

Human Culture

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Superstitions

Food and Luck

If a rotten fruit falls off a tree and hits you, you will receive good fortune soon, but it will come in a form that will appear unfortunate at first. For example, a beast of burden might step in a hole and injure itself, but something of greater value will be found in the hole. A loaf of bread should never be turned upside down after a slice has been cut from it. Doing so insults the goddess of the hearth. It's bad luck to let milk boil over.

Objects and Luck

It is very bad luck to burn candles that are significantly fancier than your neighbour's. You are symbolically burning your wealth. Nor should you buy candles that are more expensive than your wealth would normally indicate. All the people of a neighbourhood should have roughly the same quality of candles that the poorest among them has. Acorns from grandfather oaks are lucky. Carrying three, five, seven, or nine in your pocket at all times will insure good fortune and long life. Never carry more than nine, though, or Lady Luck will think you greedy and punish you for it. Never lie books flat on a shelf, or you will forget all the knowledge you gain from reading them. Always store them on edge. If you lay a fork flat on the table with the tines up, do not rest a knife on edge using the tines to support it. If you do, you and whoever you're eating with (or whoever you next eat with if you're alone) will quarrel. If the handle of a door comes loose in your hand when you're trying to open it, apologize to the door (or the god of doorways, according to some); else you will be blocked from entering "some project you are just starting (or about to start)." If a lit lamp suddenly starts to smoke, and there's nothing wrong with the wick nor is the fuel low, it means someone you care for will soon be in danger from fire. Crossing your knife and spoon on your plate after you have eaten is an indicator that the food tasted horrible and that you wish bad luck on the cook. Never store a map face down. If you must draw on a map (one that is finished), put a drop of ink on the back of your hand first, and don't draw on the map until that drop dries. Don't drum your fingers on a map. Do not throw scissors. If you do, you will soon be snubbed, insulted, or otherwise cut "in a social/emotional sense." If you wear purple shoes, you will become an alcoholic, unless you carry (but never drink) some wine with you. It's OK if you drink alcohol that someone gives you, but not any that you buy. Burning oak logs in the hearth strengthens the home against natural disasters, pine and cedar logs bring it prosperity, birch wood brings happiness and elm protects it from curses and other evil intents. Tossing basil or rosemary into the fire also protects and brings happiness. If you put a pitchfork tines down into the ground, and are going to go farther from it than your arms' reach, tell it "Goodbye." When you come to pull it out again, say "Hello" before touching it. Failing to do so will mean it (and perhaps some of your other tools) will break when you most need it to work." If you ever accidentally tap a knife against a horseshoe (except if it's on a horse), tap it twice more. There are some kinds of imps that are attracted by the sound of one such tapping, but three close together drives them away. Iron nails should never be stood upright. Horseshoes should never be turned upside down. Swords

should never be stored upright. Mail should never be rolled or folded. Spears should never be pointed towards the ground. People from Ambria always carry a pierced coin on their person; this brings monetary luck.

Behaviour and Luck

Let a young scholar draw water from the well before you, even if you got there first. Some of the wisdom he seeks will pass to you as well. If he fails to show gratitude for your deference to him, that isn't your problem, but his studies will be for naught for the rest of that day. You must get out of bed on the same side that you get in or you will have bad luck. If your right ear itches, someone is speaking well of you. If your left ear itches, someone is speaking ill of you. If you bite your tongue while eating, it is because you have recently told a lie. Treat an old woman with a remarkably small nose with the greatest kindness and respect. This is the favorite disguise of the goddess of abundance, when she wanders among humankind. Dress especially warm for one month after getting married. It prevents bad luck. Some say it specifically lessens the jealous feelings rivals may have, decreasing the likelihood that they'll do something bad to you. Some say it also increases the likelihood that both spouses will remain faithful. The first of the month (the full moon) is an auspicious time to begin new undertakings, but the 15th of the month (the new moon) is a bad time to start anything new. Weddings seldom take place on the 15th, and few people are willing to open new business ventures or start a journey on this day. To argue at a crossroads is to invite misfortune into your life. People from the Duchy of Irolo think that the sound of thunder in the distance is a harbinger of bad luck and ill fortune. People from the Duchy of Irolo will never board a ship after nightfall, because it's bad luck.

