

Three Thirty-Three

by

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The night it happened, Logan Thomas was having trouble sleeping. That was not unusual. Logan often had trouble sleeping. It wasn't because he was under any stress or that he was worried about anything in particular. He was very much at peace with himself and his surroundings. He lived alone in a tiny house tucked away in the woods on the side of a small mountain. He rarely saw anyone. Few people even knew Logan Thomas existed. He liked it that way. Logan was content with his life, but he often could not sleep. This was one of those sleepless nights.

Logan looked at his watch. It was 3:33 AM and he was wide awake. He knew it was exactly 3:33 AM because his watch said so, and his watch was never wrong. It automatically reset itself with the universal atomic clock every night at 1:00 AM. Maybe I should get up and try reading a book, he thought. Maybe that would make me sleepy so I can get some rest.

He had downloaded his favorite author's latest book two nights before. So far, the new book was very boring, but he thought a boring book might be just the thing to help him sleep. Logan eased his way out of bed and took his Kindle, with its boring new book, into the small den where he usually liked to read. He sat in his favorite reading chair, opened the Kindle, and synced to the last page he had read the previous night. He had only read four pages before deciding he was thirsty, so he shuffled off to the kitchen where he retrieved his favorite insulated tumbler from the cabinet over the sink. After filling the tumbler with water, he returned to the den.

He sat down once more in his favorite reading chair, placed the tumbler of water on the table next to his chair, and reached for his Kindle. It wasn't there. Maybe it fell on the floor, he thought. He looked all around his chair, but the Kindle wasn't anywhere to be found. Then he looked under his chair. No Kindle. That was strange.

Logan thought perhaps he had taken his Kindle with him when he went to the kitchen for his water. He didn't remember doing that, but he decided to look anyway. He went to the kitchen and searched. His Kindle was not there, so he reasoned there was only one other place to look. Since the Kindle was not in the den and not in the kitchen, the bedroom was the only place it could be. When he reached his bedroom, he found his Kindle on the table right next to his bed where he always put it at night. Very strange.

Picking up his Kindle, Logan returned to the den. He sat back down in his favorite chair and opened the Kindle. It displayed the last page he had read the night before. But, what about the pages he read just before going to the kitchen for water? He was certain he had read at least a page or two, but he was in no mood to fight technology and began reading what was on the screen. He immediately realized that he had, in fact, read this page earlier. How could that be?

Logan began mentally retracing his steps that night. He knew he brought the Kindle into the den and read a few pages before going for water, so how did his Kindle get back in the bedroom? He didn't remember taking it there. And, why did his book reset to the page he was on the night before? I must be losing my mind, thought Logan, shaking his head. He couldn't solve this mystery tonight, so he decided to read a few more pages in an attempt to get some sleep. After forcing himself through another page or two, he reached for the tumbler of water he had placed on the table next to his reading chair. It wasn't there.

The tumbler of water wasn't on any other table in the room. He looked on the floor next to his chair and around the room. There was no sign of any spilled water or a tumbler. Very strange.

This time, when Logan went to the kitchen, he took his Kindle with him. The only thing that made sense was that he left the tumbler in the kitchen when he was searching for the Kindle. Had he left the tumbler of water on the counter? No. The tumbler of water was not there. He put the Kindle down on the counter next to the refrigerator and opened the cabinet over the sink. His tumbler was there, right in front where he always stored it. He picked it up. It was empty and completely dry. Had he washed the tumbler, dried it, and put it back in the cabinet? He didn't remember doing so. Very strange.

Logan was very confused. He started back to the den. He needed to give this some thought. What was happening? Was there something wrong with him? Was he losing his memory? He never had trouble remembering things before. Very strange.

He was almost out of the kitchen when he remembered his Kindle. He turned around and went back for it. He clearly remembered laying it down on the counter next to the refrigerator just before he opened the cabinet to look for his water tumbler. The Kindle wasn't there. It wasn't anywhere in the kitchen.

Reluctantly, Logan headed for his bedroom, where he found the Kindle on the table next to his bed. He picked it up and opened it. It was on the last page he had read the night before, not on the page he had just read. Very strange.

Logan looked at his watch. It was 3:33AM. Exactly. Logan stared at his watch. How could it still be 3:33AM? He had gotten up and gone to the den to read. He remembered. He read several pages and then went for water. He went back and forth looking for his water tumbler and Kindle. That surely took 10 minutes, 20 minutes, maybe more. How could he have done all of that and his very precise watch that would have recently reset to the universal atomic clock, not have registered even one single minute of advancing time?

Logan looked at his watch again. The time changed to 3:34.

Ted Newsome and his assistant, Walter Jones, looked at each other with relief. Newsome and Jones were working the third shift as babysitters to the atomic clock. There wasn't much to do on the third shift. The clock pretty much took care of itself—until tonight when an alarm sounded. The clock, which normally ticked off the time in hours, minutes, seconds, and nano-

seconds, had frozen at 3:33:00:00. Newsome and Jones tried everything they had been taught to do. Nothing worked. Time had somehow come to a stop. How long ago was it—10 minutes, 20 minutes? They could only guess. Just then, the clock started again. Jones asked if they should tell anyone. Newsome said, “NO!” Jones asked what it meant that time had stopped if only for ten or twenty minutes. Newsome just shook his head and said he didn’t know and didn’t want to find out.

Most people in the world never learned that time stopped that day at precisely 3:33AM. They were all asleep or too busy to notice.

Logan Thomas noticed, but there was no one he could tell.