

# **THE SHOEMAKER**

A Short Play

by

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THE SHOEMAKER

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## CAST

**The Story Teller**  
**Joseph Elkinbrod** ... .. *The Shoemaker*  
**Martha** ... .. *His Wife*  
**Alice** }  
**Bertha** }  
**Caroline** } ... .. *His Daughters*  
**Dinah** }  
**Emily** }

**Arnold** ... .. *His Son*

**A Tramp**

**Lady Earlswood** \*  
**Her Maid**  
**The Duke of Dorking** \*  
**His Valet**

**Royal Messenger**  
**The Queen**  
**A Customer**  
**Minister of Elf**  
**Elfy**  
**Welfy**  
**Wilfie**  
**Elf Garnett**  
**Good Elf**  
**Elfis**  
**Freeman**  
**Hardy**  
**Willis**  
**Ladies-in-Waiting, Customers, Children etc.**

\* *Local names can be substituted for LADY EARLSWOOD and for the DUKE of DORKING.*

*The time is Victorian.*



## **THE SHOEMAKER**

*freely adapted from the fairy story THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER.*

**by Gadfan Morris**

*The playing area is divided into three parts: the living room; the shop (where there is a workbench); and the glade where the ELVES live.*

*(When the play begins, JOSEPH is working at his bench in the workshop. His wife is in the living room preparing supper).*

*(The STORYTELLER enters).*

**Teller:** Once upon a time - well, about a hundred years ago to be more precise - there lived a poor shoemaker and his family. Times were bad and the poor shoemaker was really down on his uppers, as you might say. Or he would be down on them if he had any uppers left. In fact he is at this moment cutting out a pair of shoes from his last piece of leather. That's his wife over there - Martha. She is preparing supper for her husband and her six children. She comes to the shop door and calls to her husband.

*(The STORYTELLER retires).*

**Martha:** Supper is ready, Joseph.

**Joseph:** Very well. *(He sighs deeply, crosses to the living room, and sits at the table. The table has been laid with eight bowls and spoons. MARTHA ladles some soup into his bowl. JOSEPH does not eat).*

**Martha:** What is the matter, Joseph? Why aren't you eating your supper?

**Joseph:** I have no appetite. My heart is heavy, Martha. I can see nothing but ruin staring us in the face.

**Martha:** Are things as bad as that?

**Joseph:** They're worse. I have only one piece of leather left and only a few nails. When I have used them up, I do not know what will become of us.

**Martha:** But surely there must be something, Joseph?

**Joseph:** No, Martha, there isn't. The little money I will get when I sell this last pair of shoes will hardly keep us in food for a week.

**Martha:** Instead of buying food with the money, wouldn't it be better to buy more leather with it and make more shoes?

**Joseph:** We must buy food for our children's sake. It would break my heart to see them hungry.

**Martha:** What's to be done then, Joseph?

**Joseph:** I don't know. But something will turn up, I'm sure of it. We must not despair.

*(The GIRLS enter. They sit around the table. MARTHA serves them).*

**Alice:** Ah, good, supper.

**Bertha:** I'm starving.

**Caroline:** So am I. I could eat a horse.

**Dinah:** A nice fat horse.

**Emily:** I wonder what comes after?

**Martha:** There is nothing to come after. This is all there is.

**Alice:** All there is! Turnip soup! We had this for dinner!

**Bertha:** And for breakfast.

**Caroline:** And for supper last night.

**Dinah:** We shall LOOK like turnips soon.

**Emily:** I'm sick of turnip soup

**Martha:** There's nothing wrong with it. It's very nice soup.

**Alice:** Then why isn't father eating his?

**Joseph:** Because I'm deeply worried, that is why.

**Bertha:** Are you ill, father?

**Joseph:** No, I am not ill.

**Caroline:** I know. Arnold has been trying to cheer you up with some of his jokes again.

**Martha:** Where is that boy? Why doesn't he come to have his supper?

**Dinah:** Perhaps he knows it's turnip soup again.

**Emily:** Tell us why you are worried, father. Is it because of any of us?

**Joseph:** No, no, there's nothing wrong with you, except there are so many of you. The fact is, business is very bad. I have enough leather left to make one more pair of shoes. After that, I don't know what I shall do.

**Alice:** Do you mean we shan't have any more money coming in?

**Joseph:** That's right, Alice.

**Bertha:** What about my new dress? Shan't we be able to afford it now?

**Joseph:** I'm afraid not, Bertha.

**Bertha:** Oh, dear ....

**Caroline:** And what about my new bonnet?

**Dinah:** And my new cloak?

**Emily:** And my new parasol?

**Alice:** And my new ribbons?

**Martha:** Girls! Be quiet. Your father has worries enough without having to think about parasols and ribbons and such frivolities.

