


The Cancer Grimoire

Magic on the Poison Path

~ Ivy Bromius ~



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I would appreciate you keeping the Epistle to the Youth in all copies, as that is my hyper sigil prayer for a better future for us all. Also, if you expand the poison spirit list based on your own experience, it would be amazing if you send the information back to me add to this copy. Like the magicians of old, we can share information to make all our magic stronger.

Disclaimer

This is a work of magic; a true Grimoire in that it is one magician's working notes on a particular enchantment. Nothing in this guide should be construed as medical advice.

Each person's experience with the path will be different and everyone must make their own choices and decisions. Whatever your route, know that prayer and magic can help you.

Dedication

To my family
for your unwavering support, magic, and love during my year on the poison
path

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To my wider RuneSoup family and all my friends
for your global intentions, healing workings, journeys, sacred water
deliveries, bind runes, spells, Angel bothering, free courses, and so many
prayers – thank you!

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To the Oncological Priesthood
who were my guides on the path

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To all those called to walk the poison path
my prayers fly to you on the wings of the angels
and on the breath of the wind
let them carry you to healing

Epistle to the Youth

Gather around my children and grand-children and great-grand-children – my descendants of love and blood and community. You have asked me about walking the poison path and I will share what I know. The cycle of Saturn has passed once and nearly once over again since my poison path initiation. My own life's path is near its end and I have been blessed never to have been called back to the poison path. But I remember it clearly. My body has grown frail, but my mind is sharp as ever (and my tongue and my wit, though perhaps not my modesty).

It was the year of the lockdown when fear of the plague ran wild through the world. It's a strange thing to be ill when so many are confronted with the specter of illness. Of needing a mask to stay safe when masks are mandated for other reasons. Of feeling fear of what is within you when all around you, people are afraid of what is without. But while the timing of my illness was particularly odd, no walk on the path is easy.

The poison path is one that you do not chose. You are called to it by fate and circumstance. No one can speak exactly of the path that any other person might walk. Some walk and come through changed. Some do not come through but take the final turning and go onward.

Of course, fewer walk the path now. Instead, we have the teaching medicine, helping the body learn to heal itself – immunotherapy. And we have better knowledge of the healing world through enviro-spiritual medicine and eco-immunology. But in those days, for many, the poison was the only offering.

Today, when you need medicine our healers will perform the rituals, make the offerings, diagnose with tests and imaging and astrology and divination, suggest diet and herb and nature remedies, refer you to a prayer / intention group, send you to a dream speaker, AND arrange procedures, surgeries, or therapies that you need. But back when I was young, these weren't integrated, and it was up to the patient to find these disparate parts and make them work together. We were only just barely beginning to combine the wisdom of our ancestors with the knowledge of science.

The language around the poison path was always a war language. Of course, we all spoke the war language back then. You young ones won't remember, thank the Gods, but it was all fighting and battling and the war against this or that. No wonder we had so many wars!

Walking the poison path is not an act of war. It's an act of self-sacrifice and of witchcraft: of harming to heal; killing to save. It's an aggressive act to be sure, but not against an enemy. Because with cancer you are the assailant and the victim of assault, the poison and the antidote, and both that which kills and that which heals rests within you.

The Call to the Path - Diagnosis

For me, the most frightening part of having cancer was the very beginning. That's because I find uncertainty intolerable and at first, I knew that something was wrong, but I didn't know what or how much.

It started the third week of March 2020 – Covid lockdown. I was stressed and tense and pulled a rib muscle while stretching. Shortly after, I noticed a lump, which became very painful. At first, I thought it was just from the pulled muscle, but two visits to the chiropractor didn't help and they recommended I go to my family doctor. There was a virtual appointment followed by an in-person visit. Then a mammogram and finally a biopsy. The whole time I was annoyed that this painful thing wasn't just getting removed because surely it couldn't be anything serious!

The thing to understand is that the worse the news, the more the bearer of that news needs to get paid. When the MA had my biopsy results in front of her, she said "you need to wait to talk to the Dr. tomorrow" and I knew it was bad (she doesn't get paid enough to tell someone they have cancer). The Dr. called and said I had cancer. I said "well, fuck" and she said "yeah." But she also told me that I'd have to talk to an oncologist to get more details (she doesn't get paid enough to risk getting the details wrong).

The oncology office told me that while Covid restrictions typically meant no visitors, under the circumstances I could bring a "support person" and at this point I was completely terrified.

My biopsy was June 24th (2020) and the diagnosis came the 26th. Everyone moved quickly, and I got scheduled with the oncologist July 7th. It was still a long, long 11 days.

What did I do during those 11 days?

First, I told a few people. My household, naturally. Some close/magical friends. I didn't tell my parents yet, or my workplace, because I didn't know enough to give them information that would be either reassuring or useful.

I fasted. I started researching herbs and supplements. I had tender and serious conversations with my family.

In the end, the news wasn't too bad. Stage two right-breast cancer, very aggressive, but also very treatable with no signs of metastasizing. From that point, things started moving *very* quickly. Once you are handed off to the care of the Oncological Priesthood, they keep things moving.

Divination/Journeying – Root Cause Analysis

Our medical system is much better at treating illness than preventing it. And once you get cancer, everyone is mostly focused on getting you well. There are only a few situations where the cause becomes known.

