

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW CLOTHES

By Stephen Murray

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Washington, D.C. *is* the capitol of the United States, but 1600 Pennsylvania Ave is *not* exactly a fashion capitol, especially since absent-minded President William Lee is running the country. He's too busy with domestic and international politics to worry about whether his striped tie clashes with his plaid pants and argyle socks. Even his devoted wife and First Lady, Holly Preston-Lee, is forgiving of her husband's forgetfulness and sloppy appearance, knowing it's what's inside that really counts.

But the press sure takes a stab at the chief-of-state's wardrobe, as does his election opponent, Horace Grinchley, and Horace's overly-ambitious campaign manager, Myrna Snerd. Myrna appoints a couple of staff members, Dewey, Cheatem and Howe, to pose as wardrobe consultants to strip President Lee down to his "bare" essentials, and have him deliver a nationally televised debate in an "invisible" suit. The new suit is allegedly only visible to honest, trustworthy and loyal constituents.

Add to the campaign fever a salami-hoarding terrorist, Yesiah Minsain; Vice President Green, an environmental fanatic; plus a patriotic, chaotic chorus of reporters, White House staff, and secret service agents, and you have a musical comedy that is sure to rank high in the audience polls.

Stephen Murray's witty, tuneful score includes: the bluesy "Don't Mess with the Press," the heartfelt "He's Just a Man," the rousing "Best Dressed President," "Front Page News," and the finale, "What's Inside."

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 m, 12 w, 5 flexible)

WILLIAM LEE: President of the United States.
HOLLY PRESTON-LEE: First Lady.
ROBERTA/ROBERT DAVIS: White House Chief-of-Staff.
OLIVIA/OLIVER NELSON: Campaign Director.
GEN. SEMICOLON HOWELL: Armed Forces Chairman.
G. I. LUVMONEY: Treasury Secretary.
JULIA KIDD: White House Chef.
ADAM 12: Secret Service agent.
HEINZ 57: Secret Service agent.
BETTY GREEN: Vice President and environmentalist.
HORACE GRINCHLEY: Presidential candidate.
DELBERT DORK: Grinchley's running mate and spy.
MYRNA SNERD: Grinchley's campaign director.
DORIS DEWEY: An evil tailor.
GLADYS CHEATEM: An evil tailor.
HENRIETTA HOWE: An evil tailor.
DONNA SAMUELSON: Reporter.
KATIE COWLICK: Reporter.
CONNIE CHANG: Reporter.
DANA LATHER: Reporter.
YESIAH MINSAIN: Evil dictator of Meanistan, an island nation.

*Optional chorus of additional staff members and reporters.

TIME: Just before the Presidential election of 2024.

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: The White House.
Scene 2: Grinchley campaign headquarters.
Scene 3: The White House.
Scene 4: Grinchley campaign headquarters.
Scene 5: The White House.

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SETTING

A large open area that can double for the location of press conferences at the White House as well as the Grinchley campaign headquarters. Tables and chairs should be easy to move about as needed. Additional pieces include a podium and recycling bin. Posters and bunting also must be set and struck with ease when changing back and forth between the locations.

PROPS

ON THE SET: Rubber stamp on desk.
PRESIDENT LEE: Car air freshener, business card, "Where's Waldo" book, brightly-colored boxer shorts, T-shirt and socks.
LUVMONEY: Wad of bills.
GENERAL: Report.
NELSON: Campaign speech.
WHITE HOUSE STAFF: Kazoos, newspapers.
GREEN: "Kick Me" sign on back.
HOLLY: Football uniform, woman's pink, fuzzy bathrobe.
HEINZ 57 and ADAM 12: Dark sunglasses, earpieces, toy guns.
DEWEY, CHEATEM and HOWE: Tape measures.
PRESS CORPS: Newspapers.
GRINCHLEY and STAFF: Newspapers.
DORK: Broom, business card.
MISCELLANEOUS: Spear and helmet.

A more detailed set description may be found at the end of the play.

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Scene 1

(AT RISE: The White House. The WHITE HOUSE STAFF is on stage busily at work. DORK, disguised as a janitor, pretends to work.)

