stomake, that this humour redicall continually sweating out on the one part, and no new good sucks being put in the place thereof, for lacke of digestion on the other, he shall at last vanish away, even as his picture will die in the fire.”

Alternatives to melting of effigies have been to stick them with pins thorns or knives. Animal and human hearts have been used for substitutes. Hearts, animal corpses or objects which quickly decompose, such as eggs, are buried in the ground with spells that the victim will die as the objects deteriorate.

In Ireland "cursing stones" are stones that are stroked and turned to the left as the curse is recited. It has been frequently claimed that gems and crystals possess the power to hold curses. . The Hope Diamond purchased by Louis XVI from Tavernier in 1668, is thought to be cursed, because its owners have suffered illness, misfortune, and death.

The alleged "mummy curse" is on the tomb of Tutankhamen. It was discovered when the Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter excavated Tutankhamen's burial chamber in 1922. Legend has it that in an antechamber they found an inscribed clay tablet which read:

Death will slay with its wings whoever disturbs the peace of the pharaoh.

Six months later Carnarvon died of an infected mosquito bite. Even though six of the seven principle members of the excavation team experienced strange or sudden deaths, thought to have been the result of the curse, the tablet was never photographed and strangely disappeared from the artifacts. Bob Brier, an American parapsychologist and Egyptologist, speculated the tablet never existed. In *Ancient Egyptian Magic* (1980), Brier notes that it is not typically Egyptian to write on clay tablets or to refer to death as having wings. Also, no other reliable sources exist that cite the curse.

Various legends abound in the United Kingdom and Europe of curses laid upon families, especially of the aristocracy. One of the most horrible curses was that of childlessness or death to the heirs, to the family lineage died out.

Current use of curses:

The word hex is sometimes used synonymously with curse. Among the Pennsylvania Dutch Witches hex can designate either a good or bad spell. In neo-Pagan Witchcraft, some Witches use the term hex to designate a binding spell, which is different from a curse.

A curse is the expression of desire of harm to come to a particular person. Anyone can lay a curse on another person, but it is believed that the authority of the person who lays the curse on increases its potency and makes it more dangerous. Such persons are believed to be priests, priestesses or royalty; persons possessing magical skill, such as Witches, sorcerers and magicians; and persons who have no other recourse to justice, such as women in many societies, the poor, the destitute and the dying. Deathbed curses are the most potent, since all the curser's vital energy goes into the curse.

There is a belief that if the victim knows that he has been cursed and believes that he is doomed, that the curse is all the more potent for the victim helps to cause his own demise. However, many Witches and sorcerers claim that curses can be just as effective without the victim's knowledge of them. They further say that they would never let the victim know the curse had been laid on him because then he might go to another Witch seeking to get it removed.

This has happened. Persons feeling that they have been cursed have will go to a Witch or sorcerer, sometimes in ignorance to the same person who put the curse on them, to have the spell broken. If the Witch or sorcerer has laid the curse on the person, then he makes an additional fee for taking it off. When two opposing Witches or sorcerers are involved, a magical war might erupt to see whose has the stronger magical powers.

In the various traditions of neo-Pagan Witchcraft it is against the ethics and laws of the Craft to lay curses. Most Witches abide by this, thinking that the curse will return to the curser in the same form as given. Although there are those that believe that cursing against one's enemies is justified. Witches from ethnic cultures such as the Italian Striga, the Mexican Bruja, and branches of the Pennsylvania Dutch also believe that cursing is justified.

Just as many methods exist for breaking cursers as there are for making them. If a magically charged object has been hidden in someone's dwelling it may be discovered by divination or clairvoyance and ceremonially destroyed. Sometimes other banishing rituals or protective workings are used to overpower the curse, protective talismans and amulets can be worn, and magical oils and washes can be used to attempt to lift the curse's effect. A major side effect in removing a curse is that when the curse is broken, its energy can recoil on the person who cast it, and if such person has not taken adequate precautions, he/she may end up receiving the entire effect intended for the curse's victim