

The Sole of Christmas

by Mary Barile



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Loosely based on *The Elves and the Shoemaker*

Approximate running time: 20 to 30 minutes

CHARACTERS

SHOEMAKER, middle-aged man
SHOEMAKER'S WIFE, middle-aged woman
ELVES: SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT, ageless
CUSTOMERS, woman and a man
The KING

Note: The customers can double roles as the elves and the King. All the roles can be played by children, adults, or both.

SETTING

A shoemaker's workshop in 1800: There is a table with shoes for sale, a workbench, and two chairs. It is winter and the shop is bleak and cold. There are no scene changes; the play takes place in a single room.

COSTUMES

SHOEMAKER: Black or brown pants, a white or tan shirt, dark shoes, and a canvas bib apron
SHOEMAKER'S WIFE: Full long skirt, simple peasant blouse, headscarf, and shawl
ELVES: Short, ragged pants, long-sleeved tee shirt, solid-colored and torn
EVLES NEW CLOTHES: Each will have a short, colorful jacket and elfin cap
CUSTOMERS: Variations on the Shoemaker and his wife's costumes
THE KING: Dark clothing with a short cloak and crown

PROPS

Candle and candlestick
Old shoes, all colors and shapes
Matching jackets and caps for the elves
Small hammers for the elves (plastic toys will work; all should be the same color)
Letter in an envelope
Wrapped gift (with elf hammer inside)

SOUND EFFECTS (if desired)

Shop bell (which jangles when someone enters the shop)

MUSIC

Entry music for the elves: Can be a Christmas song or music from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas; it should always play as the elves enter and leave

Pre-show music may be old fashioned Christmas tunes or carols.

LIGHTING EFFECTS (if desired)

The lights dim when the Shoemaker exits and come up again when the elves enter.

The Sole of Christmas

The Shoemaker's shop, a week before Christmas. The tables are empty and there are no customers. The Shoemaker is working on shoes, but he looks sad.

SHOEMAKER'S WIFE (WIFE)

(Entering, and pulling her shawl tightly around her.) It's so cold in here! Why don't you light the fire?

SHOEMAKER

I am trying to save wood. And there are no customers to warm.

WIFE

That is nothing! You are a fine shoemaker! As soon as people see how good you are, you will have many customers!

SHOEMAKER

I am afraid not, my dear.

WIFE

And why not?!

SHOEMAKER

I work very hard, yes. But I'm a *good* shoemaker, not a great shoemaker. Our taxes are so high. Leather is expensive. And I must sell at least a pair of shoes every day. This is a small village. Where will all those people come from?

WIFE

Ah, one day, the King himself will buy a pair of shoes from you, and then you will see!

SHOEMAKER

You may want to tell the King to please hurry, because I have spent the last of our silver coins. *(Pulls his empty pockets inside out.)* We are poor. I am afraid we may lose our home.

WIFE

We may be poor in money, but we are very rich in other ways. *(Kisses him on the cheek.)* I will sell my chickens!

SHOEMAKER

And where would we get breakfast then?! No, I will make one more pair of shoes. Let us see where they take us. Then, we will worry about the chickens. At least they don't need shoes. *(SHOEMAKER takes the candlestick, and he and WIFE exit.)*

(Lights dim. Music begins softly, as three ELVES - SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT - tumble wildly into the shop from behind the tables and chairs. They bump into each other, rebound, do handstands and somersaults; they are a vaudeville team with no talent. They have energy to spare, and they are obviously nice elves, but their clothing is raggedy and torn. They each carry a hammer somewhere on their person. Finally, SPOT motions, and SPIT and SPAT line up, side by side, for inspection.)

SPOT

Spit!

(SPIT steps forward and does an exaggerated bow, and returns to place.)

Spat!

(SPAT steps forward, spins until he nearly falls, and returns to place.)

SPIT and SPAT

(Together, pointing.)

Spot!

(SPOT does a split, rolls over, and stands up.)

SPOT

I am getting too old for this.

SPIT

You are only 35. *(Beat.)* Centuries.

SPAT

Soon, you'll be middle-aged.

SPOT

Quickly, elves, to work. *(Takes out notepaper and reads.)* This poor man and woman need our help. His shop is failing. They have nothing for Christmas.

SPIT

We have nothing for Christmas! Look at us! We are the shame of Elfland!

SPOT

We are honest elves, and true. We have an ancient and respected job. We help humans, and do good in the world. We expect nothing in return. Now, to work!

SPAT

Wait! There is but one piece of leather. And we must make two pairs of shoes from it!

