

Ministition #1: Walking Under a Ladder

*Superstitious*

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### **Superstitious Intro**

"Superstitions, in my opinion, are urban legends that are passed down by word of mouth" (Hernandez).

"A belief or notion not based on reason" (Bartram).

"You have bad luck" (Kinney).

"An unsubstantiated belief that it may or may not have a basis in reality" (Hill).

"To be paranoid of certain objects or certain old fairy tales" (Reed).

Walking under a ladder has now become one of those clichéd superstitions across the globe. Many of us are aware of its almost mythical awfulness, but many of us do not fret about walking under one (unless it's for safety reasons). So, where does the ladder superstition come from? The bad luck of walking under a ladder has a long history.

Some scholars argue that the walking-under-a-ladder-is-bad-luck superstition dates back to medieval time, but ancient Egypt seems to be the true origin of the superstition. Ancient customs show that priests were known to place a ladder in a tomb (Ancientpages.com). Accordingly, "If the dead wished, they could use the ladder to ascend upward" (Ancientpages.com). The ancient Egyptians were also well-versed in geometry and the symbolism in numbers. Placing a ladder against a wall makes the shape of a triangle; three sides. As is evident in the pyramids of Egypt, the triangle shape represented the trinity of the gods (Wolchover). Anyone walking under a ladder was believed to have broken this trinity and any spirit resting between a ladder and a wall was not to be disturbed. Doing so also contributed to this superstition (Ancientpages.com).

Like a virus, the ladder superstition would spread. The early Christians would also harbor the superstition and walking under a ladder was much like the ancient Egyptians' beliefs. Taking a

stroll under a ladder was breaking the holy trinity. Such an action was seen as blasphemous and was seen as an invitation for the devil to come in to the world. Christian tradition adds that a ladder was rested against the crucifix which was seen as "a symbol of wickedness, betrayal, and death" (Wolchover).

During the 1600s, the British found that walking condemned prisoners under a ladder to the gallows was suitable for the crimes committed.

Walking under a ladder today is still an endeavor not taken by the superstitious. It's still considered bad luck, but the tradition has been engrained in society with few people having an understanding as to why. Many people today argue that walking under a ladder is bad luck because it's dangerous. One doesn't want a ladder to fall on top of him.

So, should you walk under a ladder by accident, there are a few steps you can take to save yourself from any bad luck.

One: Spit three times through the ladder's rungs.

Two: Cross your fingers and keep them crossed until you see a dog.

Three: Spit on your shoe and keep walking. Make sure you don't look down at the shoe you spit on until you're certain that the spit has dried.

Four: Walk backwards through the ladder, the same way in which you walked under it. Make a wish as you cross back through (Skeptical Inquirer).

If you enjoyed this mini-stition, make sure to tune in on Monday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Don't forget to join the Superstitious Podcast Facebook page, and visit the website: [www.superstitiouspodcast.com](http://www.superstitiouspodcast.com). Want to suggest mini-stitions for the show? E-mail us at [superstitiouspodcast@gmail.com](mailto:superstitiouspodcast@gmail.com).

## Works Cited

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