With something like cancer, the cause may never be known because it's often not only one thing. For example, in my case:

- A deep journey about a year before my diagnoses included a teacher figure directing me to cough up a large stone that was lodged in my chest. As I coughed up the stone, I experienced an emotional catharsis and it was clear that the stone was caused by emotions that I was holding inside me.
- An astrologer confirmed my Moon and Venus placement in Cancer in the 12th house would make my own feelings often invisible to me.
- After I was diagnosed, I found research that indicated that permanent hair dye increases the risk of exactly the type of breast cancer I had. At that time, I'd been dying my hair for nearly two decades.
- I also saw a scary article that some scientists were concerned that early tests that showed cell phone radiation was harmless were

based on much simpler and less powerful phones and that modern phones have higher radiation levels.¹ Is this true? I don't know, but I know I spent many long hours surfing with my phone propped up against the right side of my chest.

- When I was 18, I had a powerful and very challenging initiatory experience. It started just as Saturn conjoined my natal north node in Capricorn. The Saturn return of that experience was in early February of 2020, as this aggressive little tumor was just getting going in my breast.
- Just plain old bad luck. Sometime people get cancer for no reason at all and I had no family history.

From the standpoint of the oncologists, the reasons don't matter, but they can matter a lot to the patient. For example, now that I have hair again, it's going to stay naturally grey. I haven't given up my phone entirely, but I keep it further from my body, turn it off at night, etc. I have been doing hard emotional work, dealing with feelings that I've long kept bottled up. And I have worked to come to terms with the fact that I might never know exactly why this happened.

Any context you can gain can be useful. This is particularly true of the contexts that might be emotional or ancestral or symbolic. Because you need to take the lead on dealing with those issues. Our modern medicine doesn't do that sort of thing. Open yourself to omens and signs and dreams. The casual overheard reference to a useful herb, an animal who carries a message, a friend of a friend's sister who mentions their surgeon – all pieces you can add to your healing work. Make it easy for people to confide their weird dreams, strange ideas, and odd bits of advice they overheard.

The Ancestors - Genetics

As part of my diagnosis, I had a genetic test. They were looking for genetic markers that would recommend a different course of treatment (hormone therapy) and ones that are family markers of breast cancer. They also asked extensively after my family history of cancer. People with a history of breast cancer often have genes that put them at great risk both of an initial

¹ <https://lawandcrime.com/administrative-law/scientists-sue-fcc-for-dismissing-claims-that-cell-phone-radiation-causes-cancer/>

diagnosis and of recurrence. That would impact the treatment options they select. I had none of these markers and no family history.

If I did, I'd have immediately looked at a course of ancestral remediation. Illnesses that are passed through family lines suggest opportunities for ancestral healing, clearing of old obligations and contracts, etc.

While I didn't have a family history, I did ask my ancestors to help with my healing. This was part of my general ancestral work where I look to my antecedents and beloved dead for guidance and help.

I have also worked directly with two people who have experience with ancestral remediation:

Chiron Armand at Impact Shamanism² – I was part of a contract clearing rite that involved finding old obligations and contracts that no longer serve you and clearing them. Chiron has specific expertise in this area and is just an all-around lovely person.

Gordon White at Rune Soup³ – after my treatment ended, my mother was diagnosed with end stage colon cancer. Coming to terms with that was a bit like a final exam for all my work in therapy. But there were also spiritual / ancestral ramifications that were impacting me physically as well as emotionally. Gordon kindly offered to assist, and I found it extremely beneficial and healing. Even though I didn't have a family history of breast cancer, I did have a family history. And the process of ancestral recapitulation and healing connected directly to my own healing and my own descendants.

Intention

My Rune Soup family immediately rallied to do a series of global intentions for my healing (thank you again, you guys rock!). Being a believer in prayer, I decided early on that I wasn't going to discriminate on the types of prayers I got. This means that as I shared my news with people, I gratefully accepted all prayers coming my way. In fact, I not only accepted all prayers and healing wishes, but actively solicited them.

² <https://www.impactshamanism.com/>

³ <http://www.runesoup.com/>

I live in an area of the world that's not particularly religious. That means that non-magical people are fearful of offending and, unless they know you well, offer prayers cautiously. My response was always an enthusiastic YES PLEASE! And in cases, where offense was more of a concern, such as at the office, I told people preemptively "I gratefully accept all prayers, good thoughts, and well wishes! Thank you in advance!"

It pleased me to think of witches and Buddhists and Muslims and Christians of all varieties praying for me. I also assumed prayer even if it wasn't explicit. My office sent a lovely vase of flowers *every month* that I was in treatment and I looked at each as a prayer for my healing.

I also gratefully accepted all advice. Yes, when you have a serious illness people want to help and sometimes their suggestions are odd and sometimes their delivery is awkward. But advice is my love language, and I took all of it in the spirit of being offered in kindness and the intent of healing. Most of it was good and helpful.

My magical family really stepped up. In addition to the intentions, there were healing journeys, angel bothering, bind runes, talismans, saint work, the collection and delivery of healing waters, and so forth. I prayed and still pray that each of you and your households be blessed with health, wealth, and wisdom.

Whether or not you can call on a global community of magical weirdos to intend for you,⁴ you can still point the folks in your life toward what you'd like them to pray/intend/spell for.

