



TRUMPELSTILTSKIN

A FAIRY TALE

BY
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* MountainWorks Press *
Bozeman MT

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TRUMPELSTILTSKIN

A Fairy Tale

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*For those
who seek to live in
better places than towers.*



— 1 —

It's been said that I believe in the power of positive thinking. In fact, I believe in the power of negative thinking.

IN A LAND far, far away—yet not so distant as one might think—lived a wise and kindly King. At that moment the King stood on the castle balcony surveying his realm.

The castle had been built on the tallest hill in the kingdom, meaning the King stood above all he surveyed. Being white, the castle almost glowed in the light of the setting sun. A flag flew above each of the castle's three towers. One flag was blue, another white, the third red.

In the valley below the castle stood the kingdom's central village. The King watched as his subjects moved to and fro. Some drove delivery wagons, some carried bags of groceries home for dinner, a mother chased her toddler around the village square. Dogs yapped, a church bell rang, children yelled out in joy.

It was all so very normal, and seemingly so very happy, that the King allowed himself to bask in the moment. This is what he liked best, a vision of his kingdom moving along peacefully, his subjects happy, busy, prosperous, and at peace.

Yet the King knew he only need raise his glance a bit to see that all was not so idyllic in his kingdom.

The first thing he saw as he lifted his eyes from the village center was that the town grew out far and wide. The houses

he saw were tidy, though sparsely appointed. Most looked alike, built of stone and having rounded earthen roofs. The only variety that set them apart were the colors of the doors: some red, some blue, some purple.

Lifting his eyes farther, the King saw that one edge of town abutted a river. A large mill and mill pond interrupted the river's flow, and an impressive mill house stood nearby. Workers, men and women of the kingdom comprising all varieties and shapes and sizes, labored about the mill. Some moved ore from giant piles into one end of the mill; others moved finished goods out from the other end. As he watched, a woman, the Miller's wife, stepped out of the mill and walked to the house. She was carrying a heavy load.

Seeing the Miller's wife made the King smile.

When the Miller's wife disappeared, the King lifted his eyes another notch. It was beyond the mill pond that the King's stomach began to tighten. For there, on the other side of the river, the hills began to climb up and away. And in the hills he saw houses that dwarfed those of the village. There were far fewer, to be sure, and unlike the village houses the estates on the far side of the river had enormous lawns, most with an ill-tempered guard dog out front. Each mansion sat on top of its own hill above the valley, above the river, above the people of the village.

For the thousandth time, the King pondered how houses so large might hold but one family. Surely "his" castle was likewise large, but along with the King's family, the castle hosted the citizen's government, plus the kingdom's police force, judiciary, and jail. I would prefer to live in one of the houses in the village, he thought, where I could meet with the people, where I wouldn't need an angry dog.

And when the King lifted his eyes the final notch he saw the biggest of the mansions, sitting atop the biggest of the hills on the other side of the river. One would be hard pressed to call this house a “house”. Instead it was tall, more like a tower, a tower made of gold.

The King’s stomach knotted. For in the years that he had been in power, and those of his predecessor king and the king before that and the one before that, no one had ever learned who lived in the golden tower. Some people in the village whispered about seeing an odd figure silhouetted in a tower window. Others spoke in envy about the stranger—who lives in a tower made of gold, anyway?!

The King had many times sent envoys to gather information on the stranger, but his representatives were always turned back at the tall wall built around the golden tower. Tax collectors had been sent over the years, as well, but they likewise were turned away, always being told that there was no money to be had in the golden tower.

The King leaned over the balcony railing, his gaze fixed, a frown forming on his face. And though no one was around, he found himself giving voice to a question he had thought about so many times before.

“Who are you, anyway?” the King said aloud.



— 2 —

The beauty of me is that I'm very rich.

I have black guys counting my money. ... I hate it. The only guys I want counting my money are short guys that wear yarmulkes all day.

THE QUESTION OF who lived in the golden tower, in the past largely a curiosity, was more and more on the King's mind these days. Because although things were mostly calm and peaceful now, the kingdom was about to change. The King had been in power for some time and he was growing weary. He knew that his reign must shortly come to an end. He also knew that while change brings the opportunity for hope, it can also open the door to upheaval.

And so the King worried about the unknown stranger in the golden tower, and if he posed a danger to the people of the kingdom.

THE CHANGE IN leadership worried the King for one reason above all, the state of the kingdom's finances. While the kingdom was running smoothly, its coffers were growing bare. There was little gold to be found.

That, in part, was why the King had smiled upon seeing the Miller's wife. You see the mill played a special role in the economy of the village. It produced metals—bronze, silver,

gold, and platinum—the kingdom’s only real exports. While many in the village worked to grow food to feed the people of the kingdom, many more spent their days in the mill.

That meant that the Miller held a special place in the kingdom, a place of power and influence, and had for many, many years. And the Miller and the Miller’s wife—for you see they shared control over the Mill and had for as long as anyone could recall—had been good to their workers, and thus were respected and revered by most of the kingdom’s people.

As it turns out, the export market for bronze and silver had tanked in recent years. And the kingdom had never been a player in the platinum market, having so few reserves.

That left gold, which had long been the foundation of the economy. Yet years back the kingdom’s stockpile had started to dwindle, decreasing year-by-year such that today the kingdom’s financial coffers were nearly bare.

The loss of gold began innocently, though ominously, enough. The Miller told of arriving at the mill one day to find pane of glass broken, and inside a dead seagull who had apparently flown off course into the window. No one ever understood about the seagull, or how it flew into the glass, though it has been debated for years.

What *was* clear is that someone had come through the broken glass that night and robbed the coffers, though not emptied them, for surely gold is heavy and difficult to move all at once. Likewise, no one doubted that is on that day the kingdom’s coffers started to dwindle. And it wasn’t long after that the big mansions on the hills above the village began to be built, though no one knew who lived in them, nor how they made the money to build such mansions.

And though these days few can remember back that far,
some still say that it was about at that time that the big
mysterious tower on the hill began to take on its golden hue.



Ofentimes when I was sleeping with one of the top women in the world I would say to myself, thinking about me as a boy from Queens, "Can you believe what I am getting?"

BUT BACK TO the King's smile. He had been meeting with the Miller and the Miller's wife regularly for many years. Indeed, the King counted them among his most trusted advisors. The three of them talked regularly about the problem of the dwindling gold, and he felt heartened that the Miller and the Miller's wife always arrived with innovative ideas on changes they could make at the mill to help restore the kingdom's stockpile.

