

# The Elves and the Shoemaker

Retold as a **Read-Out-Loud Play** for one to four voices.

Adapted and retold from the famous Grimm's Fairy Tale  
by *Ellie Hallett*



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# The Elves and the Shoemaker

Take it in turns to read the story row by row.

Make the words in bold sound as if you are the character who is speaking, and then change into your normal voice for the storyteller parts where the text is in non-bold.

Don't forget to pause at the commas and full stops!

*Have fun!*

Once upon a time there was a shoemaker and his wife who lived happily in a small town in Germany.

The shoemaker worked very hard, but one day he said to his wife ...

**'I think we have a serious problem. I have only enough leather to make one more pair of shoes.'**

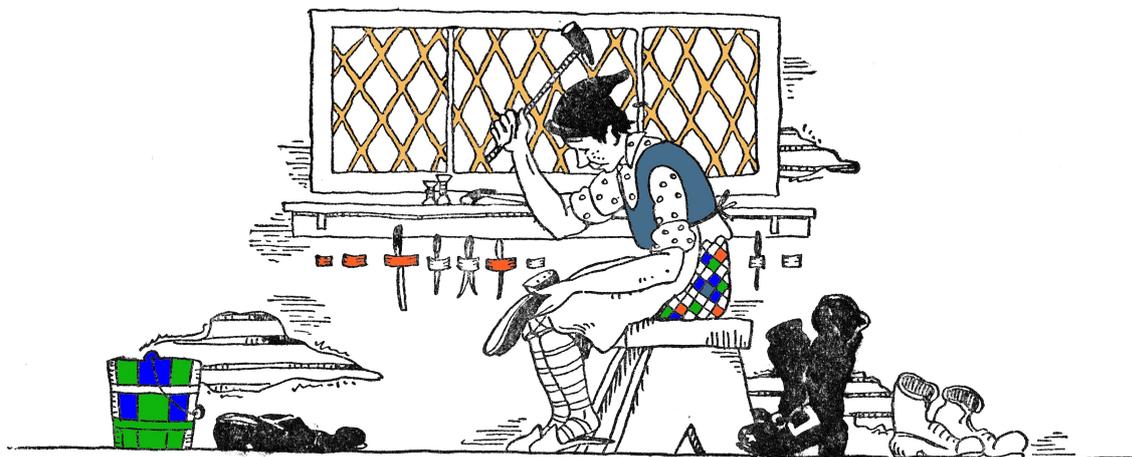
**'Only leather for one more pair of shoes! That means that after you have sold your last pair of shoes, that's it?'**

**'I'm afraid so. We will lose the shop, I won't have a job, and we will gradually starve to death because there won't be any money to buy food.'**

**'Oh no – this is terrible! Oh what shall we do, dear husband? With the winter coming on, we'll not only freeze to death, we'll also starve to death!'**

**'The only thing I can do is cut out this last piece of leather tonight before we go to bed so I can make my last pair of shoes early tomorrow morning. I just hope I can sell them for a very good price to keep us going for a bit longer.'**

And so the shoemaker carefully cut out the last piece of leather for this final pair of shoes before he and his wife went to bed with sad hearts.



Just after six o'clock next morning, the shoemaker got up to begin work as usual on the last pair of shoes, when suddenly he called out to his wife in a surprised voice ...

**'Wife, wife! Come here! Look at this! You won't believe it! Something amazing has happened!'**

**'What on earth is the matter! Oh, my goodness! There's a beautiful pair of shoes already made from the leather you left out last night!'**

**'Isn't that the oddest thing! I'm quite sure I didn't get up in the night and make them in my dreams. Who do you suppose has stitched the shoes while we were asleep?'**

**'I don't know, but I think these shoes will fetch a very good price, because they are beautifully made, with the finest and most even stitches I have ever seen.'**

**'And I think I can hear a customer knocking at the door already. I'll go and let her in while you make a cup of tea.'**

When the customer saw such beautifully made shoes, she paid much more than the ordinary price.

