

*Weaving the worlds together
through Story & the
Sacred Arts*



Spinning Gold

FIRST THREADS

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What is it to live an **enchanted** life?

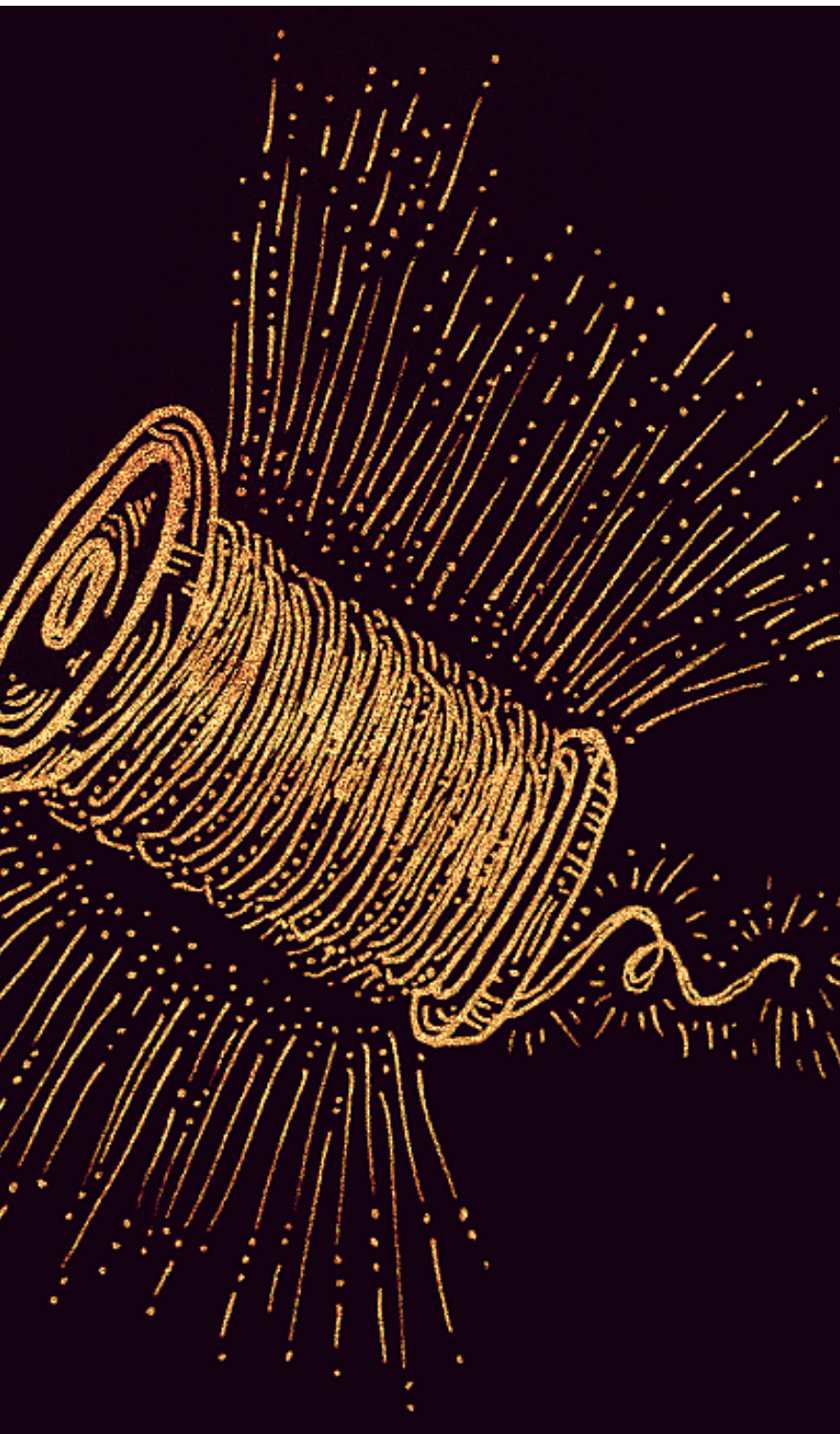
Magic works by drawing out and concentrating something that is already present in the materials. I am just calling forth the gold that is naturally in the straw.

- RUMPELSTILTSKIN TO
THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

Enchantment literally means to “sing into” or to “sing with”. To live an enchanted life is to hear, to respond, and most essentially to participate in the song of the cosmos. This is exactly what occurs in our tale when Rumpelstiltskin reveals how he finds the gold in the straw. It is the song of the straw, its whole life cycle related to the whole of all that is, to all of the lives and stories of the many creatures it touches...that is where the gold is, that is what enchantment allows you to see for real, here and now.

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Welcome to my little cottage in the woods! Allow me pour you a cup of tea or coffee. Won't you sit down and stay awhile? Listen to a story, share with a friend, write in your beloved journal, light a candle, take a journey of the imagination and explore effective practices that weave the deep transformational power of story and magic into your everyday life. Before we set out on our journey through other lands, we will need to gather the necessary provisions.

This *Spinning Gold: First Threads* guidebook is intended to introduce the greater *Spinning Gold: Living the Enchanted Life* course. I want to give you a taste of what you will find in the course, and offer practical advice about how to make the very best use of this guidebook. Whether or not you enroll in the course, my hope is that this guidebook will be of lasting benefit to you.