Animals and Luck

Three butterflies together mean good luck. No ship with a cat on board ever sinks, for the Lord of All Cats wouldn't allow it. A swan's feather, sewed into the husband's pillow, will ensure fidelity. If you kill a cat, it will wander to the Underworld, and tell your name to the first demon it meets, and command it to harrass you. Then the cat will come back as a ghost, and delight in watching your misfortune. BTW, there are dozens of explanations for why any demon would do a cat's bidding. But all agree that they will. If you meet with a dog with orange eyebrows, "cross the index and middle fingers, and the ring and least fingers, of your left hand, and show this sign to the dog. Otherwise, it is likely to bite you." Animals whose coats are pure black are unlucky. People from Daria believe that to see three crows sitting together means good fortune is coming. If a horse steps on the hem of your garment, thus preventing you from moving away, it means you are about to do something harmful to yourself. The horse is trying to prevent you from doing it. Different cultures have different interpretations of this one: * Those who live along the Rauko River say that it could be any beast of burden or riding animal, not just a horse. * The people of Daria believe that the same applies if your hat falls off your head and a horse steps on it (your hat that is, not your head). * The people of Ambria and those along Rauko River say that the horse specifically knows you're in danger and is willfully and consciously trying to save you. Most other people say that the horse is simply acting as a tool of fate and knows nothing of the situation. * The folk of the Duchy of Irolo believe all of the above. Magpies are seen as mystical birds, capable of bestowing luck or misfortune when seen. The following rhyme tells what effect supposedly occurs when a person sees magpies. The rhyme has an unsavory reputation, and children are often beaten if their parents hear them recite it. 1 for spirit 2 for life 3 for mothers and 4 for strife 5 for luck and its glad tale 6 for flesh that soon fails

On Elves

Always bow politely whenever you are about to enter a forest, even on a road. It lets the elves know that you are not their enemy.

On Magic

Some believe that magic is cast from the heart. Therefore, magic cast when sad tends not to be as powerful, magic cast when angry burns hotter, and happy magic tends to be uplifting. Mixed emotions are extremely bad since this is where magical mistakes come from. You should salt the lands where evil magic was created, for it seeps into the lands and twists the very vegetation that feeds upon it. Once a magician learns magic, he will never love again for the magic consumes his desires completely.

On Health

A mirror reflects not just the person but the soul. If a person becomes sick, all mirrors in their home should be removed or covered, lest the soul become sick as well. Illnesses are caused by evil spirits inhabiting a person's body. Different types of evil spirits manifest as different illnesses. Magic cures diseases by driving out the evil spirits. That's why priestly magics are more effective than secular magics at curing illnesses. Potions cure diseases because the evil spirits cannot stand the foul taste. Not all spirits find the same tastes repulsive. You must find the potion that repulses the specific spirit that caused your disease. Some foul smelling salves and poultices work for similar reasons. Evil spirits can enter the body through open wounds. Wounds should be bound in rags soaked in wine (or other alcoholic beverages). The spirit will get drunk on the wine and forget to enter the wound. The stronger the drink, the more effective it will be at getting the spirit drunk. Evil spirits congregate together. They live by swamps, dead bodies, sewers, and other people infected by evil spirits. Never ring a bell exactly twice or exactly four times. The people of southern Daria believe there is a strong connection between bells and the number three. If you ring a bell once, or five or more times, that's OK, but 2 or 4 times makes the bell feel uncomfortable because it's just slightly off it's favorite number. People and animals nearby will start to feel uneasy and tense. Their health may be impaired or become contrary and disobedient.

