

Madam Mombi presents
SUPERSTITIONS & COTTAGE MYTHS



EMPTY ROOM STUDIOS
P U B L I S H I N G



MADAM MOMBI PRESENTS: SUPERSTITIONS + COTTAGE MYTHS

HELLO DEARIES,

I BE MADAM MOMBI, COTTAGE WITCH,
SOOTHSAYER, STORYTELLER, AND YER
GUIDE TO ALL THINGS MAGICAL AND
ARCANE.

I WANT TO TELL YE ABOUT SOME
SUPERSTITIONS AND SUCH ME PICKED UP
AROUND THEE'S PARTS. ALL KINDS OF
THINGS THESE COMMON FOLK BELIEVE IN
AND GUARD AGAINST. BE A RIGHT FOOL
TO THINK ALL OF UM BE TRUE, BUT THAT'S
YOUR BUSINESS.

SO, HAVE A GANDER AND LISTEN CLOSE,
AS YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN SOME OF
THIS KNOWLEDGE BE COMING IN HANDY.
AND YOU DON'T WANT TO BE
ADVENTURIN' AND STUMBLE IN ON A
VILLAGE AND GO PISSIN' ALL THE FOLKS
OFF BY BREAKING SOME CUSTOM, DO
YINS?

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION AND THINKS HARD
BEFORE TRYING TO FOLLOW ALL THESE,
AND I'LL SEE YOU NEXT TIME I'M
AROUND THESE PARTS WITH SOME GOOD
OLE ADVICE FOR YA.

MADAM MOMBI



Madam Mombi Presents: Superstitions & Cottage Myths is a role-playing aid offering various ancient superstitions and customs for you to use in your fantasy game. These myths can be used as local customs, character beliefs, adventure plots, and anything else you can come up with. We hope this product is the beginning of a series of products that helps add useful and obscure information to add depth to your fantasy games.

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Empty Room Studios Publishing
Written by: Rick Hershey
with additional help by Fanny D. Bergen

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<http://www.tangledmuse.com> or email at
info@emptyroomstudios.com

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CHAPTER I.

BABYHOOD.

1. Monday's child is fair of face, Tuesday's child is full of grace, Wednesday's child is sour and sad, Thursday's child is merry and glad, Friday's child is loving and giving, Saturday's child must work for a living; But the child that is born on the Sabbath day is blithe and bonny, good and gay.

(Some put it, Sunday's child shall never know want.)

2. He who is born on New Year's morn Will have his own way as sure as you're born.

3. Thursday has one lucky hour, just before sunrise, for birth.

4. An open hand in a baby is a sign of a generous disposition, but a habit of closing the fingers indicates avarice, or, as we say, closefistedness.

5. If a child "favors its father," it is good luck for it. It will get on well in the world.

6. A baby that has two crowns will live in two continents or kingdoms.

7. A double crown on the head means that the owner will "break bread in two kingdoms."

8. Take the baby first into the sunlight on Sunday. Put it into short clothes and make all changes on that day.

9. To make a child rise in the world, carry it upstairs (or to the attic) first.

10. The baby must go upstairs before it goes downstairs, or it will never rise in the world.

11. To be a bright baby, it must go up before it is carried down, and it must be bumped to the attic roof for luck.

12. A young baby was taken up a short step-ladder by its nurse before being for the first time carried downstairs lest it should die before it was a year old.

13. A child will have a nature and disposition similar to that of the person who first takes him out of doors.

14. Let the baby have or touch the thing he starts after on taking the first step, and he will always get what he wishes. If it be the moon, then let him touch something light, on which its light shines.

15. When taking the child into your arms for the first time, make a good wish for him; if you give him his full name and he opens his eyes and looks at you (answers to his name), it is good luck.

16. To be a bright baby, it must fall out of the crib before it is eleven months old.

17. If a baby does not fall out of bed, it will be a fool.

18. To drink water out of a bucket which is being carried on a child's head stops its growth.

19. To step over a young child stops its growing.

20. Pass a baby through a window and it will never grow.

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21. Do not go for the first time into the room where the infant is without removing the veil and gloves.

