



## NURSERY RHYMES – ZOOM VERSION

By Jan Ewing

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# **NURSERY RHYMES**

**A New Play  
Adapted for Zoom  
by  
JAN EWING**

## CHARACTER NOTES

### Chip Mangus

Chip is thirty-seven years old but looks about thirty. He's athletic, in good shape and health, and cuddly and lovable. He normally has an excellent sense of humor, but, when pressed, tends to revert to adolescence. He's a tennis nut, or has been, and is currently earning what money he earns as a free-lance writer. At one time, Chip has been a writer for a successful television show, earning approximately \$160,000 per year. When the series was cancelled, he and Irene decided he would take some time off to write a screenplay. It is in progress as the action commences. Chip is very much in love with his wife, even though he is determined *not* to have a child. In type, Chip might be described as a blond *Justin Timberlake*.

### Irene Mangus

Irene is thirty-five and the Vice President of Design for a medium-sized advertising agency. She is sharp and acerbic and frequently displays little sense of humor, not because she doesn't have one, but because she is so serious about her need to become pregnant. She's quite attractive, dark and extremely capable.

### Marge Stevens

Marge is in her late forties and undergoing menopause. She was never "wrapped too tight," but, since the onset of menopause, she's become even more erratic, frequently forgetting where she is and what she's talking about. She is a dedicated mother for all that, and is extremely involved in the upbringing of her twelve year old son, Mike. She is a comfortable woman, attractive and warm by nature. She is not an hysteric, rather, she might be (and is) described as "flaky." In type, she's an *Allison Janney*.

### Frank Stevens

Frank is also in his late forties. He's a mature man with a great deal of wit and intellect. He is also a Libra, which explains why he constantly takes the opposite side of every argument. He is very much in love with Marge and endlessly forgiving as far as her problems are concerned. He is a devoted father (of a "late" son) and completely wrapped up in his and Marge's child, even though, as a "late" child himself, he is saddled with a difficult parental situation.

## STYLE NOTES

This play is supposed to be funny. It should be played with a light touch, like Noel Coward. The two main characters, Chip and Irene, argue most of the time. But, they love one another, and their arguing should never suggest otherwise. They are both intelligent, and a sophisticated sense of humor should always be evident just below the surface.

**ACT I****NARRATOR**

On a lovely spring evening, during a fabled time when people actually met face-to-face, Irene Magnus comes home from her job as vice president for a prominent design firm with a specific goal in mind. Irene is in her mid-thirties, a professional woman in every way, but her biological clock is ticking, and her husband, Chip, a slightly older free-lance writer, refuses to consider having a child. Having decided she can't wait any longer, Irene has developed a plan. It's time to confront Chip, and tonight is the night.

As the curtain rises, Irene enters. (Door opens.) She's quite mused, as getting home from work is always a trauma when one has to go out to *do* it, and she's obviously in a hurry. She rushes around the room, generally making a mess as she marches into the bedroom.

(Door opens.) Chip then jogs in. He's sweaty and breathing hard, checking his *Fitbit* as he runs. He jogs back and forth once or twice, drops a copy of *Men's Health* on the coffee table, then continues offstage into the bathroom.

As Chip clears, Irene slinks back in, now dressed like a Victoria's Secret model. She crosses to the sofa and drops several magazines on the coffee table. She then sprawls out on the sofa and pretends to read. Chip jogs out of the bathroom, a towel around his neck, and takes another round of the sofa. As he passes in front of it, he comes to a stop.

**CHIP**

Were you here last time I came around this turn?

**IRENE**

(Suddenly noticing?) Oh, Chip. Uh, hi. Uh, no. Uh, yes. (Coyly) Did you round this turn before? (She stretches suggestively.)

**CHIP**

Irene, you are turning into the whore of Babylon. I'm not finished jogging yet.

**NARRATOR**

As Chip continues to run around the sofa, Irene becomes more overtly sexual. Chip's is definitely aroused, but he tries to ignore her. Finally, he stops, drops to the floor, and leans against the sofa as Irene begins playing with his hair.

**CHIP**

What are you trying to do to me, Irene? I swear, what are you trying to do? (She feels up the back of his neck until indicated.)

**IRENE**

(Singing suggestively into his ear) I'm trying to bake a cherry pie, Billy boy, Billy boy.

**CHIP**

I hope you're not planning to use your cherry, Irene. We'd starve to death.

**IRENE**

(Not quite as aggressive now that she's got him) I'm not cooking for anybody but you, Chip.

**CHIP**

Cheap, Irene. Cheap.

**NARRATOR**

They kiss deeply as she tries to draw him up onto the sofa. He resists skillfully, then pulls away panting.

**CHIP**

Damn, Irene. Damn, you are really too much lately. Too much. How was your day?

**IRENE**

Chaos. I/T upgraded the system and everything stopped completely.

**CHIP**

Did you do anything today?

**IRENE**

I approved a toothpaste tube and a SPDQ-Series 209, aught, point, aught, aught six form for the I.R.S.

**CHIP**

(Lovingly) Fraught with meaning, Irene. Our lives are fraught with meaning. Why don't you just give up all that and I'll sell your body on the Internet?

**IRENE**

(Feeling him up) Then we'd never have to go out. I could just be your whore.

**CHIP**

You're depraved, Irene.

**IRENE**

I loooooove it when you talk dirty, Chip.

**CHIP**

(Feebly resisting) Why this ... uh, sudden interest ... in sex, Irene? I mean, if Breaznell, Breaznell and Cooper have been even slightly observant during the past few weeks, they must know their Vice President of Design is turning into a Third Avenue slut.