SPOT

Stand back! *(SPOT takes out his hammer, does an elaborate motion with it, and begins to tap on the leather. SPIT and SPAT join in, forming a circle around the leather, and tap away. Suddenly, they all count!)*

SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT

One, two, three, and a shoe you will be!!! *(They step back, and the leather has turned into two beautiful pairs of shoes. The ELVES put the shoes on the table.)*

SPIT

They are beautiful! Look at my stitching!

SPAT

Look at my cutting and fitting!

SPOT

Look! It's morning, and I hear humans!
(The ELVES quickly spin and dance off, as SHOEMAKER and WIFE enter.)

SHOEMAKER

Ah, four days until Christmas, and no one has.... *(Stops and sees the shoes.)* Why, what are these?

WIFE

How lovely! Why, I thought you said you had enough leather for only one pair of shoes.

SHOEMAKER

I did. So where did these come from?

WIFE

I don't know. The door was locked. The dog never barked.
(The shop bell rings, and a customer arrives.)

CUSTOMER

I am looking for some shoes for my wife. Why, what are those?

WIFE

Shoes! The prettiest shoes in the village. Your wife will love these shoes. Look at the handwork! Look at the colors! How delicate! How fine!

CUSTOMER

Yes, yes, indeed! I'll take both pairs!
(Pays and exits.)

SHOEMAKER

More silver than we have seen in a month! But I wonder...

WIFE

Let us be grateful for the shoes! Now, let us go and purchase more leather! It will be dinner soon.

(SHOEMAKER and WIFE exit. Lights dim. Music begins softly, as SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT tumble wildly into the shop. They repeat the routine of the night before, jumping and bumping. SPOT motions, and SPIT and SPAT line up, side by side, for inspection.)

SPOT

Spit!

(SPIT steps forward and does an exaggerated bow, and returns to place.)

Spat!

(SPAT steps forward, spins until he nearly falls, and returns to place.)

SPIT and SPAT

(Together, pointing.)

Spot!

(SPOT does a split, rolls over, and stands up and groans.)

SPOT

Well done, elves. Look, the Shoemaker has enough leather for two pairs of shoes. Tonight, we will make six pairs! Stand back! *(SPOT takes out his hammer, does an elaborate motion with his hammer, and begins to tap on the leather. SPIT and SPAT join in, forming a circle around the leather, and tapping away. Suddenly, they all count!)*

SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT

One, two, three, and a shoe you will be!!! *(They step back, and the leather has turned into six beautiful pairs of shoes. The ELVES put the shoes on the table.)*

SPIT

Look at my stitching!

SPAT

Look at my cutting! And the colors!

SPOT

Listen! It's morning, and I hear humans!

(The ELVES quickly spin and dance off, as SHOEMAKER and WIFE enter.)

SHOEMAKER

See! Look here! Six pairs of shoes. I had leather for only three.

WIFE

They are just as beautiful as the others. But I heard no one.

SHOEMAKER

And the dog didn't bark. Or the chickens cluck!

(The shop bell rings, and a customer arrives.)

CUSTOMER

I am looking for some shoes. I am an old woman I have too many children, and don't know what to do. Why, what are these?

WIFE

The prettiest shoes in the village, enough for all the children who live in their shoes. Look at the handwork! Look at the colors! How delicate! How fine!

CUSTOMER

Yes, yes, indeed! They are lovely! I'll take them all!

(Gathers up the shoes, pays, and exits.)

SHOEMAKER

How can this be? In two days, we have made more silver than last year! We will have a wonderful Christmas after all!

WIFE

Let us be grateful! We must go and give thanks!

SHOEMAKER

We will. But first!

WIFE

Yes?

SHOEMAKER

First, we must discover the secret.

(They exit. Lights dim. Music begins softly, as SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT tumble wildly into the shop. They repeat the routine of the night before, but they are getting tired. The SHOEMAKER and his WIFE tiptoe in and hide behind a table.)

SPOT

Spit!

(SPIT steps forward and does faster bow; he's getting tired of all this, and returns to place.)

Spat!

(SPAT steps forward, spins until he falls, and goes back to his place.)

SPIT and SPAT

(Together, pointing.)

Spot!

(SPOT just waves them off and sits down, exhausted.)

SPOT

Well done, well done.

SPIT

I'm tired. And cold!

SPAT

My head is freezing, too.

SPOT

The life of an elf is not easy. We cannot profit from our shoes. It is elfin law. When humans need our help, we must be there. But good news! I hear the King himself has seen our shoes! Tonight, we make a special pair! The most magical, stupendous, and lovely shoes yet! Stand back! *(SPOT takes out his hammer, does an elaborate motion with his hammer, and begins to tap on the leather. SPIT and SPAT join in, forming a circle around the leather, and tapping away. Suddenly, they all count!)*

SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT

One, two, three, and a shoe you will be!!! *(They step back, and the leather has turned a magnificent pair of kingly shoes. The ELVES put the shoes on the table.)*

SPIT

Look at my stitching! It glitters!

