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**Two Marys,  
Five Jacks,  
and  
One Very Big Shoe**

*A participation play for young children*

By

JOEY MADIA

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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(TWO MARYS, FIVE JACKS, and ONE VERY BIG SHOE)

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*Two Marys, Five Jacks, and One Very Big Shoe* was commissioned by Youth Stages in Princeton, New Jersey and had its debut on November 17, 2003 at Monmouth Performing Arts Center, Howell, New Jersey under the direction of Jean Prall Rosolino. Joey Madia played the role of Willie and Nancy Jean McBride the roles of Mary Contrary/The Old Woman.

## **Characters:**

**Wee Willie Winkie**

**Mary Mary Quite Contrary/Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe**

## **Setting:**

The stage area is roughly 12' x 15', and contains a backdrop and a functional toy box from which various items can be taken and restored. The toy box should be strong enough to support one actor standing and both actors sitting.

The play was originally staged with a large backdrop painted to look like shoe leather with a "Home Sweet Shoe" sign hanging on it and two banners with the name of the play that Willie could hang on each side. The play works well on a thrust style stage with the audience sitting on the floor on three sides, marked off with ribbons, so there are aisles for the actors to move back and forth.

The play can also be staged in proscenium style, with the children seated in front, though if at all possible they should be split with an aisle up the middle that can be used when the play calls for the actors to go into the audience area. When done in a traditional proscenium theatre with an elevated stage, the actors must work that much harder to stay connected with the audience. Stairs or ramps leading to the audience are of course ideal in this situation.

## **Costumes:**

**Willie:**

Long john pants with flannel boxers, a full-length nightshirt and a nightcap

**Old Woman in the Shoe:**

Simple dress, shawl, fitted bonnet, glasses, slippers

Miss Muffet:

Bonnet and fancy apron added to basic costume

Mary Contrary:

Large gardening hat and slip-on shoes added to basic costume

**Props:**

A blanket

A stuffed animal sheep

A lantern (nonfunctional)

A watering can

A gardening shovel

A sheep mask

A crook (needn't be full length)

A candlestick

A pie plate

A plastic plum with a thumbhole cut into it

A cutout of Humpty Dumpty

A cutout of the king's men and their horses

A fake moustache

A medium sized platter

A bowl and spoon

Two banners that hang down with the name of play on them

A bottle with VINEGAR written on it

A roll of paper to wrap around Willie's head

A hat for Willie to wear during his rap

## Two Marys, Five Jacks, and One Very Big Shoe

*Wee Willie Winkie, in nightshirt and cap, enters through the audience with a lantern, moves to the stage.*

**Willie:** Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town  
Upstairs and downstairs, in his nightgown.  
Rapping at the window, crying through the lock,  
Are the children in their beds? Now it's eight o'clock.

*Looking around.*

Home sweet shoe. (*Repeats rhyme playfully to the audience.*)  
I see you're all in your beds, brothers and sisters. Very good.

**Old Woman:** (*Offstage voice.*) Is that you, Willie?

**Willie:** Sure is, Mum. (*To audience.*) Mum will be so proud of us. Now  
it's time to fluff our pillows and get beneath our cozy blankets  
and—Hold on . . .

*He scans audience, as if looking for someone.*

Where's Mary Contrary? Mary Contrary, where are you?

*Thinks a minute, snaps his fingers.*

I bet I know.

*Opens "door" upstage by the backdrop.*

Mary Mary Quite Contrary, how does your garden grow?

**Mary:** (*Offstage voice.*) With silver bells and cockle shells and pretty  
maids all in a row—now leave me alone—I'm busy.

**Willie:** You'd better come inside. Mum will be back any minute to say  
goodnight.

**Mary:** (*Still offstage.*) Oh, all right!

*Enters with gardening hat and shovel.*

**Willie:** You're not done with your gardening yet?

**Mary:** Would I be outside when I should be in bed if I was done with my  
gardening?

**Willie:** I suppose not.

**Mary:** Then don't ask silly questions. You have no idea of the day I've  
had.

**Willie:** It couldn't have been that bad.

**Mary:** Oh really? I went out to do my gardening this morning, as I always do, and I realized I was all out of silver bells and cockle shells, so off I went to the market. Do you think they had *silver* bells? Oh no, they had red ones and blue ones and even gold ones, but not a single silver bell.

**Willie:** And the cockle shells?

**Mary:** Don't even get me started on the cockle-shells, Willie. I'm really not in a cheerful mood.

**Willie:** You're never in a cheerful mood. That's why Auntie Goose calls you Mary Contrary. Now get into your bed before Mum comes in. We've already had one scolding tonight and we certainly don't need another.

**Mary:** A scolding? What did you do *this* time?

**Willie:** We didn't do anything—it's in the rhyme, remember?

"There was an old woman who lived in a shoe  
She had so many children she didn't know what to do."

**Mary:** "She gave them some broth without any bread.

She scolded them soundly and put them to bed."

Of course—how could I forget? At least I didn't miss out on a nice tasty dinner. I've grown tired of broth without any bread.

