

Reagan starts performance of life in Washington

At long last, the scenario has been written for the opening scenes of that monumental Hollywood epic, "Mr. Reagan Goes to Washington." And a wow of a beginning it is.

Arthur hoppe

We fade into the Oval office. Mr. Reagan, a lovable, naive feller from Out West (played by character actor Ronald Reagan), has taken over as president and plans to save the country from cynical politicians and entrenched bureaucrats through just plain goodness. Nancy, The Beautiful Gal Who Loves Him (played by Nancy Davis), is, as always, at his side.

Ronnie (*examining a ledger*): Golly whillikers, Nancy! It's a bigger mess than I thought. The government's already \$50 billion in the red.

How am I going to buy the B-1 bomber, the MX missile and six dreadnoughts, while still cutting taxes 30 percent and balancing the budget?

Nancy: Oh, Ronnie, give up. It's hopeless.
Ronnie: No, wait. There's one last chance: the secret weapon I revealed during the campaign.

Nancy (*fearfully*): You mean . . .
Ronnie (*grimly*): Yes, put out a four-word memo to all departments saying: "Eliminate waste and fraud!"

Nancy (*adoringly*): Oh, Ronnie, you're so brave! (*Cut to the U.S. Department of Bureaus where two entrenched bureaucrats, Sidney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre, are taking turns dozing and stealing paper clips. A boy scout slaps the memo on Sidney's desk, salutes and marches out. Sidney reads it and blanches.*)

Sidney: Peter, that presidential order we have dreaded all these years has come at last.

Peter (*sweating*): Not eliminate waste and fraud! Is nothing sacred? We will have to fire 98 percent of our staff, including ourselves.

Sidney: Yes, we'll be forced to retire on six-fifths of our salary. But look on the bright side, Peter.

Peter: What bright side?
Sidney (*smiling evilly*): Think how fortunate we are that Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson,

Nixon, Ford and Carter didn't come up with this desperate maneuver years ago.

(*Montage of bureaucrats fleeing Washington, million-dollar bills piling up in the vaults of the U.S. Treasury, B-1 bombers taking off, MX missiles running around in circles and, lastly, Ronnie and Nancy on the bridge of a brand new dreadnought as the band plays "God Bless America".*)

Nancy: Oh, Ronnie, you did it! You saved the country.

Ronnie: Not yet, Nancy. I still have to convince the cynical Washington politicians to put the good of the nation ahead of crass politics and talk those masterminds of the Kremlin into laying down their arms and joining the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Nancy (*confidently*): Don't worry, Ronnie, after this, that will be easy.

Ronnie (*frowning*): I don't know, Nancy. Those cynical Washington politicians are going to take a heap of persuading.

(*Music up and out.*)
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Reality . . .


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Morgan was riding with his deaf-mute son, James Jr., to visit his other son, in a third hospital recovering from burns over 80 percent of his body, when their car smashed into a telephone pole. James Jr. was admitted to a hospital with a brain concussion. Mr. Morgan subsequently committed himself to a psychiatric hospital with the explanation, "I'm going crazy."

Such a streak of bad luck is so hard to comprehend that lovers of dark humor may snicker when reading of Morgan's problems. Just remember, that what happened to James Morgan Sr. is one of those intangibles in the category of "real life." What happens on "General Hospital" is not.

Fantasy and fiction are wonderful, creative and often stimulating. But if you really want to boggle my mind, just hand me something like the above stories. Or perhaps an item on how we are now exporting Coca-Cola to China, how Eugene McCarthy and Ralph Abernathy came to endorse Ronald Reagan, or that 23 million adult Americans are unable to read a word of what is written here.

Truth these days is far stranger than fiction.



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