A central idea we will explore together in *Spinning Gold* is how fairy tales and other stories can not only be sources of inspiration, but also – and most importantly – sources of a living practice. *The Spinning Gold Guidebooks* are designed with this purpose in mind: they are built for use.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

The *Spinning Gold* course is composed of six “modules.” Each module spans two months. Why two months? The first month of each period is what I call the “implementation month.” It is not an “off” month during which time nothing happens. The function of the first month is to implement what you learn. Everyone is different. You need freedom and breathing space to metabolize and work with the tools and inspirations you find on the journey we are taking – in a way that suits you. Learning is a slow process, and is very particular to each person's total situation. Learning therefore rarely travels along straight line path from point A to B. During this time, to support your process especially during implementation months, you are always one step away from connecting with either me or a course caretaker.

As you can see, every module features a different story related to a theme or native power. For example:

MODULE I: SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

The Ballad of Tam Lin and the Power of Love

MODULE II: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

The Baba Yaga and the Power of Courage

MODULE III: JANUARY/FEBRUARY

Beauty and the Beast and the Power of Hope

MODULE IV: MARCH/APRIL

Sir Gawain and Lady Ragnelle and the Power of Justice

MODULE V: MAY/JUNE

Medea and the Power of Moderation

MODULE VI: JULY/AUGUST

The Book of Job and the Power of Wisdom



At the beginning of each two-month module period, a pdf of the guidebook will be made available to you by email for download. For example:

September 1st:	The Ballad of Tam Lin Guidebook available to you for download.
November 1st:	The Baba Yaga Guidebook available for download.
January 1st:	The Beauty and the Beast Guidebook available for download.
March 1st:	The Sir Gawain and Lady Ragnelle Guidebook available for download.
May 1st:	The Medea Guidebook available for download.
July 1st:	The Book of Job Guidebook available for download.

You will also be able to access each guidebook on a private classroom page for *Spinning Gold* on my website, brianasaussy.com. In each guidebook, you'll find links to your audio files with original retellings of the highlighted story, as well as an active imagination journey related to the story. You'll also discover what I call "three illuminations", small practices you can get started right away, practices that will garner big results. Each Guidebook contains other juicy tidbits as well for your learning pleasure. There is an essay, for example, which is an opportunity for deep learning, for us to explore together larger themes of value to the enchanted life.

This *First Threads* guidebook is designed to give you an idea of what the course guidebooks will look like. If you wish, take a moment to look at the table of contents. Once you receive the Guidebook, what do you do? How do you make use of it? The remaining part of this section is to give you a few pointers on how you might make the best use of this Guidebook.

Did you know that every module includes a **live group call**? This call is a **teaching call**, but it is also an opportunity for the *Spinning Gold* community to connect. All of the calls will be recorded and made available, just in case you are not able to make a call.

The live group call of each module will last from an hour and half to two hours. During this call, I will talk about the story or fairy tale, in order to draw out or educe some of the main points that I believe will be not only inspiring but useful for your practice and everyday life, points that have "cash value" – as the charming philosopher

William James once called it. Perhaps best of all, before each group call, you will also have an opportunity send me questions, and I encourage each and every one of you to make use of this opportunity.

Finally, I encourage you to take advantage of **one-on-one calls** - two for regular course enrollment. These calls will give us an opportunity to get to know each other - a connection so important for the kind of learning I know you want from this course.



Your course path

As you get comfortable with the course, here is my suggested itinerary through the landscape of Spinning Gold guidebooks and modules:

1

LISTEN TO THE STORY

And listen to it as many times as you like! But for your first time through, try listening to it without reading along. Listening is an easily overlooked practice that can open up the mind's ear, and helps open deep un-accessed parts of our soul. Listen with family, with children, with friends. After listening to story, read through text if you want to. And if inspired, tell your own version of the story.

2

CULTIVATE CALMNESS

Before doing active imagination, you may want to spend time with cultivating calmness practice, and/or the grounding centering anchoring practice (see "Three Illumination Practices"). If you already have a practice that allows you to become calm and still and grounded, then put that into play before doing active imagination.

3

TAKE A JOURNEY

When you are ready to do the active imagination journey, know that you need to set aside about fifteen to twenty minutes. You need to find a space in which you feel safe and undistracted. If you wish, you may bring with you whatever tools and supports you ordinarily might make use of – prayer beads, talismans, and the like. After concluding, make sure to drink plenty of water and eat nourishing food. Know that you can repeat the active imagination again, but no more than three times in a week. Take your time: there is no hurry. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong!

4

MAKE NOTES & ASK QUESTIONS

Now is the time you might want to turn to questions for self-reflection and discovery. I like to think of these questions as “Delphic questions.” They are your own private oracular questions you can make your own, questions that will lead to discovery and self-knowledge. The more energy we put into them, the more we will get out of it. The purpose of the questions is for each learner to get sense of what is happening in the inner landscape. You may sit and ponder them; or you might use your journal as a support. (You might want to read my post on keeping journals: <http://brianasaussy.com/how-to-keep-a-sacred-journal/>) Perhaps even an artistic medium calls to you. An effective way to explore this is through conversation: talk with a trusted friend or companion, discuss with other students in the forum, or take notes and save them for our group call sessions.

5

THREE ILLUMINATIONS

Perhaps the most important part of the course is putting what you learn into practice. That’s what I want most of all for you. The aim of this course is not abstract endless information accumulation, but to take insights you find in the stories and begin to weave them into your life. I hope you will take these practices and run with them – feel free to get creative and to add your own signature flourishes to them. If you want to see what difference practices makes, keep a journal and record what a week feels like when you do engage in these practices versus what a week feels like when you do not. You will be surprised at the difference!