**Joseph:** Don't be cross with them, Martha. Girls are fond of new clothes and pretty things. Perhaps when times are better ....

**Caroline:** Life has suddenly become empty. The future has nothing to offer us. I see nothing but a bleak landscape and utter desolation before me.

**Alice:** You got that from that silly novel you're reading.

**Caroline:** No, I didn't. I made it up myself.

**Dinah:** You think you're very clever, don't you?

**Martha:** If you don't stop quarrelling, I shall send you all to bed.

**Arnold:** (*Entering*). I say, I say, I say. Why does the king wear red, white and blue braces?

**Bertha:** Here he comes again!

**Arnold:** Well, go on! Why does the king ....

**Emily:** What king?

**Arnold:** It doesn't matter what king ....

**Bertha:** Yes it does. Some kings don't wear braces.

**Arnold:** How do you know?

**Bertha:** I read it in a book

**Arnold:** What book?

**Dinah:** I know the answer.

**Emily:** Tell us it, Dinah.

**Dinah:** To straighten out his teeth.

**Arnold:** To straighten out his teeth?!!!

**Dinah:** Yes, people wear braces on their teeth to straighten them.

**Arnold:** Not that kind of braces, silly ....

**Joseph:** What ARE these children talking about, Martha?

**Martha:** Be quiet, Arnold, and eat your supper.

**Arnold:** I haven't been offered any yet.

**Alice:** You can have mine.

**Bertha:** And mine.

**Caroline:** And mine.

**Dinah:** And mine.

**Emily:** And mine.

**Arnold:** What is it?

**The Girls:** Turnip soup!

**Arnold:** What, again?

**Emily:** I'm going to bed. (*She goes, followed by the others in turn*).

**Dinah:** So am I.

**Caroline:** And me.

**Bertha:** And me.

**Alice:** And me.

**Arnold:** (*Sitting at table*). What's the matter with father? Doesn't he feel well? I wouldn't be surprised if we all went down with something after all this turnip soup. I wonder if there's a disease called turnipitis or something?

**Martha:** Will you stop talking nonsense, Arnold, and eat your supper.

**Arnold:** I only asked why father was looking so sad.

**Joseph:** I am depressed because I have enough leather left to make one more pair of shoes. And after that, it's the workhouse for all of us.

**Arnold:** Oh, good. Will Oliver Twist be there?

**Martha:** This is no time for your jokes, Arnold. Your father is serious.

**Joseph:** Yes, I am. If you haven't any useful contribution to make to help us in our difficulties, I'll thank you to keep quiet.

**Arnold:** Sorry, father.

**Joseph:** I think I shall go to bed. In the morning I shall stitch together my last pair of shoes. And after that, who knows .... (*He goes*).

**Arnold:** Poor father. I wish I could think of some way to help.

**Martha:** You can help me by clearing the table for a start.

**Arnold:** Yes, mother. Certainly mother.

**Martha:** I am going to bed as well. See that everything is clean and tidy ready for the morning, Arnold.

**Arnold:** I like that! Six women in the house and the boy is left to do the washing up. How's that for sex equality, I ask you! (*He picks up a bowl. He hears someone calling "Pst, pst". He stops and listens. The sound is repeated. He goes to side of stage*).

**Arnold:** Who's there? (*Pause*). Is there anybody there?

**Tramp:** (*Appearing*). Hello, young sir.

**Arnold:** Who are you? And what do you want?

**Tramp:** Who am I? Well, now, if you really want to know, young sir, I am what you might call a knight of the road.

**Arnold:** Oh, a tramp.

**Tramp:** Well, not to put too fine a point on it, yes, a tramp.

**Arnold:** What do you want?

**Tramp:** What would you say, young sir, if I told you I hadn't eaten for three days.

**Arnold:** You haven't eaten for three days?!

**Tramp:** No ....

**Arnold:** Well, you must force yourself!

**Tramp:** No, no, young sir, you don't understand. Do you think I could come in for a minute? It's cold standing out here.

**Arnold:** As long as you don't make a noise. Everybody's gone to bed. I'm the only one up.

**Tramp:** I'll be as quiet as a snowflake falling on a spider's web. *(He enters)*. Ah, that's better. Now, as I was saying. I haven't eaten for three days because of the simple fact that nobody has given me any food.