SONG 1: HAIL TO THE CHIEF

WHITE HOUSE STAFF: *(Sings.)*

THE WHITE HOUSE IS A BUSY PLACE
WE'VE GOT A COUNTRY TO RUN
THERE'S LOTS AND LOTS OF WORK TO DO
THERE IS NO TIME FOR FUN

THE PRESIDENT WORKS VERY HARD
HE MAKES US WORK HARD, TOO
AND JUST AS SOON AS SOMETHING'S DONE
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE TO DO

BUT WE SING HAIL TO THE CHIEF
HERE'S TO OUR PRESIDENT
HOORAY FOR THE RULER OF OUR LAND
LET'S GIVE OUR BOSS A GREAT BIG HAND

HE GIVES US TOO MUCH WORK TO DO
BUT WE ARE OVERJOYED
'CAUSE IF IT WEREN'T FOR OUR GREAT PREZ
WE WOULD BE UNEMPLOYED

IT'S A NEW ELECTION YEAR
AND JUST AS WE EXPECTED
OUR GREAT AND WONDERFUL PRESIDENT
WANTS TO BE RE-ELECTED

I WONDER IF HE NOTICES
ALL THE WORK WE DO?
WE KEEP THIS COUNTRY RUNNING STRONG
AND CAMPAIGN FOR HIM, TOO!

BUT WE SING HAIL TO THE CHIEF
HERE'S TO OUR PRESIDENT

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HOORAY FOR THE LEADER OF OUR LAND
LET'S GIVE OUR BOSS A GREAT BIG HAND

HE GIVES US TOO MUCH WORK TO DO
BUT WE ARE OVERJOYED
'CAUSE IF IT WEREN'T FOR OUR GREAT PREZ
WE WOULD BE UNEMPLOYED
'CAUSE IF IT WEREN'T FOR OUR GREAT PREZ
WE WOULD BE UNEMPLOYED.

DAVIS: Listen, everyone. The election is only a week away. President Lee is behind in the polls, we have major problems with the economy and the threat of war with Meanistan. On top of that, we have a national security emergency.

ALL: What is it?

DAVIS: The copying machine is broken!

ALL: Oh, no!

NELSON: Don't panic, don't panic! As campaign director it is my job to keep spirits up, overcome all obstacles, and keep this campaign going no matter what happens.

DAVIS: Thank you, Mr./Ms. Nelson. Madame First Lady, do you have anything to say to the staff?

HOLLY: I just want to say that my husband needs your help, and I hope we can count on your support.

JULIA: Don't worry, Mrs. Lee. I won't let you down. I owe my career to your husband. Four years ago I was a cook at McDonald's. I must have made three or four Happy Meals a week for Mr. Lee. And now, I'm the White House Chef! Sometimes I still slip a little prize in with his lunch.

GENERAL: Madame First Lady, you can count on me, too. It was your husband who promoted me from leader of a girl scout troop to five-star general. I owe my career to him, and that year of record cookie sales.

LUVMONEY: I was a bank teller in Mr. Lee's hometown. He always came to me to get change for the video arcade, and now I'm treasury secretary!

DAVIS: We all owe our careers to your husband, Mrs. Lee.

HOLLY: He is a remarkable man, but he still leaves the cap off

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the toothpaste.

DAVIS: What about you, Ms. Green? What did you do before you became Vice President?

GREEN: I was running a small recycling center, vegetarian restaurant and wildlife refuge when Mr. Lee called me and asked me to be his running mate. I love that guy!

DAVIS: The press conference starts in three minutes. Where's the President?

HOLLY: He's getting dressed. He'll be right down.

(PRESIDENT, dressed in horribly mismatched clothes, enters followed by SECRET SERVICE AGENTS.)

LEE: I know you Secret Service guys are supposed to follow me and protect me, but next time, let me use the men's room alone.

SECRET SERVICE AGENTS: Yes, sir.

HOLLY: Will, WHAT are you wearing?

LEE: I just got dressed for the press conference. Is there a problem?

HOLLY: You're going to be on national television in a few minutes, and you look like a refugee from Ringling Brothers!

LEE: What are you talking about?

HOLLY: Your clothes look ridiculous. What are the voters going to think?

LEE: Look, Holly, I've got a lot on my mind. In addition to this campaign, I have to fix this budget problem, I need to appoint a new Supreme Court justice, and I have to deal with those mean people...uh...on the Hill...the...uh...

DAVIS: Congress, sir.

LEE: Thank you. And I have to deal with Congress. Choosing the right tie isn't high on my priority list.

HOLLY: Will, you are President of the United States. People look up to you...

NELSON: Sir, I have to agree with the First Lady. This outfit is not going to give the voters a positive impression of you. *(LEE glares at NELSON.)* Oh, pardon me, Mr. President, I see that this is a domestic policy issue. I'll just be over here if you need

End of Freeview

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