6

READ THE ESSAY

The regular modules include an essay in which I expand on themes useful for what I call deep learning. I recommend you savor these essays during the implementation month. Or you might just choose to tuck it away for later, to save for one of those wonderful rare rainy days, when not much is happening, when things move a little more slowly, and you want to sit with a cup of tea and look at the larger side of things with me. On the other hand, maybe you are all about big picture side of things, and it may be one of the very first things you look to. Bottom line is that the essays deal with becoming conscious of the roots of our thinking and our practice. It is not essential that you agree with everything, and I hope you do not. But it is my conviction that the most effective life and practice on the path of enchantment requires that we open ourselves to a healthy challenge at the level of our most basic ways of thinking, a challenge which will certainly be one of your most vital and nourishing sources for cultivating and enchanted life and practice.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

For each module guidebook, I have included a short list of some of my favorite books and sources. Just as we have a lineage of ancestors, we all have a lineage of ideas at the roots of our life. The resources I have picked are intellectual and spiritual influences that have shaped my feeling, thinking and practice around the focus of each of the *Spinning Gold* modules. This list will give you a sense of where I'm coming from, but the items of the list also tend to be primary sources that I believe will be generally useful, especially for those of us interested in living the enchanted life. At bottom, my hope is that the short list of resources is also an occasion for you to reflect on your own sources of influence and to turn to your own personal library of favorites – what influences and delights you? Where do you find brilliance and awesome in the realm of writing and ideas? I hope in the coming months we can share these with each other.

Blessing for Lovers of Learning



Blessed One(s) in whom I live, move, and have my being. You have been called by many names: Daimon, Genius, Brilliance, Intelligence, but I know you as Wonder. As I embark on new discoveries and seek to increase my knowledge and wisdom hold me fast to your starry visage.

Remind me that learning is not measured by how much is known but rather by the quality and depth with which we know any one thing.

Call to my mind keen-eyed Attention and sharpened Discernment so that I am fully able to pierce through misleading illusions and see things as they truly are.

Teach me that wisdom begins not in having all of the answers but rather in asking the one needed question.

Help me remember that this journey is not one I must make on my own but that I am joined to a community of souls who have gone long before me and who will come long after I am gone, and that within this community it is safe not only to know, but safe also to admit when I do not know.

Fill me with Wonder, Blessed Ones keeping foremost in mind and heart, body and soul that it is not what I know but how I live within that knowledge that shows best who I truly am and all that I am capable of achieving..

These things I ask in the heavenly and blessed names, may it be so.



Listen to the spokentale

Rumpelstiltskin



The maiden was fair of face, plain of dress and had long hair as silken and lovely as flax.

Her speech was a bit rough and her manner definitely not of the high court, but she was, after all, a miller's daughter – what did I expect? When I found her she was sitting in a small room that had been filled with straw and she was weeping. They always wait until things are really not going well, then they call me.

Short, gnarled and bent like a stunted but strong oak, or a knobby hazel tree, I am a creature of the wild and the wood. Sure, I could do a glamour - play the part of handsome prince - but that would be cheating. My work is to use illusion to serve others, not myself...or at least not very much.

There she sat, crying and sniffing and smelling of straw. Waddling over I took her fair but work-hardened hand in my own.

Fair lady, why the tears? Why the sadness?

Her bottom lip stuck out petulantly and she sniffed.

*My life! My stupid father has forfeited my life!
Unless I can turn this straw into gold the King will
have my head!*

Of course I knew that wasn't the whole of the story. She had been questioned herself – can you do this? Turn straw into gold? She had nodded her assent too. It wasn't just her father's fault that she was in this fix. A spinning wheel sat in the center of the room, surrounded by yellow straw and the despondent girl. She had pretty hair: so soft and shiny. And her eyes were big and sad. I'm a sucker for big, sad eyes, so I almost told the truth to her right then and there – it was staring her in the face after all! – but I didn't. Truth must be discovered not forced upon somebody. Instead, I patted her shoulder.

Lovely mistress – I can help you accomplish this feat. But it will take some magic, and magic cannot be had for free.

Those big, sad, eyes narrowed in speculation.

I would be ever grateful for your assistance. But...I am afraid I am simply a poor country girl and have nothing to give.

(They always say this too). I came very close to asking for a lock of her hair – there is real power in that! But the gleam of a small gold ring caught my eye. It would do nicely.

Give me your golden ring and I shall set to work!

She took it off and handed it over with barely a moment's hesitation. She mentioned something about her mother and how this was one of the last items she had from that woman, but it was only a murmur – a whisper of calico on straw – and not of consequence. So I pocketed the ring, sat down and began my craft.

Spinning is all about finding that still point in the midst of motion. Magic is too. That is one reason why the two arts are so often found together. Magic works by drawing out in a clear and concentrated form something that was always there. Gold is in straw, all straw, so it was just a matter of finding it. The wheel turned. The spindle gleamed, and the room became lustrous with thousands of golden threads. The moon was not yet at its zenith when I was through with my task and the young girl was curled in a corner fast asleep.

I wanted to wake her, to show her what I had done and accomplished, but she looked so peaceful, so I simply vanished. Traipsing back to my knoll to do what any good magician does after a night of successful work: eat, drink, and make merry! I danced and laughed, and sang with my friends the ditty I had been known for:

*Gold and jewels, power and love, riches below
and heaven above. End to beginning, beginning
to end, when you need aid call on
Rumpelstiltskin!*

And then I tucked myself into my knoll and fell fast asleep. Thinking that I would never hear from or see the lovely lady again.

That was wrong.
For the very next night her distress brought me to a new room in the castle. This one was larger, filled with even more straw, and she was crying horribly, those deep racking sobs and shake the whole body.

I touched her head gently...that hair!..and whispered in her ear:

*The same task yet again, maiden? High highness
was not satisfied with my work?*

She shook her head, shrugging my hand off and turned red and puffy eyes to me.

