

*Wide O-*  
*By Elsin Ann Graffam*

Maybe I'll put my head under the pillow—no, that's no good. I can imagine him, whoever he is, sneaking up on me. Okay, that does it! I'm going to get up and stay up, put the lights on in the living room, turn on the television.

Oh, I hate going into the dark . . . there! Overhead light on, floor lamp on, TV on, nice and loud. Now I'll just sit down and relax and watch the—

Hey, what was that? Oh. Old houses creak, remember? If it creaked when Bill was here, it'll creak when he's away, and it's just—just something in the house. It's only your imagination, old girl, that's what it is. And the more sleepy you get, the more vivid your imagination will get.

All the doors are locked, right? And all the windows, ditto. Okay, then. So I feel like an idiot, trying to stay up all night. Well, sitting here in the living room is a lot better than doing what I did the last time Bill was away overnight! Locking myself in the bathroom and staying there until dawn, for heaven's sake—

Oh—Oh, the furnace clicked on, that's all that was! Calm down, girl, calm down! The trouble with you is, you read the papers. You should read the comics and stop there. No, I have to read MOTHER OF THREE ATTACKED BY INTRUDER and WOMAN FOUND BEATEN TO DEATH IN HOME. But, oh, they were so close to us! That old lady lived—what was it, only three, four blocks away? But she lived alone, and nobody knows I'm alone tonight. I hope.

What is the matter with me?! I'm acting like a child. Other women live alone—for years, even—and here I have to stay by myself for just one measly little night and I go all to pieces.

Sure seems cold in here! The furnace was on—still is on, in fact. Must be my nerves. I'll go into the kitchen and make myself a nice hot cup of tea. Good idea! Maybe that'll warm me up!

Now, where is that light switch . . . there . . . well, no wonder I'm cold, with the back door standing wide o-