The King listened to Miller and his wife carefully every time they met, and always he asked many questions about their proposals. And each time the Miller and his wife left the castle, the King sought out his own wife, the Queen, to discuss what they had proposed to him. The Queen was also his advisor, his *most trusted* advisor. Indeed, many thought that she, not he, was the wisest person in the kingdom.

Over the years the King had agreed to implement recommendations brought forth by the Miller and his wife. Happily, those changes had slowed the financial crisis for a time, though of late things had begun to look dire again.

In the early years of those meetings it was always the Miller who spoke the most, but as the years passed the King

noticed that more and more often the Miller's wife carried the discussion. Thus, it came as little surprise when one day the Miller said to the King, "Dear friend, I have grown old and tired. For years now my wife has been carrying the workload at the mill. More and more I have been staying home from work to instead just sit, read, and think."

The King nodded his head thoughtfully, indicating that he understood, and that the Miller should continue.

The Miller now gestured to his wife, who unlike most discussions with the King had been largely silent on this day. It was a moment she had long lobbied her husband for, a moment for which the Miller fully agreed she had more than proven worthy, having effectively run the mill on her own for quite some time.

"We have decided," the Miller continued, "that as of today my wife will become the new miller and I will step aside. I have decided to become the Millwright, a title in name only, to be sure, but I must admit that I do get a chuckle out of the idea of being named permanently 'right'!"

At this small joke the three of them laughed heartily. Then the King turned to the Miller's wife and said, "So be it. From this day forward, throughout the entire kingdom, you dear friend shall be known as the Miller."



A person who is very flat chested is very hard to be a 10.

Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president I mean, she's a woman, and I'm not s'posed ta say bad things, but really, folks, come on. Are we serious?

Women: You have to treat them like shit.

THE FACT THAT he was no longer the Miller, didn't mean that the Mill...er...oops...Millwright didn't continue to have many good ideas. Nor that he didn't share them.

In fact it was not the Miller, but her husband the Millwright who one day made a most startling claim to the King, "We have discovered how to spin straw into gold!"

The King was understandably intrigued, though almost immediately skeptical, and his brow furrowed. For her part, the Miller looked at her husband over the King's shoulder, careful that the King not see her. It was a look they both understood, a look that said, "What are you talking about?!"

For while both the Miller and the Millwright knew they had been researching such a process to spin straw into gold over the past several months, and had indeed seen progress, they had yet to succeed.

"My dear Miller," the King said, turning away from the Miller's husband, now facing the Miller as he always did these

days. “You and the Millwright have served the kingdom for a lifetime milling our much needed bronze, silver, platinum, and gold. If your new discovery can be proven out then you know, of course, what this means. With such a tool we could save the kingdom! Oh you must demonstrate this miracle! Can you do that?”

Now it was the Millwright’s turn to gesture over the King’s shoulder without the King seeing him. Yes, yes, yes, the Miller’s husband signaled for her to say.

The Miller was clever enough to know the danger, yet also the opportunity, she was stepping into.

And so she nodded in affirmation.

“To be clear,” the King said, “You are saying ‘Yes, we can’, correct?”

“Yes, we can,” the Miller said.

“Wonderful!” the King said. “Make no mistake. With your help, we will win the future for the kingdom!”

The King’s words meant more than the Miller or Millwright could know. You see the King had not yet told them of his pending plan to relinquish his crown. Nor that he and the Queen planned to move into the village, into one of the small houses there, and to begin life anew as normal subjects of the kingdom.

The King’s last act, he knew, would be to anoint his successor, a task the King both relished and fretted over. For the King truly loved his subjects, truly loved the kingdom, and he knew the choice of the next king would be critically important.

And of late, the King had begun to think of the Miller as the very best person to succeed him.

AFTER A BIT more conversation, the Millwright declared himself tired and wanting to head back to the mill house to rest. He waved to his wife the Miller, giving her a smile that seemed to say, “We’ve always wanted this for you, now we have it. So let’s see what you can do with it.”

The King then took the Miller to a large chamber in the basement of the palace, just off the stables. A great heap of straw filled the chamber.

“Here is some straw for you to work on,” said the King. And then, pointing, he continued, “And as you told me that your new process involves *spinning* the straw into gold, I had a spinning wheel delivered.”

The Miller nodded without saying a word. A slightly uncomfortable moment of quiet ensued, until the King broke the silence, saying, “So let there be no misunderstanding, all this straw must be spun into gold before morning.”

The King walked to the door before turning back and nodding to the Miller. She smiled strongly, but stayed silent. The King turned and walked out of the chamber, then closed and locked the door, leaving the key in the outside lock.

“This is an odd business,” the King thought as he made his way up through one of the castle’s winding stone stairways. He was, admittedly, skeptical, and decided then and there to ask the Queen her opinion on the matter at hand. But he already knew what the Queen would say, and when he found her she did not disappoint.

“It’s a big decision,” the Queen said, “with enormous potential impacts on the citizens of the kingdom. Are you really certain it is the right path to choose?”

“This is the work they do,” the King replied. “Why shouldn’t it be true? Have the Miller and the Millwright ever let us down?”

Here the Queen rolled her eyes.

“OK, OK, point taken,” the King said.

Then the Queen’s look softened. “We don’t know if they will succeed, but we *do* believe in them. So I suggest that rather than stew about it, why don’t we just wait until morning and see what, if anything, the good Miller produces?”



I play to people's fantasies. People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. That's why a little hyperbole never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular.

FOR HER PART, the Miller stared at the locked door wondering how she had been stuck carrying out the silly boast of her husband the Millwright.

“What have you gotten us into this time?” she thought.

Now it was true that the Miller and the Millwright did not know that the King's plan to step down had become imminent. But as a team the two of them were nothing if not shrewd and they had long ago surmised that the end of the King's reign would come someday soon. And with it, they knew, would come opportunity.

But planning and doing were two different things. So now the Miller sat and she thought ... and thought ... and thought. Time and again she reviewed the research they had conducted on how to spin straw into gold, and time and again she remembered how the new processes they developed had all failed.

And then she reviewed the new ideas they had, the ones they had not yet tested, so many ideas that it boggled the mind. But which one would work? Tears of frustration formed in her eyes as she pondered. But soon the Miller drew on some deep

reserve and declared aloud, “I *must* start somewhere. I must figure out how to change my good thoughts to good works. It is critical that I succeed for the good of the kingdom!”

The Miller did not wipe away the tears, but instead stood up and headed for the spinning wheel, resolved as to which of the untried processes she would attempt next. But before she got there the Miller heard the key jingle in the lock, and suddenly the door burst open, revealing the oddest looking little man she had ever seen.

