

The Shoemaker and the Elves

By Brothers Grimm

Once upon a time there was a shoemaker who worked very hard. He was a very honest man and always did what he could to help others but this meant that he was very poor until one day, all he had left was the leather to make one last pair of shoes.

Before going to bed that night he cut the leather out ready to make his final pair of shoes the following day and soon went to bed. In the morning he had his breakfast and quickly went to set about his work when, to his surprise, he saw that there was no leather left but in its place a beautiful pair of new shoes. He could not believe his eyes as he carefully studied the wonderfully made shoes. There was not a stitch out of place.

Later that day a customer came into the shoemaker's shop and was very taken with the beautiful pair of shoes, so much so that he gladly offered the



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shoemaker more money than usual for the shoes. This meant that the shoemaker now had enough money to buy leather to make two more pairs of shoes. That night he cut out the leather, again, ready to make the shoes the following day and went to bed.

The next morning when the shoemaker went to his workshop he was amazed at the sight that greeted him, two pairs of perfectly made shoes. Soon people came into the shop and they were so delighted with the wonderful quality of the shoes that they again paid the shoemaker extra money. The shoemaker was so pleased and he went out to buy leather to make four new pairs of shoes.

The following day he was greeted by the familiar sight in his workshop of four perfectly made pairs of new shoes and so it went on for time to come, what was made ready the night before was finished by the following morning. Word had spread in the village of the beautiful shoes sold by the shoemaker and soon his business was thriving and instead of the poor man he once was, he was rather well off and able to help others again.

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One winter evening near Christmas the shoemaker was sitting by the fire with his wife when he said "I would like to sit up tonight and watch to see who it is that comes to make the shoes each night and does such beautiful work for me". The shoemaker's wife thought that this was a wonderful idea and so, instead of going to bed, they left a light burning in the workshop and hid in the corner of the room to watch what would happen.

As the clock struck midnight, to the amazement of the shoemaker and his wife, in snuck two tiny little elves, with barely a stitch of clothing between them and certainly not enough to keep them warm on such a cold winters night. They hopped up onto the shoemaker's workbench and quickly set to work. They stitched and they sewed, tapped and they rapped with such amazing speed that the shoemaker could not take his eyes of the little elves. Before long the elves carefully placed the new shoes on the workbench, jumped down and skipped off into the night. "Well, I'll be" said the shoemaker, "I would never have believed it!"



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The following day the shoemaker's wife said to her husband "I have not been able to stop thinking about those poor little elves all night. They have helped us every night and enabled us to grow rich and help others and yet they do not have any proper clothing to keep them warm. I will make them each a shirt and waistcoat, trousers and a coat so that they need not be cold anymore. You could make them some tiny shoes too". The shoemaker thought this was a wonderful idea and he set about making some new clothes for the tiny elves to say thank you.

That night, instead of cutting out the leather, the shoemaker carefully laid out the clothes that he and his wife had made and again they hid in the workshop to see what the little elves would do.

As the night before, on the stroke of midnight the two elves came dancing into the room and hopped up on to the workbench where they stopped and looked in amazement. Laid about before them were the two sets of clothes so that they need never feel the cold again. Delighted they put on their new clothes and skipped around the room before leaving.

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The elves never returned again after that night, the shoemaker did not need their help anymore and so the elves went on to help somebody else who was in need, but they always knew how much the shoemaker appreciated their help and having seen such glee on their faces that night, the shoemaker always knew how much the little elves loved their new clothes.