On Birth and Death

Women who follow the druidic faith know that if they want to become pregnant, they should sleep on the bare earth in a hollow. The spouse who goes to sleep first on the wedding day will be the first to die. In Daria, people leave offerings of food at crossroads in order to placate the unquiet dead and to ensure safe journeys. They also believe that mirrors frighten ghosts away, and so to break one is to bring bad luck. The soul of a person who breaks a mirror will wander the world in the afterlife. Never set two mirrors directly opposite each other. Similarly, do not ever get between two mirrors or other highly reflective surfaces, nor see a reflection of a reflection of yourself. To do so practically invites some thing "to come and possess you." Mirrors in a house with a corpse should be covered or the person who sees himself will die next. If a mirror in the house falls and breaks by itself, someone in the house will die soon. If a bird (not just a magpie, but any bird) flies into your house, someone living there will die soon. Dried basil hung over windows keeps the spirits of the dead at bay. Do not whistle

in the presence of a corpse. The ghost will haunt you. The folk of the Horse Wilds, demand burial in earth so that the souls can be carried into the afterlife by the wild horse herds. The Darian and Ambrian cultures are very similar in most respects, but one area in which they are diametrically opposed is in how they pay respect to the dead at gravesites. The Darrians place an emphasis on the living moving on with their lives and not letting oneself be haunted" by the dead, therefore after a funeral or visiting a grave, you turn around and walk away. The Ambrians place greater emphasis on remembering and honoring the dead, and would consider this rude and arrogant - it invites hostile spirits to sneak up and attack you from behind. They say that when leaving a grave side, you should back up several steps, depending on the "rank" or honor that you wish to give the dead, before turning. In some cases, an Ambrian might back up all the way to the edge or gate of the cemetery. The Darrians consider this foolish. To back away from a grave is to imply that you're afraid of the dead, and you invite evil or mischievous spirits to pursue you and continue to haunt you and torment you with further fear." Do not spit into an empty grave; you will soon die. Don't make a headstone out of red (or even slightly-pinkish) stone; the person will rise as a blood-hungry undead. If you pass a graveyard at night, whistle if you wish (e.g., if it keeps up your courage), but do NOT sing!! Demons will join you in song, and then take you away. Don't count the number of headstones out loud. Some say it's alright, if you skip 13 and all its multiples. If you find a (live) lily growing on a grave, do not uproot it. Cutting it off flush with the ground is OK, so is covering it so it dies off. Just don't uproot it, or the body in that grave will come up too, the next full moon.

On the Weather

Cows lie down in the fields right before it rains. If the sun rises red, the weather that day is likely to be violent. If it sets red, look for a dry night.

Human Insults

Thou hast surely been on Odin's serving platter. Thoust would not be even a table scrap for Odin. Loki's dung in your teeth! And your breath reeks of his lies. Her pride fled when Baldur left. That she would take such a loathsome oaf, methinks she may be nymph. Were they sons of mine that did so, I'd have them whipped; or sent to the High Temple to be thrice damned. Brondheim is a den for dogs and trolls, and worthy of no man's treading. He is but a Satyr! Rapacious and hairy. Not even mighty Thor could bash out his brains, as he has none. Hel her self must have kissed him, as his breath is so foul and stinks of rotting corpses. Thou hast the manners of an Orc, and breath twice as foul. He is like a loathsome dwarf, short of stature, humor, and generosity. The only thing elf like about that one is his immortality, as he is eternally infuriating. Dark Elf! If elf at all. Thou art so short and queer! Surely a changeling. He is... he is a thing to bad for bad report. She looks at him with venom'd daggers. I scorn thee and thy fashion, peevish boy. Ambria, dear Ambria is strongest in bravery. your Darian, your Brondheim, your slack faced Irolon, are but mites to brave Ambria. He's a most notorious coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise breaker. A small bark would send him fleeing. He doth love his page too much methinks. Lumber on you fat and greasy bastards! 'Tis apparently the fashion here. An evening like this with you m'lady is more cheaply bought elsewhere. Thou basest of things! Begone from my sight. His face be so tart as to sour fresh grapes. A whoreson, flap eared, beetle-headed knave! Only for your heath and digestion's sake good sir. An after dinner mint? Were you split open his liver, one could get a mug of spirits for free! You play the mongrel sir. Thinking your wagging tongue to persuade me. A plague upon thee! A pox to rot thy yellow teeth. You must be deep