For example:

- Complete and total healing
- Finding the best doctors
- Synchronicities that help you figure out the best course of action
- Better understanding and connection with your own body

⁴ Join the Rune Soup Membership and you can!

Calling the Medical Masters

During radiation one of the techs commented that my surgeon was very skilled (his exact quote was “we see a lot of boobs around here and your surgeon is excellent!” and I had the kind of relationship with the techs that made this funny and not weird). And my surgeon was excellent! She was not only skilled but also had amazing patient rapport and I was fortunate to have her.

Your first magical target on diagnosis should be to help you find the very best medical and support people to help you. Best here means skilled and knowledgeable in their field, open to other areas as much as feasible, and with a kind and positive demeanor. I can't stress this last enough. If you believe in magic, you have to believe that a Doctor who likes you and is positive about you and your treatment is going to give you a better outcome.

Do this kind of magic early, while you still have the energy for outward directed enchantment. It could include candle magic, honey jars, drawing spells, etc. Later, you will go deep inward, so call your healing allies now.

Integrative Medicine – The Witch at the Edge of the Healing Village

I am very fortunate to live in an area with several great hospital systems and awesome collaboration between them. One of the benefits was an early referral to Integrative Medicine. This healer was a bit like the witch at the outskirts of the village – very helpful, but also a bit disreputable and confusing to the priests in the parish church.

My integrative medicine specialist started the integrative medicine department for my hospital system 12 years before and had to fight to get respect among the priesthood of doctors. She told me that an oncologist once introduced her to a patient by saying “we don't know what she does, but patients who see her do much better in treatment.” What she did was:

- Suggest supplements to mitigate the effects of chemo
- Recommend alternative therapies with a strong grounding in empirical research
- Heckle me to exercise as much as I could
- Suggest meditation and mindfulness

- Make smart dietary suggestions for someone on the poison path (more on this below)
- Wisely recommend therapy

Her reputation also preceded her. Doctors and their staff respected her and if I said she told me to do something, they would say, “yes, do that then.”

You may have to hunt down your own integrative medicine specialist, but it’s worth doing. The trouble with going through allopathic cancer treatment is that you must filter all advice through that lens. Your specialist can recommend supplements that won’t be contraindicated with your treatment or treatment side effects and you can bring your ideas for her to vet. She’s not going to be able to go very far outside the allopathic circle, so don’t expect a sign off on crystal healing, but when it comes to knowledge about complimentary therapies, supplements, and herbs she can access a wealth of information.

For example, taking curcumin was my idea, but she confirmed that there wasn’t any reason *not* to take it, as well as suggesting I stop a week ahead of surgery. She was interested in some research on medicinal mushrooms that I’d found and confirmed that nothing in my anti-cancer blend⁵ (created by a friend and fellow magician) was going to be a problem with anything else I was doing or taking.

Her dietary suggestions were very good in terms of dealing with the poison spirits. These spirits induce nausea and impact digestion, so what you eat is very important. She was pleased to hear that we make our own bone broth and had lots of good smoothie suggestions. The extremely ill-advised broccoli sprout and apple concoction was entirely my own fault though. I take full responsibility and ask that you not repeat my mistake.

She also pointed me to an acupuncturist who specializes in chemo patients, which was an excellent experience and one that I highly recommend. He assisted with digestion, mitigated the effects of neuropathy, and kept my immune system strong through treatment. Plus, we got to have fascinating conversations about Otzi the iceman and his acupuncture tattoos, tattoos used for healing in indigenous cultures, and the Mandate of Heaven.

⁵ <http://www.vitalveils.com>

Therapy - The Dream Speaker

If we are wise, in the future, a diagnosis of serious illness would automatically include a referral a dream speaker for emotional and spiritual healing. Right now though, you are going to have to find one yourself. And find one, you should. If I had a much more serious diagnosis, I could have had a referral to a therapist directly associated with the cancer center. These are the angels who work with patients and families making hard treatment decisions and providing end of life counseling. I was happy not to need them. But I still needed someone and, honestly, who wouldn't?

It can be challenging to arrange therapy under the best of circumstances, let alone when you are dealing with cancer treatment. One benefit is that reluctant insurance carriers can be motivated to cover therapy with an oncological referral. Another benefit was that, ironically, Covid made it much easier to see a therapist remotely.

But even if you have coverage, finding someone who takes your insurance, and new patients, and who is a match for you isn't easy. I was fortunate to find a great Jungian depth psychologist – a literal dream speaker in one of the most magic-tolerant schools of psychology. During our initial 'see if we should work together' session, I told him bluntly about my journey and the Shaman figure pulling the stone from my chest. He took it all in stride, and I knew I'd found my dream speaker.

Finding the right dream speaker is a great magical target. Getting insurance to play ball with everything is another. In fact, levying magic at your insurance is likely going to be a necessary part of magic for treatment. Getting the right coverage, making sure things get paid for smoothly, and making sure your complimentary therapies are included. A lot of this depends on an arcane – and frankly, Archonic – Byzantine system of correct billing codes and exactly right phrasing by doctors. Just remember that your physicians hate insurance companies as much as you do and can be allies in getting you the care you need.

