

The Shoemaker and the Elves



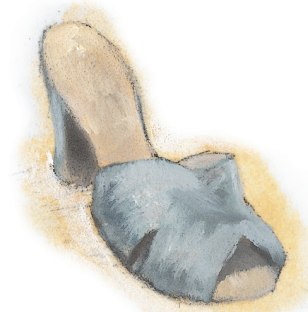
Rewritten by Margaret Mortenson • Illustrated by Amy Barrett



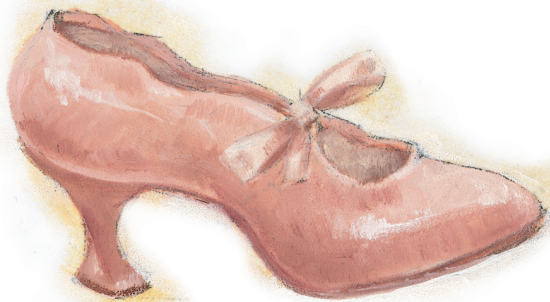
Jonas Cobbler kept a tiny shoemaker's shop on the first floor of a three-story red brick building in a big city. The tiny sign, SHOEMAKER, could barely be seen. The window was usually filled with Jonas's carefully crafted shoes, but lately the window was often empty.



Jonas's dear wife, Rose, had been sick, and after paying for the doctor and the medicine, there wasn't enough money left for leather to make many shoes.



Late one night, Jonas cut his last pieces of leather to make a pair of brown and white oxfords. He was very tired, but he had to finish them because the mayor was coming in the morning to look for some shoes. Jonas stretched and yawned.





He put his head down on the workbench, thinking he might rest his eyes for just a moment.



The morning sun was just peeping through the window when Jonas woke with a start and rubbed his eyes.



He couldn't believe what he saw. A fine new pair of brown and white oxfords shone in the early morning light. He grabbed the shoes and examined the stitching. Every stitch was straight and tight. The shoes were perfect.



“Rosie, Rosie, come here, quick!” he called. Rose hurried into the room, yawning and brushing her hair.

“Look! During the night, someone finished my shoes,” he said.



“Who could have been so kind?” she asked as she touched the stitches, admired the shine, and carefully placed them in the window.



Soon the little bell over the door jingled as the dapper mayor strode into the shop. “Say, Jonas,” said the mayor in his usual loud voice, “I want to try on those fancy shoes you have in the window.”



He put them on and tied them just so. "I've never seen any so fine," he said, as he looked in the mirror. He paid handsomely for them. Then he left, proudly wearing the shoes.



With the extra money, Jonas was able to buy enough shiny red leather for two pairs of high-heeled shoes. He cut them out carefully that night and began to stitch and tap.



But before long, his eyelids grew heavy, so he put his head down to rest for a minute.



Suddenly the morning light woke him. There, before his eyes, were the prettiest shoes he had ever seen.

He laughed, “ha ha ha” and danced around holding the two stylish pairs of high-heeled shoes. Then he placed them on display in the sunny window.



That day, two young ladies in very fine clothes bought the new, shiny red shoes and wore them as they left the shop.



Jonas had money to purchase shiny, supple, black leather, enough for four pairs of boots. Jonas carefully cut out four pairs of boots and laid the leather on his workbench.



He yawned and stretched and soon fell asleep.



Sure enough, in the morning four pairs of shiny, supple boots filled his entire window. The bell rang all morning as customers hurried in to try on the wonderful black boots.



Before long, people were coming from all over the city to buy the fine shoes found in Jonas's window. Jonas and Rose were becoming quite prosperous.



One day, Rose stood in the doorway looking thoughtful. “Jonas, let’s watch tonight and see who makes all these beautiful shoes.”





That night, Rose and Jonas tiptoed down the stairs and peeked through a crack in the hall doorway.



To their great surprise, they saw two happy little elves bent over the shoes tapping and sewing. As they worked, they sang:





*Work is easy, if we share.
Work is easy, if we care.
Work is fun for everyone.
We work together and get it done.*





“Jonas,” whispered Rose, “those tiny elves have been sewing for you each night. But look, they’re dressed in rags.” Jonas and Rose tiptoed up the stairs.



“We must show them how grateful we are. Let’s make something nice and warm for them to wear.”

All the next day, Rose cut and sewed. She fashioned the finest little suits you can imagine—vests and coats and trousers, even little felt fedora hats—and Jonas made the elves some shiny brown leather shoes. Just before midnight, they carefully laid the outfits on the work table. Then they hid behind the door.



As the clock struck twelve, the little elves entered. They looked all around for the leather to make shoes. When they saw the new clothes, they held them up curiously. Then they tried them on. To their delight, everything fit just right. They giggled and danced around and admired each other in the mirror.



Then the little elves danced out the door and never returned.



People still come from all over the city to buy the fine shoes from the tiny shop. And now, while the shoemaker and his wife are tapping and stitching, you can hear them sing:



*Work is easy, if we share.
Work is easy, if we care.
Work is fun for everyone.
We work together and get it done.*



The End

Reading

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