

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

A New Sketch by

Tom Attea

BILL and JUNE are having an after-dinner drink. THEY seems wonderfully content.

BILL

You know, June, we're so lucky.

JUNE

I agree, Bill.

BILL

You do?

JUNE

Oh, I couldn't ask for more, dear. We love each other. The two kids are getting great grades. And they'll have a wonderful future. The truth is, I'm so happy that lately when I look at the blue sky, the gold sun, the green trees, and see how beautiful our family is, I think we live in paradise.

BILL

No doubt about it. I feel the same way. In fact, these days, as I see the earth reveal more and more of its promise -- like new medicines and microchips -- I think of it as a paradise the human race threw itself out of mentally, while we're still here physically.

JUNE

What an inspiring thought! I wonder if millions and even billions of other people will ever appreciate just how lucky we are.

(The nose of a NUCLEAR BOMB begins to enter from one side; it continues to impinge on the stage as the dialogue goes on)

JUNE (CONT'D)

Especially us, dear. We've got a great marriage, don't we?

BILL

The best I've ever seen or hear of. Even after all these years, I regret being apart from you even for a minute.

JUNE

I feel the same way, Bill. In fact, I feel sad even when I watch you go off to work.

BILL

We really are in love, aren't we, June?

JUNE

Yes, darling. And we've got such wonderful kids.

BILL

You bet. And to keep nourishing them along, we'll send them to the best schools they can get into. We'll let them follow their dreams, too -- no forcing them into careers they don't want.

JUNE

Never, sweetheart. Oh, we're so aware! Too bad all children can't receive such tender, loving care.

BILL

Yes, it is! A career is just too big a part of life to deny. As I always say, you have to work eight hours a day. But you can only make love for maybe an hour a day, tops.

JUNE

How long has it been since we made love for an hour a day?

BILL

OK, twenty minutes, every other day.

JUNE

That sounds about right. Just goes to show you that a career becomes even more important as the years go by.

BILL

Right. So the kids will be happy. And just think. They won't even have to grow up the way we did -- I mean, with the nuclear threat hanging over their heads.

JUNE

Thank goodness. Oh, it's so wonderful! Russia doesn't have a single nuclear missile pointed at us anymore.

BILL

And I'll bet, in all fairness, we don't have a single one pointed at them, either. So, despite the fact that there are still thousands of nuclear bombs in the world, we don't have a thing to worry about.

(rests his drink on the bomb)

Isn't that great?

JUNE

Yes, dear. You don't suppose the Russians will change their minds, do you?

BILL

No, the thing they need now is economic success. And how else can they get it but by joining the global market -- so they can have things like modern medicine, stereos and Cds, too? And for that to happen, they can't start threatening to blow everybody up again.

JUNE

But what about the other countries that have nuclear weapons?

BILL

Oh, they're no match for us. They wouldn't dare attack the good, old United States. We're the first invincible country in history, securely but thoughtfully in charge of the whole world.

JUNE

I suppose you're right. But what about terrorists? Do you think any of them will be able to sneak a nuclear weapon into the country? I'd hate to think of one going off in a place like Grand Central Terminal.

BILL

What a terrifying thought! But no chance.
(picks up drink again)

We watch our borders too carefully.

JUNE

Are you sure? You know, you don't need all that much nuclear material to make a bomb. It would be easy to hide. And there seems to be so much of it that could get into the wrong hands. Think of all the countries in the world that never went through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

BILL

Far too many. The poor souls, they still live in the Dark Ages, with all the attendant animosities, not to mention self-inflicted suffering. But I'm still pretty sure we're safe.

(By now the BOMB is center stage and it begins to push BILL and then JUNE off the stage)

JUNE

I don't know how safe that makes me feel.

BILL

What can we do about it?

JUNE

Not much, I guess. But I really do wish there weren't anymore nuclear bombs in the world. Then I'd feel a lot safer.

BILL

So would I. But -- and I hate to say this, June bug -- I'm not sure the human race is ready for that.

JUNE

I love when you call me that. But what do you mean, Bill?

BILL

Well, we still seem to be willing to wage wars. So maybe the bombs are the greatest peace keepers we've ever had.

JUNE

Peace keepers?

BILL

Ironic, isn't it? But think how many wars they must've prevented already -- I mean, just between the U. S. and Russia during the cold war.

JUNE

You can't be serious?

BILL

Yes, I am, June. Hard as it is to admit, until the human race changes, maybe we need nuclear bombs to prevent wars, especially big ones.

JUNE

I hate that thought. Because that means they'll be around for a long, long time.

BILL

I'm afraid so. There's something else to keep in mind. If they weren't around, how else could we rule the world?

JUNE

Just by helping other countries develop?

BILL

I don't know if they could ever be that grateful, dear. In fact, it seems that one of the hardest things is to like the country -- or the person, for that matter -- who does the most for you.

JUNE

But how safe does your way of thinking mean our children's future will be?

BILL

Well, come to think of it, not any safer than our own.

JUNE

Oh, my, you're right, Bill. It seems we're all in this together.

BILL

I'm afraid so, June.

JUNE

Oh, dear! It's terrible to have nuclear bombs take up such a big part of your consciousness, isn't it?

BILL

Such an awfully big part. But I suppose it's better, in some ways, than pretending they're not there anymore.

JUNE

You're right, darling. But I'm glad I don't think about them all the time. If I did, I'd be too upset to be happy .

BILL

Well, we can't have that! We all have to take out some time to be happy. This beautiful world wasn't created for us to be miserable all the time.

JUNE

It certainly wasn't. That would be a real contradiction.

BILL

My sentiments exactly! We have so much in common.

(as the BOMB forces them totally off the stage)

JUNE

No wonder we're so happy !

BILL

Yes, happy together, in our earthly paradise!

BLACKOUT