The Oncological Priesthood

Here we come to it. The specialists. The hierophants of cancer medicine. Like any priesthood, these men and women are the keepers of wisdom which runs deep rather than wide. They know the thing that they know very well and focus on it very well. This is a strength for the patient, but also a detriment, because you need to fill in the other parts of your healing yourself. Still, my experience with the priesthood was positive and I felt like I was in good hands. Here are the healing orders I worked with:

Surgical Oncology – The Order of the Blade

I started treatment with a surgeon implanting a chemotherapy port. Magically, this is the portal that the poison spirits use to access your field – physical and spiritual. It was implanted just under the skin on the left side of my upper chest through a 1-inch incision. It appeared as a lump under the skin which was accessed through a hooked needle during chemo.

In getting the port, I was reminded of the following:

- Alien implants. Common in abduction narratives, the idea that an alien species might place something inside a human subject is inherently disturbing. I experienced my port as very alien. In addition, I was swept up in the process of walking the path. Especially at the start, when everything was moving quickly, it felt a little like being abducted away from myself.
- Spirit implants. During journeys or initiatory experiences, it's possible that a helpful spirit can implant a connection or ability to allow you to partner with them. Since my port was the mechanism by which I could communicate with the poison spirits, it was useful to see it in that light.
- Etheric implants. While my results were positive, the poison spirits are NOT gentle healing spirits. They can kill you as well as heal you and, in some very real ways, are doing both at the same time. In this regard, the port was a necessarily evil – like the circle and triangle you use when you are summoning demons. It protected me in both spiritual and literal ways (some chemo drugs can destroy your peripheral veins if injected directly).

I also ended my poison spirit engagement under the Order of the Blade. At the end of my chemo, the remains of my tumor were removed along with several lymph nodes for testing. This was my payment or sacrifice to the priesthood. A sacrifice of self to self. In addition, the port was removed through the same incision where it was inserted. I pushed to have these procedures before the end of the year for insurance reasons but also because it made a nice closure for the primary phase of treatment. I had surgery on December 31st – Happy New Year!

Medical Oncology – Keepers of the Wisdom of the Healing Poisons

After the port was implanted, the work of the poison spirits began. Chemotherapy uses powerful substances that kill fast-growing cells in your body – all fast-growing cells, including those in your stomach lining, hair follicles, mucus membranes, and blood. It's used to treat cancer because cancer cells are fast-growing. And yes, it's honestly as barbaric as it sounds. The reason my tumor was so treatable was because it was so fast growing. It's a race between the poisons killing the tumor or killing you before the tumor does. Kill the tumor first, you get remission.

Having cancer really sucks and there's a strong urge toward denial. The more in-tune you can be with your body, the more you can feel if something seems awry... and the earlier you can figure out what's up and treat it. I was in complete denial up to the actual diagnosis and I'm just very lucky that my tumor was excruciatingly painful because it forced me to deal with it.

I had chemo for just over four months, every other week at first and then every week. During this time, I had regular meetings with my medical oncologists to evaluate the side effects and adjust the type and amount of poison.

Medical oncology was the most occulted – that is, literally hidden – portion of my treatment. I think this is because a) the process is highly variable by individual so they don't always know exactly how things will go and b) because they honestly don't want to frighten you at the start.

My medical oncologists were great, but like any priesthood directly engaged with spirits they were in some ways more focused on the spirits than the patient. I didn't feel unheard or badly cared for, it's just that their approach

was as advocates for the poison spirits. In engaging with those spirits, I had to advocate for myself.

In fact, there is logic to their reserve. Chemo can cause a whole host of side effects that vary by drug and by patient. And there's something to be said for not knowing too much in advance.

Let me give you an example to clearly illustrate what I'm saying. I had a fat book filled with possible side effects – none of which I read. So, I was unaware that chemo drugs can cause heartburn. And in fact, I never had any heartburn through many months of treatment. Then during one visit the medical oncologist's assistant asked about it. "Do you have any heartburn? Because many people suffer heartburn during treatment." Sure enough, that night I had terrible heartburn.

This is called the nocebo effect and it's kind of the placebo effect inside-out. The idea is that just as a doctor telling you that you will be better has an actual curative effect, telling you what the problems and issues might be can cause those issues. There's actual research on the nocebo effect, but I like to just think of it as magic.⁶ That's why I want my doctors thinking positively about me and my treatment. It makes a real difference.

I had decided early on that I just didn't get side effects. That I was one of the rare and fortunate patients who just wouldn't. Of course, I still did, but I didn't invite them by knowing about them in advance. Instead, I'd describe what was happening (numbness, hair loss, nose bleeds, etc.) and they'd confirm that this was usual for my treatment and monitor those issues.

The next time I saw the oncologist, I told her not to mess with my suspension of disbelief. In fact, I was very blunt with all my doctors that I didn't want them to burst my bubble when it came to how hard treatment might be. I was going to do great. I wasn't going to suffer. I wasn't going to be terribly ill.

In fact, by the end I was anemic, exhausted, weak, and sore, bald as an egg with chronic nosebleeds. But everyone I interacted with was massively shocked at how well I'd done. Instead of losing weight, I gained 10 pounds. I kept working throughout treatment, which was good for my mental state

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3401955/>

(another left-handed gift that Covid bestowed was that my kind of work can be done fully remotely, I don't know if I could have done it otherwise). I kept being positive about my results.