*Too satisfied! He was utterly delighted with the
golden thread and so has assigned me yet
another room, larger this time! I am to be
finished with the spinning by sunup or I shall
be buried by sunset.*

And then she fell to her knees, clinging to me. *Can you, dear sir?*
Can you help me again?

I wanted to scream at her to look around...to see the answer so clearly surrounding her. But it was not my place. I sighed heavily and spied the silver necklace around her neck.

I shall help you fair lady, of course I can. But you must render payment before I begin. The necklace 'round your neck should do.

She bowed her head and my heart leapt! Was the price too much? Would she haggle? Beg? Try to trick me? If she did, well, then I could tell her! Tell her the truth! Or at least give her a riddle that would lead her to it, easy as pie! But...she didn't. No protest or plea came from her chapped lips. Instead she simply took off the chain and handed it to me. Resigned, maybe a little bit angry, but not willing to fight or make an effort for something held so dear.

The deal being struck, I was as bound by it as she was, so I sat down to my task and was done long before sunup – another room full of golden thread, another night passed alone, as the girl had fallen asleep. Admittedly there was not quite the spring in my step as I hurried home that night. I was sad at her lack of fire...and I had a sense I would see her again and soon.

Still, I was tired and drained, so dancing, laughing, playing my zither and singing my song – it nourished me, brought me back into myself, and allowed me to dream cleanly.

My premonition proved correct. On the third night of my acquaintance with the miller's daughter I found myself standing in a huge room, and it was filled floor to ceiling with yellow straw. I sneezed. This time there were no tears, no pretense, and no small talk. She went right to the point.

Little man. You have done me a great service. For his highness the King is so delighted with me and my skill that he has promised me his hand in marriage after I spin all of the straw in this room into golden thread. He will never ask it of me again. I know you can do this so name your price.

There was a cold gleam in her eye that I did not like. It made me yearn for the scent of rich black earth and the sturdy walls of my little tree.

Why would she wish to marry a man who clearly only cared for gold? Why would she agree? I will never understand the human heart. And there was the matter of the price. If what she said was true, and I knew it was, then this was the last chance I had to show her what was real and true. I would have to ask for something so precious, so dear, that she would never part with it without a fight. So I pondered, thought about it, looked her up and down, and then spoke with care.

I can do this work for you and will, gladly. The price tonight is the first child you shall have with the King. Are we agreed?

To be fair to her, there was a pause. A thought, an immediate response of No. But then I saw her blue eyes move back and forth in calculation. She was silent but I could see by the set of her shoulders, the carriage of her breast, that my ruse had failed.

Fine then, you wicked man, have it you shall!

I wanted to give her an out. What did I want....or need...with a baby.

Why hadn't she tried to bargain? To argue? To ask for another way? I could not give her the truth so I simply turned to my work and said:

You can break the deal and free yourself from the vow IF you discover my true name.

Oh she tried. All night she tried. Tom, Dick, Harry, Joe, George, Jeff, and Perry...but it was of no use to her. Straw became gold and the room began to glow. Right before she fell asleep she glanced out of the corner of her eye and asked me how I did it.

What do you mean, how do I do it? Do you mean how does the magic work? She nodded.

Magic works by drawing out and concentrating something that is already present in the materials. I am just calling forth the gold that is naturally in the straw.

She yawned and shook her head. *There is no gold in straw, you foolish little man. I shall find your name yet and become queen of everything.* And with that, she fell asleep.

As I spun the straw I shook my head and called out the gold...the tiny seeds that had started the life of this plant, blowing in the breeze, scattered by a good farmer's hand into turned up soil—there was gold.

The spring sun shining down on the field, cool rain washing through the layers of rock and soil to nourish and soften the seed so that it might yield its first tiny green shoots – there was the gold. The tiny and tender green starters, some of which would grow to a full matured plant but others that would feed the plump rabbits and sleek mice, who in turn would bear young and live life so that owls could fly under the moon, hawks could fly under the sun, and the wolves that lived in the forest could feed their young pups– there was gold.

The plant grew—I saw it as I sat and spun –
growing tall and graceful like a sylph. Waving
its green hands in the heady winds of July,
providing shelter for young lovers who would
kiss and bare their bodies to one another,
creating new life between them, providing a
place of play for rosy-cheeked children and
rabbits, and mice, and all of the song birds –
there was the gold. Then I saw the silver
sickle, slashing through the brittle stalks that
had grown golden through the summer heat.
Clouds heavy and gray promised rain and the
plant gave its life so that the horses, and the
cows, the pigs, and the lambs would have
food and bedding throughout the cold winter
—whoever would say gold is not in straw
such as this?

It made me sad that she would never know
the truth, that I had never even had the
chance to test her with the riddle.

That the yellow gold now filling the room was
more precious to her than the deeper gold
found in all straw, all creation. I shambled away
once the work was done, never knowing that
she secretly followed me, watching my caper,
and that she would, a year later, use it against
me.

But I remember the day I came to collect her
first born child. For I was as bound by the deal
we had struck as she was. And I remember
being relieved when she look at my through
narrowed eyes and spitefully spat out my true
name— freeing both of us from a deal we had
never wanted in the first place.

I still walk the fields every Autumn, right before
harvest. I guess you could say I have an affinity
for straw now. I touch it and sing to it in the
way I know.

*Gold and jewels, power and love,
riches below and heaven above.
End to beginning, beginning to end,
when you need aid call on Rumpelstiltskin!*



Listen to this journey



active
imagination

JOURNEY

Working with the Fates

Begin by cultivating calmness. Ground and center in the ways that work best for you or use your current anchor.

Breathe in a blessing on your physical body. Exhale in gratitude. Thank you.

