



A READERS' PLAY
BASED ON THE SHORT STORY

TRUMPELSTILTSKIN

A FAIRY TALE

BY
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* MountainWorks Press *

Bozeman MT

Books by Scott Bischke

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TRUMPELSTILTSKIN

A Fairy Tale

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Be sure to join the conversations on Facebook, GoodReads, Google+,
or Twitter—just search on “Scott Bischke” or “Trumpelstiltskin”!

Characters—costumes

- _____ = *King—crown (King)*
- _____ = *Queen—crown (tierra?)*
- _____ = *Miller—Hillary hair, pantsuit?*
- _____ = *Millwright—Bill Clinton white hair, sport jacket?*
- _____ = *Trumpelstiltskin—Trump toupee and “Make America Great Again” hat*
- _____ = *Warden—Elizabeth Warren-worthy glasses, open sport coat?*
- _____ = *Sander—Bernie-esque white hair and glasses*
- _____ = *“Politician” (13 readings could be done by 1,2, or many more audience members)*
- _____ = *Narrator*

Stage set up—props

- *Stage right—Castle balcony—fake stone wall (cardboard?) in front of stage*
- *Stage left—Castle straw chamber—spinning wheel; chair; 3 small straw bales sitting atop 3 buckets and hiding gold-sprayed straw in each of the buckets*
- *Middle of stage—Castle grounds and forest; perhaps a fake tree in a pot*

———— Scene 1 ————

Location: castle balcony looking out over the village (stage right)

Characters—Narrator, King, Queen, Miller, Millwright; Max people on stage at once—5

Narrator: Welcome to **TS: A Fairy Tale**. To stage right is the castle balcony; to stage left a straw-filled stable chamber in a lower level of the castle. And in stage center a tree that signifies the castle grounds and the forest. If anyone or several of you would like to film the play, we would love to have you do so and contact us later. Thanks. < pause > This short readers' play is dedicated to all those who seek to live in better places than towers. Its cast features local politicians, local dignitaries, local actors, and local hams ... some of whom may fit into more than one of those categories.

Politician #1 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): Oftentimes 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?" ... [My life is unbelievable, I mean] I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, okay? It's, like, incredible. ...

Narrator (standing to the side): In a land far, far away—yet not so distant as one might think—lived a wise and kindly King and Queen. At that moment they stood on the castle balcony, high on a hill, surveying the kingdom's core village. A flag flew above each of the castle's 3 towers. One flag was blue, another white, the third red. Below they saw row after row of tidy, though sparsely appointed, homes. Most looked alike. The only variety that set them apart were the colors of the doors: some red, some blue, some purple.

King (happy): Look, my dear. It is all so good. The people are happy, moving to and fro about their daily lives. Look—there goes the milk delivery wagon, and the new church construction is moving along, and over there, do you see the father pushing the baby carriage?

Queen (happy): I see them all. And listen my dear, can you hear the children playing in the village square? Isn't a wonderful sound? Yes, you have done well, my love.

King (happy): *We* have done well. And look over there, just across the river, at the mill. So many men and women of all different colors, shapes, and sizes all working and happy as they produce the kingdom's gold.

Queen (happy): They are happy, aren't they, thanks in no small part to the Miller and his wife. Look! And there they are now, coming up the hill. Aren't they coming to the castle shortly to see you?

King (happy at first; concern growing in his voice as he looks up, away from the approaching Miller): Yes, they will be here soon enough. ... hmm ... But you know, I *don't* like what I see beyond the mill, those monstrous mansions on the hill.

Queen: That has long upset you, I know.

King: Why does anyone need a house that big? And why would anyone want to live in a house that needs a guard dog?

Queen: I don't know; it is beyond me.

King (pointing): But mostly I wonder who on Earth lives in that largest of mansions on the largest of the hills, the one with the wall around it, that golden tower over there?

Queen: I don't know, dear, I only know that every time you've sent the tax collectors, they've been told there's no money to be had in the golden tower.

