

**Wife**

*(weakly)*

But I must help you - - I must help...

*Her voice trails off and she sleeps.*

**Shoemaker**

*(looking down at her)*

At least while she sleeps she will not be hungry...

*He turns back to the basket as there is another offstage knock.*

No! I'll not answer it! I'll not face any more angry customers!  
Go away!

*(knocking continues)*

Why don't they leave us alone!

*An elf enters.*

**Elf**

May I come in? The door was open.

**Shoemaker**

*(staring at him)*

Who are you?

**Elf**

A traveler. Could you spare something to eat?

**Shoemaker**

I'm sorry. We have nothing. Nothing at all. Look -- there is my wife asleep from exhaustion and hunger. We have a well in the yard if you want a drink of water. If I had anything you could share it but we . . .

*The elf is gazing at him steadily.*

Why do you look at me like that? - - - Why are you staring? I feel strange....sleepy....but I can 't sleep....I must work....I must work....work....work....

*He sinks down beside the basket, asleep. The Elf turns with a chuckle.*

**Elf**

Come in, men, and get to work!

*The elves troop in chanting:*

We'll work, work, work, work, work all night,  
We'll work till dawn of early light,  
We'll work until it's Christmas Day  
And then we'll steal away!

*As they chant, they are lifting the basket and taking it offstage.*

We'll tap, tap, tap, tap, tap all night,  
We'll tap, tap, tap, with all our might.  
We'll tap till every single shoe  
Is just as good as new!

**Elf**

Half of you do the shoes -- and the other half get breakfast; hurry -- it's morning!

The sun is up and the job is done,  
The shoes are finished, every one!  
And now we will be on our way  
There's lots to do this Christmas Day!

*As they chant the last verse, they have carried  
in the workbench with the finished shoes.*

**An Elf**

Let's wake them up!

**Another Elf**

No, -- wait -- let's wake *her* up and she can have the fun of waking *him*.

**First Elf**

Good idea!

*They gently shake the wife and say "Wake up, wake up, Merry Christmas". Then they all vanish. The wife stirs and sits up.*

**Wife**

*(sleepily)*

Husband?...I'm sorry I fell asleep....I'll help you now. Why, it's morning!

*(she looks around)*

It's Christmas morning and the shoes aren't finished. Husband - quickly - get up, we must work --

*She sees the bench with the shoes and gasps,  
then runs to shake her husband.*

**Wife**

How did you do it? How *did* you do it?

**Shoemaker**

*(stirring)*

Do....what?....