**Arnold:** Oh, I see. You mean you're hungry.

**Tramp:** That's it in a nutshell, young sir. I am VERY hungry.

**Arnold:** Do you like turnip soup?

**Tramp:** I would go as far as to say, without any fear of contradiction, that I am extremely partial to all kinds and flavours of soup ....

**Arnold:** That, I suppose, means yes. So sit here and help yourself.

*(The TRAMP sits. ARNOLD also sits and lines up five bowls of soup in front of him. The TRAMP scoffs them all, one by one, talking all the time).*

**Tramp:** Indeed I will, young sir.

**Arnold:** Are you happy?

**Tramp:** As happy as a flea in a dogs' home, young sir.

**Arnold:** Good. Why does the king wear red, white and blue braces?

**Tramp:** Why does the king wear red, white and blue braces?

**Arnold:** Yes.

**Tramp:** Which king?

**Arnold:** It doesn't matter which king. It's a joke.

**Tramp:** I would say it must be an English king, though, because of the colours - red, white and blue - the same as the Union Jack.

**Arnold:** Listen, all you've got to say is "I don't know", then I'll tell you.

**Tramp:** I don't think it's proper to talk about a KING when we have a queen on the throne of England.

**Arnold:** I'm sure Queen Victoria wouldn't mind. In fact, she might be quite amused.

**Tramp:** This is very nice onion soup.

**Arnold:** It's not onion. It's turnip.

**Tramp:** I was only trying to spare your feelings. It's only the poor who have turnip soup.

**Arnold:** We ARE poor, very, very poor. Even our mice have tears in their eyes .... or had, before they left.

**Tramp:** Oh, dear me. Are you a big family?

**Arnold:** There's my mother and father and me and the Alphabet.

**Tramp:** The Alphabet? Who are they?

**Arnold:** My five sisters. Their names begin with the first five letters of the alphabet. My eldest sister is called Alice, then there's Bertha, then Caroline, then Dinah and then Emily. If I had been a girl, they were all prepared to call me Fanny. But I fooled them. I was a boy. So they had to go back to the beginning of the alphabet again. I'm Arnold.

**Tramp:** A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Arnold. *(They stand and shake hands).*

**Arnold:** Now that I've told you my name, what's yours? *(Sitting).*

**Tramp:** I'll have a large brandy if I may ....

**Arnold:** I don't mean ....

**Tramp:** No, no, no of course not. *(Sitting).* I, young sir, am one of many. There are countless numbers of us. My name is legion.

**Arnold:** Shall I tell you something, Mr. Legion?

**Tramp:** Please do ....

**Arnold:** My father has worked hard all his life as a shoemaker, now ruination is staring him in the face. I wish there was something I could do to help him.

**Tramp:** I feel that fate has guided my footsteps here tonight to this house. And I feel that I would be less than the instrument of Fate if I did not tell you what you must do to save your family from the abject misery of utter poverty.

**Arnold:** What must you tell me?

**Tramp:** You must leave home to seek your fortune.

**Arnold:** I would if I had a cat. *(The TRAMP pushes away the last bowl from him).* Have you finished? Wouldn't you like some more?

**Tramp:** No thank you, young sir. I must be on my way now. *(Rising).* You don't have to have a cat to go out to seek your fortune, you know. We can't all be like Dick Whittington. All you need is a bundle on a stick, courage and resolution in your heart, and imagination - plenty of imagination. And at the end of the rainbow you will discover the crock of gold that will resolve all your troubles.

**Arnold:** Is that why you left home, to search for the crock at the end of the rainbow?

**Tramp:** I suppose so. The only crock I'm likely to find now is me - and an old crock at that.

**Arnold:** But supposing you do find it. What would you like to be in it?

**Tramp:** I don't mind in the least - as long as it isn't turnip soup. I think I've had enough of that to last me a lifetime. Farewell, young sir, and may good fortune come to you and all your family as I'm sure it will.

*(He goes. ARNOLD gathers up the bowls, spoons etc and puts them aside).*

**Arnold:** Ah, well, that saved me the washing up anyway. (*Sitting*). Go out and seek my fortune, he said. He seemed to think I should find it. Perhaps I WILL go.... now.... this very minute. (*He gets up and takes a red spotted handkerchief off the line and wraps some bread in it*). I wonder who he was? A good fairy, perhaps, in disguise. (*He ties the bundle on the end of a stick and carries it on his shoulder*). Good fairies, fiddlesticks! Before I know where I am, I'll be believing in gnomes and elves and all that rubbish. (*He goes*).