Politician #2 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): It's very possible that I could be the first presidential candidate to run and make money on it ... [You see] 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.

Narrator (standing to the side): The question of who lived in the golden tower 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 older and increasingly gray. 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 he knew that more and more these

days, he was thinking of the Miller's wife, who had taken over the mill for as long as anyone could recall, as the person he would anoint the next king.

Miller ('s wife; entering stage left): Hello, may we enter dearest King and Queen?

Queen: Yes, of course, please join us.

Mill (wright): We have come with news.

King: What is it?

Mill (wright): Dear friend, I have grown old and tired and...

King (interrupting; a bit exasperated): I know that feeling.

Mill (wright): ... and for years now, as you also know, 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.

King (wryly): Yes, I have indeed noticed.

Queen (double wryly): Yes, so have I.

Miller ('s wife; under her breath): And I.

Mill (wright; unaware): So we have decided that as of today I will step aside and my wife will become the new miller. 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'!

< *All laugh* >

King (turning to the new Miller): So be it. From this day forward, throughout the entire kingdom, you dear friend shall be known as *the Miller*.

Miller: Thank you my King, it is an honor.

King: And I don't need to tell you how critical your role is. The kingdom's gold supply is dwindling and threatening the kingdom's very existence. We must discover some way to increase our supplies.

Miller: As you know, my King, the Miller ... I mean Millwright ... and I have been working on many ideas to turn straw into gold. I daresay that...

Millwright (brashly interrupting): ... that we have succeeded!

Miller (surprised): Wha...

Millwright: Yes indeed, we have done it!

Queen (skeptically): Wait, by "done it", *is* that the same as saying you can make straw into gold?

Millwright (strongly, then more quietly): Yes...well I suppose that depends upon what the meaning of the word 'is' is ... Oh never mind. Yes! The Miller and I have figured out how to spin straw into gold!

Miller (aghast; gesturing to the King): May I have a moment, my King?

< Miller pulls Millwright off to the side >

Miller (whispering urgently): What are you talking about?! Yes, we have been trying to develop a process to spin straw into gold. And yes we are getting close. But you know as well as I that we've not yet succeeded!

Millwright (whispering): Look, you heard the King—he's tired. If you succeed here and he steps down, who do you think he will name the next king?? We've always wanted this opportunity for you, now we have it. So let's see what you can do with it!

< Switch to King and Queen, also off to the side, also whispering >

King: This surely is an odd business. What do you think?

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

King: We are running out of options for funding the kingdom. Plus working with gold *is* the work they do. Why shouldn't it be true? Have the Miller and the Millwright ever let us down?

Queen (rolls her eyes): Seriously?

King: OK, OK, point taken.

Queen (tone softening): 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 say let her try.

King (nods): Ok.

< They all step back together >

King: My dear Miller. You and the Millwright have served the kingdom for a lifetime milling our much needed gold. If your new discovery can be proven out then surely you know what this means?! With your help, we will win the future for the kingdom! Oh you must demonstrate this miracle! Can you do that?

Miller (with a pensive nod [Millwright beaming, shaking head yes!]): Uh-huh.

King: To be clear, you are saying 'Yes, we can', correct?

Miller (warming to the task): Yes, we can!

———— Scene 2 —————

Location: stable chamber in the basement of the castle (stage left)

Characters—Narrator, King, Miller, TrumpelStiltskin; Max people on stage at once—3

Politician #3 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): 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.

Narrator (standing to the side): The King and the Miller have descended to a chamber in the lower level of the castle.

King: Here, dear Miller, is some straw for you to work on. And as you said your new process involves *spinning* the straw into gold, I had a spinning wheel delivered.

Miller (pensively): Thank you, my King.

King: So let there be no misunderstanding, this 1st pile of straw must be spun into gold before morning if I am to believe in your new process.

Miller: I understand.

