

A New Christmas Tradition



It was the first weekend in December, and Andy and Shelia Harris were about to kickoff their first holiday season with their four grandchildren. The house was decorated from top to bottom with Christmas cheer. There was a seasonal display set up under the stairs, an elf was climbing the banister, and carolers were singing under street lamps on a tabletop nearby.

There was just one corner in the Harris house that was not yet decorated. It was a tree upstairs in the loft that stood bare, waiting for lights, garland, and ornaments. This tree was special, because it was the grandchildren's tree to decorate. They would be arriving any minute to spend the weekend and get started.



Sheila had spent the previous evening writing poems for each of the children and had placed them in their stockings. The poems contained clues for finding baskets filled with ornaments, which had been hidden around the house. The kids arrived and Sheila looked forward to watching the fun they would have figuring out the clues and then hunting for their baskets.



But Kylie didn't need a clue to spot the elf on the banister. She alerted her younger cousin. "Look Deacon," she said. "The magic elf is here!"



Luci was more interested in her picture on the shelf. "Grandma, you put our pictures in special holiday frames," she said.

"Yes I did," Sheila said. "I want everything to look like Christmas."



Garrison said, “Let’s see what’s in our stockings now,” and all four children gathered on the hearth beneath their stockings and waited for permission.

“I want you to pull the cards out first and read the clues,” Sheila told them. “And there are special hats and headbands beneath them. Go ahead and put those on.”

The kids had fun trying on their hats and quickly ran to Grandma’s mirror to see how they looked. Kylie and Deacon decided to be silly. “Let’s make a face,” Deacon said.



Then Luci and Kylie took a moment to strike a pose in their Christmas headbands. They stood there for a moment admiring their reflections.

They returned to the family room to read the clues and find their ornaments. With a little help from his older brother, Deacon read his first, and then ran to the breakfast nook to check the cupboard in the bench. He pulled out his basket and said, “Hey, this basket has a ‘D’ on it.”



“That’s right,” Sheila said. “You each have an initial ornament that stands for your name. That’s how you will know you’ve found the right one.”



Then Luci hunted her basket and found it in the dog’s crate, followed by Kylie who located her ornaments in the bottom of the china cabinet. Finally, Garrison followed the clues on his card, which led him to the built-in cabinet by the big Christmas tree.



Now that they all had found their ornaments they went upstairs to decorate the kids' tree. Garrison strung the berry garland, while Deacon found an instrument ornament and pretended to play it. Then, all four grandchildren started by hanging their own special initial ornament, and went on to hang every last ornament in their baskets. It turned out to be a beautiful tree.

Later, as the December daylight was beginning to fade, they all sat down to hot cocoa with candy cane stirrers. The fresh, cool taste of peppermint was a nice treat in the rich hot chocolate.

The next morning, the kids gathered in the kitchen to make Christmas cookies. As they baked, the kitchen was



filled with the sweet scent of vanilla, and after they cooled, the children decorated them to take home to their parents. Kylie planned to give her favorite to her mother.

That afternoon, they all climbed into Grandpa Andy's truck and waved goodbye to Grandma Sheila. "Let's do this again next year," they shouted, as they backed down the driveway.



"You can count on it," Sheila called back to them.

When she returned to the house, Sheila saw that the kids had left a special message for her—candy canes placed to form two hearts. "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas," she said to herself, smiling.



The End