

HOMELAND SECURITY

A Sketch by Tom Attea

Suburban living room with fireplace.
Mr. Walker is rocking a baby's rocker
and cooing into a crib, which is near
the fireplace. MRS. WALKER enters
with mail, opens letter, reads, screams.

MR. WALKER

What is it, dear – your bill from Bloomingdale's?

MRS. WALKER

A letter from the President ... of the United States.

MR. WALKER

What's he want – a political donation?

MRS. WALKER

As part of homeland security, he wants to install a missile in our chimney.

MR. WALKER

In Larchmont? Hey, I approve of everything he does, but why our chimney?

MRS. WALKER

It says a government representative be here on the 25th. We can ask him.

MR. WALKER

The 25th? That's today.

(doorbell rings)

MRS. WALKER

Oh, my, that must be him. Let's pretend we're not home.

MR. WALKER

We should see him. It's the patriotic thing to do.

(Goes to door and opens it. CAPTAIN JOHNSON steps in,
briefcase in hand)

Good afternoon. I'm Captain Johnson –

(puts out hand)

– from the President.

MR. WALKER

Welcome.

(looks behind him)

Where is it?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

(points to briefcase)
In here.

MR. WALKER

Oh, then it's not a very big missile?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

No, no. And it comes with free homeowner's insurance.

(tips hat at MRS. WALKER)

Afternoon, Mrs. Walker.

(sits on couch, opens briefcase)

Now, if you'll just sign the homeowner's policy, I'll slip this little sucker in your chimney and be on my way.

MR. WALKER

Let's talk about that. I can understand being careful. But isn't this a bit excessive?

MRS. WALKER

What if it blows up by accident?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Can't happen. We have to launch it from Washington.

MRS. WALKER

Oh. How powerful is it?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Let's just say it's a potent addition to the war on terror.

MR. WALKER

How many megatons?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

I can't reveal that. But we call it, in honor of the President, the Baby Boomer.

(holds up policy)

Now, if you'll just sign here.

MRS. WALKER

I'm sorry, Captain, but our chimney will never do. It's much too old.

MR. WALKER

Bricks fall out all the time. As much as we support the president, we don't want it.

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

What? Think what you're standing in the way of! You have a chimney, your neighbor has a chimney, millions of chimneys, all across the America. Those terrorists show up anywhere, we got 'em. So, you see, there's absolutely nothing to worry about.

MR. WALKER

What about, what do you call that, collateral damage?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

No need to concern yourself. It's a smart missile. It only kills terrorists. I'm seeing your neighbor next.

MR. WALKER

Count him out.

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Why is that?

MR. WALKER

He already has a nuclear sub in his garage.

MRS. WALKER

We just can't have a missile in our chimney. Our baby sleeps in front of the fireplace.

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Oh, kids love missiles. I'll show you.

(takes out missile, about a foot long,
with a little panel that opens)

MR. WALKER

That's it, huh?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Yes, it is.

MRS. WALKER

Oh, my.

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

I told you, there's nothing to worry about.

(puts it in baby's rocker and pokes
around)

Look. The kid is smiling. He thinks it's a toy.

MRS. WALKER

We have an older son who likes to take things apart.

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Not to worry. It has a childproof cap. See.
(takes out key; opens panel)
All the controls are locked under this panel.

MR. WALKER

What if we accidentally light the fireplace?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

We thought of that. It's fireproof.

MRS. WALKER

How does it work?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

In the event of an attack in the neighborhood, we send a signal that flips this auto-launch switch from here to here and swish – off it goes straight to the target.

MR. WALKER

From where to where?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

From here to here.
(accidentally flips switch; looks up with fear)

TICKING SOUND.

MR. WALKER

Excuse me. But do I hear a ticking sound?

MRS. WALKER

Did you just flip the switch?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

I am so sorry. Ten, nine, eight
(throws it to MR. WALKER)
... no way to cancel the launch.

MR. WALKER

Don't give it to me.
(throws it back)

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

(throws it to MRS. WALKER)
... four, three ...

MRS. WALKER

(to husband)
Quick! Put it in the chimney!
(she hands it to MR. WALKER)

MR. WALKER

Me?
(HEADS FOR THE CHIMNEY, BUT CAN'T MAKE IT IN TIME)

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

(fingers in ears)
... two,one ...

ALL put their fingers in their ears. Missile does not launch.
Instead, small flag pops out that says "Dummy." CAPTAIN
opens eyes.

We're in luck. It's a dummy.

MR. WALKER

A dummy?

CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Yes. We salt some of the around, to confuse the enemy.

MR. WALKER

That's not the only dummy here.
(points to door; to CAPTAIN JOHNSON)
Out, dummy! Out!

BLACKOUT