**Storyteller:** And so young sir leaves home to seek his fortune and save his family from starvation - or endless bowls of turnip soup, which is even worse. While his mother and father and his sisters are asleep, Arnold trudges deeper into the night - and the mud - until footsore and weary, he sits to rest on the edge of a glade. So tired is he that he falls asleep. And while he sleeps ....  
(*He goes*).

(*Three ELVES appear, one by one, and stand over ARNOLD*).

**Elfy:** What do you think he is?

**Welfy:** He's a human.

**Wilfe:** Oh, yes, he's a human bein', all right.

**Welfy:** When I went to school, I learnt that there were three kinds of beans: broad beans, runner beans and human beans. And he's a human bean!

**Elfy:** How can you tell?

**Welfy:** Look, he's got round ears for a start.

**Elfy:** So he has.

**Wilfe:** Look out, he's waking up. (*They retreat*).

**Arnold:** (*Waking*). Where am I? (*Sees ELVES*). Who are you? .... What are you?

**Elfy:** We're elves. Are you a human bein' ?

**Arnold:** I hope so. At least I was when I left home ....

**Elfy:** Have you got a name?

**Arnold:** I'm called Arnold. What's yours?

**Welfy:** I'll have a large honey-wine if I may ....

**Arnold:** I mean your names!

**Elfy:** I'm Elfy.

**Welfy:** I'm Welfy.

**Wilfe:** And I'm Wilfe.

**Arnold:** Elfy, Welfy and Wilfe.

**All:** That's right.

**Arnold:** Why does the king wear red, white and blue braces?

**Elfy:** What king?

**Arnold:** It doesn't matter what king!

**Welfy:** The king of the fairies doesn't wear braces at all.

**Wilfe:** The queen doesn't either.

*(Four more ELVES appear).*

**Minister:** Where have you three been? You're supposed to be hanging out the dewdrops on the cobwebs. And who's this?

**Welfy:** He's a human bein' and his name is Arnold.

**Minister:** Oh. What's he doing here?

**Arnold:** I've left home to seek my fortune, if you want to know. And this is my bundle on a stick to prove it.

**Minister:** What kind of fortune are you looking for?

**Arnold:** I don't know really. It doesn't matter what it is, as long as it will buy us clothes and food and things.

**Minister:** Who do you mean by 'us'?

**Arnold:** My family. We're very poor you see ....

**Minister:** Say no more. We understand. Do you know who we are?

**Arnold:** You're elves or something, aren't you?

**Minister:** Oh, we're elves all right. But we're not any old elves who get up to mischief like tying knots in squirrels' tails and things like that. Oh, no. We're good elves who try to help all those that need it. We provide a much needed service where ever it's needed, up and down the country.

**Arnold:** Oh?

**Minister:** Don't say you've never heard of the National Elf Service?

**Arnold:** Yes, I believe I have.

**Minister:** Well, that's us: the N.E.S.. So let me introduce myself. I'm the Minister of Elf. You've already met Elfy, Welfy and Wilfe ....

**Arnold:** Yes ....

**Minister:** And here is our toastmaster, Good Elf.

**Good Elf:** Cheers, old boy.

**Arnold:** Toastmaster? What do elves want a toastmaster for?

**Minister:** To make the toast, of course. This is Elf Garnett.

**Arnold:** How do you do?

**Elf Garn:** 'Ow are yer, yer silly old moo!

**Minister:** And this is Elfis. He sings .... well, sort of ....

**Elfis:** *(Strumming his guitar).* Rock, rock, rock, we're going to rock around the clock ....

**Minister:** All right, that's enough. *(ELFIS stops).* No wonder we've all got pointed

ears. Now tell us, Arnold, how we can help your family.

**Arnold:** Well, you see, my father is a snob ....

**Minister:** A snob? You mean he takes his clothes off when he goes to bed?

**Arnold:** No, not that kind of snob. Snob that means cobbler or shoemaker.

**Minister:** Oh, that kind of snob. Yes, well, go on.

**Arnold:** When I left home last night, all he had left in the world was one piece of leather, just enough to make one pair of shoes. And when they're sold - if ever they do get sold - we'll have no more money to buy food and we'll all starve.

**Minister:** Oh no you won't. Leave everything to me. We've got the best three shoemakers in the whole world living here. Go and tell them to come here, Elfis.

**Elfis:** Yeah, man. *(He goes, swaying his hips).*

**Minister:** We call him Elfis the Pelfis .... These three shoemakers we've got here could make a pair of riding boots out of frog's skin. All you have to do is tell them when to go, and they'll take care of everything.