The Miller had never seen a troll, but this odd creature in front of her, she imagined, must be what a troll looks like. His body was square, his neck almost non-existent, his gait stiff. But it was his hair, long and straggly and almost fully covering his eyes, that caused her pause. The little man looked for all the world like one of those orange Highland cattle kept by the farmers of the kingdom. He was almost a perfect caricature, save for the two sharp horns sticking out of the side of his head.

“Good day to you, my fair lass.” Here, the Miller thought she saw the little Troll-man wink, though she couldn’t be sure under the mop of hair. “Why pray tell, little lady, are you crying?”

The Miller found the Troll-man’s voice immediately harsh and condescending. “Where did you come from?” the Miller asked, ignoring the question, her voice becoming stern. “Were you listening outside the door? And who are you?”

“Never you mind where I came from. And as to who I am—I am an alchemist,” said the Troll-man. “I know everything. Believe me! I am everything. Everyone loves me. I can make beauty from ugliness. I can cure any disease. And I can spin straw into gold!”

The Miller’s lips tightened, her focus clearly changed. For a moment she looked over to the pile of straw. In the heat of

the Troll-man's arrival, she had forgotten the insurmountable task at hand.

Sensing his advantage, the Troll-man gestured to the pile of straw and continued, "You have a big problem, my little twittle. Yes, I was outside the door. The King expects you to turn all that straw into gold. I wonder how you propose to do that."

"I don't know how," the Miller was forced to admit.

"What will you give me," said the Troll-man immediately, "to do it for you?"

"You are an evil man," the Miller thought, as he leered over her. But she had a job to do for the King, a promise made, and so instead of saying what was running through her mind she said the only thing she could, "If you will turn this straw to gold, I will give you my necklace. Deal?"

The Troll-man drew himself up and hobbled over to the Miller. He reached out and snapped the necklace off her neck as she recoiled in disgust, rubbing her neck. The Troll-man bit into the necklace, then smiled as he held it up to judge its shiny glint.

"This is *real* gold, isn't it?" he said.

"Of course it is, solid gold at that," she responded. "I am the Miller of the kingdom, for goodness sakes, what would you expect? It's not as if I can't make myself another one."

"Yes, my little lambkin, I suppose you could," the Troll-man said with a sneer. "That is *if* you had the gold on hand. But as we both know, you don't and you don't know how to make gold, do you?"

The Troll-man broke into an evil laugh.

The Miller said nothing, but instead just looked at him in disgust.

The Troll-man pocketed the necklace with the hint of a smile. And then he sat down at the spinning wheel and began to work, whistling and singing all the while:

*'Round about, round about,
Lo and behold!
Reel away, reel away,
Straw into gold!'*

Round and round and round the spinning wheel went. As the Troll-man worked, the Miller watched intently, trying to understand how he was accomplishing this magical thing that defied logic, apparently doing something she had spent much of her life seeking to achieve, something so crucial to the kingdom's survival. But try as she might, the Miller could not discover the secret.

Slowly but surely the pile of straw dwindled while the pile of golden straw grew. Long before morning, the Troll-man had most improbably turned the pile of straw into gold.

With the spinning complete, the Miller felt a momentary sense of relief, though surely not of peace. "What is your name you odd little man?" she said to him. "And where do you live? Why have I never heard of you?"

The Troll-man stood up from the spinning wheel, then flipped back his cow-like mane with a sneer. He did not respond, but instead turned on his heels and hobbled away, stopping only long enough after closing the door to turn the key in the lock.



I know politicians who love women who don't even want to be known for that, because they might lose the gay vote, OK?

ARRIVING AT THE chamber the next evening, the King immediately felt overwhelmed with joy when he saw the chamber full of golden straw. “This is wonderful, my dear Miller friend!” he exclaimed.

“Oh it was nothing, really,” the Miller replied.

“Nothing?!” The King said. “As you know the kingdom’s finances are reeling. But I don’t think you know how bad it is. Your discovery may have saved us all!”

“I am glad to be of service, my King,” said the Miller somewhat sheepishly.

Suddenly the King’s look turn from gleeful to serious. “But we must do more,” the King said. “This is a start; it will help recover our coffers, but is far from enough. We must make *more* gold if we are to save the kingdom!”

The King stepped before the Miller, looking directly into her eyes, an expectant smile now forming. “You must share the secret with me, lo share the secret with the people of the kingdom, about how this miracle was done. Then we can get as many people as possible working to make more gold!”

Here the Miller found herself in a pickle, of course, since she had no idea how the Troll-man turned the straw into gold. The Miller paused, dropping her eyes as if in thought, then raised them and spoke directly to the King. “I am the Miller,

and this is part of the secrets of my trade. So I cannot share how this miracle occurred—with you or with anyone.”

The smile on the King’s face flipped into a frown. He turned and began to pace. “You have no idea what is at stake here, do you? I am about end my reign...”

The Miller gasped, never guessing he would share this information. “Now?”

“Soon,” the King replied. “And it is my solemn duty to anoint the person who will succeed me.”

“Yes, yes,” the Miller said expectantly.

The King paused, as if for a last time considering something he had considered so many times before. And he thought about how many times the Queen had looked at him with that piercing look of hers, that look that always made him feel like a child, and how many times their discussion ended with the Queen making the same flat statement, “*Why not a female king?*”

And so the King finally said what he had long been thinking, “It is you, dear Miller, who I would like to anoint as the next king.”

The Miller gasped again, almost hyperventilating. But before she could respond, the King continued, “But if you won’t share the secrets of turning straw into gold, I cannot anoint you our next king. Are those secrets worth that much to you?”

Her mind scrambling, the Miller decided not to answer the King’s question, but instead to head off on another tack. “I must keep some secrets to myself. But now that you see what I am capable of, perhaps you and the people of the kingdom don’t need to know everything. What if I could create more gold, and then more? I could help the kingdom that way, could I not? Please set me about the task!”

The King listened to her words, but did not reply. Instead he scratched his chin, thinking.

“Very well,” the King at last responded. “We have two more chambers of straw that you must turn into gold to prove yourself. But let me be clear—this is not the end of our discussion. If that is the path you choose, I will consider that my decision on who will be the next king has *not* been made.”

With that the King took the Miller into the next chamber, signaling that she should bring the spinning wheel. Again the Miller found a chamber filled with straw. Again the King left, locking the door behind him, but not before saying, “With the kingdom’s finances at risk, there is a fierce urgency now. You must turn this straw into gold by the time I return tomorrow. We can discuss the rest then.”

Alone once again, as on the previous night, the Miller stared at the pile of straw before her, and a single tear ran down her cheek.