< King turns and walks out of the imaginary door, closing it behind him and turning the key in the lock >

Miller (alone; at first downcast and crying, then turning resolute and heading for the spinning wheel): Dear husband, *what* have you gotten us into this time? I must think. We have tried so many ways to spin straw into gold but they have all failed. I must test those ideas we have *not yet tried* and find one that works. 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!

TS (TS; bursts thru the door; always condescending; nice-ish now but increasingly nasty as story proceeds): Good day to you, my fair lass. And why pray tell, are you crying?

Miller (wipes tears away; ignoring his question): Where did you come from? Were you listening outside the door? And who are you, anyway? Why have I never seen you before?

TS (bragging and brash): Never you mind where I came from. And as to who I am—I am an alchemist. I know everything. I am everything. Believe me! Everyone loves me. I can make beauty from ugliness. I can cure any disease. And *I* can spin straw into gold!

Miller (lips tighten as her focus returns to almost forgotten straw):

TS (gestures to the straw): 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.

Miller (downcast): I don't know how, but I will figure it out.

TS (sensing advantage, leering): What will you give me to do it for you?

Miller (under her breath): You are an evil man.

Miller (thinking, then after a pause, decision made): OK, if you will turn this straw to gold, I will give you my necklace. Deal?

< TS hobbles over to Miller, snaps imaginary necklace from her neck; Miller recoils in disgust, rubbing her neck; TS bites into the necklace, then smiles as he holds up to judge its shiny glint >

TS: This is *real* gold, isn't it?

Miller (with disdain): Of course it is, solid gold at that. I am the Miller of the kingdom, for goodness sakes, what would you expect? It's not like I can't make myself another one.

TS (with sneer, pressing advantage, ending with evil laugh): Yes, my little lambkin, I suppose you could. 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?

Miller (says nothing, just looks at TS with disgust and gestures to the spinning wheel):

TS (sits at spinning wheel and starts to work, singing): *'Round about, round about, Lo and behold! Reel away, reel away, Straw into gold!*

< Narrator steps out to the side to draw attention to her/himself. When the Narrator describes it, TS leaves, taking away one of the straw bales and leaving bucket with golden straw. >

Narrator (standing to the side): The Miller thinks the odd-looking man looks like a Troll, and as she watches this Troll-man spins the first pile of straw into gold. Try and try as she might, the Miller cannot discover the secret of how he is accomplishing this

magic thing, something so crucial to the kingdom's survival. When the Troll-man finishes his task she asks again who he is, but he simply sneers at her and departs.

———— **Scene 3** ————

Location: stable chamber in the basement of the castle (stage left)

Characters—Narrator, King, Miller, TrumpelStiltskin; Max people on stage at once—3

Politician #4 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): 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? ... [And another thing ...] A person who is very flat chested is very hard to be a 10. ... < long pause > ... Women—you have to treat them like shit.

Narrator (standing to the side): It is now the next morning when the King arrives at the downstairs castle chamber.

King (excited): Look at this golden straw! This is wonderful, my dear Miller friend!

Miller (sleepish and sheepish): Oh it was nothing, really.

King: Nothing?! The kingdom's finances are reeling—your discovery may have saved us all!

Miller: I am glad to be of service, my King.

King: But we must do more. 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!

King (steps before the Miller, expectant & excited): 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!

Miller (drops her eyes, considering, then looks up): I am the Miller, and this is part of the secrets of my trade. So I cannot share the secret of how this miracle occurred—with you or with anyone.

King (now frowning): You have no idea what is at stake here, do you? I am about end my reign...

Miller (eyes getting big): Now?

King: Soon. And it is my solemn duty to anoint the person who will succeed me.

Miller (expectant): Yes, yes.

King (solemnly): It is you, dear Miller, who I would like to anoint as the next king.

< Miller gasps, almost hyperventilating >

King (serious): 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?

Miller (mind scrambling): I must keep some secrets to myself, my King. 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!

King (scratches head in thought, then finally ...): Very well. We have two more piles 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. You *must* turn this straw into gold by the time I return tomorrow. We can discuss the rest then.