Breathe in a blessing on the land where you live and all of the creatures, seen and unseen, that make it up... Thank you.

Breathe in a blessing on your beloveds, those who bring a smile to your face and softness to your heart... Thank you.

Breathe in a blessing on the path that you walk and the many ways that you walk it. Thank you.

Affirm and acknowledge that you are at a crossroads. Not just any crossroads but the place where our waking world comes into contact with the Otherworld. A place in between time and space – limitless and absolute.

See, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel that while you stand in the center of this crossroads there is a road running to the north, moving through a vast forest and then ascending into a great mountain range.

A second road runs to the East into a verdant green meadow with a Dawn-filled sky.

A third road runs into the South into an orchard full of trees, heavy with fruit under a brilliant noon day sun.

And a final road runs to the West, into a land of mists and the deep ocean.

Take a moment to orient yourself, noting which road runs behind you and which road runs before you.

See, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel the presence of three hooded figures surrounding you as you stand at center. Called by many names, you recognize these hooded figures for exactly what they are: the Three Fates, sisters that are understood to measure, weave, and finally cut the fabric of your life into a one of a kind tapestry.

Look down into the palm of your own hand and see, sense, touch, know, hear and feel the presence of a spool of shining gold thread. As you look at the spool of thread the three figures move apart and you are able to see, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel the presence of a great tapestry – a weaving that shows the story of your life up until this point.



Affirm and acknowledge that this weaving is connected to many others that have gone before it – each one depicting the story of one of your ancestors, those who come before you. Affirm and acknowledge too that your weaving is connected to many others that come after it, whose stories are not yet written. These are the tapestries of your descendants, those whose lives are touched by your own and who live further down in time.

Take a few moments to see, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel how the tapestries are connected to one another forming a cosmos, a sky full of stars.

As you are ready, return your attention to your own tapestry. Allow yourself some time to truly see, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel the tale that has been written thus far: your successes and triumphs, your brilliant moments, your failures and mistakes, your adventures, love stories, and places of hurt are all reflected here. Give yourself a few moments to take it all in.

Becoming aware once again of the spool of golden thread in your hand. See, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel the invitation for you to decide where you will weave gold into your story, where you would like your life to be touched by enchantment. Affirm and acknowledge that the weaving of gold into your life is not accomplished with needle and loom, but rather through the choices you make, the relationships you participate in, and the way you live.

See, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel that true enchantment is the ability to see clearly and to respond deeply to what you observe. As you meditate on this, see, sense, touch, know, hear, and feel the question asked: where is the true gold in your life waiting to be seen?

Take some time to reflect on this question and the answers that come to you.

As you are ready, prepare to depart from the crossroads at this time, knowing that you may always return.

Breathe in a blessing on the path that you walk and the many ways that you walk it. Thank you.

Breathe in a blessing on your beloveds, those who bring a smile to your face and softness to your heart... Thank you.

Breathe in a blessing on the land where you live and all of the creatures, seen and unseen, that make it up... Thank you.

Breathe in a blessing on your physical body. Exhale in gratitude. Thank you.

On your next in-breath bring your awareness back to the room that you are in. Feel the weight of the air upon your skin. Allow yourself to stretch and move in any ways that feel good and useful.

Please remember to engage in proper after-care actions such as drinking more water than usual, eating meat and/or root vegetables, and paying close attention to your dreams for the next several nights.

DELPHIC QUESTIONS FOR SELF- DISCOVERY

Instructions: Take one question, miracle, whichever one appeals to you, forget about the others, and sit with it. Strike up a conversation with someone, write about it, find other ways to work through them. But making one or all of these questions your very own questions will bring lasting benefits. Cherish the time you have for self-reflection and self-knowledge.



What did I think
“enchantment” was
before this Guidebook?



Where do I see the Miller’s
Daughter in my own life?



What would real enchantment
look like in my life, here and
now?



After listening to the story
of Rumpelstiltskin, what
does enchantment appear
to be now? How does
Rumpelstiltskin challenge
my ideas of magic and
enchantment?



Imagine that our lives are
like great tapestries –
weavings that show the story
of life up until this point.
What does your tapestry look
like? What is your story?



Where might the true
gold in my life be hidden,
just waiting to be seen?



What are my true native
powers and where do I see
them working in my life?



three ILLUMINATIONS

1 Cultivating Calmness

This practice is one of the cornerstones of my own personal practice. Some would call it a meditation, but you don't have to use that language. It is simply a way of turning your attention inward so that you are in attunement with who actually you and where you are right here and right now.



Listen to this practice #1

#2

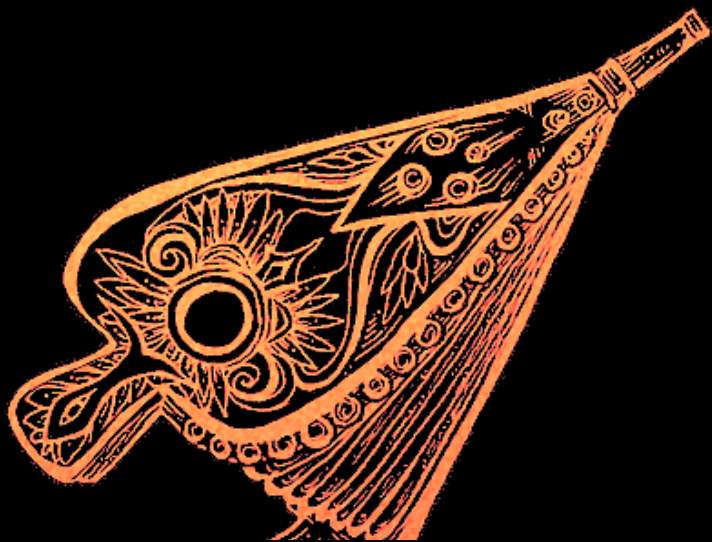
#3

2 Grounding & Centering

This has been taught by magical and sacred arts teachers for years. My version is a bit different as its goal is to connect and attune you with the place where you live right here and now.



