

## Late Night Visitors

*By Marilyn Reeves*

Normally, I'm an 'early bird' – I go to bed early and get up before the crack of dawn. But on New Year's Eve I wanted to see if I could stay up long enough to watch the local celebration. Well, I almost made it. When I startled awake in my chair, I looked at the clock: 11:54 p.m. So I decided this is ridiculous – I'm better off going to bed. I turned off the TV and the light and headed toward my bedroom. But then I heard a sound at my front door: Knock-knock.

'Oh my goodness! Who would come calling at this late hour?' I said, overcome with a foreboding sense of dread. Then it came again: Knock-knock. I tiptoed up to the door and tried to look through the peephole but couldn't see a darn thing. I'd forgotten about the Holiday wreath hanging outside my door blocking the view. So I said in as stern a voice as I could muster: 'Who's there?' No answer. I waited a moment and said a little louder, 'Who's there???' Still no answer, just another insistent knock-knock.

Against my better judgment I turned the safety lock and opened the door ... just a crack. There didn't appear to be anyone there. So I threw it open to step out and look down the hallway ... and then I saw him. Or it – a figure shrouded in black, its face hidden beneath the hood of its cape, leaving only a pair of dully shining black eyes peering out at me. And resting against its shoulder was the staff of a scythe. I let out a little scream – I couldn't help it. The specter before me was so ominous, so dreadful ... and I knew that it had come to take me away!

'Oh, please, please don't take me now! I'm not ready. I know I'm getting up in years and I haven't always taken the best care of myself, but I've tried to be good in other ways ... at least most of the time. There's still so much more that I want to see and do before my time is up—'

My fervent pleas were suddenly interrupted by loud banging, horns honking and lights flashing through my window. I turned to see what the ruckus was all about and saw the fireworks bursting in the night sky. Of course! It was New Year's Eve! Then I turned back to face the specter in the doorway but it had vanished. I started to close the door, but it bumped against some obstruction. Then I heard a tiny giggle. There, in a basket placed in my doorway was the cutest little baby I ever saw, holding up a bottle of champagne. And across its chest was a banner imprinted with big bold letters saying, 'HAPPY NEW YEAR!'

Well, I fainted dead away. When I awoke the next morning the baby was gone, but to my great joy I knew that I would live to see another day! I opened my door and began to shout, 'Happy New Year! Happy New Year!'

And that goes for you, too. Happy New Year to one and all!