< King departs, leaving Miller alone pondering the straw, a single tear on her cheek. Quickly door reopens, in bursts TS. >

TS (incredulous, hideous laugh): You? You little lady, you who are crying and weak—what a disgrace!—YOU are to be King?!

Miller (wiping single tear, angry, coming face-to-face): How do you know that I am to be king?

TS (mocking, snarling): I know everything; I AM everything. 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!

Miller (yelling): Not you, ME!

TS (mocking): Oh really. Is that so? You who are a disaster, an absolute disaster! How, my pumpkin, do you propose to spin this straw into gold? I believe that was the King's requirement, was it not?

Miller (angry look, pursed lips, tersely): It was...

TS (disdainfully, & as if in charge): Let me tell you how, then, little one. I will spin the straw into gold for you once again. But only for a price. You and I, little squashed raspberry, will make a deal.

Miller (a bit of desperation): What do you want?

TS: You know what I want. I WANT TO BE KING!, just like you. But unlike you, I don't care what people think of me. The people are idiots!

Miller (with abhorrence): How can you say that?

TS (on a roll): Idiots, all of them! 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*!

Miller (full force): I will NEVER let that happen!

TS (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!

Miller (groans, eyes defiant, yet beaten): No! You wouldn't.

TS (triumphant, voice softening just a bit): Ah, don't be so mad my little burnt walnut. 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.

Miller (glimmer of hope in her eyes): What?

TS (voice turning hard again): If you can guess my name, I will leave you and never return. But if you do not, 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!

Miller (off to the side): I will solve this problem. I can turn straw into gold and save the kingdom. I am so close to discovering how. And the Troll-man can never, ever, be King!

TS (insistent, growling): DO we have a deal?

Miller (resigned): Alright, then, we have a deal.

TS (sits at spinning wheel and starts to work, singing): *'Round about, round about, Lo and behold! Reel away, reel away, Straw into gold!'*

Politician #5 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): It's been said that I believe in the power of positive thinking. In fact, I believe in the power of negative thinking.

Narrator (standing to the side): And while the Troll-man spins the straw, the Miller sits and watches and thinks. How could she discover the Troll-man's name and thus put an end to this madness for the kingdom? ... Then, much later, after the pile of straw had been turned to gold

TS (sneering, stands up, speaks, then departs in a huff): Your gold is made and now you owe me. Mark my word, you wretched pup, one more straw bale and then I will collect what is rightfully mine!

Miller (as TS departs, smiles at his back, then a gentle laugh, then as an aside): All I need to do is find out the Troll-man's name to banish him from the kingdom. And now I know how I will do it!

———— Scene 4 ————

Location: stable chamber in the basement of the castle (stage left)

Characters—Narrator, King, Miller, Warden; Max people on stage at once—3

< While Politician speaks, Narrator removes 2nd straw bale to reveal second pail of golden hay >

Politician #6 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): 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.

Narrator (standing to the side): In the morning the King arrives at the chamber. . . .

King (joyous): Wonderful, you've done it again dear Miller! You are proving true to your word. Now only the third bale of straw awaits. 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!

Miller (nods to acknowledge): It is my pleasure to serve, my King.

King (turning serious, but happy): And assuming you are successful with the third bale of hay, I *will* name you the next king.

Miller (happy, thoughtful): Wonderful, my King. But first, before tackling the third straw bale, I have some things that I must do. Can we meet here tonight?

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

< Both depart. Next action at stage center, near fake plants. >

Narrator (standing to the side): The Miller departs to visit the mill and assure herself that both the workers and her husband, the Millwright, are OK. Then she heads back up to castle to find the one person she knows will help her expose the Troll-man, her cousin *the Warden*. The Warden tends the castle's dungeons—her job is to root out the evil people of the kingdom, bring the truth of their crimes to light. The Warden is 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. At this moment, the Miller and the Warden are walking through the castle courtyard and the Miller has already told the Warden about her meetings with the Troll-man, how he had somehow spun straw into gold, how the King wanted to name her the future king, and how the Troll-man was blackmailing her

Warden (angry, indignant): He's doing what?! That scoundrel! With every ounce of my soul I will search him out and expose him for the wretched soul he is!

