

## The Voices in My Head

By Marilyn Reeves

Being a Colorado native, I never noticed how dry the air is here, until 1979, when I returned to Denver after living in Dallas for a couple of years. The difference in humidity was so dramatic I went out and purchased a little half-gallon humidifier to put in my bedroom and I've used one ever since. Not only does it help me breathe easier, but the gentle humming white noise helps me sleep better, blocking out the sounds of the floorboards creaking, rafters popping, and those mysterious little clicks and ticks that come in the night.

But one night this past March, rather than simply humming its soft, breathy sound, my humidifier started *singing*. It sounded like a group of monks droning plain chant. Night after night I was disturbed by the rhythmic sound of male voices. Creepy! Well, this just wouldn't do. Time to replace the old humidifier with a new one.

So I went over to Walgreen's and bought a new model, thinking I had solved the problem. But when I turned it on that night, same thing. Only worse. Not only did I hear the chanting sound of those deep baritone voices, but now the sopranos were chiming in. They weren't just chanting, they were actually singing a tune – even harmonizing! It might have been entertaining if the music had been coming from the neighbor's radio, but it wasn't – it was coming from my humidifier!

I got up and turned on the fan of my air conditioner, thinking its more robust sound would drown out the singing voices. But no, it was worse than ever. Now, not only did I hear monks chanting and sopranos singing, but I could hear people chatting outside my window. At two o'clock in the morning on a cold winter's night. I couldn't make out the words, but given the cadence of the voices, there was definitely a group of people out there carrying on a conversation.

But the minute I turned off both appliances, all those voices went away and I could only hear the usual sounds of the floorboards creaking and the timbers snapping. Still, I couldn't get back to sleep. I was in the habit of having that white noise act as a buffer to all those creaky little sounds in the night. So I turned both units back on and tried to block out the voices. I found they were more audible if I lay on my right side rather than my left, and at some point during the night they would finally stop and I was left with just the normal thrumming sound of the fan.

So, what is going on? Obviously, either a change in my hearing or in my perception of those sounds, as I'd never heard the chanting and chattering before. It's been an on-going nuisance and a mystery that continues to plague me night after night.

I wonder if anyone else has had that same experience. Or, to borrow a line from *The Gods Must Be Crazy*: Are the voices in my head bothering you?