22. If the "cradle cap" of a baby be combed with a (fine?) tooth comb, the child will be blind.

23. Hold a baby to a looking-glass, he will die before he completes his first year.

24. When it is first dressed put the clothes on over the feet instead of the head for good luck.

25. Always give a baby salt before it tastes aught else. The child will not choke, and in general it is a good thing to do.

26. If a child cries at birth and lifts up one hand, he is born to command.

27. If the baby smiles in its sleep, it is talking with ghosts.

28. If a baby yawns, the sign of the church should be made over it that the evil spirit may not enter.

29. First a daughter, then a son, The world is well begun. First a son, then a daughter, Trouble follows after.

30. First a son, then a daughter, You've begun just as you oughter.

31. To rock the cradle when the baby is not in it will kill it.

32. The first time a baby is taken visiting, if it is laid on a married couple's bed there will be a baby for that couple.

33. The mother who gives away all the clothes of her dead baby will eventually be comforted by the coming of another child.

34. However many children a woman may have, the last will be of the same gender as the first, and they will look alike.

35. One article of an unborn infant's wardrobe must be left unmade or unbought or the child is liable not to live.

36. A baby's nails must not be cut with scissors before it is a year old; it will make it steal.

37. To cut a baby's finger-nails deforms it; if the baby is a month old, to do this will cause the child to have fits.

38. Tickling a baby causes stuttering.

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CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD.

1. A child to whom is told any story which he considers remarkable will usually reply by an expression of skepticism, such as: "Really and truly?" "Honestly?" "Earnest, now?" or, "You are fooling." The first speaker answers by some formula or asseveration, as, "Honor bright" ; "Deed, deed, and double deed" ; "True as I live," or, "Hope I'll die if it isn't so," or simply, "Hope I'll die."

2. In asseveration, the proper method is to use the words, "Hope to die if I don't," the speaker drawing the forefinger across the throat from ear to ear.

3. Asseveration is often made by the following formula. First boy: "Honor bright?" Second boy: "Hope to die." First boy: "Cut your throat?" Second boy draws finger across throat. This is the strongest possible form of oath that can be taken by a boy.

4. Little girls, without any idea of the meaning, employ the following formula of asseveration:--

Certain, true, Black and blue.

A variant of the first line: "Certain and true."

5. A form fuller than the preceding:--

Certain, true, Black and blue, Lay me down and cut me in two.

6. A boy who desires to tell an extravagant story without being guilty of a lie would point with his thumb over his left shoulder. If he should succeed in accomplishing this without the observation of the boy to whom he is talking, so much the better.

7. "In my school-days, if a boy crossed his fingers, elbows, and legs, though the act might not be noticed by the companion accosted, no blame was attached to the falsehood."

8. A formula for making a false statement: "As true as I lie here," said, as one fools, gives free scope to white lies.

9. An imprecation of children against disloyalty:--

Tell tale tit, Your tongue shall be slit, And every dog in our town It shall have a bit.

10. Put a mark upon a paper for every bow you get, and when you have one hundred bury the paper and wish. When the paper is decayed you will find your wish in its place.

11. If two persons, while walking, divide so as to pass an obstruction one on one side and one on the other, they will quarrel. Children avert this catastrophe by exclaiming, "bread and butter," which is a counter charm. On the other hand, if they say "pepper and salt," the quarrel is made doubly certain. So universal is the practice that many grown people of the best social class (women) still involuntarily avoid such separation, and even use the childish words. In country towns, when girls are walking with young men, if the latter pass on the other side of the tree it is considered as rude, and as a token of indifference; in such a case one girl will cast a meaning look on her companion as much as to say, "he does not care for you."

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12. In passing a tree in the middle of the sidewalk, children used to pass it on one side going one way and on the other side going the other way for luck.

13. The stars are faery' eyes.

14. "As a child, I constantly looked into lilies and tulips in the expectation of finding fairies lying within them."