Miller (firmly, but with hope): Yes, yes, and if we can just learn his name, we can banish him from the kingdom—he promised.

Warden (seething): Then I will leave immediately to crisscross the kingdom in search of that wretched man. I will find out where he lives, and expose the evil-doer for who he is. And I will find out the Troll-man's name so that we can, indeed, banish him from the kingdom *forever!*

Miller (sincerely): I do so appreciate your help, dear cousin.

Warden (with a wry but angry smile): And I know one place more than any other I want to look.

Miller (curious): You do? Where?

Warden (as if doing something she was born to): In the giant mansions on the other side of the river, of course.

———— Scene 5 ————

Location: First castle balcony (stage right), then stable chamber (stage left)

Characters—Narrator, King, Queen, Miller, TrumpelStiltskin; Max people on stage at once—3

Politician #7 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): 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.

Narrator (standing to the side): Meanwhile, on the balcony of the castle, the King and Queen are talking....

Queen (lovingly, though insistently): It is time. Tomorrow you must announce that you are stepping down.

King (fighting the idea): Soon, yes, I agree. But *tomorrow*?

Queen: Yes, tomorrow. There is no more time for delay. If the Miller is successful spinning gold into straw 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?

King: Yes, I do agree.

Queen (wrapping arms around King): Then *it is time*. 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.

King (holding her tight and whispering into her hair): Yes, tomorrow I will declare to the people that I will resign in 3 days. And that on that third day, I will announce my successor.

< King and Queen depart; TS and Miller enter stage left as Politician and Narrator speak >

Politician #8 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): Sometimes, part of making a deal is denigrating your competition.

Narrator (standing to the side): Later that night, the Miller meets the King back at the castle's lower chamber. The King reminds the Miller that if she can turn the third straw bale into gold he will anoint her the next king 3 days later. The King departs and, as if on cue, the evil Troll-man enters the chamber

TS (gleeful): Only 3 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!

Miller (to the side): So you think, you evil man, but even as we speak the Warden is finding out who you are!

Miller (turns to TS and gestures to the spinning wheel): Well, then, get started.

TS (glowering, grunts, then sits at the spinning wheel, begins to work and sing): Hrumph! *'Round about, round about, Lo and behold! Reel away, reel away, Straw into gold!'*

Narrator (standing to the side): And while the Troll-man spins the straw, the Miller sits and thinks. She has come up with more names, and wants to try them on him. How simple this whole thing would be, the Miller thinks, if I could just discover the Troll-man's name. Then he would have to keep his word and leave the kingdom forever. ... And so later, when the Troll-man finishes his spinning ...

TS (standing and growling): And now you and I are done. I will see you in 3 days 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 laugh you out of the kingdom!*

Miller (sternly, as TS makes to leave): But wait! You said that if I guess your name you will leave the kingdom forever.

TS (condescending): Yes, it is so little I risk with a dimwit like you. 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.

Miller: Is it Low Energy Jeb?

TS: No.

Miller: OK, how about Little Marco?

TS (indignant): No! And I can assure you there is nothing little about me. Everything is fine in that department!

Miller (hopefully): How about Lyin' Ted?

TS (angry): 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!*

< Troll-man hobbles indignantly out of the chamber. >

———— **Scene 6** ————

Location: across the river in the forest and on the grounds of the golder tower (fake plant at stage center)

Characters—Narrator, Warden, Sander, TS; Max people on stage at once—3

< While Politician speaks, Narrator removes 3rd straw bale to reveal 3rd pail of golden hay >

Politician #9 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): 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.