in your cups, to be such a fool. Your appearance goes much against my stomach. There are no loose tongues about you dear lady. For all know of your whoring. Thine advice is not worth a rotten egg. He is like an overturned cup. Empty, loud, leaving a mess. Your wits, are strongly encastled in a stone skull. Bear not the effort. His wits are gone. How now my weak hearted fop. What mischief are you upon today? Thou rotted apple.. thou addle-witted fiend.. thou great noodle. Impudent hopping flea! Thou hairy nothing. Thou tripe encased rascal! Oh arrant ass! Go shake thine ears elsewhere. Thou whoreson assbreath, out with thee. May Hel take your soul. Such a ludicrous noise thou dost keep up. How thy tongue does twang but ineffectually. How thou talks your poor tongue and my poor ears weary. You swagger your dull wit about like a clumsy hammer. An over boiled wit, with no substance remaining. His brains buttered would fill but a spoonful. Sweet tickle brain, how cluttered thy poor head. Doth it ache thee? Your lost mind is but a plague upon me! Thou must itch sorely, as you are the most grievous scab on Harn! Do thy wits be so fat and lazy as thy belly? Aye, tough he looks. Undo his hauberk and his belly would tumble to his knees. He does show some sparks that are like wit. His wits, though not so fair, are lost like Baldur. Your fair face cannot hide your foul grace. His soul is black, as if besmeared in pitch. 'Tis a pleasure to see you hence from here. Death and pain dog thee at the heels. I'd rather burn my ears with flaming brands, than with you lies. Have you a mighty bellows at the back of your head? You have endless breath, of only hot air. I trust you like a coin from Irolo.

Human Praises

Such a lovely that Freya must have smiled upon your birth. So sweet is Hana that were a troll to trick a kiss from her, he'd convert. My affection for thee has an unknown bottom, like Lake Celinad. Mimir! Or a worldly paragon. By every hair in my beard! 'Tis good to see thee. Bragi steels his soul this day! Thou hast monstrous balls, such that not even Odin could swallow. She is dull, but has a well turned thigh. Were I to die with you, I would be most happy. She sits, as one risen from my dreams. My purse, my person, my strongest means, are open to you. Though she charm Thor from the sky with her words, she need but look at me. I like your company, and would willingly waste my time in it. You surely have a place in Aesir's court in the hence after. You have the sweetness of far eastern dainties. 'Tis dandy to see you man. I'd gladly empty cups with you, and assault Arindel the next morn. 'Tis said her look makes the daisies sprout.

Human Sayings

Even roses have thorns. His temper burns like the pits of The Cleft. Even the gods seek the Church's wisdom at times. 'Tis said his tongue tickles the ears of the Council of Elves. If kisses were the only pleasures in bed, one woman would another wed. She would become a Sister of Mercy for you. I am struck to the quick. In religion there is no damned failing, that a pontiff cannot bless and approve with a text. Greatest scandals await in greatest estates. Grievous wrong doings! It blows me up like a bladder. Surely as a Svartalfar has a beard. A knavish speech finds home in a foolish ear. Sweetmeats grown common, lose their dear delight. Fair thoughts be of my fair pillow. Many a man's tongue shaking, undoes his master's doings. Breaking your bargain is the surest way to meet Hel, though not the fairest way. Cudgel thy brains no more on the matter. 'Tis more than jewelry that can be stolen from a maid. And that what cannot be replaced. If I follow such a deception again, I'll have my brains buttered and given to an Orc for a treat. Gods send him well. The courts a place for harsh learning. Unnatural deeds breed unnatural troubles. A friend in the court is worth more than pence in the purse. I'll spend my days in my ladies lap; and deck my body in gay ornaments, and witch sweets