ALMOST AS IF on cue, the key rattled and in waddled the Troll-man. In fact he arrived so soon after the King’s departure it’s a wonder they hadn’t run into each other in the hall.

“You? You little lady, you who are crying and weak—what a disgrace!—YOU are to be King?!” The Troll-man let out a hideous laugh.

Now the Miller was angry. She stood aggressively and came face-to-face with the Troll-man, trying to find his eyes but unable to see them through the mop of hair on his head. “How do you know that I am to be king?” the Miller said sternly, wiping the single tear away.

“I know everything; I AM everything,” snarled the Troll-man. “Didn’t I tell you that last night? And do you know what

I know now, my little lambkins? It is *I* who am going to be king!”

“Not you,” the Miller returned, “*me!*”

“Oh really. Is that so?” The Troll-man burst into laughter. “You who are a disaster, an absolute disaster! How, my pumpkin, do you propose to spin the straw in this chamber into gold? I believe that was the King’s requirement, was it not?”

The Miller fell silent.

“Let me tell you how, then, little one,” the Troll-man continued, disdain in his voice. “I will spin the straw into gold for you once again. But only for a price. You and I, dear little raspberry, will make a deal.”

“What do you want?” the Miller asked, a hint of desperation in her voice.

“You know what I want,” said the Troll-man. “I want to be king, just like you. But unlike you, I don’t care what people think of me. The people are idiots!”

“How can you say that?” the Miller asked.

“Idiots, all of them!” the Troll-man shouted back. “You are so naïve, an imbecile just like all the rest. But you do possess one thing I want, that I must grant. Because unlike you, the King will never name me as his successor. But, *you*, once you are king, you will wait until the crown sits solidly on your head, and then you will abdicate the throne to *me!*”

“I will NEVER let that happen!” the Miller exclaimed.

The Troll-man laughed and it was the laugh of one with his foot on his enemy’s throat. “If you do not name me king, I tell everyone how you lied to the King, about how you never knew how to spin straw into gold, and you will become the laughingstock of the kingdom!”

The Miller groaned angrily, her eyes defiant, yet both of them knew he had her backed into a corner.

“Ah, don’t be so mad my little walnut,” said the Troll-man, his voice softening ever so slightly. “For along with being the most handsome man in the kingdom, I am the most honorable man you will ever meet. And I like to keep things interesting. So I will give you a sporting chance.”

The Miller looked up, wary, but a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

“If you can guess my name, I will leave you and never return. But if you do not,” and now the Troll-man’s voice took on a hard edge again, “you *will* abdicate the throne and name me king, just as I demand! If you don’t, I will reveal your deep secret about the straw and you will be *scorned* throughout the kingdom! They will kick you off the throne and I daresay you and your husband will be banished from the land!”

The Miller felt in turmoil. “I will solve this problem,” the Miller thought to herself. “I can turn straw into gold and save the kingdom. I am so close. And the Troll-man can never, ever, be King!”

“DO we have a deal?” the Troll-man growled, interrupting her thoughts.

And so pressed, the Miller said the only thing she could, “Alright, then, we have a deal.”

And so for a second night running, the Troll-man started to work, whistling and singing drooling over the spinning wheel:

*'Round about, round about,
Lo and behold!
Reel away, reel away,
Straw into gold!*

And while the Troll-man spun the straw, the Miller sat and thought. How could she discover the Troll-man’s name and thus put an end to this madness for the kingdom?

Much later, but once again long before the morning arrived, the pile of straw had been turned to gold. The Troll-man stood from his seat at the spinning wheel and sneered at her. “Your gold is made and now you owe me,” the Troll-man said. “Mark my words, you wretched pup, one more chamber and then I collect what is rightfully mine!”

With that the Troll-man turned to the door and departed. But on this second night the Miller did not frown. Instead, she allowed herself a tiny smile as the Troll-man hobbled away.

And then, after the key rattled in the door, the Miller even let out a little laugh. And it was not because the Troll-man had inadvertently added more gold to the kingdom’s coffers. Instead, there, on that second night running, as the pile of straw had dwindled and the pile of gold had grown, the Miller had suddenly realized what she must do.



It's very possible that I could be the first presidential candidate to run and make money on it.

THE KING ARRIVED in the morning and found, much to his delight, that the straw in the second chamber had been spun into gold.

“Wonderful! Now only the third chamber awaits,” the King said to the Miller. “You are proving true to your word. I more and more believe that you alone may save the kingdom with your spinning prowess. In fact, today I will tell my advisors of your great discovery, and have them spread the word across the land—we are financially saved!”

And then the King said what the Miller longed to hear: “And assuming you are successful with the third chamber, I *will* name you the next king.”

“Wonderful, my dear King,” said the Miller. “But first, before tackling the third chamber, I have some things that I must do. For instance, I have not seen the Millwright for days and would like to assure that he is OK. And I must check on the welfare of our workers in the mill. Can we meet here tonight?”

“Of course, my friend, of course,” the King answered. “I have some preparations I must make myself, for the Queen and I have begun setting the wheels in motion for the succession.”

THE MILLER DID go to see the Millwright, down at the house on the river. The Miller found the Millwright reading a book.

“You have been gone for some time, dear wife,” said the Millwright. “I trust that all is OK.”

“It is indeed,” the Miller replied. “I have a problem, it is true, but I have a plan and will carry it out. I only wanted to see that you were OK and to check on the welfare of the workers. Now that I know that all is fine with you and with the good people in the mill, I must return to the castle.”

With that the Miller spun around and departed, leaving the Millwright to cast a curious glance at the closing door, shrug, and then return to his book.

AS IT TURNS out, the Miller was off in search of more family, this time a cousin who worked in the castle. That cousin, the Warden, tended the castle’s dungeons. Her job was to root out the evil people of the kingdom, bring the truth of their crimes to light, and see that they were thrown in jail. Most crime in the kingdom dealt with money and taxes. The Warden was known far and wide as having the most combative of personalities, and little patience for those who would steal from the people of the kingdom. More than once the Warden had been called to aid the King when he needed a stick rather than a carrot, such as collecting taxes from those who would not pay.

The Miller met the Warden in the castle courtyard and described to her cousin the meetings with the Troll-man, and how the Troll-man had somehow spun the straw into gold. And the Miller described how she did not know how the Troll-man did it, nor who he was, nor where he lived. The Warden listened intently, shaking her head in anger.

And then, because she trusted the Warden as family, the Miller told her of the King's plan to anoint her, the Miller, as the *next* king.

The Warden gasped in surprise. Still, it only took a moment or two for the Warden to recover and offer the Miller congratulations. Then the Miller provided further details about how the Troll-man had stolen her necklace, and how he was blackmailing her into abdicating the thrown to him after the Miller assumed it from the King.

