

HAIL to the CHIEF

By Craig Sodaro

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Fellow Americans! Your President, Leland Moore, has more problems than the Treasury Department can count.

His swing through the West turns wild when he ends up stranded by a snowstorm in the Turtle Shell Cafe located in the sleepy mountain town of Turtle Creek which is destined to become a ghost if a new interstate bypasses it.

To make matters worse, his daughter Emily's rebellious boyfriend Yuri shows up with his own political agenda. Also popping in unexpectedly is Victoria Day, a corporate CEO who's into acquisitions—and her next planned takeover is the White House as the new first lady! Add an underworld kingpin who wants the President in his back pocket and the ingredients are right for a comedy coup.

Smitty Clutter, owner of the cafe, has a way of making people stick around even when they don't want to. And Claramae's cooking and Della's serving are guaranteed to put the President in such a good mood he'll be able to make the right decisions despite his advisors and campaign contributors.

Leave it to the down-home folks of Turtle Creek to remind the uptown President what's really important. By the end you'll hail this chief and all his constituents as they shore up the state of our union!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

9 m, 11 w, 3 flexible

(in order of appearance.)

LELAND MOORE.....President of the United States.
TONI REED.....his press secretary.
LESLIE MARK.....reporter, *Washington Post*.
SHAWN TURKOW.....reporter, *New York Times*.
BO CARLSON.....reporter, CNN.
CLARAMAE CLUTTER.....50's, owner of the Turtle Shell
Cafe.
SMITTY CLUTTER.....60's, her husband.
LUANNE CLUTTER.....16, their granddaughter.
LOTTIE FARR.....50's, owner of Widgets, Inc.
CLEMANTINE O'HARA.....30's, an attorney.
SARAH BENTLEY.....70's, a widow.
DELLA MASON.....20's, a waitress.
EMILY MOORE.....18, President's daughter.
CLIFF MOORE.....11, President's son.
ELIZABETH CRABTREE.....20's, Secret Service Agent.
JEFFERSON P. WILMONT.....30's, presidential advisor.
GEN. TITUS BULLFINCH.....50's, presidential advisor.
VICTORIA DAY.....40's, owner of the Day Motor Company.
YURI GEARY.....20's, Emily's boyfriend.
THUG ONE.....minor role.
THUG TWO.....minor role.
ADELE BRISTLEBIT.....prim and proper secretary.
O.R. CASHFLOE.....owner of Titanic Industries.

**The reporters may be played my men or women.*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1: East Room at the White House.

Scene 2: Several days later at the Turtle Shell Cafe.

Scene 3: Several hours later at the White House and cafe.

Act II

Scene 1: An hour later at the White House and cafe.

Scene 2: Two hours later at the White House and cafe.

Scene 3: A week later at the White House.

THE SETTING

The play takes place in the East Room of the White House and at the Turtle Shell Cafe, a roadside restaurant at the junction of Highway 8 and US 42 somewhere in the Rocky Mountains. The East Room is always played before the curtain. American flag at SR, Presidential flag (or facsimile) at SL. No podium is necessary. As for the Turtle Shell Cafe, the room is pleasant enough in a rustic way. A door, SL, leads to the outside. A coat rack and a curtained window looking out on the snow-covered mountains across the road are USL. A counter dominates the room USR, several stools in front of it. Counter contains usual sugar containers, ketchup and mustard dispensers, and napkin holders. Entrance DSR leads to storeroom, kitchen and apartment, which is in the back of the restaurant. Several tables covered with gingham cloths dot the stage, two USL, one DSR and one DSL. Old public phone on wall DSL. Western pictures, calendars and so on, decorate the room along with balloons and streamers. Fireplace is USC with fireplace tools on the hearth.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: East Room of the White House, played before the curtain. LELAND MOORE is CS and TONI REED stands at SL.)

MOORE: At this point I want the American people to know that as their President, I am endeavoring to rise above the lobby-laden political process which has been holding this country back for decades. I was elected last year honestly and the only promises I made were to the American people. And those are the only promises I intend to keep.

(TONI moves to CS. LESLIE MARK, SHAWN TURKOW, and BO CARLSON sit in audience throughout the play, rising when THEY have questions.)

TONI: And now President Moore will entertain a few questions from the press.

MOORE: Thank you, Ms. Reed. *(HE points to LESLIE MARK who has a raised hand.)*

MARK: *(Rising.)* Leslie Mark, *Washington Post*.

MOORE: *(Biting his tongue.)* Of course. Always a pleasure.

MARK: Mr. President, I understand that your upcoming trip to the Rockies to break the ground for that new Interstate 101 is really a payback to Orville R. Cashfloe of Titanic Industries. Any truth to that rumor?

MOORE: *(Loosening his collar.)* Payback? I don't even know Mr. Cashfloe, therefore—

MARK: Mr. President, it's common knowledge that Cashfloe pumped millions into your campaign.

MOORE: *(Weakly.)* It is?

MARK: And didn't he want that stretch of Interstate 101 to run right by his ski chalet because he hates to fly and hated the two-lane mountain road that he previously had to use to get there?

MOORE: Well, this certainly is news to me!

MARK: But it isn't news to you that the interstate will cost \$200 million to complete?

MOORE: You know how pricey things are these days. Next question? *(HE points to SHAWN TURKOW, who stands as MARK sits down.)*

TURKOW: Shawn Turkow, *New York Times*. Mr. President, I understand that the city of Turtle Creek, which has been trying to revitalize itself economically after the closing of the Turtle Creek Mine, will become a ghost town now that Interstate 101 has been built. After all, the main industry, Widgets, Inc., intends to move closer to the interstate and with it will go the jobs. What's your feeling on that situation?

MOORE: *(Loosening his collar more.)* Well, now, we understand that everything has its season. Even towns. If the jobs move, the people will have to and if a town dies, at least we can take consolation in the fact that...well, another one will spring up. Isn't that right, Ms. Reed?

(TONI shrugs, looking worried.)

TURKOW: Do I take it you don't care about Turtle Creek?

MOORE: Of course I care about Turtle Creek. *(Weakly.)* Wherever it is.

TURKOW: Do you plan to visit the town on your Rocky Mountain trip?

MOORE: Do I, Miss Reed?

TONI: We can always pencil it in, Mr. President.

MOORE: *(To TURKOW.)* Happy?!

CARLSON: *(Rising as TURKOW resumes seat.)* Mr. President, Bo Carlson, CNN. I hate to change the subject—

MOORE: I don't!

CARLSON: I understand your daughter, Emily, has a new love in her life?

MOORE: Can we go back to discussing Turtle Creek?

End of Freeview

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