*(Three ELVES appear).*

**Minister:** Ah, here they come. This is Freeman, this is Hardy and this is Willis.

**Arnold:** Pleased to make your acquaintance ....

**Minister:** Now listen you three. There's a very important job to be done. Arnold here has a father who's a shoemaker. And he's only got one piece of leather left. Your orders are to make a pair of shoes from this piece of leather, and they've got to be the finest pair of shoes that's ever been made - with not one single bad stitch in them. Do you understand? *(They nod).* Good. On your way then. And you can come with us Arnold, and we'll all have a nice cup of instant nectar.

*(They all go off. FREEMAN, HARDY, and WILLIS cross over to the shop. They work quietly at the bench for a minute or so, then re-cross to the glade and go off).*

*(JOSEPH appears, yawning and rubbing his eyes. He goes to his bench and picks up a pair of shoes. He stares at them in astonishment. He crosses to the living room and calls out).*

**Joseph:** Come quickly! Something astonishing has happened.

*(MARTHA and the GIRLS appear).*

**Martha:** What is it, Joseph?

**Girls:** What's happened, father? What's going on, father? What's the matter?  
What's astonishing? etc.

**Joseph:** Look at these shoes!

**Martha:** What about them?

**Joseph:** Take a close look at them. (*MARTHA and the GIRLS peer*).

**Martha:** They're quite nice.

**Alice:** Nice! They're beautiful, father.

**Bertha:** You've never made such a beautiful pair, father.

**Carol:** They're perfect.

**Joseph:** That's just it. They ARE perfect. There isn't one bad stitch in them.

**Dinah:** Let me see them, father. (*She takes them*). Oh, they're lovely and soft.

**Emily:** We're proud of you, father.

**Joseph:** But that's the whole point. I didn't make them!

**Martha:** You didn't make them?

**Joseph:** No!

**Martha:** Then who did?

**Joseph:** I don't know. All I know is, it wasn't me. I cut out the leather last night to  
sew them this morning. And when I went to my bench, there they were - all  
ready made.

**Alice:** Perhaps it was Arnold.

**Bertha:** Don't be silly, Alice. Arnold couldn't drive a nail into a lump of cheese.

**Joseph:** Fetch him, Emily. Perhaps he might know something about it.

*(She goes. DINAH has sat down and is trying on the shoes).*

**Martha:** He was the last to go to bed.

**Carol:** At least he cleared the table and washed up.

**Dinah:** Wonders will never cease.

**Emily:** (*Entering*). He's not there. And his bed hasn't been slept in either.

**Bertha:** Perhaps he's been kidnapped.

**Carol:** I thought I heard voices last night.

**Alice:** Who'd want to kidnap Arnold?

**Dinah:** Even if he was, they'd offer US the ransom to take him back.

*(Shop bell rings).*

**Dinah:** Ah, what did I tell you? This must be somebody with the ransom note  
asking us to take him back.

**Joseph:** (*Peeping*). I do believe it's a customer. Martha, keep these girls quiet

while I see who it is.

*(GIRLS sit at table. JOSEPH crosses to shop. A very elegant LADY and her MAID have entered the shop).*

**Joseph:** Good morning, ladies. Can I be of assistance?

**Maid:** This is Lady Earlswood. She wants a pair of shoes.

**Joseph:** Er .... yes, indeed, your ladyship ....

**Lady E:** When my maid said I wanted a pair of shoes, she meant I wanted a pair that are as soft as silk, as elegant as a peacock, as perfect as a rose and which fit me as comfortably as a glove. Have you such a pair?

**Joseph:** I'll go and see what I've got, your ladyship. *(Crosses to living room).*

**Lady E:** *(Looking round).* He doesn't appear to have any shoes here at all. This shop is as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

**Maid:** Yes, ma'am.

**Joseph:** *(Loud whisper).* Where are those shoes?

**Martha:** Who is it, Joseph?

**Joseph:** It's Lady Earlswood.

**Girls:** Lady Earlswood!

**Joseph:** And she wants to buy a pair of shoes. Who's got them?

**Dinah:** I have, father. *(Taking them off).* Here you are.

**Martha:** Really, Dinah!

**Girls:** For shame, Dinah! *(JOSEPH takes shoes and returns to shop).*

**Joseph:** What about these, your ladyship? Would you like to try them on?

**Lady E:** *(Peering at the shoes).* They certainly look like the style I'm after. And very well made .... superbly made .... Yes, I'll try them on. *(She sits. MAID takes shoes from JOSEPH).*

**Maid:** Thank you. *(She fits shoes on LADY E.).* How do they feel, ma'am?

**Lady E:** *(Rises and walks about).* Perfect .... absolutely perfect. I've searched everywhere for such a pair as this to no avail. In shop after shop I have left mountains of shoes on the floor and walked out in disgust. And I come here where there isn't a pair of shoes in sight and I'm suited with the first pair that's brought to me. You are the most extraordinary shoemaker I have ever met.

