

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

There were small things that worried Marietta. Like the fact that her name happened to be the same as a packet of biscuits. Children in her class at school used to say: 'I'm going to eat you, Marietta because you're a biscuit.' As it happened she was rather fond of Mariettas and often asked her Mummy buy some. She realised that it would have been much worse if she had been named after a biscuit she *didn't* like.

Another small thing that worried Marietta was her great aunt Dora who would pinch her cheek playfully. However, Great Aunt always gave her lovely presents, which made it difficult to complain.

But her biggest worry was at night, when she was in bed. She would be half-asleep, half-dreaming about lovely things, when suddenly she would hear a frightening noise, which made her start. Sometimes it was just a little bump as though someone had dropped a book on the floor. Sometimes it was a creaking noise as though someone was climbing stealthily up the stairs. Then she would bury her head under the pillow and say: 'Noise, noise go away. Noise, noise please go away.'

Just as everything became quiet and peaceful again, the noise would come back: Creak-creak; or Bump, Bump, Bump. And she would put both hands over her ears and bury her head under the pillow.

Marietta should not have let herself be worried for so long about noises and things that go bump in the night. She should have told her mummy and daddy and they would have explained what was causing it. It's always best to tell other people your worries.

But there you are- Marietta wouldn't even tell anybody that she didn't like being named after a biscuit.

One very dark night, she was lying in bed when she heard a sort of creaking sound, which went Uuu-uurch -Uuuuurch It was followed before she had time to put her head under the covers by another sound that went: Luuuurch-Luuuurch. She was sure the noises were coming from horrible creatures like Poobly-wingles or Givitadunks. Now the funny thing is that if you had asked Marietta in the day time what a Poobly-wingle or a Givitadunk was she would have said that such things don't exist. Which, of course is true. But just because things don't exist in the daytime it doesn't mean to say that they don't SEEM to exist in the dark.

And so when Marietta thought it was a Poobly-wingle or a Givitadunk coming up the stairs she buried her head even more deeply under the covers.

After a while the creaking noises ceased. Marietta gave a sigh of relief, turned over in bed and tried to go to sleep again.

Would you like to know what a Poobly-wingle looked like? Marietta, in her terrified state, thought it was a large, winged creature about the size of a bus. It had a scaly skin and a tail as long as an underground train. Ridiculous, of course, because a creature that size couldn't even get into the front door. But it is just because Poobly-wingles don't really exist at all you can imagine them to be any size.

Marietta gave a big yawn.

She was nearly asleep and was dreaming about a lovely party, when suddenly there was another noise. This time it was a kind of a bump. She gave a start. Then all was quiet. Perhaps it was a mistake, she thought. No...there it was again! A distinct Bump. Only this time it was louder. Instantly, her imagination told her what it was...It was a Thingalumpy- a horrible Thingalumpy.

Marietta was never able to give a good description of a Thingalumpy. But it appeared to be an octopussy kind of thing with eight arms. Under each arm was a parcel and it kept dropping them. They were quite heavy parcels and every time the Thingalumpy dropped a parcel it went BUMP. And then BUMP again and then BUMP again. Eight times.

Marietta was so terrified she buried her head under the covers. At that moment she would rather have been a Marietta bisuit than a frightened little girl.

BUMP...BUMP...BUMP

It was horrible.

CREAK...CREAK...CREAK.

That was worse.

And then, worst of all...UUUUUURCH, UURCH UURCH,

LUUUURCH, LUURCH, LUURCH.

Marietta screamed! Shortly afterwards everything went silent.

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Now, I believe that Marietta went to sleep after all this and what happened subsequently was all a dream. But this is what she told me happened: A bright, white little fairy, carrying a magic wand appeared and told her: 'There's no need to be frightened any more, Marietta. If you come with me, I will show you that there are no such things as Poobly-wingles or Thingalumpies. Marietta sat up in bed, took the fairy's warm hand and the fairy led her down the stairs into the kitchen. I forgot to tell you that the fairy had lovely china-blue eyes.

In the kitchen the fridge was talking to the washing machine. It was going Urch Urch...Lurch Lurch. Because that was the only language it knew. The washing machine was in the middle of a spin and it kept going Bump...Bump....Bump...Bump as it went round and round. Meanwhile, the vacuum cleaner, who didn't like to be left out of the conversation kept saying Whoooooosh-whoosh...

So you see, said the fairy to Marietta, there's no need to be frightened. Every noise you hear has a natural cause. If it's not a washing machine or the fridge, it's something else that can be easily explained.

'What about the creaking noises,' Marietta asked.

'Oh,' said the fairy. 'That's simple. This is a very old, wooden house and sometimes the wooden timbers rub up against each other in strong winds and that makes them creak.'

'That's all right then. I'm not frightened anymore,' Marietta said, giving a big yawn. She said good-night to the fairy, ran up the stairs, got into her bed and fell fast asleep.

So now she doesn't believe any more in Poobly-wingles or Thingalumpies. But she does believe in Givitadunks. Because they're her pet name for Marietta biscuits dunked in milk. They really are delicious.