15. The children used to fearfully look in the well, and on seeing the reflected face in the bottom, would cry out, "Face in the well, pull me down in the well," and would then run away quickly.

16. Stick your thumb through a knothole and say:--

Old Gran'f'ther Graybeard, without toots or tongue, If you'll give me a little finger I'll give you a thumb. Thumb'll go away and little finger'll come.

17. Go to the woodpile and say, "Johnnie with your fingers, and Willie with your toes," and something (suthin) will come out of the woodpile and tear off all your clothes (close).

18. Children believe it is unlucky to step on the cracks in the flagstones, which are believed to contain poison. It is a game to walk a long distance on such stones without setting foot on the interstices.

19. When children are tired of swinging, or think it is time for the swinger to give way to another, the phrase is "let the old cat die." After this has been said, it is unlucky to quicken the motion of the swing again.

20. When a child loses a tooth, if the tongue is not put into the cavity a gold tooth will come in place of it.

21. An old superstition which still survives among children is, that if they crawl over an older person and do not crawl back they will never grow again.

22. Boys believe that they can prevent the stitch in the side which is liable to be induced by running, by means of holding a pebble under the tongue. "I believe I could run all day, and not get tired, if I could hold a pebble under my tongue," said one.

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CHAPTER III.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

1. If a person is very handsome, it is a sign that he will have one of the infectious diseases of childhood (measles, whooping cough, etc.) more than once.

2. Dimple in chin. Devil within.

3. A dimple in the chin is lucky. Some say "it shows you're no fool."

4. Small ears indicate that a person is stingy. Large ones show that he is generous.

5. Large ears are a mark of a liar. Small ears show that one is truthful. Boston, Mass.

6. Long, slim ears are a sign that you will steal.

7. Hazel eyes betoken a good disposition.

8. If your eyebrows meet, you will be rich.

9. A well-known children's rhyme runs:--

Blue-eye beauty, do your mammy's duty! Black eye, pick a pie, Run around and tell a lie! Gray-eye greedy gut Eat all the world up!

10. If the eyebrows meet, one is ill-tempered.

11. If the eyebrows are far apart, you will live away from home; if near together, you will live near home, or at home.

12. Heavy eyebrows are a sign of long life.

13. Always keep your nails clean and you will be rich.

14. If your instep is high enough to have water flow under it, you are of good descent.

15. A mole on the sole of the left foot means trouble and hardships during life.

16. If there is a blue vein in the child's forehead extending down upon the nose, it is one of the surest signs of early death.

17. Vertical wrinkles in the brow show the number of husbands one will have. Horizontal ones show the number of children.

18. Coarse hair indicates good nature; fine hair quick temper.

19. Red hair indicates a "spit-fire."

20. Beware of that man, Be he friend or brother, Whose hair is one color And moustache another.

21. A single white hair means genius; it must not be pulled out.

22. Hair growing upon the upper lip of a woman means riches.

23. Draw a single hair from the head strongly between the thumb and finger-nail. If it curls up, you are proud.

24. Hairy arms mean wealth.

25. Hairy arms mean strength.

26. Scrape the finger-nail and the thumb-nail along a hair, and if, by the third time, it curls up, the owner is high-tempered.

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27. Put some of your hair in the fire. If it burns slowly you will have a long life. If quickly, a short one.

28. A straight line in the palm of the hand is an omen of early death.

29. The letter formed by the veins on the inside of the wrist is the initial of the name of the future husband or wife.

30. A person with an initial in his hand will be very fortunate in selecting a companion for life.

31. In clasping your own hand, you put uppermost either your right or your left thumb. If the former, you are to rule; vice versa, you yield.

32. If the thumb sticks up in the closed fist, you are either capable or honest, probably the latter, as thieves are said to double theirs in.

