

# The Hairy Toe

retold by  
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Once there was an old woman who went out in the woods to dig up some roots to cook for dinner. She spotted something funny sticking out of the leaves and dug around until she uncovered a great big hairy toe. There was some good meat on that toe which would make a real tasty dinner, so the old woman put it in her basket and took it home.

When she got back to her cottage, the old woman boiled up a kettle-full of hairy toe soup, which she ate for dinner that night. It was the best meal she'd had in weeks! The old woman went to bed that night with a full stomach and a big smile.

Along about midnight, a cold wind started blowing in the tops of the trees around the old woman's house. A large black cloud crept over the moon and from the woods a hollow voice rumbled: "Hairy toe! Hairy toe! I want my hairy toe!" Inside the house, the old woman stirred uneasily in her bed and nervously pulled the covers up over her ears. From the woods there came a stomp-stomp-stomping noise as the wind whistled and jerked at the treetops. In the clearing at the edge of the forest, a hollow voice said: "Hairy toe! Hairy toe! I want my hairy toe!" Inside the house, the old woman shuddered and turned over in her sleep.

A stomp, stomp, stomping sound came from the garden path outside the cottage. The night creatures shivered in their burrows as a hollow voice howled: "Hairy toe! Hairy toe! I want my hairy toe!" Inside the house, the old woman snapped awake. Her whole body shook with fright as she listened to the angry howling in her garden. Jumping out of bed, she ran to the door and barred it. Once the cottage was secure, she lay back down to sleep. Suddenly, the front door of the cottage burst open with a bang, snapping the bar in two and sending it flying into the corners of the room. There came the stomp, stomp, stomping noise of giant feet walking up the stairs. Peeping out from under the covers, the old woman saw a massive figure filling her doorway. It said: "Hairy toe! Hairy toe! I want my hairy toe!"

The old woman sat bolt upright in terror and shouted: "I ATE your hairy toe!"

"Yes, you did," the giant figure said very gently as it advanced into the room.

No one living in the region ever saw the old woman again. The only clue to her disappearance was a giant footprint a neighbor found pressed deep into the loose soil of the meadow beside the house. The footprint was missing the left big toe.