I don't attribute that to any special super-power. It was just my deliberate ignorance about how bad it could be and my insistence – self-delusion really – that it wouldn't be that bad. In fact, it was pretty horrible, but that's how magic works. You move the odds. What could have been a 10/10 bad was only 6/10. And it ended in remission. Know what? I'll take it.

Infusion Center Nurses – Sororitas Veneficarum: The Poison Sisterhood

If the medical oncologists were spirit-focused, the nurses in the infusion center were all about the patient. I had a comfy reclining chair, warm blanket, and a range of drinks and snacks (my go to was cup o' noodle – warm and salty). The nurses were unfailingly kind and nurturing while delivering the poison.

Chemo infusion is highly organized. If you pay attention, there's no question that there is some serious ritual going on. From the drawing and testing of blood, the repeating of the patient's name and birth date (over and over) to the donning of special garb, the infusion process was very like what I imagine the Pythia went through. The attendants, the special seating, the delivery of the pre drugs to keep you from throwing up or having a reaction. And then finally, access to the poison spirits.

The reason for the special garb, which the nurses don right before infusion and then remove right afterward, is to protect them from the poison. It's also the reason for the repetition of the name and birthdate and patient ID -- for confirmation that someone doesn't get the wrong poison or the wrong dose.

In fact, during chemo, I *became* the poison. For two days after infusion, my body was a biohazard. If I threw up, for example, it had to be cleaned with bleach while wearing gloves. It also meant no sex, interesting considering the prohibitions against sex in the classic Grimoires. Also, no kissing and no sharing food or drink. The protocol is obviously going to depend on the spirits you are working with, but the whole point of chemo is poison -- and poison has a long tradition in shamanic initiation and witchcraft.

I leaned into the ritual. While waiting for the blood test results, I read relevant material, listened to appropriate meditation music, and drank my soup. Then during the infusion, I prayed and engaged directly with the spirits. The sisterhood was supportive of my efforts to engage with the spirits (though I did try to be subtle – quiet prayer and invocation are easier with a medical mask on).

Most of the drugs are delivered by mechanical infusion, so I was left alone to journey and pray and do my thing. But one drug was injected into the port manually, with the nurse sitting directly in front of me with several large syringes. I directed the spirit to the location of my tumor and as she obviously saw me pointing and tapping, I told her I was telling the drug where to go. She said that in her experience that patients who try to engage with the treatment and do positive visualization and affirmations *had better results*.

The sisterhood made the process easier to bear. They were there to keep me warm (increasingly a challenge as my blood got thinner and thinner) and bring me hot soup. They explained everything and answered all my questions (“my face is numb, is that OK?”). Once, on a particularly trying day ahead of my appointment, I wept in the exam room. The nurse comforted me and washed my glasses to keep them from fogging up. On my last day of chemo, I brought them a huge bouquet of flowers with a note thanking them for their kindness (and signing it with the oft repeated mantra of my name, birthdate, and patient number).

Radiation Oncology – The Brothers and Sisters of the Holy Fire

The final stage on my journey was radiation. After chemo and the removal of the rest of the tumor, I was scheduled to do five weeks of radiation – a session each weekday. This was less disruptive than you might imagine, as the radiation itself took only minutes and the hospital was nearby. I met with the oncologist every Friday for a slightly longer session.

My radiation oncologist was the absolute best, most positive, most life-affirming person. He was kind to both patients and staff. After completing treatment, I received an amazing card where he and the entire staff included their personal well-wishes.

Radiation isn’t as taxing as chemo (like the kind of tired that comes from recovering from a sunburn, not the kind that has you sleeping 12 hours or

more a night). Once I stopped engaging with the poison spirits, my hair started to regrow and my body to heal. My immune system rebounded surprisingly quickly (weeks instead of months) but my anemia more slowly. The consensus is that full chemo recovery takes about two months for every one month of chemo. Of course, I knew my recovery would take a lot less time than that (nocebo effect) and told everyone so repeatedly.

I did great during radiation. The doctor commented on it every week. As I got to my last few sessions, I started having only a little redness and itching. The only other effect was that I had (and still have, though it's slowly fading) one tanned spot on my chest. Naturally, I credit this to magic. The Working of the Spirit of the Sun, at the end of this Grimoire, outlines what I did and the materia I used.

Workings to Prepare for the Path

The Power of Positivity

OK, let's cut to the chase: Cancer sucks. A lot. And I had stage two, and highly treatable cancer! Even so, I still had many dark nights of the soul. After chemo, with the poison spirits coursing through my body and keeping me up late into the wee hours, my thoughts turned very dark indeed (1:1 RSO is an excellent sleep aid and mitigates many of the side effects of the poison spirits as well – if it's possible for you to take it, I recommend it).

When I was first diagnosed, I was frightened. Once I had a better sense of my diagnosis, I got really pissed off. Emotionally, my anger is more visible and accessible to me than sadness. Sadness hides from me (in my 12th house, in my chest, in my life – it's all part of the same thing).

Anger can be energizing and put you in a fighting spirit, which is good. You are allowed to be angry (cancer sucks, remember!). However, it's also important to understand that when you are treating cancer, you are effectively fighting a part yourself (a troublesome and harmful part of yourself, but a part of yourself nonetheless). There's no real enemy for you to point your anger at. This results in the risk that your anger either lodges deep inside where it might impact your healing OR gets placed outside of yourself on family, friends, doctors, the system, etc. which also doesn't support healing. If you can be angry that bad things happen to good people

(like you!) then yes, use your anger to kick ass finding treatments and doctors and doing magic. But don't use it as a weapon to hurt yourself or others.