33. If the ends of the fingers are capable of being bent far back, it indicates a thief.

34. A mole on the eyebrow denotes that one will be hanged. On the ear it denotes that he will be drowned.

35. A mole on the neck indicates that its owner will be hanged.

36. A mole on the arm indicates riches.

37. Mole on your arm, Live on a farm.

38. A mole on the arm means that you will fight many battles, and will be very successful in them.

39. A vein across the nose is an omen of short life.

40. A broad space between the teeth indicates a liar.

41. Broad front teeth mean that one is generous.

42. A space between the two front upper incisors signifies wealth.

43. If the front teeth are wide apart, it means one can't keep a secret. If overlapping, one is close-mouthed.

44. Do not trust people with pointed teeth.

45. If you have a space between your teeth, it is a sign that you will die of consumption.

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CHAPTER IV.

FORTUNES

Love divinations or love charms, I have found, are well known as "fortunes" in of the realm. The expression for these love divinations is "trying fortunes." One girl will say to another at some appropriate time, "Let's try our fortunes."

1. Eat an apple at midnight before the glass, saying,--

Whoever my true love may be, Come and eat this apple with me,

holding the lamp in the hand. The true love will appear.

2. Throw a whole apple-paring on the floor, after swinging it three times around your head. It will form your true love's initial letter.

3. When eating an apple, snap it with the fingers and name it for a person of the opposite sex. Count the fully developed seeds (all of the others are kisses), and the last one must correspond to the following formula:--

One's my love, Two's my love, Three's my heart's desire. Four I'll take and never forsake, Five I'll cast in the fire. Six he loves, Seven she loves, Eight they both love, Nine he comes, Ten he tarries, Eleven he goes, Twelve he marries. Thirteen honor, Fourteen riches, All the rest are little witches.

Some change the latter lines of this formula into

Thirteen they quarrel, Fourteen they part, Fifteen they die with a broken heart.

4. Lay in the hand four apple-seeds and have some one name them, then pick them up, saying,--

This one I love all others above, And this one I greatly admire, And this one I'll take and never forsake. And this one I'll cast in the fire.

5. Kiss the baby when nine days old, and the first gentleman you kiss afterward will be your future husband.

7. Go upstairs backward, into a chamber backward, and into bed backward. Drink some salt and water, and if you dream of some one bringing you drink it will be your future husband.

8. The first time two girls sleep together let them tie two of their big toes together with woollen yarn, and the one with the shortest piece of broken string left attached in the morning will be married first.

9. If two girls on sleeping together for the first time tie their waists together with string or thread, and the thread gets broken in the night, the first man who puts his arm round the waist of either will have the first name of the man whom that girl will marry, whether that man is the one or not.

10. After getting ready for bed in silence, take a ball of string and wind about the wrist, repeating,--

I wind, I wind, This night to find, Who my true love's to be; The color of his eyes, The color of his hair, And the night he'll be married to me.

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11. When you see a turkey-buzzard flying alone, repeat,--

Hail! Hail! Lonely, lonesome turkey-buzzard: Hail to the East, hail to the West, Hail to the one that I love best. Let me know by the flap of your wing Whether he (or she) loves me or not.

Note the manner of the bird's flight: if he flaps his wings your lover is true; if not, the lover is false.

12. When the call of the first turtle-dove is heard, sit down and remove the shoe and stocking from the left foot, turn the stocking inside out, in the heel of which if a hair is found, it will be of the color of the hair of the future husband or wife.

13. The coming husband is determined by repeating the following words, touching each button of the coat, vest, or dress in order:--

Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. Doctor, lawyer, Barbarian chief.

Or,

Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief.

Or,

Doctor, lawyer, merchant, cheat.

14. If a girl puts a two-leaved clover in her shoe, the first man who comes on the side where the clover is will be her future husband.

15. Put a four-leaved clover in your shoe, and you will marry a man having the first name of the man whom you meet first after doing it.

16. Count sixty white horses and one white mule, then you will marry the first man with whom you shake hands.

17. Count the buttons of an old boot. The number of buttons indicates the number of years before marriage.

18. Put the breast-bone of a fowl over the front door, and the first one of the opposite sex that enters is to be your future companion.

19. Put two eggs in front of the open fire on a very windy day, and soon two men will come in with a coffin. The man at the foot will be your future husband.

