

Echo the Christmas Parrot

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

The little girl reached high up on her tip toes. She opened the mailbox and carefully put her letter inside. Happy, Lucy skipped back home, sure that Santa would be able to help her.

At the North Pole, it was getting very busy. All the elves were working hard, making toys, wrapping gifts, and taking care of the reindeer. Everybody had to pay close attention to their work so everything would be ready in time for Christmas Eve. There was no room for mistakes.

One elf named Rusty was working by himself in the big garage. His job was to make sure Santa's sleigh was clean and polished. In one corner of the garage sat a large green parrot on a tall perch. Rusty called her Echo because she often repeated things he said.

"Jingle bells..." he started singing to himself, as he worked.

"Jingle bells!" squawked the parrot.

"Jingle all the way," sang Rusty. Sometimes it was nice to have Echo with him. She kept him company. Other times it drove him bonkers.

Rusty noticed that some of the gold paint on the sleigh was faded. It needed repainting. The elf got out the paint can and set to work painting the gold swirls decorating the side of the cherry red sleigh.

"Here comes Santa Claus..." he sang.

"Here comes Santa Claus!" squawked Echo.

"Right down Santa Claus Lane," continued Rusty, paying close attention to his paintbrush so he wouldn't make a mistake.

"Here comes Santa Claus!" screeched the loud bird, again. Rusty frowned. That wasn't how the song went. He ignored her, busy with his work.

"Here comes Santa Claus!" repeated Echo. The parrot wasn't going to stop. Rusty got annoyed.

"Echo, stop it. I'm trying to concentrate."

"SANTA CLAUS!" shrieked the parrot.

“How’s it going, Rusty? All ready for take-off?” asked Santa, entering the room. A handful of elves carrying clipboards came bustling in behind him. Rusty was so surprised he turned around quickly, knocking over the paint can. Gold ribbons of paint spilled all over the floor.

“Santa! Hello! I didn’t see you come in,” said the embarrassed elf.

“I told you,” said the parrot. Rusty made a face at the bird.

“Tsk, tsk, paint all over the floor,” muttered one of the elves. He marked something down on his clipboard. “That will take time to clean up. Not good, not good.”

“I’m sure Rusty will clean it up in no time,” smiled Santa. “How is everything going so far?”

“I’ll have it painted, polished and ready for you before Christmas Eve, Santa!” promised Rusty.

“I know you will, Rusty. I just popped in to take a look and say hello,” said the big man, kindly. “There is so much to do before Christmas Eve. I’ll see you then.” Santa walked towards the door, with the small group of elves following behind him. “Now then, Bongo, how is the mailroom? Has your team opened all the letters from the children?”

“Letters from the children!” cried Echo.

“Yes, Santa,” said Bongo, ignoring the parrot. “We have matched all the right toys with all the right children. Except for one. It’s a problem. Lucy has asked us to bring her a friend for Christmas. She’s lonely.”

“Hmm,” replied Santa. “That’s a tricky one. Can we give her a doll that’s as big as she is?”

“Of course, Santa, sir,” said Bongo. “But she did write that she would like someone to talk with. I don’t know if a doll is good enough,” worried the elf.

“Good point,” answered Santa. “I know, what about a dog or cat?” Santa knew that many children loved animals. “A pet can be an excellent listener!”

“An excellent listener!” squawked the parrot. Rusty gestured for Echo to quiet down.

“That would be perfect, Santa, except we checked, and Lucy is allergic to cats and dogs. And they are good listeners, but not so great at holding a conversation.” Bongo was stumped. Santa scratched his head. Suddenly, Rusty smiled.

“Santa, I think I have an idea!”

On Christmas morning, Lucy raced downstairs to the Christmas tree. Perched on the top branches sat a beautiful green parrot with a pretty red bow around her neck. Lucy couldn’t believe it! “Mom, Daddy,” called the little girl. “Come look at what Santa brought me!”

“Santa brought me!” squawked the happy parrot.

“Hello, I’m Lucy,” said the girl.

“Hello, I’m Echo,” replied the bird.

“Oh my goodness,” smiled Lucy. “I think we’re going to be great friends!”

“Great friends,” agreed Echo. “Merry Christmas!”

Questions

1. What did Lucy asked Santa for in her letter?
2. What was Rusty the elf's job?
3. What was Rusty's idea to solve Santa's problem?
4. Why do you think the parrot was a good present for Lucy?