

The Christmas Eve Guest

It was always the best night of the year. Now it would be ruined!



By Holly K. Worthington

(Based on a true story)

“Sing the carols of the Christ child: Let your neighbors know you care” (Children’s Songbook, 51).

Shannon loved her family’s Christmas Eve traditions. First they ate fried rice and dumplings at their favorite Chinese restaurant. Then they drove around the city to look at the Christmas lights. When they got home, they read the Christmas story from the Bible together. And before bed, they got to open one present each. It was Shannon’s favorite night of the year. She could hardly wait!

Until Mom made an announcement.

“We’re having a special Christmas Eve guest this year. Remember Ms. Reed?”

Shannon groaned. “The neighbor Dad invited to church last week?”

“That’s right. Dad’s picking her up now.”

Shannon plopped into a chair. How could she relax and have fun with a stranger around? Christmas Eve was ruined! Well, Ms. Reed hadn’t come to church when Dad invited her. Maybe she wouldn’t come this time either.

But when Dad came through the door, the “special guest” was with him. Ms. Reed looked tired and kind of sad. Shannon said hello. But she didn’t want to say anything else. At dinner she just focused on her food while Mom and Dad chatted with Ms. Reed.

“Have you ever taken dance lessons?” asked a soft voice. Shannon saw that Ms. Reed was waiting for her to answer. She nodded and looked back down at her plate.



"Me too," said Ms. Reed, her voice still quiet. "What's your favorite dance style?"

Shannon shrugged, poking at a dumpling with her chopsticks.

"I love jazz," Ms. Reed said. "I was on a dance team in college. One year we traveled all over Europe. It was amazing."

Shannon looked up. That *did* sound amazing.

"What else do you like?" asked Shannon.

Ms. Reed gave a small smile. "Playing the piano. And math."

Shannon's eyes got big. "Really? Math is my favorite subject!"

Shannon talked to Ms. Reed for the rest of dinner. She

found out that Ms. Reed had a college degree in math and was studying to become a math professor when she met her husband. He had made some bad choices and was now in prison.

After dinner Shannon sat by Ms. Reed while they drove around to look at the Christmas lights. And when they read the Christmas story, she shared her scriptures with Ms. Reed so she could follow along.

Soon it was time to open presents. Shannon got some cozy purple pajamas. She couldn't wait to put them on! But she felt a little bad that Ms. Reed didn't have a present.

Just then Mom handed a gift to Ms. Reed. Ms. Reed smiled shyly and unwrapped a pair of dark blue socks. She looked up at Mom with watery eyes. "Thank you. You really didn't need to get me anything."

Shannon went to her bedroom and put on her new pajamas. She couldn't stop thinking about Ms. Reed. She seemed so grateful to get socks for Christmas!

As Shannon slipped her own fuzzy socks on, she heard beautiful music begin to play. She ran downstairs to find Mom and Dad singing carols while Ms. Reed played the piano. Shannon joined in. As she sang, a warm feeling grew in her heart. *I guess it's not so bad to have a guest on Christmas Eve*, she thought.

On Sunday, Ms. Reed came to church and sat with Shannon's family during sacrament meeting. She looked really happy. Shannon smiled as she shared her hymn-book with Ms. Reed. Maybe it was time to add a new Christmas Eve tradition. ◆

The author lives in Idaho, USA.



I show love to my neighbor who lives alone by visiting her and drawing her pictures!

Jill K., age 10, California, USA