**Joseph:** Thank you, ma'am .... your ladyship.

**Lady E:** Pay him twice what he asks for and throw these old things away. *(She goes).*

**Maid:** Yes, ma'am. *(To JOSEPH).* How much?

**Joseph:** I don't know what to say ....

**Maid:** A sovereign?

**Joseph:** A sovereign? Well, if you say so ....

**Maid:** Here's two, like she said. (*Hands over money and goes*).

**Joseph:** Thank you .... thank you .... good day .... come again .... (*He returns to the living room*). She bought them! Look! Two sovereigns .... two golden sovereigns ....

**Martha:** Oh, Joseph.

**Girls:** Oh, father!

(*They join hands and dance around him singing to the tune, "For he's a jolly good fellow"*).

*For he's a wonderful father, he's a wonderful father  
For he's a wonderful father, and so say all of us.*

**Carol:** Let's all get ready to go out ....

**Bertha:** And buy our presents!

**Girls:** Yes .... !!! (*The GIRLS run off, followed by MARTHA and JOSEPH*).

(*The STORYTELLER enters*).

**Teller:** Although Alice didn't get her new ribbons, or Bertha her new dress, Caroline her new bonnet, Dinah her cloak or Emily her parasol - there wasn't enough money for all these things - they enjoyed their little outing. They all went to a Wimpey's and had all kinds of things with chips and ice cream sundaes afterwards - well, not really, because I don't suppose there was a Wimpey's in those days. But all the same, they did go to a restaurant and had a nice meal which they very much enjoyed because it made such a change from turnip soup. And with the rest of the money, Joseph bought three more pieces of leather.

(*JOSEPH enters with leather, crosses to his bench and works*).

**Teller:** And before he went to bed that night, he cut out three pairs of shoes ready to make an early start in the morning. Meanwhile, back in the glade, our good friends the Elves were preparing for another of their mysterious and philanthropic visits. (*STORYTELLER goes off*).

(*MINISTER, FREEMAN, HARDY and WILLIS appear, followed by ARNOLD*).

**Minister:** You three did a very good job last night. Those shoes were sold for two sovereigns.

**Freeman/Hardy/Willis:** Two sovereigns!

**Minister:** I want you to keep up the good work. You'll have three pairs to make tonight.

**Freeman:** That's one pair each.

**Minister:** I don't care how you share out the work as long as you do a good job. Did anybody see you last night?

**Hardy:** No, I don't think so.

**Willis:** We were as quiet as mice.

**Minister:** Good.

**Arnold:** Do you think I ought to let my family know that I am alive and well?

**Minister:** There's nothing to stop you going home if you want to.

**Arnold:** I shan't go home until I have made my fortune. All the same I'd like to let them know I am all right. How can I do that?

**Minister:** Give something that belongs to you to Freeman, Hardy and Willis, and they can leave it on your father's bench. What have you got that he would recognise?

**Arnold:** What about this spotted handkerchief? *(Taking it from his pocket).*

**Minister:** Yes, that will do. *(Takes it and gives it to FREEMAN).* Take this and leave it behind on the workbench. Now go.

*(JOSEPH has left the bench and gone off. The three ELVES cross over and work at the bench. They return to the glade and go off, leaving the handkerchief behind. JOSEPH comes on, yawning, as before and goes to the bench. He picks up the shoes and the handkerchief. He is astonished once again. He goes into the living room and calls).*

**Joseph:** Come down quickly. Another astonishing thing has happened.

*(MARTHA and the girls appear. JOSEPH holds shoes aloft).*

**Joseph:** Look at them. Absolutely perfect. There's not a bad stitch in any of them. And that's not all, I found this on my workbench as well. I'm sure it wasn't there last night. *(He puts shoes on table and holds up handkerchief).*

**Dinah:** It's Arnold's.

**Martha:** It's Arnold's way of telling us that he is alive and well, and not to worry.

**Emily:** Do you think the gipsies have stolen him?

**Alice:** Gipsies only steal babies.

**Bertha:** Who's a bigger baby than Arnold, sometimes?

**Carol:** Besides, no self-respecting gipsy would put up with Arnold's jokes.

*(Shop bell rings).*

**Joseph:** It must be another customer. (*He goes into shop*).

**Martha:** Upstairs, girls, make your beds and tidy your rooms.

**Dinah:** (*Peeping*). Can't we see who it is?

**Martha:** No, off you go, the lot of you.

(*They go; MARTHA sets the table. An elegantly dressed gentleman and his valet are standing in the shop*).