**IRENE**

I looooooove it when you wear sweat pants, Chip. The smell turns me on.

**CHIP**

(Trying to change the subject) I had a good day.

**IRENE**

I can make it better.

**CHIP**

I finished the scene about the sports promoter in the Vegas motel room.

**NARRATOR**

She nibbles on his ear as she slides onto the floor next to him.

**IRENE**

What did the sports promoter do in the Vegas motel room, Chip?

**CHIP**

He did it with the girl from Human Resources.

**IRENE**

I always thought Human Resources might be fun. This is my favorite spot, did you know that?

**CHIP**

Here on the rug? (He begins responding enthusiastically.)

**IRENE**

Haven't you noticed? We've been wearing little holes in it. There's one by the landing, and one by the bar, and ...

**CHIP**

(Interrupting) ... now we can wear another one right here.

**NARRATOR**

They kiss. After a moment, they become passionate. Suddenly, Chip pulls away, panting, as Irene tugs at her clothing.

**CHIP**

I'll be right back.

**NARRATOR**

He jumps up and moves to stand behind his chair.

IRENE  
 (Warily) Where are you going, Chip?

CHIP  
 I thought you wanted to *do* it.

IRENE  
 I do.

CHIP  
 Well, then, I'll just get the ...

IRENE  
 No props, Chip.

CHIP  
 What?

IRENE  
 No props, Chip. No props, no gadgets, no stimulating little devices.

CHIP  
 Irene?!

IRENE  
 Please, Chip? Please? Just this once, let's do it, uh, missionary position, Chip. Please? Just once? You remember missionary position. It's what people did before sexual liberation.

CHIP  
 We had a lot of fun last time we had sex, Irene. You know we did. I mean, you said you looooved it, Irene. Loooooovd it. (Petulant) I'm just trying to be a good lover, you know.

IRENE  
 Missionary position, Chip. Please? I mean, no little ... uh, things ... and no ... I mean, I'll just lie down and ...

CHIP  
 I'm just trying to be a good lover, Irene.

IRENE  
 ... and you are, Chip. You are. You're a fine lover. One of the best. I did enjoy it, too. It was really wonderful. It was just so ... uh, complicated ... uh, you know, all that equipment ...

CHIP  
 But, you did enjoy it?

Oh, yes. **IRENE**

Honestly? **CHIP**

(Boyishly) You're the best, Chip. **IRENE**

The best? **CHIP**

Absolutely. **IRENE**

You really think that? **CHIP**

Sans doubt, Chip. Sans doubt. **IRENE**

**NARRATOR**  
He turns toward the bedroom door.

Oh, God. I can hardly wait. **CHIP**

**IRENE**  
STOP!!! (He stops) Missionary position, Chip!

**CHIP**  
(Hopefully) I'll just get the ...

**IRENE**  
No props!

**CHIP**  
... Reverse cowboy?

**IRENE**  
(Yelling) Missionary position!!

**CHIP**  
Not even the little one with the fringe?

**IRENE**

(Grimly) Just stick it in and pump, Chip!!

**CHIP**

(After a pause, all heat gone) I haven't finished my exercises yet, Irene. I have to do some more push-ups.

**IRENE**

(Angry and frustrated) Oh, Chip!?

**CHIP**

(Coldly) You know, you really ought to exercise yourself, Irene. Then you wouldn't be so ... nervous.

**IRENE**

(Trying to pull herself together) Living with you would make Buddha nervous.

**CHIP**

Why don't you run with me sometime, Irene?

**IRENE**

It's bad for the uterus.

**CHIP**

So what?

**NARRATOR**

Irene abruptly stands, stares at Chip, then bursts into tears. She exits into the bathroom, slamming the door behind her. (Door slams.) Chip jogs as far as the door and yells.

**CHIP**

(Through the door) Hey? Reenie? Reenie? Come on, Reenie. It was just a joke. Reenie? Are you crying?

**NARRATOR**

She re-enters.

**IRENE**

No!

**CHIP**

Oh, I thought you were.

**IRENE**

Well, I'm not.

**CHIP**

I just thought you were.

**IRENE**

What makes you think I'm crying?

**CHIP**

There's water running down your face. Come on, Reenie. This is dumb. It really is.

**IRENE**

Why are you avoiding me, Chip?

**CHIP**

(Amazed) Avoiding you? I'm not avoiding you, Irene. What makes you think I'm avoiding you? God, we go at it around the clock. How can you say I'm avoiding you?

**IRENE**

For the last six weeks, we have not once, not once, Chip, have we actually had intercourse.

**CHIP**

Oh, now, come on, Irene. What about Thursday? What about Thursday, huh? What about then, Irene?

**IRENE**

What we had on Thursday, Chip, and it was, I admit it, enjoyable, from a strictly sexual point of view, what we had on Thursday, Chip, was foreplay. That's all we have any more, Chip, foreplay. Lots and lots ... and lots of foreplay.

**CHIP**

(Coldly) I don't what you're talking about, Irene.

**NARRATOR**

She crosses to the bedroom door.

**IRENE**

That's what I like about you, Chip. You're so good at picking up on subtleties.

**NARRATOR**

She exits, slamming the door behind her. (Door slams.)

**CHIP**

(Calling out) Now, come on, Reenie, that's not fair. Stop stomping out and slamming the door. I feel like I'm hurlin' in the wind some of the time, Irene, I swear ...

**NARRATOR**

She re-enters abruptly, carrying a bunch of helium filled "baby" balloons.