

'Twas the month before Christmas and all through the North Pole you could hear Santa shout: “Rudolph! Rudolph! What is the meaning of this – a Reverse Parade?!”

Santa didn't usually raise his voice, something must be very wrong, thought Rudolph. He had better see what was going on.

“Santa, what is it? How can I help?” asked Rudolph.

Santa replied, “I was online reading Trent Hills Now and saw that Campbellford is having a Reverse Parade. What does that mean? I can still go there for a parade, but it has to be backwards?”

Rudolph shook his head.

“Santa, we won't be going because of all the cancellations, but the good folks in Campbellford have figured it out how to have a parade without you being there.”

“Oh, okay,” said Santa, somewhat doubtfully as he stroked his beard thoughtfully. “Hmmm, I need one of our best elves to travel to Campbellford and find out how this works. Who do you recommend?”

“That's easy, Santa, we will send Shimmer the ⁽¹⁾ _____ . She'll blend right in and give us a full report. The Visitor Information Centre will be her first stop.”

“I knew I could count on you, Rudolph.”

Rudolph was so excited to tell Shimmer the news!

Shimmer's favourite task at Christmas was making sure the elves had everything they needed to make toys for boys and girls. She had just finished putting the final touches on her order when Rudolph arrived.

“Shimmer, you won't believe what just happened,” said Rudolph. “Santa has a special ⁽²⁾ _____ . for you. You're going to Campbellford to find

out about the Reverse Parade.”

“Santa picked me?!” squealed Shimmer.
Then she panicked. “But what am I to do?”

Rudolph showed her the Google Map, explaining how she had to visit each marked address to find out how a Reverse Parade works.
Rudolph whispered, “Parades are one of Santa’s favourite things to do. I think he’s worried they might not need him next year!”

“Oh, Rudolph, I understand! Of course I will go!” Shimmer said. “Santa’s new sleigh needs a trial run, maybe I could catch a ride?”

“Go get ready, we leave just before dawn!” Rudolph responded.

Shimmer was ready for her adventure in Campbellford. She put on her fashion forward holiday outfit – a red sparkly skirt, with her shiniest green belt.

(3) _____ took one look and remarked, “Now I know how you got your name!”

Rudolph found the perfect landing spot, 4) _____ , located across from one of the locations on the Reverse Parade map. He had arranged for Deal Taxi to meet him there to chauffeur Shimmer to the Visitor Information Centre and then around town.

“Have fun, Shimmer, we’ll see you back here tonight,” Rudolph said.

Shimmer greeted her driver, Sam, with her brightest smile.

“I’m here for the Holiday Reverse Parade, But take me to the Visitor Information Centre first.”

“Off we go, ma’am!”

“Whoa, wait a minute!” shouted Shimmer. “This is supposed to be a reverse parade, why are we going forward?”

Sam chuckled.

“Reverse doesn’t mean we drive in reverse or walk backwards, it means WE are the ones moving instead of the parade moving past us! Folks have decorated their homes and businesses to show their holiday spirit. You create your own route from the map!”

“Ohhhh, now I understand,” Shimmer said, breathing easier. She had been afraid of getting motion sickness riding backwards all day!

“After I go to the centre, it's straight to the businesses. Maybe I can do some shopping along the way!”

Shimmer spent the rest of the day, going to different spots on the map. She was delighted with all of the decorating that the folks had done. There were gnomes, winter wonderland themes, glitter and sparkle, all of the holiday characters; she especially liked the inflatable Rudolph.

The Campbellford ⁵⁾ _____ and _____ display on Second Street she was happy to see. They're always in the parade.

As shopping is Shimmer’s specialty, she knew just where to go to get treats for her fellow elves. She ordered five dozen sprinkled donuts and pure Ontario maple syrup for Santa’s pancakes. And the ⁶⁾ _____ she knew would be gobbled up in no time by the reindeer.

Shimmer found a cute ⁷⁾ _____ at the Paint Store for Mrs. Claus and stopped by the drugstore to pick up some allergy medicine for Blitzen; he had developed an allergy to straw, of all things! He would be so ⁸⁾ _____ to have his holiday spirit back again!

And, of course, she had to purchase a little something for herself. The folks were super friendly in the shops, the boutique owner showed her a pair of earrings that had just the right amount of sparkle, and the ⁹⁾ _____ - _____ shoes fit perfectly!

Shimmer had time to spare so she used it for some ¹⁰⁾ _____, a quick mani-pedi at one of the salons.

She walked around the downtown one more time, to see once again how the businesses had participated, even the lawyer's office with a decorated orange tree. Santa, she knew, will be glad to learn what an outstanding job everyone had done to make this an ¹¹⁾ _____ .

Then it was time to check out the reverse parade locations at nighttime. Shimmer's first visit was to the retirement residence, and the sight filled her with joy. The residents had outdone themselves with their ¹²⁾ _____. One of them waved from her window and it made Shimmer feel really good inside. She was so glad that Santa had given her this assignment. Santa didn't have to worry, the ¹³⁾ _____ was alive and well in Campbellford, thought Shimmer.

Then she remembered, a lady at one of the houses had given her an envelope for Santa. She had better make sure that he got it.

It was time to head back to meet Rudolph and the others to return home.

Shimmer was so exhausted she slept all the way back to the North Pole.

As the sleigh came to a stop, Shimmer awoke with a start and jumped up. "The envelope, we have to take it to Santa right away!" she exclaimed.

Mrs. Claus came to the door at the sound of loud knocking. "What's all the ruckus about?" she asked with a trace of alarm.

"We have a special letter for Santa!" Shimmer said excitedly. "Please go get him, it's really important. And he will need his glasses!"

Santa had overheard the exchange and approached them with his glasses in hand and a hint of dread in his voice.

"Is this reverse parade thing as bad as I feared?" he asked, with a slight tremble in his voice. "Will no one miss me showing up in their town for a quick visit before

Dec. 25?"

"No, no, no, Santa, it's just 2020. It's been that kind of year, you know, with all the changes and everything. I can tell you, though, everyone is looking forward to seeing you again in person next year. There wasn't a one who didn't send you
14) _____ . They still want you to come into their homes
Christmas Eve."

Santa clapped his hands, and then rubbed his tummy.

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear it. I was afraid I wasn't wanted anymore."

Santa then read the letter he had been given and gave out with a hearty laugh when he reached the end.

"This is great news! The folks in Campbellford want me to do 15) _____
_____ with them! Mrs. Claus, we have some planning to do.
Like, how do I fire up that Zoom thing?"

Shimmer heaved a huge sigh of relief.

All was well again at the North Pole.

And she had a new pair of shoes. And earrings, too!