Listen to this practice



three ILLUMINATIONS

3 Finding the Gold

Devotional Candle Recipe – Fixing, blessing, and setting devotional candles is one of my favorite sacred arts acts. The following is a recipe inspired by what we learn in Rumpelstiltskin. You will need:

A devotional or vigil candle of some kind. My personal preference is a beeswax glass encased candle with a cotton wick, but really any glass encased candle will do. You could even use a pillar or taper candle if that suits better. In which case apply the herbs to the entirety of the candle and do not leave it burning unattended, since herbs on pillar and taper candles are more likely to catch and start a fire.

An herb that you associate with clear vision – I use Mesquite Tree (*Prosopis glandulosa*) leaves as they are local to my area, eye-shaped, and used in herbal medicine to treat issues with the eye. Other good choices include eyebright or rue.

An herb that you associate with focus and concentration – I use a blend of Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*) for this.

A root that you associate with patience, endurance, power, and blessings – I use Angelica Root (*Angelica archangelica*).

A root or herb that you associate with magic – I use Solomon's Seal Root (*Polygonatum multiflorum*).

A clear quartz crystal point either affixed to the top of the candle (in the case of a glass encased or pillar candle) or set next to the candle if using a taper candle.

A small amount of olive oil for drizzling over or anointing the candle.

The following petition (or you can adapt and write your own):



THE PETITION:

Blessed One(s) in whom I live, move, breathe, and have my being. With your blessing I see clearly, may it be so. With your blessing I speak truly, may it be so.

With your blessing I have many ways to transform all that needs transforming into something more whole, holy, and health, may it be so. As Above, So Below, As Within, So Without. It is done.

THE PROCESS:

I recommend you begin this rite by cultivating calmness and grounding and centering. If you have performed the Active Imagination journey, the ceremony will have more weight but if you have not do not worry, you can still do this part.

Dress the candle with the dried herbs and then add the root pieces. Remember that when it comes to candle dressing less is more.

Anoint the candle with olive oil. If you are working with a glass encased candle simply take a dropper full of oil and drop it over the top of the candle. If you are working with a pillar or taper candle then anoint it with the oil.

Write the above petition out on a piece of paper and set the candle on top of the petition. (Please practice all practical fire safety precautions).

Breathe over the candle (note that the candle is not yet lit).

Read the words of your petition over the candle. When you have finished place one hand, palm down over the candle and with your other hand gently knock the palm down hand, just a nudge will do. (We are literally knocking the intention into the candle).

Light the candle.

Allow the candle to burn completely – this will take different amounts of time depending on the candle used.

Perform a concluding divination if you so desire.

Dispose of ritual remains at a crossroads. If using a glass encased candle please recycle.



Blessed be our broken places

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

We don't need to look very far to find broken lands and broken people. Your window and your mirror will do just fine. I know. I know it isn't popular or socially correct to say that. Perhaps to claim it about the land is fine – few would disagree that our lands are broken in a number of ways. But to write it, to think it, to say it about you, about me, about us? Not so much. For we are told in countless ways that we are perfect exactly as we are, that nothing needs to change, that there is love and light and peace. We are also told the opposite in a confusing move – that we can be/act/do/look better – that this guru or that program will make the difference, that as soon as we break six or seven figures or can once again slide into the smaller size of jeans (size zero!) everything will be just right.

We are told we have everything we need except for this one thing. We are told we are full, and then we are told we are hungry; but rarely are we told the truth – that our blithe declarations of “I'm great just the way I am!” and our socially sanctioned discontent with self and situation, cover up an inner terrain that is fractured, separated, and broken. Much like land everywhere – the fracture lines are not always easy to spot. Vegetation might thrive, animals may be present, but dig a little deeper and you will find it: scarred and wounded lands, scarred and wounded souls.

This is not a hypothetical statement. As a sacred artist I work with tools like Tarot cards, and a funny thing happens when you are holding a deck of tarot cards and offering to read for someone. You get told everything. I'm privy to stories no one else hears, not the priest, the therapist, or the lover. I'm perceived as strange enough to be safe. And though the stories are as different as the terrain in South Central Texas is from South Central Canada, the underlying story is always the same and carried on words like these: “please help me, I'm afraid. I'm alone. I feel lost. I feel hopeless. I'm missing a piece, If only I had X.” And, most poignant of all: “Will it ever get better?”

The good news is that it can get better, absolutely and unequivocally, but not until we see what we are working with, not until we look the situation head-on and call it for what it is. We are each in big and little ways broken. Those who do speak out about feeling that they and their world are fractured and fragmented in deep ways are often shamed into silence. But I hear their cries, coming straight from the heart, and it is the kind of thing that once heard cannot be unheard. Instead, I have dedicated much of my life and work to hearing this cry as clearly as possible, to understanding it, locating its origin points, tracing out its tracks across soul and sands and most essentially of all, helping each person I come into contact with find the medicines that might begin to repair and restore. One of the doors that consistently opens up and out into the wild woods and all of the good medicines found within them is the door of story, and those who open it are story tellers.

In my practice, once the initial situation is laid out and articulated in the best way possible, I then ask whomever I am working with to tell me their story. And this is where I started picking up the scent trail of one of the origin points for our sense of brokenness but also a potent medicine - story. For when I first ask someone to tell me their story they are often a little startled, like a bird that I have flushed out of a tree. They often stumble over their words, stop making eye contact, pull physically back. But then, once they do start talking, they tell me just a tiny tale, just enough to fill in the blanks, to get me to pull some cards.