maids with my words and looks. He that wants money, power, and fame is one without three good friends. He who signs Loki's pact, has the direst price to pay. He who lives by the sword, dies by the arrow. Thor gives us strength, Geofon gives us forgiveness, but Freya gives us permission! A calm sea does not make a skilled sailor.: Nothing worth gaining is gained without difficulty. Mostly used along the southern coast, especially among those of Brondheim. A variation on this is found in Ambria is "A bad harvest teaches more than a good one". " Anywhere a rat can go, you will find two Hobbits waiting.: A human expression meant to indicate the fact that Hobbits live everywhere that men do. The Hobbits find it insulting." A wrinkled apple tastes sweeter.: A saying among the peasants and farm-folk of Ambria, indicating the benefits of experience." Anyone can fancy his bed as a palace.: Meaning "believe what you want, because I know the truth." Used mainly by the Dornicans, this expression is usually said in response to someone else making an outrageous statement of fact that flies in the face of common wisdom or direct evidence." Better to be clever than to be thought clever.: A person's reputation is useless if he can't back it up." Cut the coat according to the cloth.: A common expression meaning "don't try to make something into something its not". " Dragons beget dragons, and lions beget lions, and the offspring of mice will know how to chew holes.: A Darian proverb meaning "accept that which is fated to be" or "you can't change the way the world works". " Even a black lamb's wool is warm.: An Irolon proverb meaning "every cloud has a silver lining." - black animals are generally held to be unlucky." If I knew where I was going to fall, I'd spread straw.: A common expression used to indicate a foolish wish for prescience. Its used in the same manner that some people today use the phrase "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride". " Lightning, then thunder.: All things happen in their own good time." The time to collect rainwater is while its raining.: Take advantage of opportunities when they come. This one is used almost everywhere." The lion roars. The snake hisses. The stranger smiles.: A Darian proverb taken to mean "take warning" or "be on your guard". " Never use up your arrows before the battle.: Always keep your priorities straight. This saying is used mostly in the Marches of Irolo." No road is ever old.: A saying among the trading caravans meant to express the opinion that the only life is the traveling life. A variant is "All roads lead to somewhere." Only a fool tests the depth of the water with both feet.: A Dornican proverb indicating the value of thinking before acting." Sorrow runs while joy sleeps.: This is an expression among the Darrians, indicating that a bad reputation will travel farther and faster than a good one." Talk gathers no firewood.: A farm-folk proverb on the virtues of doing rather than talking about doing." Empty armor clatters loudest.: This phrase is usually used in response to bravos on the part of another. Its use is similar to the real-world "Put up or shut up" or "Don't let your alligator mouth get your mockingbird ass in trouble". A variant used in Ambria is "A tree is known by the fruit, and not by the leaves.", while the Hobbits say "Barking dogs seldom bite." There is no mud without rain.: Nothing goes wrong without a cause." The value of the water is only seen when the well runs dry.: You don't know what you have until its gone. A Darian proverb." Trust in the Gods, but row away from the rocks.: A Dornican proverb that shows the wisdom of self-sufficiency." When the avalanche begins, it is too late for the pebbles to vote.: A saying among the people of several kingdoms speaking to the fact that in the grand scheme of things the common folk have little influence when compared to the nobles." When the fight is lost, all that is left is to die gloriously.: A saying used by many warriors across Taranche. It used in a similar manner to "it is better to die on your feet that live on your knees." Where the wolf howls, the goblin prowls.: Troubles almost never come alone. This one is most often found in the easter reaches of Ambria." A wolf whose belly is full will still hunt.: Don't assume that you know what another man's motives are." You cannot blame a mirror for a crooked face.: This expression, common among the Bronheimian, is a warning against blaming others for your own mistakes." You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.: You can't have your cake and eat it too." You don't know what is in the pot until you lift the lid.: A Bronheimian proverb meaning "the best way to learn is to act". "

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