**Joseph:** Good morning, gentlemen. How can I be of assistance to you?

**Valet:** We are given to understand that you are the maker of fine footwear.

**Joseph:** Well, that is kind of you to say so ....

**Valet:** My master here - who is no less a person than the Duke of Dorking - would be obliged if he could inspect your stock.

**Duke:** I am reliably informed by Lady Earlswood at whose hunt ball I was last night, that you make exquisite boots. In fact she tells me that for the first time in her life she has been fitted with a pair of shoes that are not only elegant to look at but are also a perfect fit.

**Joseph:** I am most honoured to be of service, your grace.

**Duke:** She went as far as to say that you must be the best shoemaker in England, nay, in the whole of Europe.

**Valet:** My master has had considerable difficulty in finding a reliable shoemaker owing to a slight deformity ....

**Duke:** Bunions! I suffer with bunions!

**Joseph:** I'm sorry to hear it, your grace.

**Valet:** We hope you will be able to meet our requirements which, to say the least, are most exacting.

**Joseph:** I will do ,y best, sir. If you will take a seat, your grace .... Now where did I put them .... oh, yes .... (*He crosses to living room and picks up the shoes*).

**Martha:** (*Loud whisper*). Who is it this time, Joseph?

**Joseph:** It's the Duke of Dorking.

**Martha:** (*Collapsing into chair*). The Duke .... Lord preserve us.

**Joseph:** (*Re-crossing*). Here we are, your grace. Shall we try this pair for size?

(*The VALET pushes him aside and fits the shoes. The DUKE stands and walks around*).

**Duke:** Superb .... magnificent .... sheer ecstasy .... i feel as if I am walking on a carpet of the finest gossamer. I'll take them. I'll take all three pairs. Give him treble the price he asks.

**Valet:** Very well, your grace.

**Duke:** *(To JOSEPH).* I shall speak your name in every corner of the land, my good man. Lords, viscounts, dukes shall hear of you - even the Queen herself, God bless her. You shall have all the work you can cope with. You will not only become rich, you will become famous. The world will beat a path to your door, and your humble establishment shall become a shrine to the cobbler's craft. A very good day to you. *(He goes).*

**Joseph:** And a very good day to you I'm sure, your grace ....

**Valet:** How much?

**Joseph:** *(Bewildered).* How much, did you say?

**Valet:** Will ten guineas meet the bill?

**Joseph:** Ten guineas!

**Valet:** Very well, make it twelve.

*(He pays JOSEPH and goes. JOSEPH crosses to living room and collapses in a chair).*

**Martha:** Are you all right, Joseph?

**Joseph:** I don't know. I think I must be dreaming. Twelve guineas for three pairs of shoes. I thought I'd never live to see the day.

**Martha:** I don't believe you, Joseph.

**Joseph:** *(Showing money).* Look! *(She does).*

**Martha:** We mustn't tell the girls yet. They'd want to buy up the whole town.

**Joseph:** Martha, we must find out who is helping us.

**Martha:** How can we do that?

**Joseph:** As soon as we're ready, we'll go into the town. You can go to the market and buy food and I will buy more leather. When we return, I will cut out several more pairs of shoes and leave them on the bench. And when night comes, after the girls have gone to bed, we'll keep watch.

**Martha:** Very well, Joseph.

*(MARTHA and JOSEPH go off. The STORYTELLER comes on).*

**Teller:** Without telling the girls - well, you know what girls are when they see a bit of money - Martha and Joseph went into the town. While Martha shopped for food in the market, Joseph bought some more leather, enough this time to make a dozen pairs of shoes.

*(JOSEPH enters with leather and works at the bench).*

**Teller:** For most of the morning, all the afternoon and well into the evening, Joseph

worked hard cutting out the leather. He didn't stop, even for meals. It was nearly midnight before he finished. He and Martha were then ready to keep watch. And this is what they saw.

*(MARTHA appears with a lighted candle. She is joined by JOSEPH. A clock strikes midnight. The three elves, FREEMAN, HARDY AND WILLIS appear from the Glade and cross to the workbench. They get to work).*

**Willis:** There's a lot more work tonight.

**Hardy:** Do you think we'll get finished before dawn?

**Freeman:** If we don't we can claim overtime.

**Willis:** Stop chattering and get on with your work.

**Martha:** *(Loud whisper).* Who are they, Joseph?

**Joseph:** They're a kind of little people .... sort of elves.

**Martha:** Elves?

**Joseph:** Yes.

**Martha:** Aren't they small and thin? Do you think I could prepare some supper for them, poor things?

**Joseph:** No, we mustn't disturb them, or they'll go away.

**Martha:** How shall we repay them, Joseph? They have brought us happiness and riches. We must find a way to repay them.