In coping with my diagnosis and treatment, I had two goals:

- Allow myself to see, feel, and express sadness as a legitimate and valuable emotion
- Stay as positive as possible about my treatment, doctors, outcomes, side effects, and life in general

Those two goals may sound contradictory, but they are not! In fact, I discovered to my surprise and delight that allowing myself to be sad in a healthy way (that is, not bottling it up until I create a black stone inside me) also allowed me to be more joyful, grateful, and yes positive. This kind of positivity felt very *real* to me. Not a fake veneer of positivity that you slap on because:

- Someone tells you to or to put on a show for people
- You think you'll die of cancer otherwise
- You are setting an example (dammit!) for the people that love you

This is all stuff to take up with your Dream Speaker. I can only speak from my perspective and experiences. Your emotional makeup is different; your path will be too. But there's been tons of research into the benefits of having a positive attitude, so do what you can to get there. Here's what I did:

- Heavily curate my information intake to avoid bad news, particularly the emotionally distressing kind (no hurt children, no dead animals, no doubt your list will be different)
- Avoid anyone who made me feel stressed, upset, frustrated, or annoyed, even if under normal circumstances they were just fine
- Deliberately come up with stuff to be grateful and happy about
- Avoid putting myself in situations that would exhaust or stress me (I said 'no' a lot and it's a game changer)
- Spend my limited energy doing things that lifted my spirits (time with family, CircleThrice, outdoor time)
- Give myself permission to ask for help when I need it and express gratitude for the help I received

Fast and Feast

I mentioned previously that the first thing I did when diagnosed was fast for four days. This was actually a very big deal for me. I'm not a particularly good faster. I have low blood pressure and hypoglycemia and fasting for more than a day tends to make me prone to passing out.

I fasted for two reasons. The reason I knew about at the time was that autophagy can hinder cancer growth. The reason I understand now was that it was something that I could control. Even after the four days, I started eating primarily keto. We know that certain kinds of fasting can have health and spiritual benefits, though as always, your results will vary.

However, once I started engaging with the poison spirits, all bets were off. Like the Grimoire spirits of old, who objected to magicians eating beans before invocation (and I always wondered if they just disliked flatulence), the poison spirits dictated what I could or could not eat. Obviously, it was critical for me to eat as healthy as possible to withstand the ravages of chemo. But the poison spirits had their own ideas about what I should be eating, and they brutally punished any deviance.

Most people lose weight during chemo. I gained 10 pounds and of all the results I had, this was probably the thing that surprised the doctors the most. I absolutely credit this to my chef / magician husband who made nourishing and delicious food that also placated the poisons. If you know magically operant people who can cook, have them make you dishes that sound appealing (there will likely be some carbs just because they are easier to digest) and enchant them for your digestion and recovery.

I also leaned into antiemetics, both medical and herbal (ginger, chamomile, RSO). Nausea is a part of the poison path and it still affects me in strange ways. When I last visited the infusion clinic for a follow up with the oncologist (long after treatment) I became nauseous. When I saw the bottle of Ondansetron in the cabinet, I got queasy. And writing the Goetia section below is giving me a woozy feeling just thinking about it.

The Descent of Inanna

As my treatment started, I struggled to find a way of explaining my circumstances to myself; to make sense out of it. That meant narrativizing it by turning it into a story that I could be a part of. Of course, it's not easy telling a story about your situation when you don't yet know what that situation is. But I found something powerful I could use in the story of the Descent of Inanna to the Underworld and its various interpretations, both ancient and modern:

Diane Wolkstein interprets the myth as a union between Inanna and her own "dark side": her twin sister-self, Ereshkigal. When Inanna ascends from the underworld, it is through Ereshkigal's powers, but, while Inanna is in the underworld, it is Ereshkigal who apparently takes on the powers of fertility. The poem ends with a line in praise, not of Inanna, but of Ereshkigal. Wolkstein interprets the narrative as a praise-poem dedicated to the more negative aspects of Inanna's domain, symbolic of an acceptance of the necessity of death in order to facilitate the continuance of life....

Joseph Campbell interpreted the myth as a tale about the psychological power of a descent into the unconscious, the realization of one's own strength through an episode of seeming powerlessness, and the acceptance of one's own negative qualities.

Conversely, philosopher Joshua Mark argues that the most likely moral intended by the original author of the Descent of Inanna is that there are always consequences for one's actions: "The Descent of Inanna ... would have given to an ancient listener the same basic understanding anyone today would take from an account of a tragic accident caused by someone's negligence or poor judgment: that, sometimes, life is just not fair." ⁷

I was already familiar with the story and a longtime fan of Inanna. It was the fact that She loses her wig (aka her hair) along with all her clothes and finery that really hit home for me as a metaphor for chemo. During my early chemo sessions, I'd spend the preliminary time reading *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna*.⁸

⁷ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanna#Descent_into_the_underworld

⁸ Enheduanna, and Meador, Betty De Shong, *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (University of Texas Press, 2006).

The Poison Spirit Goetia

The Process

The first time I had chemo, I was frightened and distracted by all the weird sensations coursing through my body. It was also the only time I was allowed to have my husband with me (for which I was very grateful). But the following session I began developing the process.

