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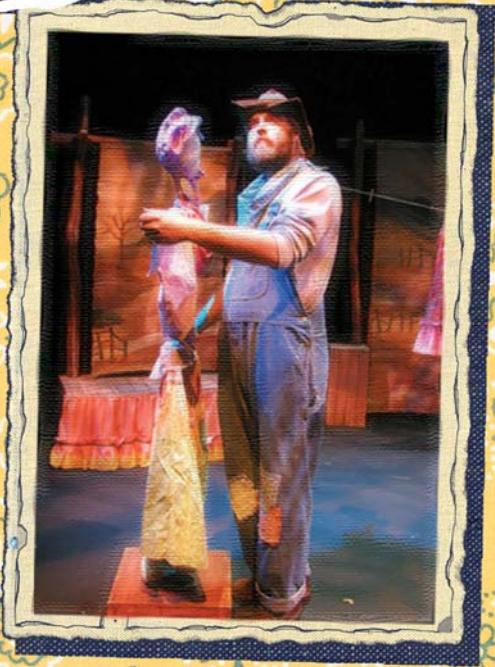
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Dramatic Publishing

Old Jake's Skirts

Adapted by
José Cruz González

From the book by
C. Anne Scott



Old Jake's Skirts

Play with music. Adapted by José Cruz González from the book by C. Anne Scott. Music composed/arranged by Ric Averill.

Cast: 2m., 1w., 1 either gender (with doubling). Old Jake is a lonely pumpkin farmer who is down on his luck, until he and his hound dog, Shoestring, find an old trunk beside the road. They take the trunk home and soon discover that it contains calico skirts that once belonged to a young mother. With every skirt—and the imaginative ways he uses them to fill his life—color begins slowly to creep back into Jake's world. When he meets the little girl who shares the secret of these skirts, he finds hope and laughter. This tale, filled with gentle humor, is both homespun and heartwarming. "A tale where a touch of beauty and softness ends by softening a man's rusty heart. Even if you don't have kids to take along, you should see this show ... Playwright José Cruz González should be rewarded for having turned a ... narrative by C. Anne Scott ... into a witty play, allowing Scott's straight narrative to twist and bend like a wacky song." (Arizona Republic) Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Unit set. Music in book.

*Cover photo: Childsplay, Inc., Tempe, Arizona.
Featuring Matthew Proschold. Photo: Jannine Doto.*

13 ISBN: 978-1-58342-375-2
10 ISBN: 1-58342-375-3

Code: O69



www.dramaticpublishing.com

Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel



Printed on Recycled Paper

OLD JAKE'S SKIRTS

Adapted for the stage
by
JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ

From the book by
C. ANNE SCOTT



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ

Based on the book *Old Jake's Skirts* by
C. ANNE SCOTT
Published by Northland Publishing, Flagstaff, Ariz.

Printed in the United States of America
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(OLD JAKE'S SKIRTS)

ISBN: 1-58342-375-3

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Old Jake's Skirts premiered at Childsplay, Tempe, Arizona. Directed by Graham Whitehead, composer/arranger was Ric Averill, scenic design by Greg Jaye, costume design by Liz Ihlenfeld, lighting design by Michael Eddy, stage manager was Gretchen Schaefer, and contributing musician/composer was Adam Jacobson. The cast included Maureen Dias, Beau Heckman, Adam Jacobson, Matthew Proschold. The school tour was February 2005 to June 2005. David Saar was the artistic director.

Old Jake's Skirts was adapted for the stage from the book by C. Anne Scott, illustrated by David Slonim, Rising Moon, Books for Young Readers from Northland Publishing. *Old Jake's Skirts* was developed through Childsplay's New Plays Workshop. David Saar, director; Ric Averill, music consultant, Graham Whitehead, dramaturg. The cast included Jon Gentry, Dwayne Hartford, Katie McFadzen, Debra K. Stevens, D. Scott Withers and Adam Jacobson. Gretchen Schaefer was workshop stage manager.

Special thanks to Childsplay, the Pew Charitable Trusts/Theatre Communications Group and the Arizona State University's Piper Center for Creative Writing.

OLD JAKE'S SKIRTS

A Play in One Act

CHARACTERS:

SARAH is a young woman. She is our storyteller. She also plays YOUNG SARAH, E.B. SWEENEY and GOOD SAMARITAN LADY #3.