Narrator (standing to the side): On that same night, the Warden is out across the river searching the kingdom. She stops everyone she meets to ask if they knew of the Troll-man, where he lives, and especially if they know the Troll-man's name. The Warden comes upon an old man along the trail, a man who was of the village but works in the forests on this side of the river searching for wood to accomplish his work in the castle woodshop. The man, the Warden learns, is called Sander. He is known far and wide as one who fashions 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 asks if Sander knows anything about the big mansions across the river from the village....

Sander: Not much. Except I have many times seen streams of people from the big mansions make their way to the golden tower.

Warden: I knew it!

Sander (holding up his hand): But let me just say this. They not only come from the big mansions. I often see 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.

Warden: A tea party? Hmmm...that's strange. And something else, Sander, have you ever seen the Troll-man? He looks a bit like a Highland cow, with a mop of orange hair covering his eyes.

Sander (head cocked as if disbelieving): Really? No, I'm sorry, I don't know about the Troll-man. But if it was me, I know what I would do. I would look in the golden tower—I bet that's where the Troll-man lives.

< Sanders and Warden depart while Narrator takes up the story >

Narrator (standing to the side): And so the Warden abandons her search of the kingdom and heads instead toward the distant golden tower. Though it is well past midnight when she arrives there, the Warden does not give in to the urge to curl up and sleep. Instead she surveys the massive wall that surrounds the golden tower.

< Warden steps onto stage >

Warden (incredulous, as if looking up at the wall): What purpose could this *stupid* wall possibly serve? How can this wall really stop anyone who wants to enter?

< Warden steps off to edge of stage >

Narrator (standing to the side): And as if to prove her point, the Warden walks to a nearby tree whose upper limbs have grown over the wall. She shimmies up the tree, crawls out on a limb, then drops into the grounds of the golden tower. The Warden spends no time in self-congratulations. Instead she marches directly to the door of the golden tower. The door is roughhewn and massive, and like everything else apparently made of solid gold. The Warden grabs the big door knocker and pounds it into the door — boom, Boom, BOOM! The Warden waits, but no one comes to respond. As the Warden pauses to consider what to do next she makes a most startling discovery. For under the light of the full moon the Warden sees a most enlightening site: the

gold on the door under the knocker has started to flake off! The golden tower is a fake! ... The Warden steps into the shadows to wait and it is not long before the Troll-man appears, fumbling for the keys to the golden tower door and dancing an awkward jig and singing ...

< *TS steps onto stage, opposite side from Warden* >

TS (gleefully singing): *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! And TrumpelStiltskin shall be king!*

Warden (in the shadows, as an aside): This must be the Troll-man! And now I know his name—*TrumpelStiltskin*. I will tell the Miller and then we can banish him from the kingdom forever! Oh I don't know who you are, *TrumpelStiltskin*, but I do 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!

———— Scene 7 ————

Location: stable chamber (stage left)

Characters—Narrator, Miller, TrumpelStiltskin; Max people on stage at once—3

Politician #10 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): 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?

Narrator (standing to the side): It was three days later, the day the King told his subjects he would announce his successor. Most of the King's subjects had been shocked by 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. Now the morning of the crowning, having not seen him for days, the Miller began to think—hope actually—that *TrumpelStiltskin* had given up his

preposterous plan. ... The Miller and the Millwright make their way to the castle for the succession ceremonies, to be held on the castle balcony. Once there, the Miller says she wants to be alone to practice her acceptance speech, and opts for the stable chamber below, pacing back and forth in front of the golden straw as she practices ...

< *Miller pacing back and forth, acting as if practicing her speech* >

TS (bursting in the door): Today is MY day! 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!

Miller (cooly): Is that right? Aren't you forgetting something?

TS (mean spirited): What is that, you mealworm?

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

Troll-man: Fat chance that will ever happen, you parasite. 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! It's going to be...

Miller: Hold on there a minute, let me guess. Is it Pocahontas?

Troll-man: No.

Miller (with a smile): Is it Heartless Miller-y?

TS (growing exasperated): What? That's a stupid name. No, you imbecile, that's not it either. One more try and we are done here!

