Have you ever experienced a sudden conversational pause in a crowded place—say, a busy restaurant? There is a long-held superstition that this occurs at “twenty minutes after the hour”.

There are several explanations of this phenomenon, one being that angels are singing heavenly songs and everyone stops to hear them. The pause is also linked to Abraham Lincoln’s taking his last breath at 7:20 PM on April 15, 1865. If that’s the case, why is it that the silence happens more often than on that one time on that one date? Perhaps, the reason will remain as elusive as its origin is.

Another superstition is that if someone spills the salt, throwing a pinch of it over one’s left shoulder will scare away the devil. Another claims that putting salt on the doorstep wards off demons. Is your soup too salty? Maybe the cook is in love.

According to some Old Wive’s tales acorns seem to lead to good luck and it was once believed that putting one in your window would scare away lightening. (Try that during the next Texas-sized deluge!) Carrying an acorn in your pocket might assure you of good fortune and a long life.

Before you eat an apple, claims one old saying, twist the stem while speaking the names of five or six potential spouses. When the stem breaks loose from the apple, the name that you’re speaking will be your future mate. Cutting an apple in half, and counting the seeds inside, will predict how many children you will have, claims another.

Unless you’re looking for bad luck, never throw your hat on the bed, nor get out of a bed on the side opposite from the one on which you started the night. Never stop making your bed in order to do something else, or you will have a restless night the following evening.

Cat-lovers—this one’s for you. Before you step aboard your next cruise ship, be sure that there’s a cat on board. It is said that they bring good luck and calm seas. If a black cat runs toward you, you will have good fortune. If it runs away from you good luck follows in its wake.

Here’s some advice in case you cough. Take one hair from your head and place it between two slices of bread. Then feed it to a dog while saying, “Eat well, you hound. May you be sick and I be sound.”

Pictures of elephants only bring good luck if their heads are facing a doorway.
The following is from corsinet.com:

How did Friday the thirteenth become such an unlucky day?

Fear of Friday the 13th is rooted in ancient, separate bad-luck associations with the number 13 and the day Friday. The two unlucky entities combine to make one super unlucky day.

There is a Norse myth about 12 gods having a dinner party at Valhalla, their heaven. In walked the uninvited 13th guest, the mischievous Loki. Once there, Loki arranged for Hoder, the blind god of darkness, to shoot Balder the Beautiful, the god of joy and gladness, with a mistletoe-tipped arrow. Balder died and the Earth got dark. The whole Earth mourned.

There is a Biblical reference to the unlucky number 13. Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus, was the 13th guest to the Last Supper.

A particularly bad Friday the 13th occurred in the middle ages. On a Friday the 13th in 1306, King Philip of France arrested the revered Knights Templar and began torturing them, marking the occasion as a day of evil.

In ancient Rome, witches reportedly gathered in groups of 12. The 13th was believed to be the devil.

Both Friday and the number 13 were once closely associated with capital punishment. In British tradition, Friday was the conventional day for public hangings, and there were supposedly 13 steps leading up to the noose.

It is traditionally believed that Eve tempted Adam with the apple on a Friday. Tradition also has it that the Flood in the Bible, the confusion at the Tower of Babel, and the death of Jesus Christ all took place on Friday.

Numerologists consider 12 a "complete" number. There are 12 months in a year, 12 signs of the zodiac, 12 gods of Olympus, 12 labors of Hercules, 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 apostles of Jesus. In exceeding 12 by 1, 13's association with bad luck has to do with just being a little beyond completeness.

Throughout history the number thirteen has been a superstitious one. Many hotels and high rises eliminate the thirteenth floor; airports skip the thirteenth gate, and airplanes have no thirteenth aisle. Italians don’t have a 13 in their national lottery numbers, and in Florence, house numbers between 12 and 14 are listed as 12 and a half. Many cities have no 13th Avenue or Street, and finally, so goes one wife’s tale, “If you have thirteen letters in your name, you just might live a life of crime. Examples: Charles Manson, Jack the Ripper, Theodore Bundy, Albert de Salvo and Jeffrey Damler. (You’re counting the letters in your name, aren’t you?)
How many times have you seen a horseshoe hanging above a doorway? If it’s turned down-ward the Irish and English believe that good luck will pour out of it, but if it’s turned up-ward, good luck will come in through the door.

An itching nose can mean that you’re going to kiss a fool, or, perhaps that someone is thinking about you.

If someone gives you a knife, you should immediately give them a penny. Otherwise, you won’t be able to maintain your friendship.

This little verse should cure anyone from telling a lie; “Cross my heart and hope to die. Cut my throat if I tell a lie!”

Good luck with that!