OLD JAKE is a tall, thin man with a beard. He wears overalls. His face is weathered from working the land. His clothes are loose on him. Old Jake is a pumpkin farmer and raises chickens for sale. His home is Stillwaters Farm located on a hillside. He doesn't have much but with the work he does it's enough to keep him going. Jake lives alone with his old hound dog Shoestring. When he isn't working, Old Jake likes to carve little figurines. There is something sad and lonely about him.

SHOESTRING (Actor #3) is Old Jake's hound dog. He likes to sleep inside Old Jake's farmhouse because it's quiet and warm, but during the planting season Old Jake's got Shoestring outside watching for hungry rabbits that like to eat the pumpkin sprouts. Shoestring is the closest companion Old Jake has. He will also play CLARENCE, GOOD SAMARITAN LADY #1.

OTIS BROWN is YOUNG SARAH's father. He also is the MUSICIAN, ELLIS and GOOD SAMARITAN LADY #2.

For additional characters roles may be split up to increase the cast by giving each actor a character.

LIST OF MUSIC
(melodies found at the back of the book)

Above the Plains
Jake's Skirts - Magic Skirts Opening
Rounder
Shoestring Blues
Truck-Drivin' Riff
Tin Lizzy
Jake's Skirts - Main Theme
Jimmy
Delbert Sweep - Fly
There's a Hole in the Bucket
Planting Crops with Plague Tag
Whistlin' & Whittlin'
Bill Cheatham
Opening the Trunk
Devil's Dream
Banks of the Ohio
Pre-Clean Music
Irish Washerwoman
Happy Planting
Soul of Man
This Train
Shall We Gather at the River
Beautiful Dreamer
Otis & Sarah Music
Jake's Skirts - Skirt Magic with Sarah Theme
Amazing Grace
Harmonies as Needed
This Train (alternate key of C)
Shall We Gather at the River (alternate key of C)
Amazing Grace (alternate key of E)

OLD JAKE'S SKIRTS

AT RISE: *The stage is bare. A lone MUSICIAN enters playing "Above the Plains." The ENSEMBLE enters joining the MUSICIAN in song as they begin setting up the stage.*

ENSEMBLE.

**ABOVE THE PLAINS
OF GOLD AND GREEN
A YOUNG BOY'S HEAD
IS PLAINLY SEEN
A-HOO-YA, HOO-YA, HOO-YA, YA!
SWIFTLY FLOWING RIVER
A-HOO-YA, HOO-YA, HOO-YA, YA!
SWIFTLY FLOWING RIVER**

(Repeat.)

(A backdrop of a painted landscape of hills and farmland is unrolled. An old trunk is placed on stage. The ENSEMBLE exits except for the MUSICIAN and SARAH.)

MUSIC: "Jake's Skirts - Magic Skirts Opening."

SARAH looks at the old trunk and smiles. She opens the trunk delicately removing a calico skirt neatly bound

with a beautiful ribbon. She closes the trunk and sits on it. SARAH discovers a colorful wood carving of a girl wrapped in the calico skirt.

OLD JAKE enters. He is the hermit farmer. OLD JAKE does not see SARAH but SARAH remembers OLD JAKE.)

OLD JAKE (*in a gravelly voice*). Take whichever one you want. (*He introduces a miniature wooden cabin. We see the exterior of the cabin with a porch, door and window.*)

SARAH. Old Jake wasn't much a talker. It was his strong hands that did the talking by the hard work they would do. He was always up before the sunrise working on his farm, feeding his chickens, milking old Sally, his cow, and repairing this or that.

(ACTOR #3 enters.)

ACTOR #3. Something always needed fixing.

SARAH. With each season he barely scraped by. But he didn't need much. He lived a simple life. His home was an old wooden shack and his only source of light was a lantern. In the wintertime, he would cover his windows with used burlap sacks to keep out the cold.

ACTOR #3. Old Jake didn't have a family and he liked to keep to himself. There was plenty to do on the farm and that suited him just fine.

SARAH. But when Old Jake wasn't planting, he was carving.

ACTOR #3. Uh-huh.

SARAH. He loved to whittle little wooden figurines.

ACTOR #3. That's right.

(MUSIC: "Rounder.")

ACTOR #3. Old Jake's only companion was his hound dog. *(ACTOR #3 places a wooden dog on the porch of the cabin.)*

OLD JAKE *(offstage)*. Shoestring!