**Willie:** Me too. But I know a way we can all have a delicious cake before going to sleep.

**Mary:** Oh, yes? How?

**Willie:** "Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake, Baker's man!

Bake me a cake as fast as you can.

Roll it and pat it and mark it with a B,

And put it in the oven for Baby and me!"

*He acts it out as he recites it. Waits a second, uses pantomime to open imaginary oven door.*

There we are. Nice and hot.

*He pops the imaginary cake into his mouth and rubs his belly.*

And delicious. Now, my grumbling-bellied brothers and sisters, let's all make cakes together. Say the rhyme with me if you can.

*He repeats rhyme and hand motions with audience. Waits a second.*

Put on your oven mitts. Now open up your oven doors and take out your cakes—but be careful, they might be a little hot. (*Sniffing*)

*the air.*) Oh, the whole shoe smells like delicious cakes.

*He moves around the stage sniffing.*

Why, I smell chocolate over here, vanilla over here, and wonderful lemon-strawberry swirl over here! Very wonderful! Everyone put your cake in your other hand and shake off your oven mitts. Blow on your cake to make sure it's cooled off. Now let's eat them!

*He eats his, going around to the audience and ad-libbing, "Aren't they good?" etc. Picks one child who is really going along with the pantomime and says, "You've got a spot of chocolate on your chin—you should wipe that off before Mum comes back in."*

**Mary:** (*Who hasn't participated.*) That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen. Those cakes were just pretend.

**Willie:** Of course they were, but it was still fun. Come on, Mary—give it a try.

**Mary:** No thank you. I have to get back to my garden. If Mother sees I haven't weeded and watered it today she'll scold me for sure.

*Turns to go.*

**Willie:** What am I supposed to tell Mum when she comes in to say goodnight and she notices you're not here?

**Mary:** I hadn't thought of that. Can you keep her busy for me while I finish my gardening?

**Willie:** I guess I could . . . if you don't take too long.

**Mary:** It will take as long as it will take. Will you help me or not?

**Willie:** Let me think a minute. (*He does.*) I've got it! It's perfect. Well, not perfect, but it'll do for now.

**Mary:** What are you talking about?

**Willie:** Something I've been working on in my spare time. A way to help out our Mum. It's a bunch of games.

**Mary:** What kind of games? Are they any fun?

**Willie:** They sure are. There are finger plays, reciting games, and lots of fun characters. I've put them all together into a little play I call . . . (*Imitates fanfare trumpeting.*) Ta ta ta ta ta ta taaa!

*Taking two banners with play name written on them and hanging them from the backdrop.*

"Two Marys, Five Jacks, and One Very Big Shoe!"

**Mary:** Two Marys, Five Jacks, and One Very Big Shoe? Those are all things from Mother Goose.

**Willie:** Exactly! And you know how much Mum loves Auntie Goose's rhymes!

**Mary:** I do indeed. But what does that have to do with helping Mother?

**Willie:** *(As if she should have figured it out.)* Mary! "There was an old woman who lived in a shoe, she had so many children she didn't know what to do." My little play will give her something to do with us. The only problem, it isn't quite finished, so you had better go and get started on your garden. I'll stall her as long as I can.

**Mary:** I'll work as fast as possible, but after I'm finished I'll have to wash my face and hands and brush my teeth.

**Willie:** *(Ushering her out the door.)* Fine, you're a good girl—just do it quickly and quietly, all right?

*Mary exits, nodding. Willie talks to audience while preparing props and folding banners over the top of the backdrop.*

I'll need your help with the play, my sleepy-eyed brothers and sisters—as long as you all stay sitting nicely in your places and we don't get too loud and start talking over each other I don't think Mum will mind us all staying up a little late tonight.

**Old Woman:** *(Calling offstage.)* Willie, are the children in their beds?

**Willie:** Yes, Mum.

*He works behind the toy box quietly arranging props. Old Woman enters.*

**Old Woman:** *(She looks into the audience.)* Hello, children. I'm glad to see you all sitting nicely in your beds waiting for me. Willie, you've done a wonderful job with the children, as always.

*Noticing he's not there.*

Wait a minute. Wee Willie Winkie! Where has that boy gotten off to now? Willie Winkie! Where are you, you young rascal? You're supposed to be in bed like your brothers and sisters! Wee Willie Winkie!

*She searches around the stage and audience for him.*

**Willie:** *(Coming around the toy box.)* I'm right here, Mum.

**Old Woman:** Willie! Not that old trick again! You get me every time!

**Willie:** You mean I get you to *smile* every time!

**Old Woman:** Yes you do. You do indeed. But now it's time to go to bed. You may be done for the day but I still have plenty of chores to do. Goodnight, everyone. (*She turns to go but Willie stops her.*)

**Willie:** Wait a minute, Mum. Do we have to go to bed just now?

**Old Woman:** Of course you do, Willie.

**Willie:** But, Mummmm—

**Old Woman:** No buts about it, young man. I'm just following the rhyme. My sister, Mother Goose herself, saw fit to make me the Old Woman who lives in the shoe, though I can't imagine why, and, according to her, I am supposed to give you some broth without any bread, scold you all soundly and put you to bed, and that's just what I've done.