But if I ask that same person to tell me a story about something that they see in the cards, something that the card reminds them of and holds out as a possibility...well! Grab the edges of your seat and get ready, because once we start telling stories we really don't know how to stop. It reminds me of nothing as much as wandering through a desert and being so thirsty that, when you finally find water, you will just drink until it makes you sick.

“Narrative loss” is now a term that has made it into the therapy office and mental health clinic. Once upon a time, narrative loss, which is really a way of saying loss of a whole sense of one's self and one's story, was something that those touched by extreme trauma and violence experienced. The idea was that events had to conspire and be pretty severe to fracture our sense of self. Now-a-days most people cannot tell a story about themselves easily or fluidly. It is not because we are no longer natural storytellers and it is not because digital media and high-resolution images have taken over the written word –those are symptoms of a greater problem. We cannot tell our stories because our sense of self is not whole, not intact. But, joyfully, that does not mean that we cannot tell stories period – we love to tell stories and even more than that we love to hear stories.

Both sides of my family are healers – some are healers of physical trauma working within the parameters of Western medicine and some of inner trauma working within parameters much older. But what I have learned is that trauma is trauma is trauma, and likewise healing is healing is healing; and all healers, no matter their method or approach, tell wonderful stories, hilarious stories, heart breaking stories, stories that carry medicine.

When I started to see firsthand how we as a people have lost our sense of story, I knew I was getting closer to the origin point of our sense of brokenness. I knew I was on the right track too because we take the same approach to broken places. A steward who cares for land, no matter what their training or connection to the place is, knows that you always start by listening, because wounded land tells a story, not just of what went wrong but of what has been, and what could once again, be right.

In healing traditions the world over there is a saying – the curse contains the cure. If the curse that has fallen over us was an inability to tell, to know, our stories, then perhaps the cure could be found in the stories themselves. The only way to find out for sure would be to start telling some stories. I'll also admit to some inside knowledge that influenced my thinking. I knew firsthand the kind of medicine that story could carry. Born with a severe birth defect that threatened my life and would impair my ability to speak, I was raised on stories and tales – the ones that you know, many that were taken from the lives of my family members and embroidered and embellished into durable fabric, and a number of tales whose origins have been, mostly, lost.

So I started out small. I would tell little stories to my students and clients – stories about things that had happened to me, stories about different places I had lived or my student had lives, stories about things I saw or found, stories about animals I talked to and what they said in return.

And, as is the tradition for people no matter who they are or where they are from, as soon as I told a story to whomever I was talking, they would respond with their own story, so that within out time together we would have several tales, tied together like medicine bundles, like prayer flags, and we would both walk away a little more whole and a little less broken. I really think it is the first unwritten rule of social relationships – if you tell me a story I will tell you one; it's only polite.

I noticed too that the people I talked with moved in their stories from what was farther away to what was closest to them – so that a person wouldn't start out by telling me about their ailing mother and their relationship to her and how they loved sitting on the porch in mid July and shelling green peas with her and how hurt they were and never understood when she married that good for nothing second husband – but they would, over time, talk about the Empress in the tarot card and tell me about her family, and they would talk about how they like to grow peas in their garden today, and they would tell me about how they have dreams of their mother's second husband and make up a story about what he is doing right now. It is only after all of those stories that we could get to the core of it: what do I say and how can I be in right relationship to my sick mother? And even more than that: how do I come back into right relationship with myself? The curse contains the cure. We may not be able to tell our stories, but we can still tell stories, and we can also listen to them. There is hope.

Within my family there is another understanding
that is helpful. Our broken places hold our blessings.
My people do not mean this in some namby-pamby
way along the lines of your stubbornness is really an
opportunity for growth. No, they mean it quite
literally. The person who is blind or has occluded
outer vision most likely has the inner sight. The
person who comes in with impaired speech
becomes gifted with inner Voice. The one who is
born with that extra chromosome possesses more
wisdom in their little finger than many learned ones.
I have watched this play out in a thousand ways and
over thousands of lives, mine included, and I'm
convinced. Wherever you feel most broken –that is
where you will find deepest blessing. I see it
reflected too in land and creatures, rocks and roots.
Healing, wholeness, and holiness are not found by
ignoring the wound, looking over the scar,
pretending everything is fine. They are found rather
by facing it head on and asking: what are you trying
to tell me? Then, if we are wise, we will sit back on
our heels and listen:

*it all began once
upon a time...*



Further Exploration

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.* New York: Knopf, 1976. Print.

If you haven't heard of this author or book, definitely check this one out. Bruno Bettelheim is one of the first thinkers to take fairy tales seriously and rescue them from the nursery in a rigorous and systematic way. Following in the footsteps of the Freudian tradition, many specific claims may or may not hold water; but Bettelheim's most fundamental and important idea, as it seems to me, is exactly right. Fairy tales possess a psychological and therapeutic medicine beneficial even for adults, and as such, have a much needed, vital relevance for the modern world.

Joyce, Graham. *The Limits of Enchantment: A Novel.* New York: Atria, 2005. Print.

Whenever we embark on a course of learning, it is especially important to nourish ourselves with beautiful images and words. Well, here is one for you. This novel raises important questions for those of us interested in living an enchanted life. An enchanted way of living – one that has been isolated – coming into contact with the modern world and all of its disenchantments. Fascinating aspects of British folklore and cunning magic come into play in this stunning work.

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Monsters and the Critics: And Other Essays.* London: HarperCollins, 1997. Print.

