

heart balm

By Stephanie Mee.

“Love is hard. Life is hard. But you must always remember that everything comes from within you.” - Tjokorda Rai

THERE is an old adage that says, “If you love someone, set them free”, which is a completely reasonable piece of advice, but one that is far easier said than done. Letting go of someone you care deeply for is never easy, and most of us, regardless of country of origin or culture, will do anything in our power to find and hold on to the people we love. While for some this may involve elaborate games of seduction, begging, pleading, or even throwing the occasional tantrum, others take a much more sinister approach.

In Bali, it is widely believed that skilled practitioners of black magic called *balian hitam* can make charms or potions that will cause even the hardest of hearts to crack. This type of magic is called *guna-guna*, and although it may sound innocent enough, any Balinese person will tell you that it is both very powerful and very dangerous. There are many consequences of using black magic to attract a mate . . . and the outcome is never certain.

The most common form of black magic used to possess another person's heart is a charm called *Juran Guyang*. To make it, you must secure a personal item from the person you desire. This could be a strand of hair, a scrap of fabric from their clothing, or even a bit of earth that the person has stepped on. Once you bring the item to the *balian*, he or she will infuse it with black energy so that it becomes a tool for luring in your

potential mate. The *Juran Guyang* then absorbs the soul of the victim and s/he becomes wildly attracted to you and unable to concentrate on anything else.

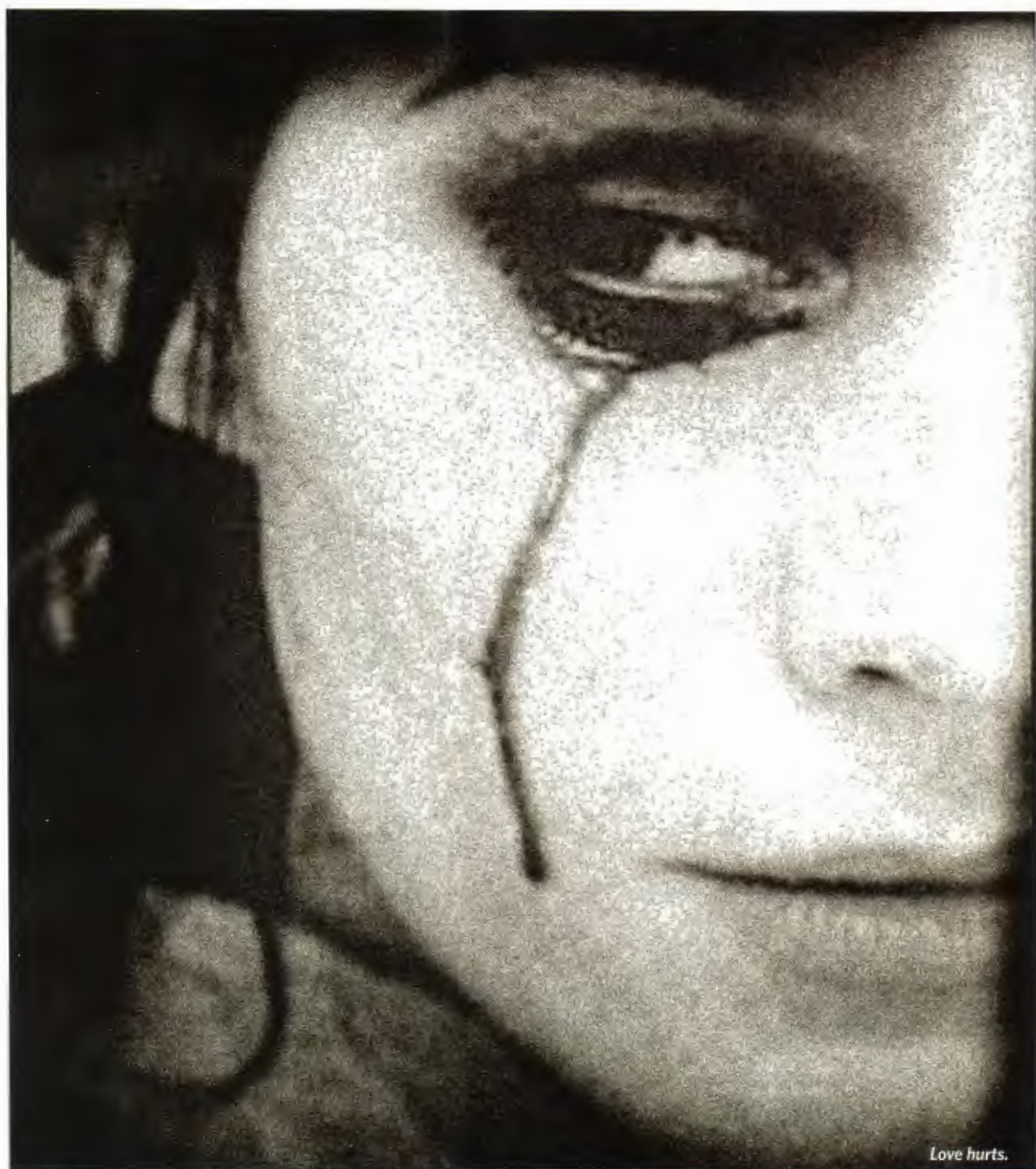
Another popular form of magic for conquering the heart is *Lengis Colek*, or 'love oil'. In this case, the *balian* infuses a vial of coconut oil with powerful black energy. All you need to do is dab the oil anywhere on your beloved's body and s/he will instantly fall in love with you. The effects are similar to those of *Juran Guyang*, however *Lengis Colek* has a much shorter shelf-life. After 42 days, the magic wears off, the soul returns to the body, and the victim forgets everything that took place during that period. With *Juran Guyang*, clients decide how long they want the magic to last, and can even extend that period if they so desire.