(MUSIC: "Shoestring Blues.")

ACTOR #3 transforms into SHOESTRING. He stretches, yawns and scratches an itch. He lies on the trunk to sleep.

OLD JAKE enters whistling. OLD JAKE places an old toy truck in front of the miniature cabin.)

SARAH. It was still dawn when Old Jake rose. He was planning an early start into town to pick up supplies at the general store.

OLD JAKE. Come on, Shoestring.

SHOESTRING. Awu.

SARAH. Old Jake wanted to get his daily start before the morning regulars arrived for their morning round of coffee and chitchat.

OLD JAKE. Nuthin' worse than coffee and chitchat.

SHOESTRING *(sleepy)*. Awu...

OLD JAKE. Clarence and Ellis will talk your ears off.

'Fore you know it the day's half gone.

SHOESTRING. Awu...

OLD JAKE. Let's go, you old hound dog.

SHOESTRING. Awu...

OLD JAKE (*looks at his grocery list*). Let's see, gonna get us a sack of flour.

SHOESTRING. Awu...

OLD JAKE. A can of lard.

SHOESTRING. Awu...

OLD JAKE. A new whetstone for my whittlin' knife.

SHOESTRING. Awu...

OLD JAKE. And a bone for you. That got you moving, didn't it?

SHOESTRING. Awu!

OLD JAKE. Get in the truck! (*The trunk becomes OLD JAKE's truck.*) Where are my keys?

SARAH. Old Jake and Shoestring had a peculiar way of starting into town. It always began with Shoestring sitting in the front seat of Old Jake's beat-up truck. And it was a routine as constant as the jackrabbits populating Old Jake's farm.

(OLD JAKE crosses back to the cabin to get his keys while SHOESTRING sits in the front truck seat. OLD JAKE returns unaware that SHOESTRING has climbed in.)

OLD JAKE. How many times I gotta tell you, hound dogs belong in the back. People in front. Out you go.

(He signals the hound dog to the back and opens the tailgate, helping SHOESTRING onto the bed of the truck. SHOESTRING goes to OLD JAKE and OLD

JAKE scratches SHOESTRING's head. OLD JAKE sits in the truck and closes the imaginary door.)

SARAH. Old Jake would use an unwired coat hanger to hold the truck door shut. And getting the truck started was always an adventure.

OLD JAKE. Come on now. You're gonna start real easy.

(MUSIC: "Truck-Drivin' Riff.")

He pumps the gas pedal several times. He turns the key but the engine doesn't start. OLD JAKE steps out of the truck lifting the imaginary hood while SHOESTRING climbs back into the front seat. SHOESTRING presses on the horn.)

OLD JAKE. Shoestring, you do that one more time! Get! *(SHOESTRING quickly jumps into the back of the truck.)* Didn't have any trouble getting in that time, did you? *(OLD JAKE pumps the gas pedal again.)* Finally, on the third try the truck starts.

(SARAH picks up the toy truck and places the dog figurine in the back.)

MUSIC: The ENSEMBLE sings "Tin Lizzy.")

ENSEMBLE.

**SHE'S AN OLD PILE OF TIN,
NOBODY KNOW WHAT SHAPE SHE'S IN
GOT FOUR WHEELS AND A RUNNING BOARD
SHE'S A PICKUP, SHE'S A FORD**

**HONK, HONK, RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE
CRASH, BEEP-BEEP**

**HONK, HONK, RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE
CRASH, BEEP-BEEP**

**HONK, HONK, RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE
CRASH, BEEP-BEEP**

(Repeat.)

(While the ENSEMBLE sings SARAH plays with the truck as if it is driving over a bumpy road. OLD JAKE and SHOESTRING transform into a road of hills, valleys and curves. The little truck slowly climbs up a steep hill until it finally slides down the other side. Suddenly the truck stops before an old trunk in the middle of the road. OLD JAKE and SHOESTRING stand behind SARAH who is holding the toy truck. The truck's tiny headlights shine on the trunk.)

SARAH. Old Jake ground his truck to a stop. The headlights of his pickup had revealed out the form of a trunk a few yards ahead.

MUSICIAN. Now, the trunk was in his way.

(MUSIC: "Jake's Skirts - Main Theme.")

ACTOR #3 transforms back into SHOESTRING..)

OLD JAKE. Whatcha reckon it is, Shoestring?

