

# **Elmo, The Robot Cat**

by: Judy Holland

There was a robot called Elmo who was sitting in Harley's Computer Store waiting to have someone purchase him.

He was very lonely and sad as people would just look at him and his price and then continue shopping. They were looking for the real, "Tickle Me Elmo," the plush toy. Elmo was bored staying at the store, especially when the store closed because there was no one around, except for the store cleaners. The store cleaners never noticed Elmo on the shelf.

Elmo was a robot cat who could get his rechargeable battery powered up by electricity, and he could be used for reminding people of their daily important appointments. Elmo was programmed to talk, and to give time, and reminder dates three times a day. No one was interested to purchase Elmo until one day when the store keeper decided that Elmo sat on the shelf too long, and no one showed any interest in him, so he was put on sale at 50% off. Elmo was furry and looked like a stuffed real cat. He was very soft to touch and all his operating buttons were behind him under a fur flap.

Elmo was finally purchased for \$12.50 by an elderly couple, Sam and Charlotte, who were starting to forget important appointments and dates. This elderly couple's children were grown up and lived away from home on their own, so the seniors thought that having a cat that could talk and remind them of important dates would be very nice. They could use some noise in the house as it was very quiet living by themselves. Elmo could also be programmed to store

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shopping lists, and when the seniors said “shopping list,” he would read out the shopping list for them. As time went by Sam and Charlotte noticed that Elmo was something special because he didn’t only tell time he reminded them of their appointments by talking. Elmo began to say other things like, “Good Morning,” “Good Afternoon,” “Good Evening,” and “Good Night.” The elderly couple was amused by Elmo, and they both would start talking to Elmo, never expecting any replies. They began to notice that Elmo had started to purr when they got up in the morning, whenever they got close to him. Elmo would usually just say, “Good Morning.”

The elderly couple would take Elmo to their bedroom at night and set him on the dresser. They would take him into the living room while they watched television. Soon Elmo got used to the television programs that the couple enjoyed watching and then he began to remind them about when their favorite show would start and what channel to turn to watch their show. The elderly couple didn’t realize that Elmo had a memory chip that had preprogrammed him for special times, and he was able to do more than just tell time and dates. The elderly couple didn’t realize what they were getting when they got Elmo. They didn’t complete reading the instructions on Elmo as he had many options they were not aware of, so this elderly couple was in for a surprise!

Elmo had become a part of their family as he was so important to have around. The couple began to talk to Elmo as if he was a real cat, and he would respond by purring. Elmo was beginning to feel very important because he was spoken to and he was getting attention that he never had before when he was at the store. He was so happy to have some people that were nice to him and gave him so much attention. He was very pleased with what he could do that he actually surprised himself.

Then one day the grandchildren came home and their older children were there. Elmo was left alone until he blurted out the time which was a big mistake. A granddaughter grabbed Elmo and began walking around with him on her arm. She squeezed him so tight that he was sure his wires inside were almost touching together and making him feel hot. Then she was poking at his eyes and trying to see if she could get them out. She was tugging at his whiskers to see if she could pull some out. Elmo was worried, and he wondered if anyone would notice that this little girl was being so rough with him. Who would care? He was just a stuffed kitty cat that happened to be abused by some little girl who thought he was only a stuffed animal. The abuse continued, and the couple forgot about Elmo because they were busy entertaining the children's parents. The little girl got Elmo sticky with ice cream, and when she found something else to play with, she just tossed Elmo in the corner. Elmo laid there for a long time, and he wasn't able to talk because his battery was low.

Finally, Sam came into the living room to sit down to watch television and to relax when he noticed Elmo on the floor all messed up and really needing to be recharged. He got a damp cloth and wiped out all the stickiness out of Elmo. Then he gently brushed him and when Elmo was dry, Sam set him on the dresser and plugged him in. He stood a couple of hard cover library books in front of Elmo so he was hidden from the children. Elmo was so relieved that Sam finally rescued him from the little girl. He was okay and he went into sleep mode until he was fully charged.

Elmo was hidden away until the grandchildren left and things were back to normal. To Elmo, this seemed to be such a long time because he was so used to the attention and the talking when he was reminding the elderly couple of the appointments and other chores that they had to do. Then Sam explained to his wife, Charlotte, about finding Elmo on the floor, all sticky and messed up. They decided that next time the grandchildren came, they would hide Elmo in their bedroom. Elmo was so happy to hear what they had planned for the next visit when the grandchildren came. He was so happy that they cared for him that much. Elmo didn't want that little girl to carry him around and hold him so tight again. He would enjoy staying in the bedroom and having some peace and quiet when his senior companions had such rowdy company.

After the company left, Elmo was happy and the next day he was purring before he told the time. He managed to tell the elderly couple, "Thanks for saving me." Elmo was feeling so much better since he was cleaned up and recharged. Things were back to normal, and Elmo was talking more in sentences. He started to remind the elderly couple that it was time for their medication at the right time. They were very surprised when he did that. They told him that they completely forgot about him when the grandchildren arrived with their parents. They told Elmo that they were really sorry about what happened to him. Elmo told Sam and Charlotte that he would remind them to hide him in their bedroom the next time the grandchildren arrived. Elmo told the elderly couple that everyone had learned something from this experience with the grandchildren. Elmo said, "It's kind of my fault too because I should have reminded you. That's my job, but now we know this for the next time."

Elmo learned a lot from watching television with Sam and Charlotte. That's where he  
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learned to make sentences. He began having good conversations with them in the evenings, sometimes talking about the programs they watched. Elmo also reminded the couple about the weather conditions: whether it would be sunny and calm, or windy and rainy.

Elmo also learned the names of the granddaughters from Sam and Charlotte. He also learned that they were family, and that the little girl didn't mean to hurt him. It was just that she was a baby and she was careless with Elmo. The elderly couple told Elmo that the next time they would visit, it wouldn't be so bad because the little girl would be older and most likely more gentle than their first meeting. This explanation made Elmo so happy and content. Elmo had also realized that he had more family and that things would be getting better in the future for everyone.