

An Irritating Sound

It was in the middle of the night, when most people were fast asleep that an irritating buzzing noise woke Kristina. She tossed and turned as the sound of it seemed to go deep inside her ears. Thinking it must be an insect that had crawled inside her ears, she dug her fingers inside them, but nothing was in there. So she cupped her hands over her ears to dull the sound. It grew a little softer, but as soon as she took her hands off her ears, the noise grew louder once again. *Where in the world could that bothersome noise be coming from?* she thought.

Weren't all the troubles from the day before enough? Now she had to deal with this.

The moonlight spilled through the window and lit up the room, but Kristina still couldn't see where the sound was coming from.

"All right, where are you?" she called out in frustration. She got out of bed and walked over to the window to see if the noise might be coming from outside. Nothing seemed unusual—all the other houses on her street were dark, and the snow was falling pretty hard, at least that was something good; she could go sledding the next day.

Suddenly, the sound grew even louder, and she realized that it was coming from inside her room. She spun around quickly to

see if she might catch sight of whatever was making the sound, but when she did so, it was nowhere to be found.

There was a piece of paper on her dresser, so she grabbed it and quickly rolled it up. If it was some sort of annoying insect making the noise, she would use the paper to swat it. “Come on out, wherever you are,” she coaxed, now standing in the middle of the room, tapping her foot. “Where are you?” she continued, slapping the rolled-up paper onto her other hand. She just couldn’t figure out where the sound was coming from. She started walking back toward her bed and noticed that the closer she got to it, the louder the weird noise became.

Raymond had woken up and was standing in his cage, looking at the floor near her bed.

“What is it, Raymond? Where do you think the noise is coming from?” Kristina said.

Raymond just kept staring down at the floor with his eyes wide and his whiskers twitching.

“So, you’re hiding under my bed, are you?” she said, reaching for her bedspread. She pulled it up and threw it to the other side of the bed. The buzzing noise grew louder. *Insects aren’t that loud. This is becoming a little freaky*, she thought. She went down on her hands and knees to look under the bed.

It was dark, and there was no sign of any strange insect. She got up and scratched her head, thinking, *This is too weird*. Then she remembered that she had shoved the hatbox under the bed. She looked under her bed again. The buzzing seemed to definitely be coming from the hatbox Miss Hensley had given her. *What in the world could be in there?* she thought.

Raymond stood on all fours, staring at the bottom of the bed, as though being drawn to the strange sound. She quickly touched the hatbox with her rolled-up paper. There was no zap of electricity or anything of that sort, so she decided to pull it out. She slid the box out from under the bed and picked it up. It didn’t feel weird, so she shook it. Then she remembered that it wouldn’t open, so, feeling frustrated again, she tossed it on the floor, where it slid across the room and bumped into her dresser. She crawled back into bed and stuck her head under her pillow, but that didn’t help—the

buzzing just grew even louder, and then it suddenly changed into what sounded like one continuous melodic, quavering note being sung. “Would you shut up!” she finally yelled, grabbing hold of her pillow, ready to throw it at the hatbox. But just before she did so, the lid slowly opened. Kristina’s eyes grew wide with surprise and she jumped out of bed. Inside the box was a little leather sack, the kind one would put a marble collection in. It had a gold tassel tied around the top of it—and the strange sound was coming from inside it. She quickly untied the tassel and peeked inside it, hoping to find something spectacular. But instead, what she found was not spectacular at all. Sitting in the bottom of the sack was a tarnished silver ball, about the size of a golf ball.

“This is what I got myself so worked up about,” she said, looking up at Raymond. “It’s just a crummy silver ball with an electronic buzzer inside it.”

Feeling very disappointed, Kristina closed the sack and placed it back in the hatbox. The moonlight shone directly on the little hatbox, giving it a soft glow, and the tarnished ball inside kept right on singing its strange quavering note.

As Kristina sat staring at it, some thoughts popped into her mind: *Maybe I shouldn’t be so ungrateful. After all, it’s the thought that counts, not the gift itself. Miss Hensley really didn’t have to give me anything at all, and besides, the ball could have some sentimental meaning to her. I was the only student who got to stay after school and be honored with a gift from her.*

“Oh, well, what the heck? I may as well play with it,” she said to Raymond.

Once again she opened the hatbox, took out the leather sack, and untied its gold tassel. Then she dropped the ball onto the palm of her hand.



“You sure are tarnished, and I must say very unusual, with your mysterious sound. I bet that you used to be beautiful, shiny silver.” While rolling the ball around on the palm of her hand, she noticed that it was perfectly smooth and seamless. “How peculiar. I wonder how that annoying sound got inside of you.” As she held her hand directly in the moonlight, the ball suddenly began to get very warm. She swirled it around on her palm a few times, and then clasped her hand tightly shut around it. All of a sudden, it turned scorching hot. “Ouch!” she yelled, dropping it and shaking her hand to relieve the pain.

The ball bounced once and then a second time, right into her clothes closet. She quickly went over to the closet, hoping to find it on the floor, but when she couldn’t see it anywhere, she realized that it must have gone down the laundry chute.

The laundry chute was connected to a steel tunnel, which ran down into a large canvas sack on the basement floor. She poked her head into the opening of the chute, but it was too dark to see anything, so she crawled down into the tunnel until she was up to about her waist. She listened again for the strange sound, but she couldn’t hear anything, so she crawled in a little farther until she was hanging from her ankles. Suddenly, her right ankle slipped off the corner of the opening of the chute, and then her left ankle slipped as well, and she went sliding, headfirst, down the dark tunnel into the large sack on the basement floor. Luckily, there was a pile of laundry at the bottom of the sack to soften her landing. *Wow, that*

was fun! I should of thought of doing this a long time ago, she thought.

It was dark in the sack, and as she sat quietly, she could hear the noise once again. It was a faint sound, coming from the bottom of the pile of laundry. She dug her hand down into the dirty clothes, and as she did, she noticed that what she was feeling was different than clothes. It was dry and crisp, almost like paper. Her hand suddenly felt the little ball. It was no longer hot but just a little warm. She pulled it out from the bottom of the pile, and the melodic tone became louder once again. Then, suddenly, she heard someone whistling, and she felt the laundry sack lift off the ground—with her inside it. The little ball suddenly stopped singing and she felt herself being dumped out of the laundry sack. Clearly, what was happening to her was nothing short of magical.