

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER

Once upon a time there was a poor and honest shoemaker, who had worked hard all his life but wasn't rich at all. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't save enough for more than just one piece of leather - enough to make only one pair of shoes.

Every evening he would cut out the leather and prepare it for the next day, so that he could start working early in the morning. He was a poor and honest man and he went to bed with a light heart, because his conscience was clear and he had left his troubles to God. This night wasn't any different than any other night and the man soon fell asleep.

When he woke up in the morning he sat at his work bench and looked for the leather, but it was missing. Instead he found a new pair of shoes, already made. The man didn't know how it could have happened but he knew it was the weirdest thing that had ever happened to him. He looked at how the shoes were made to see whether they had any faults, but no matter how carefully he looked, he couldn't find a single bad stitch. The job was perfect. "A masterpiece!" he said. The shoemaker sighed, because these shoes were so much better than his. So there was nothing he could do but sell

the shoes. A customer soon entered the shop and the shoes fit his feet perfectly, so he bought them for twice the price the shoemaker usually charged. With the money he earned, he bought twice as much leather as normal. That meant he could make two pairs of shoes the next morning. Again he cut out the leather and went to bed.

The next morning he woke up to find that someone has done the work for him again, and two pairs of shoes were waiting on his work bench. He was astonished by the faultless work that had happened overnight. He waited for clients to enter his shop. Soon two men came in and bought the shoes. They liked them so much, that they paid the shoemaker quite a handsome amount of money. With it he bought enough leather for four pairs of shoes and just like every other night he cut out the leather so that it could be ready in the morning.

When he woke up the next morning he saw eight pairs of shoes - perfectly sewn, polished and laid out on his work bench.

This continued for quite a long time - so long that the shoemaker and his wife became just not well off but incredibly rich. They had no problems of any sort now that they had enough money to live a wealthy life.

A day before Christmas, as the shoemaker and his wife were sitting before the fireplace, having breakfast, he said, "I think I want to finally understand who comes every day and does my job for me. The workshop will be closed tomorrow, so I can stay up all night." His wife agreed and in the evening they left a candle burning in the workshop, so that they could see better.

At midnight the man was hidden behind the curtains waiting, when two naked elves entered the room. They were so cheerful and so happy that you would think they were Santa's elves. They sat on the shoemaker's bench and started measuring and sewing, and



stitching so fast that their hands couldn't be seen. They didn't stop for a second until the job was done. They finished long before dawn. As soon as the two elves finished their job, they disappeared into the thin air.

The next day at breakfast the wife said, "We should be thankful to the dwarfs. They have made us rich and since they started coming we have no troubles at all. Don't you think it would be a good idea to give them a gift?"

"Yes, that's a great idea. But what should we give them?" asked the shoemaker. "They wore no clothes and it is a pity to walk naked in this cold winter," she replied. "You're right, it is a pity and it's not very decent either!" the shoemaker added.

So the shoemaker's wife prepared a shirt, a waistcoat, trousers and a coat for each of the elves, and left them on the bench for the elves to see when they came at midnight. The shoemaker left a pair of shoes for each of them and hid himself.

When the elves came they sat down to work, but they couldn't find the leather. Instead there were clothes and shoes lying before them. They started laughing and seemed to be delighted by the present.

The elves put their clothes on and started dancing and singing. That night they left the house without working and never came back again, but the old couple lived happily and wealthily ever after.