According to Wayan Tantra, a well-respected *balian* from Blahbatu, it is very easy to tell if someone has been trapped by *Juran Guyang* or *Lengis Colek*.

"It's like they are in a dream," he says.

"They have a vacant aura about them and their character is gone. They may not respond to what you are trying to tell them, or they may act violently when you tell them they have fallen victim to black magic. Everything to this person may seem like an illusion because they are not in control of their own soul."

The only way to heal someone who has been affected by this type of black magic is to enlist a *balian*



Love hurts.

who can use *penengen* (white magic) to fight the *pangiwa* (black magic) and return the soul to the victim's body.

"Black magic is always used to create problems, whereas white magic solves the problems. It is like surgery, where the black magic is the knife that cuts open the patient, and the white energy acts like the stitches that sew the body back together," Wayan Tantra says.

But, despite the healing power of white magic, the battle between good and evil is never easy.

"Fighting to return the *sukma* (soul) from a *balian hitam* is very difficult and can be dangerous," Wayan Tantra says.

"The *sukma* can become stuck and it might not be possible to get it back. It all depends on the power of the *balian*."

In the Western world there is a prevailing notion that it is usually women who resort to charms and potions to secure a mate. In Bali the opposite seems to be true.

"Ninety-nine-point-nine per cent of the time it is men who request *guna-guna* to possess women," says Wayan Tantra.

"Most of the time it is for revenge and power. A man may be obsessed with a woman, but instead of respecting her own free choice, he might choose to control her instead.

"Other times, the man may have been rejected by a woman and he just cannot accept it."

Although many people are aware of these particular forms of black magic, the topic is not always an easy one to broach. Octogenarian and prominent Singapadu healer, Tjokorda Rai, feels very strongly about *guna-guna*.

He says: "I'm not a healer who can do that and I don't help people with that. I don't want people to get revenge and I don't tell people about black magic.

"If people come to me I try to heal them and tell them they must find forgiveness. Love is hard. Life is hard. But you must always remember that everything comes from within you."

Tjokorda Rai touches on what is perhaps the biggest problem for many Balinese when it comes to *guna-guna*: it simply isn't natural and can create a huge karmic debt.

Wayan Tantra explains: "People who try to alter their life path with *guna-guna* become a slave of passion and find no happiness and no satisfaction in love or life.

"What you do comes back to you, so it is best to accept what happens in your life and give gratitude to the gods for what you do have rather than dwell on what you don't have."

To many Balinese, bad karma is not the only negative repercussion of using *guna-guna*. Firstly, the magic does not last forever, so those who want to prolong the effects must spend a great deal of money to extend the duration of the *Juran Guyang* or to make more *Lengis Colek*. If the effects wear off, the victim may come out of the trance and feel a strong hatred for the person who attempted to control them. Moreover, if a pregnancy happens while the soul is not in the body, many people believe that the resulting children could have serious imbalances such as mental and emotional problems.

When it comes to matters of love in Bali, the overwhelming consensus is that the best thing to do is find your balance, control your emotions, and have faith that everything will happen the way it is supposed to happen. It is better to fall back on self-control, meditation and prayer than to succumb to desire, such as lust and obsession. In fact, much of Balinese faith centres on controlling desire.

There is an ancient Javanese poem that describes the origins of human desire, called *Smaradahana*. In this poem, the god of love, Smara, makes the fatal mistake of shooting Lord Siwa with an arrow while Siwa is meditating. Enraged, Siwa transforms into a multi-headed demon and shoots fire at Smara, causing Smara to burst into flames. Smara's wife, the loyal Ratih, is so overcome with grief that she joins Smara in the fire. Their ashes permeate the air and all living creatures inadvertently consume them. From this point on, all living beings have different desires within them which must be controlled.

In Bali, this involves meditation and elaborate ceremonies such as *matatah*, or teeth filing.

Balinese Hindus believe that anger, lust, greed and jealousy are emotions that should be controlled from within. No matter how strong your desire for another person, or how hurt you are over the loss of a potential mate, *guna-guna* is not the answer.

"There is no medicine for love or a broken heart," Wayan Tantra says.

"You can meditate and pray, but going to the wrong type of healer for the wrong type of energy can cause problems."

Tjokorda Rai shares this sentiment and elaborates: "Everyone has a different way of thinking. It's up to you if you want to resort to black magic, but it is best to follow your life's natural path and live your life the best way that you can." 📄



Wayan Tantra.