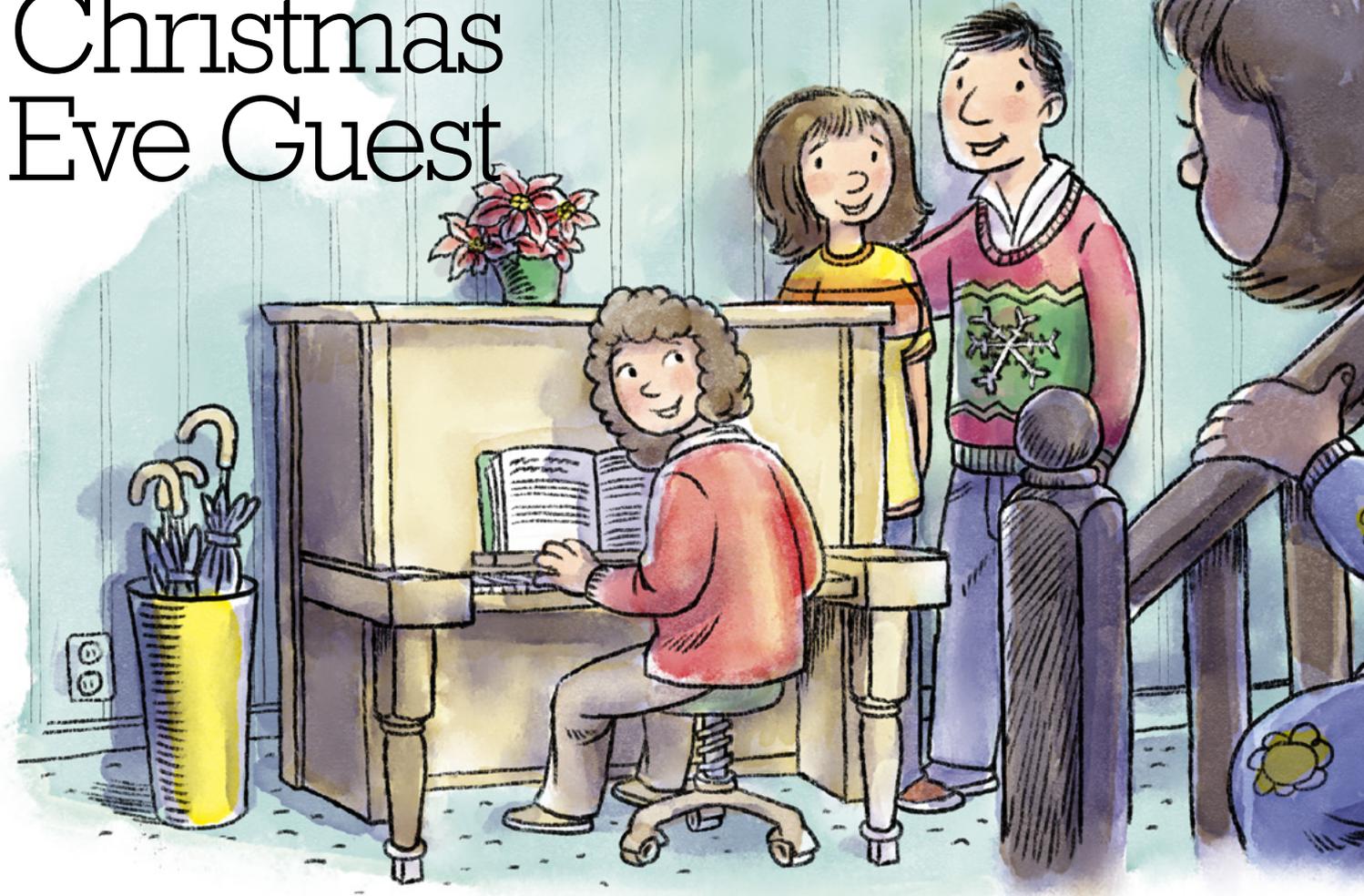


The Christmas Eve Guest

*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).

Clara loved her family’s Christmas Eve traditions. First they ate baked fish for dinner and Christmas cookies for dessert. Then they visited the Christmas market. When they got home, they read the Christmas story from the Bible together. And before bed they lit the Christmas tree for the first time and got to open one present each. It was Clara’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. Rainer?”

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

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

Clara plopped into a chair. How could she relax and have fun with a stranger around? Christmas Eve was ruined! Well, Ms. Rainer 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. Rainer looked tired and kind of sad. Clara 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. Rainer.

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



“Me too,” said Ms. Rainer, her voice still quiet. “What’s your favorite dance style?”

Clara shrugged and pushed her vegetables around her plate.

“I love ballet,” Ms. Rainer said. “I was on a dance team at university. One year we traveled all over Europe. It was amazing.”

Clara looked up. That did sound amazing.

“What else do you like?” asked Clara.

Ms. Rainer gave a small smile. “Playing the piano. And math.”

Clara’s eyes got big. “Really? Math is my favorite subject!”

Clara talked to Ms. Rainer for the rest of dinner. She found out that Ms. Rainer 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 Clara stayed by Ms. Rainer while they walked around the Christmas market. And when they read the Christmas story, she shared her scriptures with Ms. Rainer so she could follow along.

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

Just then Mom handed a gift to Ms. Rainer. Ms. Rainer 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.”

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

As Clara 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. Rainer played the piano. Clara 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. Rainer came to church and sat with Clara’s family during sacrament meeting. She looked really happy. Clara smiled as she shared her hymnbook with Ms. Rainer. 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