Listening to the story, the Warden grew red under the collar, the rage building as if a teapot about to boil, and finally unable to control herself she bellowed, "Who is this Troll-man, anyway?! He is evil incarnate and we must expunge him from the kingdom. With every ounce of my soul I will search him out and expose him for the wretched soul he is!"

The Miller smiled, unsurprised by her cousin's outburst.

"I will leave immediately to crisscross the kingdom in search of that awful man," the Warden said, steam almost pouring out of her ears. "I will leave no stone unturned. I will find out where he lives, and expose the evil-doer for who he is. And most important, I will find out the Troll-man's name. For once we have that, we can banish him from the kingdom forever!"

"I do so appreciate your help, dear cousin," said the Miller sincerely.

The Warden nodded, then continued with a wry smile, "And I know one place more than any other I want to look."

"You do?" replied the Miller. "Where?"

"On the other side of the river, of course, in the giant mansions."



I want five children, like in my own family, because with five, then I will know that one will be guaranteed to turn out like me.

AT THE SAME time the Miller was meeting with the Warden, the King was talking with the Queen.

“It is time,” the Queen said. “Tomorrow you must announce that you are stepping down.”

“Soon, yes, I agree. But *tomorrow*?”

“Yes, tomorrow.” The Queen smiled but her eyes were a bit hard. “There is no more time for delay. If the Miller is successful spinning straw into gold for a third night running then surely we can believe that she can continue to do so and save the kingdom. Don’t you agree?”

“Yes, I do agree,” said the King.

The Queen walked over to the King and wrapped her arms around him, her eyes softening. “Then *it is time*,” the Queen said before laying her head on his shoulders. “You have done anything and everything any King could ever do. It is time for someone new to look after the kingdom. It is time, my love.”

The King held the Queen tightly, and gently kissed her hair. In that moment his emotions jumped between foreboding and joy. But mostly the King felt one thing above all: an overwhelming sense of love.

“Yes,” he whispered into her hair, “tomorrow I will resign.”



I have a great relationship with the blacks. I've always had a great relationship with the blacks.

You're living in poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed—what the hell do you have to lose?

THAT EVENING, AS planned, the King and the Miller met in the third chamber on the castle's lower level. The spinning wheel had been delivered, and for a moment they stood together, silently surveying the large bales of straw that awaited the Miller.

"It is nearly your time," the King said to the Miller. "Tomorrow I will stand on the balcony and announce to the village that I will be resigning. And I will tell them that three days later we will have a village meeting on the square, and that at that meeting I will be naming my successor."

Here the King paused, and the Miller smiled.

"Yes, my friend, as we discussed already, once I see that you have spun this final chamber of straw into gold I will name you my successor. I will name *you* the next king!"

"It is an honor, to be sure, my King," said the Miller. "One that I do not take lightly. I will make you proud. And more importantly, with all due respect, I will make the people of the kingdom proud."

“I know that you will, and I appreciate that you understand who you will be serving,” said the King. “But let us not get ahead of ourselves—*first* you must spin this straw to gold before I return tomorrow. And *then* I will make my announcement. And then, three days later, you shall be King and I...well I shall simply be one of the villagers.”

“My dear friend, you will never ‘simply be one of the villagers’. Even if that is what you seek, the people will never let it be so.”

With this the King smiled a kindly smile, nodding to the Miller in acknowledgement but not responding. Instead he headed for the door, turning the key in the lock behind him.

And as the King’s steps echoed down the hall, the Miller felt certain she could hear him humming, ever so gently humming.



Sometimes, part of making a deal is denigrating your competition.

ONCE AGAIN THE strange Troll-man arrived as if on cue. He burst into the room, almost gleefully. “Only three more days and we shall be king! And then I shall be king! At last, you little wench, my dream will come true. I will never ever forget it—it will be huge!”

The Miller let the Troll-man’s arrogant claim and condescending words roll off her. Because she knew that at that very moment the Warden was off in the woods, searching the kingdom for any clue that might tell them where the Troll-man lived, and what his name was.

So instead of responding, the Miller gestured to the spinning wheel as if to say, “Well, then, get started.”

The Troll-man sat with an aggravated “hrrumph!” and began to work, once again whistling and singing and drooling over the spinning wheel:

*'Round about, round about,
Lo and behold!
Reel away, reel away,
Straw into gold!*

And while the Troll-man spun the straw, the Miller sat and thought. She had come up with more names, and wanted to try them. How simple this whole thing would be, the Miller

thought, if I could just discover the Troll-man's name. Then he would have to keep his word and leave the kingdom forever.

When the Troll-man finished his work, he stood and growled, "And now you and I are done. I will see you three days hence and once the King names you king, and you are wearing the crown and everyone is settled with it, you will turn and name *me* king. If you don't, mark my words I will tell the people you did not make gold from the straw, I did, and then not only will they make you relinquish the throne, they will remove you from your role as the Miller, and then laugh you out of the kingdom!"

"But wait," said the Miller as the Troll-man started to leave. "You said that if I guess your name you will leave the kingdom forever."

"Yes, it is so little I risk with a dimwit like you," the Troll-man said. "I daresay I could invite all the idiot subjects of the kingdom to join in the game and no one would ever guess my name. So let me hear your lame-stream attempts, peanut."

"Is it Low Energy Jeb?"

"No."

"OK, how about Little Marco?"

"No. And I can assure you there is nothing little about me. Everything is fine in that department!"

"How about Lyin' Ted," the Miller asked hopefully.

"No, no, and NO! You wretched soul, you have not even come close. All the names you have provided I would only give to my worst enemies. No more guesses. *You* are done, and as for me, *I* will soon be king!"

With that the Troll-man turned and hobbled out of the chamber.



I know exactly how to build a wall. I know the footings. I know exactly how deep they have to go. I know everything.

*When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best.
They're sending people that have lots of problems.
They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime.
They're rapists, and some, I assume, are good people.*

AT THE SAME time the Miller and the Troll-man were meeting in the third chamber, the Warden was out across the river wandering the kingdom. She stopped everyone she met to ask if they knew of the Troll-man, if they knew where he lived, and especially if they knew the Troll-man's name.

Once the Warden came upon an old man along the trail, a man who was of the village but worked in the forests on this side of the river searching for wood to accomplish his work in the castle woodshop. The man, the Warden learned, was called Sander. He had become known far and wide as one who fashioned beautiful creations from wood, often using green saplings to mold and assemble and sand into a cohesive chair or bench, or perhaps a table or deck or platform.

