

This story concerns Elphi, the hob from Farndale – you can also listen to it on the BBC Radio 4 series *Mythical Creatures* (episode 6), available on BBC Sounds.

If you ever find yourself in deepest North Yorkshire, high in the moors, perhaps you'll awaken in the dark and feel your way down the stairs.

Be careful they don't creak, because if you're very quiet, perhaps you'll encounter a hob.

Hobs are extremely secretive creatures. Some say they're very small, and some say they're revoltingly ugly, with long straggling hair covering naked flesh. But I say, they are kind and helpful creatures and you would be wise not to offend one.

If treated well, a hob may do your chores, unseen, but not unthanked. In fact, thanking a hob is very important.

On one farm in Farndale, Elphi the hob had been rewarded for many years with a gift of cream, left out each night. It was only when the farmer remarried that things began to change.

What you must never do to a hob, is what the farmer's wife did. One night she swapped Elphi's cream for skimmed milk. Perhaps she thought that the hob wouldn't notice, or perhaps she just didn't care. But the hob did notice.

In fact Elphi was so upset that he instantly stopped doing work around the farm – well wouldn't you?

And now, everything started to go wrong for the family. The cheese began to turn sour, the fox attacked their chickens, the house began to crumble. It became so bad that they decided the only thing they could do was leave – flit the farm, leave and start a new life elsewhere.

They loaded their cart up and waved goodbye to their friends.
“We're flitting,” they said. “We're off! There's no point staying here.”

And then they heard a little voice behind them – a tiny echo. It said, “Yes, we're flitting. We're off.”

Behind them in the cart, a small head poked from the milk churn. The hob was going with them.

This version of the story is told from the perspective of the hob.

It's a hob's life...

How would you feel, if you were me?

I've had a lifetime of slaving away all night, toiling on the farm. I'm not your run-of-the-mill house elf. I'm no hobnobbing hob - not me. When the sun goes in, that's when the real workers come out.

Always working, working, working... and then hobbling I go, worn out with my chores.

And what have I ever asked for in return? Nothing.

Well, almost nothing. I asked for one tiny, measly little thing, and the mistress of the house denied me that. I asked for a jug of creamy milk. That's all. Not much to ask for, is it? A single jug of creamy milk, in return for all I do.

And what did the mistress give me?

Skimmed.

Skimmed, I tell you. Rude, or what?

So, what do you think I did?

I did what any self-respecting hob would do – of course I did. I ran amok. I caused all kinds of mischief, up and down the farm. If there was something to break, I broke it. If there was something to upset, I upset it. If there was something to take... well, you get the idea.

And when the family tired of all the mess I'd made, they packed their stuff to flit – flit away from that place and all the fun I'd had.

So what would you have done, if you were me?

I flitted too! I folded myself inside their baggage, and along I went.

Do you think they were pleased to see me?