Miller (pouncing): Fine, then, my last guess. Could your name, perchance, be *TrumpelStiltskin*?!

TS (screaming, color draining from his face, eyes glowing red): How do you know that? How could you possibly know that!

Miller: Be gone with you, TrumpelStiltskin! Be gone with you and know that you shall never be allowed to set foot in this kingdom again!

Troll-man: Some witch must have told you!

Miller: Hardly. And there's something else. 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 ..."

TS: How dare you!

Miller: ...just like your golden tower, worthless!

TS: How would you know that? No one can get beyond my wall.

Miller: You are like a spoiled child, TrumpelStiltskin. 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!*

TS (glaring, then turns away in a huff, limps two steps, and turns back): Mark my words, I will sue the hell out of you!

< *TS limps away in huff* >

————— Scene 8 —————

Location: castle balcony (stage right but flex to use all stage as needed)

Characters—Narrator, King, Queen, Miller, TrumpelStiltskin; Max people on stage at once—5

Politician #11 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): I know politicians who love women who don't even want to be known for that, because they might lose the gay vote, OK? ... 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.

Narrator (standing to the side): People from across the kingdom have assembled in the courtyard below the castle balcony, standing shoulder-to-shoulder. When the King and Queen take center stage a roar rings out from the crowd, though some jeers fill the air, as well. The King and Queen are followed by the Miller and the Millwright. Standing behind are the Warden and a man

everyone seems to call Uncle Bitin, because of his big, infectious smile. When the King stepped to the center of the balcony the crowd begins to quiet

King (happily, waving to silence the crowd): Welcome my fellow subjects of the kingdom. Today, as I told you 3 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. 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 3 days ago . . . and for oh these many years.

King (a big smile, chuckling with the crowd): I am so happy, my fellow citizens to tell you that today I am naming the Miller as your new King!

Narrator (standing to the side): More than a few gasps go up from the crowd before a chaos of clapping and hollering envelops the crowd. “A woman?!” “That’s not possible . . . is it?!” “Sacrilege—a woman must stay in the home!” . . . “Amazing!” “Best day ever!” “I love the Miller!” “Hold it, will the Millwright be Queen?!” And then a man with a cane, a man hardly anyone knows, stands up next to the Miller and yells, “Three cheers for the new King!” And many in the crowd—*but hardly all*—join in, “Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, Hip, Hooray!”

King (with apparent joy, waving to quiet the crowd, eventually taking off his crown): Thank you, thank you. Quiet now. This is proud moment for me, a proud moment for you our citizens, a proud moment for the kingdom. For now, my fellow citizens, I take off the crown of the kingdom, your crown, your kingdom, to give it to

TS (bursts in stage right, shouting at the King): Do *not* put that crown on the Miller’s head!

Narrator (standing to the side): An electric shock races through the crowd. People gasp. “What the . . .” “Who the . . .” “It’s that stranger from the golden tower!” “Booo!” “Yeaaa!”

Miller (stepping forward, angry): You, TrumpeStiltskin, are supposed to be banished from the kingdom. You gave your word!

TS (first to Miller, then to crowd): My word? Ha! You are a simpleton, a disgrace unworthy of being the king! Isn't she a disaster?!

Narrator (standing to the side): And some, just a few, shout out, "Yes!"

TS: 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?!

Narrator (standing to the side): Now more cheered than before, "Yes!"

TS: And is the Miller fit to be king?!

Narrator (standing to the side): And while many remained silent, again the sound of the response grew, "No!"

TS: And do you know, folks, that she did not make the golden straw that saved the kingdom. I made that straw, not her!"

Narrator (standing to the side): Shouts of disbelief ring out.

TS (forcefully!): Now tell me, again, is she fit to be king?!"

Narrator (standing to the side): This time many, many more scream out, "No! NO!"

TS: 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?!

