

The Day the Nonmembers Moved In

By Orson Scott Card

Uncle Lamar and Aunt Daverla lived in Orem for seventeen years before they met a nonmember. Their children had never seen a nonmember. Their dog had never pooped on a nonmember's lawn. They were totally unprepared when their next door neighbors, the Cannons, moved away and a new family moved in.

It started the day the for-sale sign disappeared from the front lawn. Aunt Daverla phoned us and said, "Benulda Miner knows the real estate man's cousin's mother-in-law, and she told us the new family *aren't* members."

In Utah, you don't ask, "Aren't members of what?" You can be a member of Rotary, Lions, Cub Pack 1134, the Senior Citizens Munch Bunch, and the city council but if you aren't a Mormon, you aren't a member.

"I wonder if they'll smoke," Aunt Daverla said. My wife said, "If they do, they'll probably go in the bathroom and lock the door," and Aunt Daverla said she was probably right. "But I just don't know. Will it be safe to let the children play with them? What if they have long hair?"

Daverla was still talking about how she would have to lock her children indoors when the conversation ended. My wife and I forgot about it, until Thanksgiving brought us down to the big family dinner at Mom's place.

When we got inside the front door, they were in the middle of the report on the Nonmember Family, but they were more than willing to start again from the beginning. "We were so pleasantly *surprised*," Aunt Daverla said, while Uncle Lamar nodded his agreement. "Short hair, no dog, clean children, don't smoke. Everything we could have hoped for. They don't even swear. They could practically be members."

Lamar leaned forward eagerly. "They *hunt*, too," he said, and for about

fifteen minutes we heard about the Nonmember Family's twelve-point buck trophy and the three rifles.

"They get at least one deer every year," Lamar concluded, beaming with approbation. "They could practically be members."

Which led to the obvious question: "Are you friendshiping them?"

"Friendshipping them!" Daverla exclaimed. "Friendshipping! Why, no sooner did we see that they were all right but what I baked a cake and Lamar went to the garage to gas up

myself. It was a spice cake with penuche icing, you know."

"I woulda liked to have a piece of that cake, all right," said Uncle Lamar.

"But, I figure that cake's been chalked up in heaven as good marks for us, even if the Nonmember Family *isn't* interested in the Church."

Then it was time for Thanksgiving dinner, and I've got to admit it, Mom cooks a wonderful turkey, even if her dressing is always wet. My wife pretended that the candied yams were any good, and then dinner was over

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the lawnmower. But it was so *digusting*. Lamar got the mower going and what do you think? Brother Andrews from across the street was already out there, mowing their lawn. And the Nonmember Family lives next door to *us*."

"And then Daverla goes over there with the cake, and there's the presidency of the Relief Society and the Honeywells from the other side and Sister Johnson from through the block," Lamar said, and Daverla interrupted to say, "I was so mad I could have spit nails. *Our* next door neighbor, *our* golden contacts, and everybody else wants to muscle in and get all the glory."

It turned out that everybody left a cake, and Lamar mowed the back yard while Brother Andrews mowed the front.

"But it hasn't done any good at all," Daverla concluded, a little miffed.

"Why not? With that kind of fellowship . . ."

"Oh, they're Seventh-Day Adventists. We no sooner started talking religion than they whipped out these tracts and started trying to convert *us*. As if we didn't already have the truth. I almost wished I'd kept the cake

and we were getting ready to head back to Salt Lake City, when I asked, "What was that Nonmember Family's name, anyway?"

"Oh, Muskoblitz or Moskowitch. Anyway, some Russian name or Polish or Austrian or something. Couldn't pronounce it." And then Uncle Lamar went back to the football game. That was all we heard about the Nonmember Family, but on the way home my wife turned to me and said, "You know something?"

I offered the opinion that I knew several things, and she disagreed.

"No, no, honey, I mean you know what I want to do?"

"What?"

"I think it'd be fun to move back to Orem someday."

"Sure," I agreed, "as soon as the kids are old enough to understand."

"But when we go," she insisted, "let's tell everybody we aren't Mormons!"

I kind of liked the idea. After the initial visit, we'd never be bothered by our neighbors again. But then we realized that the first time we went to church the game would be up. Oh well. The idea had its attractions for a few minutes.