1. I listened to a soothing meditation track which blocked out external sounds.
2. I performed a quiet and quick mental banishing of unwanted spirits and request for my spirit posse to watch over me. This is important. Chemo leaves you vulnerable, so you want to be protected.
3. During the infusion, I journeyed deeply seeking to connect with the poison spirits.
4. Sources of spirit information came from: visions of the spirit, comments made by my oncologists, and in one memorable instance a dream that directed my friend Amaya to point me to Jack Grayle's Hekate Course which contained a particular piece of information that I needed.⁹
5. I researched the source of the drugs as well, though I avoided looking at their side effects.
6. Based on my discoveries, I would find an appropriate invocation / prayer to use during the following sessions.

⁹ <https://www.theblackthorneschool.com/courses/hail-hekate-walking-the-forked-path/>

Daunorubicin, the Red Dragon

Titles: Red Andriomayacin, Dracorubis, Doxorubicin, Streptomyces Peucetius Caesius, The Red Devil, The Ruby of the Mountain

Appearance: An earth Dragon red in tooth and claw.

History: In the 1950s, an Italian research company discovered the Red Dragon in soil-based microbes isolated from the area surrounding the Castel del Monte, a 13th-century castle near the monastery of Santa Maria del Monte. They named it Daunorubicin from the name Dauni, a pre-Roman tribe that occupied the area of Italy where the compound was isolated and the French word for ruby, rubis, describing the color.

Invocation:

Ho Ophis ho archaios

Ho Drakon ho megas

Ho en kai ho on kai

Ho zon tous aionas ton aionon!

Meta tou pneumatou sou!

The primeval serpent,

The great dragon,

Who was and who is,

Who lives through the aeons of aeons!

He is with your spirit!

Direct the spirit to your wounded part and ask that he not harm you in his coming. The Red Dragon can injure the heart.



Endoxan, Ruled by Mary, Empress of Hell

Titles: Cyclophosphamide, Lyophilized Cytosan, Cytosan, Neosar, Procytox, Revimmune, Cycloblastin

Appearance: A skeletal nun holding aloft a crescent moon on which stands the White Mary, Empress of Hell. Scent of white roses.

History: Mustard gas, a potent blister-agent, was first used as a chemical weapon in World War I. During World War II, an incident during the air raid on Bari, Italy, affected several hundred soldiers and civilians. Medical examination of the survivors led to development of the first chemotherapy spirit, Mustine. From this first toxic spirit, came many others, all with the blood of many thousands in their hands. These spirits are ruled by Mary, Empress of Hell and can be invoked for healing in Her Holy Name. They feed on the blood.

Invocation:

Invoke the Mustinean spirit by praying the Rosarium Imperatrix Inferni during the infusion.¹⁰

Greatest thanks to Rev. Yuri McGlinchey for their site and prayers there.



¹⁰ <https://thenowlbetwixt.revyurim.com/blog/infernal-marian-rosary/>

Taxol, Hecate's Yew

Titles: Taxus Brevifolia, Paclitaxel, Iubhair, Ioua, Ioho

History: This spirit was isolated from the Pacific Yew in the 1950s. Related to the mythologically potent European Yew, which can live forever and has ancient associations with death and resurrection, all parts of the Yew are poisonous. Yew trees were sacred to pre-Christian Celtic peoples, have been connected to many Goddesses, and are strongly associated with churchyards (though in many cases, the churches were planted near the trees and not the other way around). The most ancient tree in the British Isles (and possibly all of Europe) is the Fortingall yew in Glen Lyon, which may be 9000 years old. The Taxol spirit is one of Hecate's retinue and can be invoked in her name as Queen of Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld. This spirit weakens bones.

Invocation:

The Poison Sisterhood often deliver a strong dose of Benadryl before this spirit. That means you may spend most of your spirit engagement sleeping. Invoke ahead of time and pay attention to any dreams that the spirit sends to you. Say/sing the Orphic Hymn to Hecate.¹¹

If you have the energy, you can also perform the Deipnon on the first day of the lunar month, but this is optional.



¹¹ <https://www.hermeticfellowship.org/OrphicHymnHecate.html>

The Working of the Spirit of the Sun

For my radiation treatment, my lovely and wonderful neighbor made me a skin healing calendula salve.¹² I empowered the salve with the following working using Asclepius Son of Apollo oil from Sphere + Sundry.¹³

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On a Sunday in the hour of the Sun

Lay the altar with a beeswax candle dedicated to Apollo (marked with the sign of the sun), a bell, solar incense, your healing balm, and the solar oil.

Perform the opening from the Lunation Rite to call on the Agathos Daimon wherein the space is cleared, the spirits called, the vowels sung, the incense and candle lit, and the Sun called upon.<sup>14</sup>

Recite the Orphic Hymns for Apollo and Asclepius and call on them to provide their healing powers to the oil. Call with the bell.

Add a dose of oil to the healing salve.

Pray for healing and ongoing health.

Close the rite in the usual way.

