

THE SHOEMAKER AND THE ELVES

Once upon a time there lived a shoemaker and his wife. They were good people but they were old and poor.

One day the shoemaker said to his wife, "I have only enough leather to make one more pair of shoes. If the shoes do not fetch a good price, we shall have to close our shop."

That night the shoemaker cut out the leather for the shoes, left it on his workbench and went to bed.

"I will sew the shoes tomorrow," he said wearily.

The next day when he went into his shop, there on the counter stood a most beautiful pair of shoes! In no time at all a customer came into the shop bought the shoes and paid a good price for them. The astonished shoemaker and his wife rejoiced as now they had enough money to buy leather for two pairs of shoes.

So the next night the shoemaker cut out the leather for the two pairs of shoes, left it on his workbench and went to bed. The next day on the counter sat two of the most beautiful pairs of shoes the shoemaker and his wife had ever seen! While they were still admiring the excellent workmanship, a wealthy customer entered the store, bought one pair of the shoes and paid a handsome price for them. Before long the second pair of shoes were purchased by a woman who vowed to tell her friends about the wonderful little shop and the excellent quality of the shoes.

Now the shoemaker and his wife had enough money to buy leather for four pairs of shoes. As before the shoemaker cut out the leather, left it on his workbench and went to bed. In the morning the finished shoes were sitting on the counter. The shoemaker had no trouble selling the shoes as they were of such excellent quality. Word spread far and wide of the wonderful shoes and the little shoe shop. This went on until the shoemaker and his wife were no longer poor.

One day the shoemaker's wife said, "Let us stay up tonight to see who it is that has been making the beautiful shoes."

"Indeed," said the shoemaker. "I am curious to know who has been so kind to us."

So that night the shoemaker and his wife hid behind the curtain and waited to see what would happen. Around midnight they heard a tinkling sound and Lo! and Behold! two little elves slid through the window on a moonbeam! They immediately set to work assembling the leather which the shoemaker had left on the workbench into beautiful shoes. As they worked they sang:

♪ "Tap, tap, tap with the hammer. ♪
Stitch, stitch, stitch with the thread.
We work all night on the shoes
♪ While the good man is in bed." ♪

When all of the leather had been stitched into beautiful shoes, the elves hopped on a moonbeam and were gone in a twinkling.

The next day the wife said to the shoemaker, "What good little creatures they are, but did you notice they did not have any nice clothes or shoes."

"I did, indeed," said the shoemaker. "They have helped us when we were poor. Now it is our turn to help them."

"I will sew them each a new outfit," exclaimed the wife.

"And I will make them each a new pair of shoes," agreed the shoemaker.

In a few days when all was ready, instead of leather, the shoemaker placed 2 tiny pairs of shoes on the workbench. His wife added two tiny outfits each consisting of a tiny shirt and a tiny pair of pants. That night they again hid behind the curtain to await the arrival of the elves. Around about midnight they heard a tinkling sound and the two little elves slid through the window on a moonbeam. When they saw the new clothes on the workbench, they jumped with glee. They quickly put on the outfits and shoes. Then they sang and danced around the workbench.

♪ "Oh, happy elves are we, ♪
Dressed in such finery.
The shoemaker and his wife
Will have a happy life!"

The shoemaker and his wife were filled with joy to see the little creatures so happy. Then the elves jumped on a moonbeam and were gone in a twinkling!

The elves never returned to the shoemaker's shop but the good fortune they brought to the shoemaker and his wife lasted them for the rest of their lives.

The End