The Warden asked if Sander knew anything about the big mansions across the river from the village. "Not much," said Sander. "Except I have many times seen streams of people from the big mansions make their way to the golden tower."

The Warden, smiling, said, "I knew it!"

“But let me just say this,” Sander said, holding up his hand as if to slow her. “They not only come from the big mansions. I have often seen groups of people from the village headed up to the golden tower, as well. When I asked once where they were headed, they said to a tea party.”

“That’s strange,” replied the Warden. Then she turned to the question of the Troll-man, describing him as the Miller had told her. “Have you ever seen such a cow-like Troll-man?”

“I’m sorry, I don’t know about the Troll-man,” Sander replied. “But if it was me, I know what I would do. I would look in the golden tower—that must be where the Troll-man lives.”

And so the Warden abandoned her search of the kingdom and headed instead toward the distant golden tower. Though it was well past midnight when she arrived there, the Warden did not give in to the urge to curl up and sleep. Instead she surveyed the massive wall that surrounded the golden tower.

“What purpose could this stupid wall possibly serve?” thought the Warden. “How can this wall really stop anyone who wants to enter?”

And as if to prove her point, the Warden walked to a nearby tree whose upper limbs had grown over the wall. She shimmied up the tree, crawled out on a limb, then dropped into the grounds of the golden tower.

The Warden spent no time in self-congratulations. Instead she marched directly to the door of the golden tower. The door was roughhewn and massive, and like everything else apparently made of solid gold. The Warden grabbed the big door knocker and pounded it into the door — boom, Boom, BOOM! sounded the knocker. The Warden waited, but no one came to respond. Again she tried ... again no response.

And as the Warden paused to consider what to do next she made a most startling discovery. For under the light of the full moon the Warden saw a most enlightening site: the gold on the door under the knocker had started to flake off!

The Warden grabbed a sharp rock and quickly dug into the door. More gold flaked off. And then she attacked the wall of the castle, and again the gold flaked off, and then a windowsill and then a rounded turret and every time and everywhere the gold flaked off to reveal a cheap, rough, unpolished stone beneath.

THE WARDEN STEPPED away from the tower of fake gold and back into the shadows. "So be it," she thought, "I will sleep until the morning. Then I will knock again and confront the Troll-man, if it is truly he who lives here."

But as it turns out, the Warden would sleep little. For only an hour or two later, with the sun a hint on the horizon, the Warden was awoken by the strangest sound. She peered out from her hiding place in the trees to see that there in front of the tower door, fumbling with his keys, stood a most peculiar man. The man was singing and then, as if he couldn't contain himself, started dancing an awkward jig.

"He looks like a Highland Cow," the Warden thought sleepily, "with that mop of orange hair covering his eyes." And then suddenly the Warden jumped upright, and recalling her discussions with the Miller and Sander, thought, "This must be the Troll-man!"

But before the Warden consider what to do, the words of the Troll-man's song hit her like a lightning bolt:

*Merrily the feast I'll make.
Today I'll brew, tomorrow bake;
Merrily I'll dance and sing,*

*For next day will a stranger bring.
Little does my lady dream
TrumpelStiltskin is my name!*

The Warden's heart soared! She now knew the Troll-man's name, *TrumpelStiltskin*.

And though the Warden wanted desperately to confront TrumpelStiltskin, she thought better of it. Because the Warden realized a bigger prize was at stake. She could instead reveal the name TrumpelStiltskin to the Miller, and with that they could have him banished from the kingdom forever!

"I don't know who you are," the Warden thought. "But I know one thing now for certain: you are a loud, nasty, thin-skinned fraud who has never risked anything for anyone and who serves no one but himself. And I will expose you!"



— 12 —

If you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. Okay? Just knock the hell—I promise you, I will pay for the legal fees.

For many years I've said that if someone screws you, screw them back. When somebody hurts you, just go after them as viciously and as violently as you can.

THE MILLER WAS understandably overjoyed when the Warden told her the news that she had discovered that the odd Troll-man was named TrumpelStiltskin. Now she could banish TrumpelStiltskin from the kingdom forever!

And none too soon, of course. For the day the Warden arrived with the news was the same day that the King stood on the castle balcony and announced to his subjects that three days later he would be giving up the throne. “And on that day,” the King told the people, “I will convene a meeting of all the subjects of the kingdom down in the town square, and there I shall name my successor.”

Most of the King's subjects stood shocked upon his announcement. Many voiced sadness. A few wept.

And some cheered.

But all, without exception, expressed intense curiosity over who the King planned to anoint as his successor.

TWO MORE DAYS passed. Trumpelstiltskin did not reappear. Thus the Miller could not confront him, guess his name to be TrampelStiltskin, and thereby banish him from the kingdom. But for the moment the Miller had little time to worry about that, for in those interim days there were non-stop meetings with the King and the Queen and their circle of advisors.

And there was much to do at the mill, as well. The day before the King's announcement, the Miller and the Millwright convened a meeting of the mill workers.

"The mill will be closed the tomorrow," the Miller said to the assembled workers. "It is a day to be with your families, and then in the afternoon to come to the town square to hear the King speak. And I want you to know this: no matter what happens when the King speaks, I will make sure that your jobs are safe and your families secure."

BY THE THIRD day, the day the King would name the Miller the new king, the Miller began to think—hope actually—that given his absence TrampelStiltskin had given up his preposterous plan.

The Miller and the Millwright made their way to the castle early so that they might later walk to the town square with the King and the Queen. Once at the castle, the Miller said that she wanted to be alone to practice her speech, the one she planned to give to her new subjects after the King anointed her as next king. The Miller opted for one of the castle chambers below, pacing back and forth in front of the golden straw as she practiced. For over an hour she paced and she practiced and she thought about how it was to be her honor and duty and responsibility to protect the citizens of the kingdom.

Suddenly, just as the Miller was considering if it might be time to join the others for the walk to the town square, the door of the chamber burst open and in hobbled the Troll-man.

“Today is MY day!” the Troll-man raved, glaring at the Miller. “It is a day all about me! This is a day I will never forget. Never ever. This is the day *I* become king! It will be huge, HUGE!”

“Is that right?” said the Miller coyly. “Aren’t you forgetting something?”

“What is that, you mealworm?”

“That if I guess your name you will be banished from the kingdom forever. Surely you remember?”

“Fat chance that will ever happen, you parasite,” said the Troll-man. “Go ahead, let’s get this over with, I have to go down to the town square to accept my kingdom. Oh this is going to be HUGE!”

“Hold on there a minute, let me guess. Is it Pocahontas?”

“No.”

Then with a half-smile, the Miller asked, “Is it Heartless Miller-y?”