Apply the salve to surgical scars and the area of radiation every day after treatment.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://homesteadandchill.com/homemade-calendula-salve-recipe/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://sphereandsundry.com/product-category/series/asclepius-iii/son-of-apollo/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://circlethrice.com/lunation-rite/>

## Moving Forward

When I thought I had completed this Grimoire, I sent it to my friend Brian for a pre-read and he commented: “...*there is a piece missing for me to round out. Obviously, there are parts of this that you are taking with you forward... I am curious as to what practices you are taking with you now. What are you retaining from this time with the poison spirits?*”

This gave me pause... what did I take from this experience? What changed for me? I found I was resistant to examining the question because I hadn't yet processed the aftermath of my experience. I had to go back and do that before I could finish.

### Living Magic

First, it was useful for me to remember that I've been out of treatment now for five months. And part of me felt like I hadn't done much. Yet in that time, I did many things that were intensely magical, though not necessarily what's usually thought of as magic:

- My husband and I went away together to the Oregon coast to celebrate wellness and 30 years together. The trip was an act of magic for health, love, and the connection between us, which only strengthens over time
- We built a chicken coop and run with our own hands, which involved magic for protection, custodianship, and sovereignty.
- I built cinder block raised garden beds in an area of the yard that was all river rocks. This involved moving many, many rocks and bricks and working in the sun and with my hands in the earth. The entire process was magic for health and strength. The soil and seeds were blessed for prosperity and sustainability for the household.
- I went out into the world and invited the world in to connect with friends old and new. After many months of relative isolation during the height of my treatments, this was powerful magic for community and mutual thriving.
- I did work with and for my parents as they dealt with their own health stuff, in particular my mother's cancer diagnosis. My trip home and support of them was an intense magical act of love, recapitulation, and ancestral support / healing.
- I wrote this grimoire, which itself is an act of magic.

One of my goals during the year of my treatment was to integrate magic more tightly into my life. This was by necessity, as I only had so much energy to spare, but also because I felt that connecting my magic to the work of living was connecting me to life. That means that moving forward, magic is going to look a little different: more natural, more wholistic, more entwined.

### Living Health

I've also been thinking about the physical changes I need to make in my life to ensure my thriving and health ongoing. My Integrative Medicine Specialist recommended a book called *Anticancer: A New Way of Life* by David Servan-Schreiber.<sup>15</sup> She suggested it to me at the end of treatment and I only wish she'd done it sooner... like 10 years ago.

The book was written by a Western Medical Doctor – well entrenched in allopathy and materialist medicine – who looked further afield for help after his own cancer diagnosis, and it skillfully bridges the gap between oncological treatment and the terrain approach to health and healing. Suggestions for diet, exercise, meditation are obvious inclusions, but seeing the backing research for which things work best and where to focus your energy is incredibly useful. The evidence for breathing practice alone was eye opening. The author is gently critical of the reductionist approach to researching treatments and how science dismisses evidence in situ in living systems (particularly non-Western ones).

The book's approach was particularly useful for me because I knew I wanted to make changes, but I didn't want to get obsessive about it. Enjoying and loving life is another way to heal. Doing things that are good for us in a relaxed way that leaves room for pleasure is powerful magic. That's not always an easy balance to strike. Knowing where the biggest benefit is allows me to choose what to take into my own terrain.

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<sup>15</sup> David Servan Schreiber, *Anticancer - A New Way of Life* (Penguin Books, 2017).

### Living Spirit

After treatment ends, there's a period where you just want to relax and not worry or think about cancer ever again. But I know that the spirits left an imprint, not only on my physical body, but my energetic one. These are death spirits and while I didn't come as close to that final initiation as many do, I certainly came closer than I had before. Feeling the spirits kill cells in my body was a real, visceral, experience. Cancer cells, yes (the tumor shrank under my fingers as chemo progressed) but also blood cells, nerve endings, and mucus membranes.

In addition, there were many long nights after treatment when I was visited by another spirit, a specter of my own mortality. As an animist, ancestor-honoring Witch who believes in recycling, it's easy to say I don't fear death. And maybe I'm not as avoidant as some members of our death-hating and fearing Western world. When I speak with my grandmother, I know that she is waiting with love for my mother to join her and that someday they will both be waiting for me. That brings nothing but comfort. Yet I fear dying. I fear it because dying of cancer isn't how I'd prefer to die. I fear it because I still have lots of things on my to do list and it's not like me to not get shit done. Above all, I fear it because I love my life and the people in it. I love my family and friends. I love my work. I love the Peaceable Kingdom and the garden and the chickens.

### Just Plain Living

I have gained new perspective on what's important and just how enchanted the world really is. My magic has changed in both obvious and subtle ways. It's more integrated, more organic, and more balance and healing focused than ever before.

I'm not about to go all "Eat, Pray, Love" now that I've had cancer -- I don't need to blow up my life because my life was already awesome. But I would be remiss if I didn't examine the things I could do better: relax better, feel my feelings better, breathe better, connect better, enjoy better, *enchant* better.

Some of that is because I intend to continue living my best life. Some of that is because I intend to continue living for as long as I can.

These are the lessons of the poison path:

1. Gather your supports around you. Leverage all the help you can get.
2. Point your magic inward. Conserve your energy and your power for healing.
3. Determine that you are the exception to the bad and the rule that proves the good.
4. Amor fati and memento mori.

Choose joy

In-finitione

If you have been called to walk this path and you would like to talk with someone who knows it, please reach out to me: [ivy@circlethrice.com](mailto:ivy@circlethrice.com).