20. On your birthday, as you retire at night, take off your slipper or boot. Stand with your back to the door and throw it over your head. If the toe points to the door, you go out of the chamber a bride before the year is out. You must not look at the boot until the morning.

21. Write names on three pieces of paper, throw them up in the air (in the dark); feel for one, put it under the pillow, and in the morning look at it to see the name of the man you are to marry.

22. Go out at midnight and walk around a peach-tree, repeating,--

Low for a foreigner, Bark for a near one, Crow for a farmer, Screek, tree, screek, if I'm to die first.

23. Set the table in silence for two at eleven o'clock P.M., with bread and butter and silver knives and forks. Two girls sit down at twelve, and say, "Whoever my true love may be, come and eat this supper with me."

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CHAPTER V.

LUCK.

1. At cards, if your luck is poor, walk round your chair three times, lift it, sit down, and your luck is assured.
2. At cards, it is bad luck to play against the grain of the table.
3. It is unlucky to travel at the end of the week.
4. If you put on any garment wrong side out, as, for example, a pair of stockings, never change it, as to do so brings ill luck.
5. If you put a garment on wrong side out, you mustn't speak of it, or you will have bad luck.
6. Walking across the room with one shoe off is a sign of ill luck.
7. It is good luck to find a horseshoe.
8. If horseshoes are put up over a house for luck, the points should not be placed downwards, or the luck will slip through.
9. It is unlucky to pass salt across the table.
10. It is bad luck to spill salt unless it is burned..
11. If you spill salt, throw some over your left shoulder, and then crawl under one side of the table and come out on the other, to prevent bad luck.
12. Never sweep the floor after sunset; it is bad luck.
13. Carrying ashes out of the house after sunset is bad luck.
14. It is ill luck to sweep dirt out of doors after sunset.
15. It is unlucky to turn back for anything after you have set out to go anywhere.
16. It will prove unlucky if you return for a forgotten article after you have left the house; but if you seat yourself before leaving the house again, the misfortune will be averted.
17. Go under a ladder and you will be hanged.
18. If, in passing, one parts two people, it is a sign of disappointment to the parter.
19. To fall upstairs means good luck; downstairs, ill luck.
20. The opal is unlucky, unless set with diamonds.
21. It is unlucky to lose a glove.
22. To step over the feet of any one who is sitting is ill luck.
23. In getting out of bed in the morning, the right foot is always to be placed first.
24. When you drop a knife or fork, and it sticks up in the floor, you will have good luck.
25. If a knife be spun round, care should be taken to spin it back again, otherwise it insures bad luck.

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CHAPTER VI.

DEATH OMENS.

1. Carry an axe or any iron implement through the house, and some one will soon die.
2. Death is foretold by the ringing of a bell that cannot otherwise be accounted for.
3. When bread, in baking, cracks across the top, it means death.
4. If the candle burns blue, it is token of a death.
5. Change a sick person from one room to another, and he will die.
6. If a corpse remains soft and supple after death, another death in the family will follow.
7. A cow mooing after midnight means death.
8. The hearing, in the wall, of the "death-watch," or "death-tick," betokens a death in the house.
9. It is a sign of death to see a tree blossoming in the fall.
10. If an empty rocking-chair is seen to sway back and forth when apparently unoccupied, it is supposed that the chair is held by the spirit of some deceased member of the family, who has come back to choose the next to go, and call that person quickly.
11. When you shiver, it means that some one is walking over the place where your grave is to be.
12. If sparks are left (unintentionally) in the ashes over night, it is a sign of death.
13. If sparks of fire fly out of an opened stove door, it is a sign of death.
14. If any one in the town lies dead over Sunday, there will be another death before the end of the week.
15. Three horses of the same color indicate death, but this sign is not very noticeable in a thickly settled community.
16. Three chairs placed accidentally in a row mean death.
17. If there is a death there will be three deaths in the family within a short time.
18. To break the spell of thirteen at table, all should rise together, otherwise the first up (or, as some say, the last down) dies inside a twelvemonth.



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