

Whatwaszat?

by Joan Black

Whatwaszat? The clock says it is 2:00 a.m. Did I hear my front door click open? Is that what woke me? Heart pounding I lay quiet and still. Very still – listening. All is quiet – very quiet – deathly quiet – quiet as the grave. Gradually the heart slows, I relax. Huh. Must have imagined it – dreaming probably. Another glance at the clock and I roll over, snuggle under the covers, then, THUMP. THUD. CLANK! Should I turn on the light? Maybe it's best not to. Should I get up and go look? Maybe it's best not to. Indecisive I sit bolt upright, listening ... but nothing. Five minutes tick by. Seven minutes. Silence. I relax. Must have been a neighbor deciding to hang pictures in the middle of the night. Crazy people! But that's life when you elect to live in an apartment complex. Having solved the mystery I settle back down and drop off to sleep.

Bright sun awakens me early and it's time for coffee. I do love my morning coffee. Fill the electric kettle and plug it in, take down a cup and reach for the coffee. WHAT? NO COFFEE. I stare at the empty space where the coffee jar has sat ever since I moved in. But it's gone. I move a couple of dishes, but no, the coffee is not hiding behind the salad bowl. Puzzled, I look around the counter, move the toaster, check the other cupboard. "I'm going nuts," I tell myself. "No use fretting about it – all old people go nuts. I'll just have hot chocolate." Reach into the refrigerator for the milk and THERE! There is the coffee jar! But who (or what???) put it in the fridge?

This little episode happened a few months after I moved into #4D and in the nine years since then there have been several other incidents when things have been moved around during the night. The muffin pans ended up on a different shelf. Cans of tomatoes mixed in with the canned tuna. The bottle of Mr. Clean found new home in with the packets of rice and some things have disappeared altogether. I gradually realized that this phenomenon seemed to occur on those nights when I heard the THUDS, BUMPS and CLINKS – nocturnal sounds that no longer bother me. I've adapted to these disturbances. No longer am I petrified, or even scared. I do get a bit annoyed when that pesky poltergeist decides to pay a midnight visit and mischievously moves stuff around or hides things. In this community, inhabited by the over-50 crowd, there are many spirits wandering the hallways, refusing to leave their cozy little apartments. Reluctant to let someone else occupy what was THEIR space. They can be mean and vindictive and vent their anger with wails and moans, even hurl vases and waffle irons instead of just moving things around. So, all things considered, I am quite happy to entertain my Casper, the friendly ghost, just as long as he sticks to moving or hiding objects and leaves ME alone.