

The Literal Child by Jeffery Greb

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

Yes. A shoe. I don't know how she fit. I suppose she was a very small woman, or it was a very large shoe. Well, look at the picture. It looks kind of like a boot, right? So think of it like a big boot. I don't know why they say shoe but show a boot. Let's start again.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

I don't know if it was all one big room. Yes, I know shoes, and boots, are empty inside, but it wasn't a regular shoe since people lived in it. Look, it has a door. Most shoes, and boots, don't have doors. None of mine or yours do. I don't know how they got to that window up near the top, but that's exactly my point: we don't know what it's like inside. It could have rooms; it could have an upstairs; there might even be a basement. Yes, it might also be empty.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

I don't know whose shoe it was. Yes, it would have to be a very large person to have a shoe big enough for other people to live in. No matter how big it is, a shoe is going to be cramped. And maybe that's the point. The old woman is so poor, all she can afford to live in is a shoe. Or boot, yes. I don't know why they don't just say she's poor, maybe it's more fun to say she lives in a shoe. No, I don't mean they're making fun of her; I mean fun for people reading the story to think of a person living in a shoe. Or boot, yes. You'll need to ask Mother Goose why. Mother Goose: she wrote the story. No, she isn't a bird. Mother Goose is said to be the author of a whole bunch of little stories and rhymes for kids that no one really knows who wrote. I don't know why she's called Mother Goose. No, Mother isn't her first name; it's more like a title. Like your Uncle Bob. His first name is Bob, and his last name is the same as ours. "Uncle" just describes his relationship to you. No, I'm not saying she was related to a goose. Mother Goose isn't an actual person. I know I said she wrote the story, but . . . you know what? Forget Mother Goose. Let's just keep going.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

She had so many children, she didn't know what to do.

I don't know how many children. Quite a few. Look at the picture. Well, you can count; count them up for yourself. Yes, that's a lot of kids. That's why it says she had so many "she didn't know what to do." I don't think it means "do" something specific. More like she didn't know how she would get by, make ends meet, cope, something like that. Well, *I* certainly

understand feeling like that. Never mind. What? I don't know where the father is. Yes, there needed to be a father, but the story doesn't mention him. Well, you can just think about that because there is no answer because the story doesn't mention him.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

She had so many children, she didn't know what to do.

What? I suppose she's pretty old, look at the picture. Yes, she looks more like a grandmother than a mother, but remember grandmothers are mothers too. Grandma is your mom's mom. Yes, your mom is all grown up, and the kids in the picture are little. Let's just say all those kids made the woman grow old faster. Yes, believe me, that can happen.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

She had so many children, she didn't know what to do.

She gave them some broth without any bread;

Broth is like soup without any meat or vegetables in it, just liquid. I agree that does not sound good. No, people didn't just eat yucky stuff back then. It's another way to show how poor she is. Well, bread is inexpensive and can help fill your tummy when you're hungry, and they didn't even have bread. Yes, I like soup with crackers, too, but there weren't any crackers. I know because it doesn't say anything about crackers, and I think they'd mention it if there were crackers. Yes, I mean Mother Goose would mention it, but we're not going back over that again. Look, we're almost done.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.

She had so many children, she didn't know what to do.

She gave them some broth without any bread;

And whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.

Yes, "whipped" means spanked. I don't know why. Maybe she was just really, really, really frustrated. You know what, how about we stop reading for tonight and you go watch tv? No, ask your mom. I've got a headache.