**Joseph:** We shall, we shall, we must think of a way. Let us leave them now to get on with their work.

*(They go off. The three ELVES work silently for a brief moment).*

**Hardy:** Do you get that feeling sometimes that you are being watched?

**Willis:** Yes, I do.

**Freeman:** So do I. I wonder what it is?

**Hardy:** I've finished.

**Willis:** Just a couple of stitches for me ....

**Freeman:** And one more stitch for me ....

**Willis:** And I've finished

**Freeman:** So have I

**Hardy:** Good. Let's go.

*(They return to the glade and go off. The STORYTELLER emerges from the shadows where he retired previously).*

**Teller:** The following morning when Joseph got up.

*(JOSEPH appears yawning etc).*

**Teller:** He found on his bench a dozen pairs of exquisitely made shoes. Hardly had he the time to examine them before the customers began to arrive. Not one this time, but two, three, four ....

*(The shop bell rings several times as the customers enter. JOSEPH runs into the living room and calls. ARNOLD enters with the CUSTOMERS and sits on the chair with his back to the living room).*

**Joseph:** Quickly, quickly, everybody. The shop is full of customers. I want all the help I can.

*(MARTHA enters, followed by the GIRLS. They take chairs from the living room and begin to fit shoes on the customers. ALICE takes off one of ARNOLD'S shoes without noticing that it is he).*

**Alice:** I know that clumsy old foot .... *(Looking up)*. It's Arnold! Arnold has come home!

**Girls:** It's Arnold! He's come home. *(They crowd around him)*.

**Joseph:** *(To customers)*. I'm sorry, we're closing.

**Customer:** But I haven't been served yet.

**Joseph:** My stock is sold out for today. Come back tomorrow.

*(The CUSTOMERS troop off).*

**Martha:** Where have you been, Arnold?

**Arnold:** I've been to seek my fortune, mother.

**Bertha:** Did you find it?

**Arnold:** I think so.

**Joseph:** What do you know about the little people who come here in the middle of the night and make my shoes for me?

**Arnold:** They are my friends, father.

**Martha:** We want to repay them, Arnold, for all they have done for us. How can we do that?

**Arnold:** I don't know. But we could begin by asking them all here and giving them a feast.

**Girls:** Oh, good, a feast!

**Arnold:** And while they are here, we could ask how we can repay them.

**Martha:** You must go now and invite them, Arnold. This very minute.

**Arnold:** Yes, mother. *(He goes).*

**Martha:** Come girls, we must prepare the room and the table.

*(All the chairs, except one, are returned to the living room. The table is being prepared when the shop bell rings).*

**Joseph:** Oh, dear, not another customer I hope.

*(He crosses to the shop. The ROYAL MESSENGER has entered).*

**Messenger:** Are you Joseph Elkinbrod, Shoemaker Extraordinary?

**Joseph:** That is my name.

**Messenger:** I am the Royal Messenger, and I have been commanded to inform you that Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria is about to call upon you ....

**Joseph:** The Queen .... ! Calling on me .... !!! *(He is flabbergasted).*

**Messenger:** Having endured great disappointments with her shoemaker of late, your name was given her as the most reputable craftsman in the kingdom. Pray be ready to receive her. God save the Queen.

*(He goes out. JOSEPH goes into the living room).*

**Martha:** Who was it, Joseph?

**Joseph:** The Queen .... the Queen is calling on us .... what shall I do?

**Girls:** The Queen is coming! The Queen is coming!

*(They dash about in all directions. They all go into the shop. Led by the ROYAL MESSENGER, QUEEN VICTORIA comes in followed by Ladies-in-Waiting, the CUSTOMERS, the TRAMP, LADY EARLSWOOD and MAID, the DUKE of DORKING and VALET. JOSEPH arranges the chair for the QUEEN who sits. ARNOLD enters with all the ELVES. TABLEAU).*

**Arnold:** Excuse me, Your Majesty. Why does the king wear red, white and blue braces?

**The Queen:** I don't know, young man. WHY does the king wear red, white and blue braces?

**Everybody:** To keep his trousers up!

*(EVERYBODY laughs. The QUEEN keeps a straight face).*

**The Queen:** We are not amused.

*Music*

**THE END**