(SHOESTRING crosses to the trunk sniffing it. He barks at it.)

OLD JAKE. Be still, dog. A little ol' trunk can't hurt nuthin'.

(SHOESTRING slinks away and sits down beside OLD JAKE who scratches SHOESTRING's ear.)

OLD JAKE. How in the world did it get here? Musta fallen off some poor feller's pickup. Best we take it on to town. Hope it ain't heavy like books or somethin'.

SARAH. Old Jake slowly hunched over to lift the trunk. A bone popped in his back.

(OLD JAKE and SHOESTRING lift the trunk up into the air.)

OLD JAKE. 'Tain't books, Shoestring. Could be feathers.

(OLD JAKE and SHOESTRING lift the trunk over their shoulders. SARAH slips herself and the toy truck through.)

SARAH. Old Jake shoved the trunk into the back of his truck, slammed the tailgate shut and off they went in a in a cloud of dust traveling the last few miles to town.

(MUSIC: Resume "Truck-Drivin' Riff.")

SARAH places a wood carving of a trunk in the back of the toy truck. SARAH exits with the toy truck.

(MUSIC: "Jimmy.")

SARAH puts on an apron transforming into E.B. SWEENEY, the storeowner.)

ACTOR #3. In town, old E.B. Sweeney, the local store-keeper, was up early preparing the general store for business.

E.B. SWEENEY. There's lots to do today.

(MUSIC: "Jimmy" repeat.)

ACTOR #3. Sure is. Items had to be stocked. Inventory had to be counted. Prices had to be marked.

E.B. SWEENEY. It's gonna be a hot one. I better get this floor swept. *(E.B. yawns.)*

(E.B. SWEENEY rolls on a miniature grocery store. OLD JAKE and ACTOR #3 lift the trunk on its side turning it into a store counter top. They exit. E.B. flicks on a little light in the store.)

MUSIC: "Delbert Sweep - Fly."

E.B. yawns as a fly buzzes about. She shoos it away. E.B. starts to sweep with the music. She yawns and the fly enters her mouth. She spits it out and the fly lands on the counter. She is about to smash it when it buzzes off.

A music interlude of sweeping and fly squashing culminates with E.B. striking the counter top with her broom.

OLD JAKE and SHOESTRING enter onstage with the toy truck.

MUSIC: “Truck-Drivin’ Riff” dies to “Jimmy” ending fast.

OLD JAKE leaves the toy truck parked in front of the general store. The door rings as OLD JAKE enters.)

OLD JAKE. Stay in the truck, dog.

SHOESTRING. Awu.

OLD JAKE. I know! I know! I won't forget.

MUSICIAN. Old Jake was E.B. Sweeney's first customer that morning.

(MUSIC: “There’s a Hole in the Bucket” repeats under scene.)

E.B. SWEENEY. Mornin' Jake.

OLD JAKE. E.B.

E.B. SWEENEY (*looks at SHOESTRING*). Mercy, what you been feedin' Shoestring? That dog's grown near ten foot since I seen him last.

OLD JAKE. Ain't grown none. Standin' on a trunk.

E.B. SWEENEY. A trunk?

SHOESTRING (*slips off*). Awu!

E.B. SWEENEY. Mercy. Whatcha gonna buy this mornin', Jake?

OLD JAKE. Same.

E.B. SWEENEY. Let me guess what you're gonna get.

OLD JAKE. Just the basics—

E.B. SWEENEY. —Nothing fancy, I know.

(OLD JAKE removes a piece of paper from his pocket. E.B. crosses to the miniature general store turning it around to reveal the interior filled with supplies, etc. She starts selecting OLD JAKE's groceries.)

OLD JAKE. Gonna need a—

OLD JAKE.

—sack of flower.

E.B. SWEENEY.

Sack of flower.

OLD JAKE.

Can of lard.

E.B. SWEENEY.

Can of lard.

OLD JAKE. A new whetstone for my whittlin' knife.

(MUSIC: "There's a Hole in the Bucket" stops.)

E.B. SWEENEY. A new whetsone?

OLD JAKE. Yup.

E.B. SWEENEY. Well, what happened to the old one? Did Shoestring bury it again? *(E.B. SWEENEY crosses to SHOESTRING petting him.)*

(MUSIC: "Delbert Sweep - Fly" but stops suddenly.)

E.B. SWEENEY. Oh, that darn fly!