With the extra money, the shoemaker was able to buy enough leather for two pairs of shoes.

That evening, he carefully cut out the leather for two pairs of shoes and went to bed, intending to make an early start the next day.

**'Wife, wife! Come quickly! The same thing has happened again! There are two pairs of beautifully made shoes.'**

**'How mysterious! Oh yes - they are indeed expertly made. What small, even stitches! I'll put them on display immediately to try and sell them as soon as possible.'**

It wasn't long before two customers came into the shop and bought the two pairs of shoes immediately, paying much more than the ordinary price.

With the extra money, the shoemaker was able to buy enough leather for four pairs of shoes.

That evening, he carefully cut out four pairs of shoes and went to bed intending to make an early start the next day.

**'Wife, wife! Come quickly! The same thing has happened yet again! There are four pairs of beautifully made shoes.'**

**'How totally incredible! Oh yes - they are indeed perfectly made, and I think I can hear customers looking in the window already, and it's not even opening time!'**

And so it went on, night after night. Every morning there were twice as many shoes as the morning before, and each time the customers paid much more than the ordinary price.

The shoemaker and his wife began to make a very good profit, and after a while they were no longer poor.

One day the shoemaker's wife said ...

**'I'm really curious about who it is making the shoes at night when we are fast asleep. Let's stay up all night tonight and watch to see what happens.'**

So the shoemaker and his wife hid behind a curtain and waited to see who came into the workshop during the night to make all the top-quality shoes.

What a surprise the shoemaker and his wife had when they saw who arrived just after midnight and started making the shoes with the leather ready for stitching.

Two little elves appeared and sat down at the shoemaker's workbench and started stitching and hammering to turn the leather into shoes.

The shoemaker and his wife whispered quietly to each other while they watched, and were careful not to be seen or overheard by the hard-working little elves.

**'How quickly their little fingers are working, dear wife, and I am getting a lot of new ideas seeing their methods and unusual designs. But they are wearing such thin and raggedy clothes, and the weather is already becoming very cold.'**

**'That has given me an idea, dear husband. Tomorrow I'll make the little elves warm winter clothes. They must be freezing when they go out into the morning air after working all night!'**

And so the shoemaker and his wife continued to watch in amazement at how quickly the fingers of the two little elves flew as they busily made the most fashionable and stylish shoes they had ever seen.

The shoemaker's wife spent the whole of the next day making elfin-sized clothes.

She made little trousers and shirts and waistcoats and jackets and socks, and then she made some more because she wanted to make sure the elves would have enough clothes to last them right through the long winter.

The shoemaker also wanted to do something to say thank you to the elves, so he made some tiny shoes and belts and caps from the softest and finest leather he could find.

By five o'clock, just as the sun was setting, the shoemaker and his wife stopped work.

**'The elves have made us rich again, and saved us from starvation. It is only right that we say thank you by giving them these warm clothes and little belts and shoes.'**

And so, instead of leaving out leather, the shoemaker and his wife laid out neatly what they had made so that the elves would find them later that night.

Again, the shoemaker and his wife hid behind the curtain to watch what would happen.

When the elves saw the clothes they jumped up and down and cried out with excitement in their tiny voices.

They put them on immediately, talking excitedly all the while as they did so.

**'They fit perfectly, and they seem to be very pleased with our gifts!'**

And then, in the twinkling of an eye, the two little elves disappeared, singing as they went.

The shoemaker and his wife didn't see the elves ever again because they moved on to help other people who were in need of their services.

The shoemaker became a rich man because word spread about his wonderful new designs and the high quality of his workmanship.

The shoemaker's wife opened a shoe boutique because customers were now travelling from far and wide to buy shoes. Even kings and queens ordered shoes from them!

And from that time on, the shoemaker and his wife had good luck in everything they did, and they lived happily ever after.