SPAT

Look at my cutting! It glows!

SPOT

Look! It's morning! The sun is up. And now, we must go!

(The ELVES spin and dance off. The SHOEMAKER and WIFE come out of hiding.)

WIFE

These shoes! The elves! I don't know what to say!

SHOEMAKER

How fortunate we are - and the chickens, too!

WIFE

The poor little elves are so good to us. They work so hard every night. Christmas is coming and still they help us without a thought for themselves. And they are so cold! *(Thinks.)* My love, I must go out. You will have to watch the shop.

SHOEMAKER

But I am a terrible shop watcher. I watch, and watch, and nothing happens.

WIFE

Good bye! *(Exits.)*

SHOEMAKER

(Grumbling) Elves. Look at this beautiful pair of shoes. They are wonderful shoes. Much better than mine! Ah, well. What is this? *(Picks up an elf's hammer that was left behind.)* I wonder. Hmm. Perhaps....what was it they said? *(Stands with his back to the audience. Begins tapping away.)* "One, two, three, a shoe you will be!" Oh my heavens! Oh my stars! Look at these lovely shoes!!! *(Lifts up a beautiful pair of shoes, then places them on the table next to the elves' shoes. He repeats this three more times. The bell jangles, and KING enters.)*

KING

Good day, my good man, I want a good pair of shoes.

SHOEMAKER

Uh, um, your majesty, I don't know what to say. I am a humble...

KING

(Interrupting him.) You can say "Here is a good pair of shoes" or I will toss you in the dungeon. No, I won't. But a king is supposed to say that, and so, I do. I want the loveliest pair of shoes for my Queen - the best Christmas gift possible.

SHOEMAKER

Your Majesty. I am but a humble shoemaker.

KING

Bosh, man. What are those? *(Pointing to the beautiful shoes.)* Let me see them. *(SHOEMAKER hands him the elves' shoes.)* Why, these are the loveliest shoes in the world! I will give you a hundred silver coins for them!

SHOEMAKER

(Stunned.) Oh, your majesty. I did not make them. I must be honest.

KING

(Misunderstanding) Is this your shop? I must have these shoes. I will give you two hundred silver coins! *(The SHOEMAKER is speechless.)* You drive a hard bargain, my man. Three hundred silver coins, not a penny more, and I will make you a prince!

SHOEMAKER

Your majesty! *(Wrapping the shoes; KING hands him a bag of silver and a crown. KING exits. WIFE enters with a sack.)*

We are rich! You are a princess. And I am a prince! The chickens will have a heated house! And now we can pay for the church's a new roof! We must thank the elves! *(WIFE takes three jackets and three caps out of the sack and lays them on the table and puts a letter next to them. They hide. The ELVES enter, but they are not very happy, and there is no dancing and jumping this time.)*

SPIT

Cold. And no one cares.

SPAT

Tired. And no one cares.

SPOT

Now, elves, we can't give up... *(Sees the caps, and jackets. They all look in wonder, and hold up the clothing.)*

SPAT

A cap! Oh, oh, how warm I'll be!

SPIT

And a jacket! I'll wear it day and night!

SPOT

And a letter. *(Opens it and looks carefully.)*

SPIT and SPAT

What does it say? Who wrote it?

SPAT

It says....

SPIT and SPAT

What?

SPOT

Dear Elves, Thank you for your help. We will always be your friends. The chickens will never forget you, either. The Shoemaker and his Wife.

SPIT, SPAT, and SPOT

Awwwww.

SPOT

Well, we're done here. Off we go. Other humans need our help, and shoes. Farewell, Prince and Princess!

(ELVES dance off. SHOEMAKER and WIFE come out of hiding.)

SHOEMAKER

Well, my dear. Listen, I can hear the bells. Merry Christmas! And you know, I learned something from the elves.

WIFE

What was that?

SHOEMAKER

I am a good shoemaker, but not the best.

WIFE

Yes, my dear. I know that.

SHOEMAKER

You do?

WIFE

Yes. But a good person is more important than a great artist. And giving is better than receiving. And always be honest. Still, it never hurts to have some help. *(Hands him a wrapped present.)* Merry Christmas, my dear. *(SHOEMAKER unwraps gift – it is an elfin hammer. Hugs WIFE. Music up. Lights dim.)*

THE END