

Mission Creep

by

Michael Bettencourt

67 Highwood Terrace #2, Weehawken NJ 07086

201-770-0550 • 347-564-9998 • michaelbettencourt@outlook.com

<http://www.m-bettencourt.com>

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DESCRIPTION

Military technology finds a place in the home.

CHARACTERS

- CHUCK
- MARLA
- YOUNG MAN
- QUAD-ROTOR DRONE (this is a model hanging from the end of a long pole, manipulated by a stagehand or actor)

SET

- Except for some simple furniture, the bloodied towel, and the model of the drone, all other props/materials are mimed and/or indicated by sound, unless, of course, the director wants to do otherwise and has the budget.
- An exception could be made for the smartphone, unless the director can find a way to light CHUCK's face in the dark to make it look like it is being bathed in the light of the phone.

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On one side of the stage, CHUCK holds a smartphone which controls a small quad-rotor drone. MARLA sits in a chair or on a couch on the other side of the stage and reads a newspaper.

SOUND: A soft whirring or buzzing which changes as the drone flies.

CHUCK manipulates the drone up and down and around and eventually flies it over MARLA, who doesn't notice it at first. CHUCK enjoys spying on MARLA.

CHUCK

Hey there.

MARLA happens to look at CHUCK, then look up—and lets out a yell that is part fright and part “you're such a pain in the ass.”

CHUCK

Pretty cool, eh?

MARLA

Get that thing away from me, Mr. Gadget-man.

CHUCK

You don't like my quad-rotor drone—

MARLA

No.

CHUCK

Or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle—

MARLA

I'll unman you, you bastard—

CHUCK

It's the official name for—

MARLA

How much did you waste on this one?

CHUCK

Doesn't matter—have to see things in an evolutionary perspective, improvements and—

MARLA

How much?

CHUCK

Three hundred dollars—but I can run it off my phone! See!

SOUND: Drone moves back and forth—maybe even buzzes MARLA.

MARLA

Stop it!

CHUCK

I have something even cooler to show you. Come here—leave the newspaper there and come over here.

MARLA does and joins CHUCK. CHUCK shows her the phone.

CHUCK

Go ahead.

MARLA reads the headline on the newspaper across the room.

MARLA

“War dims hope for peace.”

CHUCK

And what God-forsaken part of the world is that? Who cares?

MARLA

So you could read over my shoulder.

CHUCK

It has a front-view camera with a live video feed. How cool is that!

MARLA

And you don't care that the hope for peace is dim?

CHUCK

Who cares? Isn't that always the case? But then there's this!

MARLA

Stop it—just stop it! Now! Land the goddamn thing now!

Faced with MARLA's wrath, CHUCK lands the quad-rotor drone, puts the phone in his pocket.

MARLA

Give me the phone—give me the phone!

CHUCK hands it over.

MARLA

I didn't mind the home alarm system—it seemed to make sense, except that the only things that seem to trigger it are squirrels and cats—cats chasing the squirrels—

CHUCK

You never know.

MARLA

Yes, yes—the bands of terrorists who mysteriously have not yet shown up in our community—

CHUCK

But they're out there—that mosque downtown—

MARLA

But they haven't come here.

CHUCK

Because we have an alarm system! They know that!

MARLA

Then there are the house cams for when we're at work.

CHUCK

Just in case—

MARLA

—the alarm system doesn't stop them, yes, I know your argument. Have you ever seen anything on your house cams?

CHUCK

No.

MARLA

Has your supervisor warned you about spending too much time checking the house cams?

CHUCK

Yes.

MARLA

Yes he has.

CHUCK

But something may happen when I'm not checking!

MARLA

So let's get a dog.

CHUCK

That's so low-tech. And they could distract it with goodies while they install keyboard readers—

But something in MARLA's face and posture tells him that this is not a good line of argument.

MARLA

You've already installed the anti-keyboard reader software, and every malware, grayware, and spyware scanning program, both free and paid, that's out there, plus the updates—it's a wonder we can even use the computers since they're always being scanned to make sure they're safe to use!

CHUCK

Online is a dangerous place. The cyber-terrorists—

MARLA

Enough!

CHUCK

The quad-rotor will allow us a greater range outside so that we don't have to wait until—

MARLA

Enough! You think there are enemies everywhere, you think you're so vigilant—and there is so much you miss, so much you miss—

MARLA cuts herself off, enraged. She throws CHUCK's phone back at him, then storms off.

SOUND: The air fills with the drone of drones.

Lights to black.

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Night light.

SOUND: Night sounds.

CHUCK's face in the glow of the smartphone.

SOUND: _____ The quad-rotor drone rises.

CHUCK guides the machine over the landscape.

In a flame-like glow, MARLA and YOUNG MAN, naked, couple enthusiastically—all reflected in the glow of CHUCK's smartphone.

At one point MARLA shifts her gaze upward and connects with the quad-rotor drone—through it she looks CHUCK directly in the face, and she shows not a flicker of shame, and possibly even lets a smirk cross her face. Then she gets back to the business at hand.

CHUCK watches—this is the price he has paid for his vigilance. He presses a virtual button on his smartphone.

SOUND: _____ Ignition of a small guided missile and consequent explosion.

Orange explosion, then blackness.

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CHUCK to one side, MARLA in the middle wrapped in a large bloodied towel, YOUNG MAN naked and dead to the other side.

MARLA
You had it armed?

CHUCK
It was an extra module they offered.

MARLA
A missile?

CHUCK
Comes with two. It didn't add that much to the cost. I didn't think it would be so precise—right in the ear canal, wow. You okay?

MARLA just looks at him, dumbfounded. CHUCK gets the message.

SOUND: _____ Police sirens approaching.

CHUCK slides the smartphone across the floor to MARLA.

CHUCK

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. How fucked-up is that?

MARLA

You want a calculation of how fucked-up it is?

SOUND: Police cars are getting closer.

CHUCK

It's still got one armed.

MARLA picks up the smartphone, looks it over for a moment, then begins to manipulate the quad-rotor drone.

CHUCK turns, faces the quad-rotor, puffs out his chest. MARLA punches in the command.

SOUND: Police cars arrive, car doors open, slam shut.

SOUND: Missile fires, then explodes.

CHUCK is bathed in flame.

Then darkness.