Narrator (standing to the side): A chorus of "Yes" goes up from the crowd, yet all can hear it is a group off to the right side that yell the loudest. The men there wear top hats; the women fancy dresses and the louder they yell the more people in the crowd also yell, "TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin!" And the chant grows and TrumpelStiltskin glows. A few others stand with him. There is a fat man who they call Krispy, and another they call Turtle because of his striking resemblance to ... well to a turtle. There's also a man with large eyebrows, but he stands with one foot on the stage, one foot on the stairway. And there is a man the people call "Nopence", because he once ruled a borough of the village and paid his workers so little those workers were said to have "no pence".

Miller (screaming, pointing at TrumpelStiltskin): But wait! This man, this man did NOT make straw from gold! TrumpelStiltskin is lying to you. It was all a mirage, it was all worthless fool's gold!

Miller (becoming crazed, turns to the Queen who hands her a bucket filled with golden straw): Look here, is this really gold? In all my years as the Miller I have never seen gold burn, have you?!

< Miller pulls out lighter and flicks it on as Narrator jumps in >

Narrator: No, no *<actress real life name>*—just pretend! A *PRETEND* fire! The fire marshall, remember?!

Miller: Oh yea ... sorry...”

Narrator: People, please just imagine a fire. You OK? Let’s continue...

Miller (catching breath to get back on track, now shouting): Look at those flames my friends—gold doesn’t burn. It’s all a façade! TrumpelStiltskin is a fraud!

Narrator (standing back to the side): The crowd gasps. And then some begin to point at TrumpelStiltskin and boo. The boos grow. And now some in the crowd begin to chant, “Miller! Miller! Miller!”

Miller (snorting): And let me tell you something else. 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 only I who can save the kingdom!

Narrator (standing back to the side): Louder chants of “Miller! Miller! Miller!” ring out but then in the next moment a counter chant begins: “TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin! TrumpelStiltskin!” Chaos reigns for several minutes until ...

King (puts crown back on head, waves the crowd down, and then solemnly): This is not who we are as a kingdom. We are better than this.

King (looks back at the Queen, who nods): 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.

King (taking deep breath, looks left and right): Today, and from this day forth, the people of the kingdom will elect their king!

Narrator (standing back to the side): Shouts ring out. People hug. A woman faints, as does the man next to her.

King: Today we will vote, all of us in the kingdom, on who will be the next king. Will it be the Miller ... or will it be TrumpelStiltskin?

Narrator (standing back to the side): More chaos! More cheers, more boos coming from all directions.

King (waving the crowd to quiet): 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, 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, 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. We begin now! One, two, three, four ...

Narrator (standing back to the side): And the people of the kingdom look among themselves, and some move immediately to their left or right, and some wait for a time listening as the people on the stage yell at them, and then they too move. And some wait until the King reaches 80, and then 90, and then 95 before they finally move. ... And some do not move at all, but instead simply chose not to participate.

Politician #12 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): ... He's not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured.

King: ... NINETY-EIGHT, NINETY-NINE, ONE HUNDRED.

Narrator (standing back to the side): The King stops counting. By then, those who wanted to pick a side had picked. Those who did not choose stand motionless in front of the stage. Some of them have disgusted looks on their faces. But most of them simply appeared disinterested, even bored, apparently unaware of the power they hold. A big crowd surrounds the Miller. A big crowd surrounds TrumpelStiltskin. Bite'n and Turtle complete their two counts and report to the King, who writes down the numbers. He confers with the Queen, who nods, and then ...

King (steps forward with air of finality): We have a winner.

< full cast steps to the left side of the stage as the narrator continues; Miller gets mic while narrator talks >

Narrator (moving from the side into stage center): 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.

< Narrator holds finger up as if to say, just one more thing—pointing at politician >

Politician #13 (stands up in the audience; with Trumpian flare!): [And seriously folks ...] Who knows what's in the deepest part of my mind?

< All actors come forward with the Miller out front >

Miller (holding mic as if speaking into it): And now, friends, PLEASE let's all get out there and vote!

< Miller drops mic, and cast exits stage >

* The End *