

Tony  
Toenails

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## Tony Toenails

DO YOU EVER WONDER HOW PEOPLE EARN THEIR NICKNAMES? Where I'm from — Fort Smith, NWT — we're the nickname capital of Canada. We have hundreds of nicknames. Some people are born with nicknames; others earn them.

Here's a story my uncle told me one day that I hope makes you laugh. I guarantee you'll be sharing this at the supper table right after you hear it. There's a couple in town — I can't tell you who they are because I swore to keep it secret, and, ah, you'll know who they are anyway. Okay, what happened, the way I heard it, was like this:

There's this husband and he's the most wonderful husband in the whole wide world. He absolutely adores his wife. He cooks for her, cleans for her, bakes little bannocks. After her yoga class, he runs a bath for her, throws in some Epsom salts and some baby oil. He rubs her little toesie wosies at night with almond butter. He's crazy for her, he sings to her, he writes her a poem every single day. Everything's great! He spoils her. Do you know what I mean? He's so in love, he gives himself a perm just thinking about her!

Anyhow, the only thing is, he has the worst habit ever. It's actually the worst habit in the entire world. (Worse than snoring or leaving the seat up or, um, "arriving early.") He likes his hockey, eh. So when he's watching hockey, every three months, he whips off his socks and he goes, "Aww! Aww! What's going on with my toenails?" He runs his fingers along his scraggly, long, sharp man-hooves. "Ah ha! It's time for me to clip my scraggies!" (That's what he calls them.)

He's a real cheapskate, eh! He doesn't have a big toenail clipper or his own personal one, so he uses his wife's fingernail clipper — the little gold one. So he grinds away, digs away, he cuts and digs and pulls to get under his huge bionic toenails. You know he works out in the bush, eh! So he has his big sweaty toes in wool socks all the time. Imagine these thick yellow toenails with a hint of green. So he clips like this and he clips like that. And they fly, boy! Half of his toenails end up in the goldfish bowl and the other half end up on the plants. As he watches the game, he stops halfway to smell the clipper. That's the man musk right there! That's the aroma of a real man. Oooh hoo! That's the sweet stuff. After he takes another sweet whiff, he goes back to watching the game. His worst habit is, after he clips all his nails, he scoops them up and leaves them on the supper table.

When his wife comes home from work, she is beat. She works hard, eh. She works for the government. She comes home one day and steps on something sharp. It tears right through her sock.

"Oooh my goodness!" she says. "What is that?"

She pulls from her sock a yellow toenail, all sharp and pokey. She looks at the supper table and there's the biggest pile of yellow toenails piled up curled and jagged. Every three months! And each time this happens, they always have the same fight:

"You have the worst habit in the whole wide world," his wife says. "It's disgusting. I told you to burn your big corn-chip toenails in the wood stove. I shouldn't be stepping on them and cutting up my favourite sock. I may have to get a tetanus shot because of you! I cannot even believe this! If you do that one more time I am going to fix you!"

He says, "Oh baby, baby, I am sorry baby, baby, baby. Don't leave me baby, baby, baby. You're the love of my life. You're my lighthouse, baby, baby, baby. I'll never do it again. I swear!"

And she forgives him and they go into the honeymoon stage, hey. But it happens, she comes home one day three months later. She is having a real rough day, eh, a real rough day. It's election time, hey. She comes home and steps on something sharp again and it rips through

her brand new pantyhose. She already knows what it is and she pulls it out. Oh, it is the biggest, grossest toenail. She looks in the fish bowl and the fish are all nibbling on the toenails that plopped in there and half the fish are dead, hey, just floating sideways. She looks at her plants and sees toenails poking through the leaves. She looks at the supper table and there is, once again, that big pile of stinky yellow toenails!

Finally, she snaps. She says, "That's it!"

She scoops up the big pile of toenails and doesn't say a word. Oh, it stinks, eh! She hides this big yellow pile of scraggly toenails in the Lazy Susan, right at the back. The next morning she makes his lunch. She decides to teach him a lesson. She has bread and butter, mayonnaise, baloney — because he is quality, eh! Quality knows quality. Five stars all the way. Then, as he sings a love song for her from the shower, she takes his toenails and sprinkles them all over the baloney. Then she takes some cheese, then some lettuce, now some mustard and some butter and another piece of bread. She pushes it down and the toenails poke right through the bread like thick barbed thorns. She wraps the toenail sandwich in Saran Wrap and then she gets a little juice box, a little chocolate pudding, a thermos of tea, and she puts it in his lunch box. She gives him a little kiss and says, "Baby, baby, baby, have a good day baby, baby. I love you, I love you. You're the love of my life. Bye."

And her man goes to work. About five minutes later, she goes, "Oh my God! What if he chokes on his own toenails! Oh my God!" She calls his boss. She says, "Whatever happens — as soon as my husband comes in — just get him to call home. It's an emergency."

The boss says, "Oh, ah, oh — I won't forget." Well guess what? He forgot.

Her husband worked out in the bush. Just like I told you. He's a heavy-machine operator in great big sweaty clothes all day, and lovely wool socks to get his toes just nice and stinky, hey. His wife is sweating bullets all day, worried her hubby will choke on his own toenails. She's in agony with worry!

Well, he comes home at six o'clock. His wife is running around the house. Oh thank God! He's alive; he's safe.

"Baby, baby, baby!" She said, "You're the love of my life! You're my lighthouse! I have tea; I have coffee; I made buffalo chili here with bannock. I even have Kraft Dinner because it's your favourite. I made apple pie for you because I love you so much baby, baby, baby. How was work?"

"Wow!" her hubby said. "All right! I could get used to this. This is great! Wait — is it your birthday?"

"No!" his wife said.

"Our anniversary?" he asked.

"Nope," his wife beamed.

"What's the big occasion?" he asked.

"Our love," she said. "Our love is the big occasion! What other reason do I need to spoil my man?"

"Oh hey!" her husband said. "That sounds good. That sounds really good."

"How was your lunch?" his wife asked.

"Lunch?" he asked. "What lunch?"

"The lunch that I made you," she said.

And he went, "Oh, I don't know. I had a tummy ache. I gave it to Tony."

His best friend ate his toenails! Hoo hoo! Can you imagine? Can you imagine his best friend Tony munching on his sandwich going: "Wow this is so crunchy. Wow! Oh that crunch. Oh yeah. So good. Oh wow. Are those chips or fish bones or what? Oh so good. So good! Mmmmm."

And now you know how Tony Toenails got his nickname. We're so very proud to add another nickname to the growing pile around here.