Best known for *The Lord of The Rings*, Tolkien was a brilliant folklorist and scholar in his own right. He brings such a light and masterful touch to the topic of fairy tales in this work (see Chapter Four: On Fairy-Stories), and he gives one of the best arguments I've come across for escapism: why escapism matters and why it should be practiced regularly!



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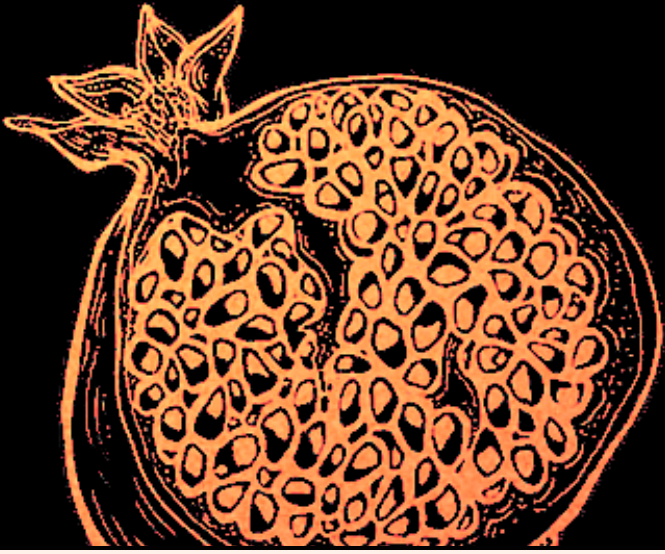
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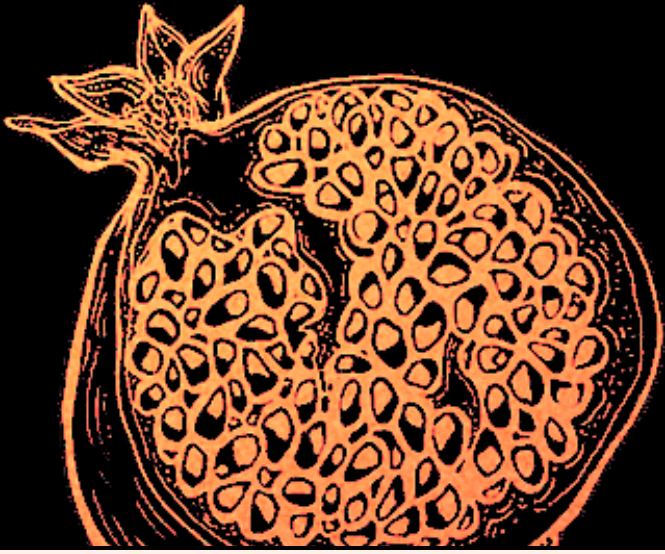


Briana Saussy

Hi, I'm Briana, often called Bri. I am a **writer** and **teacher** working within the **Sacred Arts** and on behalf of **Soulful Seekers** all over the world.

Whether I am reading **Tarot cards**, casting **Astrology charts**, teaching my community how to **spin gold** or **making magic**, the point of all of my work is to cultivate a deeper sense of healing, wholeness, and holiness on an individual and global level.

My first book: *Making Magic: Weaving Together the Everyday and the Extraordinary* will be published by Sounds True in Spring 2019.



course

CARETAKERS

One of the most unique aspects of Spinning Gold are the guardians who hold the space for the community that has formed and that continued to expand around this program. Spinning Gold caretakers have all worked with Briana and know and understand her approach intimately. They each bring their own gifts, practices, and orientations to our bounteous table offering love, support, and guidance whenever and wherever it is needed.



David Saussy

David is a lover of learning. He has worked as a professional librarian, high school teacher, and facilitator and organizer for adult seminars on classical books and primary texts from around the world. He plays a mean saxophone, glorious piano, makes magic with his favored materials of paper and charcoal, and can be often be found asking a question that really matters.

Cassandra Oswald

Cassandra is an artist and student of the land & the mantic arts, presently immersed in the study of place, ways of seeing, as well as graduate studies in art therapy. She works in ink, paint and wood to illuminate manuscripts, draft maps and illustrate tales both tiny and mighty, including the ones you'll encounter with *Spinning Gold*!



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*We offer four enrollment options upon registration.**

OPTION 1: ONE-TIME PAYMENT OF \$1,000

Includes The Spinning Gold Masterbook PDF with linked Master Table of Contents, access to individual guidebooks, access to Teaching Calls, Guest Teacher and Resource Library, two one-on-one calls with Briana over the course of the year, and participation in the private Spinning Gold forum.

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Receive Six Module Guidebooks during the course of the year, access to Teaching Calls, Guest Teacher and Resource Library, schedule two one-on-one calls with Briana over the course of the year, and participation in the private Spinning Gold forum. Upon completion of the course, students will have option to download The Spinning Gold Masterbook, the Spinning Gold course including First Threads in a convenient single document.

OPTION 4: SELF-STUDY COURSE: 1 PAYMENT OF \$250

Receive The Spinning Gold Masterbook PDF course in a single downloadable PDF document, with a linked master table of contents for each section. The Self-Study option includes audios of stories and active imagination journey.

Please Note: This option does not include access to the Six Group Teaching calls, two one-on-one personal conferences with Briana, or access to the private forum and Guest Teachers and Resource Library. If you should decide at a later time - for example next year - that you would like the support and benefit of conferences with me, my teachings and the community, you are welcome to enroll in the course, less the amount of the Self-Study course.

**Payments are processed through Gumroad and/or Paypal. Registration is available August 7th. Course begins September 1st and runs through the end of August of the following year.*