“What? That’s a stupid name. No, you imbecile, that’s not it either. One more try and we are done here!”

“Fine, then, my last guess,” the Miller said slyly. “Could your name, perchance, be *TrumpelStiltskin*?!”

At this guess the color in the Troll-man’s face drained. And for as much as she could see them, the Miller could swear TrumpelStiltskin’s eyes glowed red. “How do you know that?” he screamed. “How could you possibly know that?! Some witch must have told you!”

“Be gone with you, TrumpelStiltskin!” yelled the Miller right back in his face. “Be gone with you and know that you shall never be allowed to set foot in this kingdom again!”

TrumpelStiltskin sneered, the most hateful face she had ever seen. Enraged, he kicked his foot into a pile of golden straw before him. But much to TrumpelStiltskin's chagrin the straw was so thin he kicked straight through it and right into the castle wall.

"Ouch," he screamed.

"So unfortunate," said the Miller, though her voice carried no sympathy, "but not very surprising. You see you may have forgotten that I am the Miller, and have been for a long time. For the first time today I inspected your golden straw. And lo and behold, I realized it is nothing of the sort. That's not gold. It is just worthless fool's gold, just ..."

"How dare you?" TrumpelStiltskin growled, cutting her off.

"...just like your golden tower," the Miller continued, "worthless!"

"How do you know that?" TrumpelStiltskin groaned, still rubbing his foot. "No one can get beyond my wall."

"You are like a spoiled child, TrumpelStiltskin," the Miller returned, now clearly enjoying herself. "My cousin the Warden has been looking into you, and I daresay we are discovering a lot. Like your castle of gold. It's all a façade. Sure, looks pretty on the outside, but that's it: just worthless fool's gold hiding a structure having *no substance!*"

TrumpelStiltskin glared at her, turning beet red. But for the first time the Miller could recall, TrumpelStiltskin said nothing. Instead he turned angrily away, and limped out the door.



I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, okay? It's, like, incredible.

BY THE TIME the King, Queen, Miller, and Millwright arrived at the town square, people from across the kingdom had assembled. They stood elbow-to-elbow, with some on top of shoulders straining for a look.

A large platform had been built across one end of the square. When the King and Queen took the stage a roar went up from the crowd. Mostly cheers sounded out, but some jeers filled the air, as well.

The King and Queen entered from stage left, but they were not alone. The Miller and the Millwright followed closely behind. The crowd continued to cheer, though more lightly, as more of the King's trusted advisors joined the King and Queen on the stage.

First came the Warden. Behind her was a man the people affectionately called "Uncle Bite'n" because of his big, ever-present smile. It was such an infectious smile that people said it always made it look like he was "bitin' in to something good."

"Haven't seen Uncle Bite'n for a while, have you?" one man near the front of the stage remarked to his friend.

"I heard the King sent him out to study the moon," said his friend.

The first man looked confused, but before he said anything his eyes locked on the man behind Uncle Bite'n. "Hold it, who's that guy walking with the cane, anyway?"

"Not a clue," said the second man.

"Shhhhh," hissed a woman behind them, "the King is about to speak."

Indeed the King had stepped to the center of the stage and was waving to silence the crowd silent. They did so slowly, only stopping when the King began to talk.

"Welcome my fellow subjects of the kingdom," the King said. "Today, as I told you three days back, is the day I announce my successor. The new king, as is our tradition, will take power immediately upon my placing the crown on that person's head."

The King paused to let his words sink in. "As you all know, this crown, *your* crown, is symbolic and only worn on momentous occasions of state. Well today, the changing of the guard, is clearly such a day. And I do not plan to delay this moment, for you already heard enough from me three days ago ... and for oh these many years."

Here the people laughed, causing the King to pause, a big smile crossing his face.

"I am so happy, my fellow citizens," the King went on when the laughter died down, "to tell you that today I am naming the Miller as your new King!"

More than a few shouts went up from the crowd before a chaos of clapping and hooting and hollering rang out.

"A woman?!"

"It's not possible ... is it?!"

"How can a woman be king?"

"Unheard of!"

"No, this can't possibly be happening!"

“Sacrilege!”

“A woman must stay in the home!”

“This is the end of the kingdom!”

“Amazing!”

“I am so happy!”

“The best day ever!”

“I love the Miller!”

“Hail the new King!”

“Hold it, will the Millwright be Queen?!”

And then the man with the cane, the one hardly anyone knew, stood up next to the Miller and yelled, “Three cheers for the new King!”

And many in the crowd—but hardly all—joined in, “Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, Hip, Hooray!” The King waved the Miller forward as those cheering for her continued to cheer. But they shared a glance that showed the pockets of silence felt a bit awkward to them both.

Soon the King waved to quiet the crowd once again, and then continued. “This is proud moment for me, a proud moment for you our citizens, a proud moment for the kingdom.”

Then the King reached up and pulled the crown off his head. “For now, my fellow citizens, I take off the crown of the kingdom, your crown, your kingdom, to give it to...”

Suddenly an electric shock raced through the crowd. People gasped and all eyes pivoted away from the King. For there, coming up the stairs from the right side of the stage, was none other than TrumpelStiltskin!

More chaos!

“What the...”

“Who the...”

“It’s that stranger from the golden tower!”

“Booo!”

“Yeaaa!”

The sergeant-at-arms jumped up from behind the King to race across the stage, but the King put out an arm to stop him. “It’s OK, Sam, let’s just hold on a second.”

TrumpelStiltskin waved the crowd down, then shouted at the King, “Do *not* put that crown on the Miller’s head!”

Some cheered, some booed, most just looked confused.

The Miller stepped forward and yelled out at TrumpelStiltskin, “You are supposed to be banished from the kingdom. You gave your word!”

“My word? Ha! You are a simpleton, a disgrace unworthy of being the king!” TrumpelStiltskin turned to the crowd, “Isn’t she a disaster?!”

And some, just a few, shouted out, “Yes!”

“And no one, I am telling you NO ONE, knows better than this woman that if you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth. Believe me, she practically made up the saying! Do you hear me?!”

Now more cheered than before, “Yes!”

“And is the Miller fit to be king?!”

And while many remained silent, again the sound of the response grew, “No!”

“And do you know, folks, that she did *not* make the golden straw that saved the kingdom. I made that straw, not her!”

Shouts of disbelief rang out.

“Now tell me, again,” screamed TrumpelStiltskin, so forcefully his hair blew back from his eyes for just a moment, “is she fit to be king?!”

This time many, many more screamed out, “No! NO!”

“That’s right. Only I—I who spun straw into gold—only I can make the kingdom great again! And isn’t it I who should be your King?!”