**Willie:** Which is what you always do. Why can't we have a little different ending tonight? It's hard to fall asleep when all we keep thinking about is our empty stomachs. Cold broth without any bread isn't very filling, you know.

**Old Woman:** Very well. I'll read you one of your favorite Mother Goose rhymes. Let me get my book. I think I left the book on the bench in Mary's garden.

**Willie:** Uh—no, no Mum, don't get the book! That won't do at all!  
*Moves to block her.*

**Old Woman:** Excuse me, Willie? I thought you loved Mother Goose rhymes?

**Willie:** We do, Mum, but if we can't have a proper supper I think we should at least be able to have some proper fun before turning in for the night. I have just the thing to make us sleepy and it'll also help you forget your chores for a while.

**Old Woman:** (*Half to herself.*) I'm almost afraid to ask . . . what do you have in mind?

**Willie:** (*Getting funky hat from the toy box.*) Well, I've been working on something new. It's a little play I call: "ta ta ta ta ta ta taaaa!"

*Unfolding the banners to reveal the name of the play.*

"Two Marys, Five Jacks, and One Very Big Shoe!" It starts with a catchy song that's a mix of Mother Goose rhyme, music and dance. I call it "rap music."

**Old Woman:** Nap music? That will be perfect for lulling everyone to sleep.

**Willie:** Not *nap* music, Mum! *Rap* music.

*He does a human beat box sample.*

**Old Woman:** Really?

**Willie:** And when I become a famous rap star you'll never have to work another day in your life!

**Old Woman:** You're a sweet boy, Willie. A famous rap star . . . That's a wonderful dream. Let's hear what you've got so far.

**Willie:** (*Using Human Beat Box rhythm to rap Old King Cole.*)

Old King Cole was a merry old soul

And a merry old soul was he.

He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,

And he called for his fiddlers three!

And every fiddler, he had a fine fiddle

And a very fine fiddle had he.

"Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee" went the Fiddlers,

"Twee twee tweedly dee."

"Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee" went the Fiddlers,

"Twee twee tweedly dee."

Oh there's none so rare as can compare

With King Cole and his fiddlers three.

*During the rap Willie has grown increasingly showy, gesticulating with his arms and moving around the space, encouraging the children to clap, while keeping the beat on his body. Old Woman is getting into the show when she realizes the children are clapping or laughing, etc.*

**Old Woman:** Willie! Stop that right now—you're getting the children all wound up!

*Note: On occasion there will be an audience that gets very excited by the rap, clapping along and getting very loud with laughter, etc. When this happens it is best if Willie calms them down, not wanting to ruin his chances to have them stay up late. He might say, "Oh, I didn't mean to get them all so excited! They must really like it. All right, brothers and sisters, remember what I asked you before. We need to be nice and quiet so Mum will let us stay up." And the Old Woman might reply, "Listen to your brother Willie, children. Oh, I just knew this was a bad idea."*

**Willie:** (*Pouting.*) You don't like it? . . . I knew you wouldn't like it. . .

**Old Woman:** Oh, I do dear—it's lovely, just lovely . . . for *playtime*. But it's not the kind of thing to help the children fall asleep. It's all wrong for

bedtime.

**Willie:** I guess you're right. But that's just the beginning of the play—the rest is much calmer and just perfect for bedtime.

**Old Woman:** I don't know, Willie. Sounds like more of your shenanigans . . .

**Willie:** It's not, Mum, really. It'll be just the thing to make us tired so we can go to sleep.

**Old Woman:** Oh, all right. We'll try it your way, though I should know better by now.

**Willie:** Thank you, Mum, thank you! You won't regret this, I promise! The first part of the play is games about boys named Jack. Mother Goose if full of rhymes about boys named Jack.

**Old Woman:** That's because her son is named Jack. Don't tell me you've forgotten your cousin Jack.

**Willie:** My cousin Jack? I just may have. What's he look like?

**Old Woman:** It's in the rhyme: "She had a son named Jack, a plain-looking lad. He was not very good, nor yet very bad."

**Willie:** Sounds easy enough. (*Strikes a pose with a big smile.*)

*Note: This sequence works best if Willie uses his arms and upper body to portray the emotion rather than limiting it solely to facial expressions.*

**Old Woman:** What are you doing?

**Willie:** I'm playing Jack, a plain-looking lad. (*Resumes smile pose.*)

**Old Woman:** Well, I hate to further burst your bubble after stopping your rap, but you don't look plain-looking at all. (*To audience.*) Does he, children? How does it look like he's feeling?

*Accept "happy," "silly," "glad," etc.*

I'm afraid that just won't work for a plain-looking lad. Try it again, Willie.

*Willie takes a new pose with a SAD face.*

Well, that's certainly different but still not plain-looking. How is he feeling now, children?

*Accept "sad," "unhappy," etc.*

I'll give you one more try, Willie. Think plain-looking.

*Willie takes new pose with SURPRISED/SCARED face; Old Woman ad-libs as she did with Happy and Sad faces.*

**Willie:** (*Deflating.*) It's no use. I just can't be a plain-looking Jack.

**Old Woman:** Then why don't you pretend to be some other Jacks instead?