A chorus of “Yes” went up from the crowd, yet all could hear it was a group off to the right side of the stage that yelled the loudest. The men there wore top hats and the women fancy dresses and the louder they yelled the more people in the crowd in front of the stage also yelled, “Yes! Yes! YES!”

A few others stood on the right side with TrumpelStiltskin. There was a fat man who they called Krispy, and another they called Turtle because of his striking resemblance to ... well to a turtle. There was also a man with large eyebrows, but he stood with one foot on the stage, one foot on the stairway.

And then someone yelled “TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin!” and the chant grew to a minor roar.

“But wait!” cried out the Miller, hoping to wrest control of the crowd back from TrumpelStiltskin. “This man,” here she pointed at TrumpelStiltskin in disgust, “this man did NOT make straw from gold! He is lying to you. It was all a mirage, it was all worthless fool’s gold!”

More shouts and confusion reigned. The Miller turned to the Warden who handed her a pile of the golden straw in a bucket. “Look here,” the Miller cried out, holding bucket of golden straw aloft. “Is this really gold? In all my years as the Miller I have never seen gold burn, have you?!”

The Miller lit the pile of straw on fire and it burst into a big flame!

The crowd gasped as one.

“It is all a façade, my friends,” the Miller shouted. “TrumpelStiltskin is a fraud!”

And then some began to point at TrumpelStiltskin and boo. The boos got louder and louder until someone threw a tomato at TrumpelStiltskin, but at the last moment a man beside him stepped forward to block the blow. It was a man the people called Nopence, because he once ruled a borough of the village and paid his workers so little those workers were said to have “no pence”.

Now some in the crowd began to chant, “Miller! Miller! Miller!”

“And let me tell you something else,” the Miller snorted, quieting them as she was clearly winning back the moment. “You think TrumpelStiltskin is some magician who lives in a tower made of gold? Well he is not! That tower, like everything about him, is fake! It too is made of worthless fool’s gold! Fool’s gold, I tell you! And so while it may be true that I did not turn the straw into gold, I *am* the Miller and it is only I who understands gold and who can save the kingdom!”

More boos, then, and louder chants of “Miller! Miller! Miller!” But then in the next moment a counter chant began: “TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin!”

Chaos reigned for several minutes during which the Miller and TrumpelStiltskin glared at each other across the stage.

The King, who had been watching and scratching his chin and whispering with the Queen through all the lunacy, stepped forward. The crowd began to quiet, but when he put the crown back on his head, everything went still.

“This is not who we are as a kingdom,” the King said. “We are better than this.”

The King looked back to the Queen, who nodded solemnly. Then the King returned his gaze to his citizens, and continued. “For the moment, at least, I retain your crown, meaning I retain supreme power over the land. And I have

decided I will now do something that has long been pondered by past kings, something that has been a long time in coming for our beloved kingdom.”

Suddenly the town square became so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Everyone leaned forward to hear what the King would say.

The King looked solemnly around, from left to right to center, took a deep breath, and proceeded. “Today, and from this day forth, the people of the kingdom will elect their king!”

Shouts rang out. People hugged. A woman fainted.

“Today we will vote, all of us in the kingdom, on who will be the next king. Will it be the Miller...”

Cheers and boos rang out at once.

“...or will it be TrumpelStiltskin?”

More cheers, more boos.

“And this is how we will do it. I will begin to count to one hundred, and those who favor the Miller will move to my left, those who favor TrumpelStiltskin will move to my right. And when I get to one hundred, I will stop.”

Confused murmurings sounded from the crowd, but everyone quieted when the King continued.

“After I get to one hundred, Bite’n will count those who stand on the left with the Miller, and Turtle will count those who stand on the right with TrumpelStiltskin. And then Bite’n and Turtle will report to me. And then they will each count the other side. And again, once they finish, they will report to me.”

“And then, dear citizens, I shall compare the counts to verify them, and we shall have our new king, whom I will announce to you.”

And before anyone could protest, before anyone could even call out a question, the King began, “One, two, three, four ...”

And the people of the kingdom looked among themselves, and some moved immediately to their left or right, and some waited for a time listening as the people on the stage yelled at them, and then they too moved. And some waited until the King reached eighty, and then ninety, and then ninety-five before they finally moved.

And some did not move at all, but instead simply chose not to participate.



I do whine because I want to win, and I'm not happy about not winning, and I am a whiner, and I keep whining and whining until I win.

“... NINETY-EIGHT, NINETY-NINE, one hundred.” The King stopped his counting. By then, those who wanted to pick a side had picked. Those who did not choose stood motionless in front of the stage. Some of them had disgusted looks on their faces. But most of them simply appeared disinterested, even bored, apparently unaware of the power they held.

A big crowd surrounded the Miller.

A big crowd surrounded TrumpelStiltskin.

The King called Bite'n and Turtle over to him, and the three of them huddled as the King instructed them on what to do. Then the King sent them off, Bite'n to count the Miller's side, Turtle to count TrumpelStiltskin's side.

The counting took some time, but the crowd was so fascinated by what was happening they waited patiently. Eventually Bite'n and Turtle reported their first vote counts to the King, who wrote down each number on a notepad, careful not to let the other man see. And then the King dispatched them both again, this time to count the votes for the other side.



The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.

She's not giving me 100 percent. She's giving me 84 percent, and 16 percent is going towards taking care of children.

He's not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured.

Who knows what's in the deepest part of my mind?

BITE'N AND TURTLE returned with the second count and handed it to the King. The King wrote down the second set of numbers, then stepped off to stand with the Queen and review the notepad.

The people waited anxiously, barely a peep coming out of them. The Miller stood off to the left of the stage. Trumpelstiltskin stood off to the right. Both tried to appear confident. Both fidgeted.

The counts differed slightly, which did not surprise the King. But the counts told the same story. The King whispered something to the Queen and she nodded in agreement. Then the King folded the notepad with an air of finality, and stepped back into the center of the stage.

“We have a winner,” the King said. And with that the King pulled the crown off his head. Then, instead of announcing the vote count, the King spun to his side, walked

directly over to the winner, and put the crown on the new King's head.

Some people cried out in delight, others in anguish. The new King rejoiced! And on the other side of the stage, the loser stomped their foot into the platform, which broke open, swallowing up the candidate who was never to be seen again.

AND FROM THAT day forward, dear friends, it is said that the kingdom and its people were never the same again.

* The End *



— Acknowledgements —

There is something crazy, hot, a phenomenon out there about me, but I'm not sure I can define it and I'm not sure I want to.

Show me someone without an ego, and I'll show you a loser.

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Now please, friends, let's get out there and vote.