

Substantial Disruption



Trumpelstiltskin

By Mike Tully

The Elephant was morose. His followers did not love him. True, they helped him control two of the Great Circus' three rings, but the grandest ring of all eluded him. "How I dream of living in the Gilded Palace in the Center Ring!" he said. The Gilded Palace was the residence of the Circus Master. The Elephant could live in the Gilded Palace if his followers would place him there, but his followers did not love him and their friends did not trust him. "I could live in the Gilded Palace if only my followers and their friends loved me," said the Elephant.

Suddenly, in a cloud of sulfur and expensive cologne, there appeared a strange, impish creature with hair like a haystack, a pricey suit that fit him like burlap stuffed with cotton, and a long, red tie that lapped against his shoes. "You want your followers to love you, do you?" asked the straw-haired Imp. "I can make them love you, as well as their friends. So many will love you that you will live in the Gilded Palace forever!"

"I could live in the Gilded Palace forever?" exclaimed the Elephant. "But that is the Circus Master's house and I am only an elephant." "I know," replied the Imp. "I know what elephants look like. My sons have been to Africa. But you will live there, nonetheless."

"How?" asked the Elephant, nearly knocking the Imp over with a blast of his peanutty breath. "I will do anything." The Imp grinned. "Anything?" "Anything," said the Elephant, rubbing his right tusk with his trunk. "Tell me," said the Imp, "Do you have any straw?" "I'm an elephant," said the Elephant. "Point taken," said the Imp. "Bring me one quarter of your straw." "My straw?" asked the Elephant. "Why do you need my straw, straw-haired little imp?"

"Bring me one quarter of your straw and I'll spin it into gold," said the Imp. "You can give the gold to your followers and they will love you." The mesmerized elephant leaned forward and accidentally stepped on his trunk. "But I have a request," said the Imp. "If I spin your straw into gold, you must invite me to your debates. Will you grant my wish?" "Yes," said the Elephant, rubbing his sore trunk. "Door bish id by cobbadd."

The Elephant delivered one quarter of his straw to the Imp, who began to spin. He spun and he spun and he spun and he spun. The Elephant had never seen anybody spin like the Imp, who asked him to leave during the final spin. After a while the Imp emerged from the locked room. "I have spun your straw into gold," he told the Elephant. "I locked it in my personal vault so nobody can steal it from you." "Can I see it?" asked the Elephant. "I need to give it to my followers so they will love me and I can live in the Gilded Palace."

"You cannot live in the Gilded Palace," said the Imp. "Your followers don't have the numbers to get you there. You need their friends. Make their friends love you as well and you will live in the Gilded Palace." "How can I make their friends love me?" asked the Elephant. "Give more

gold to your followers and they will share it,” said the Imp. “Then you can live in the Gilded Palace. Give me half your remaining straw to spin into gold. Then you will have gold for your followers and their friends.” “What else must I give?” asked the Elephant, warily. “You must invite me to your Great Meeting,” said the Imp. “You must introduce me to everybody there.” The Elephant brought the Imp more straw and he took it into the room and began to spin.

When the Great Meeting took place, the Elephant’s friends loved the Imp. He promised them he, and only he, could make the circus great again. The Elephant became jealous of the Imp’s popularity and suspicious of his motives. “Where is the gold?” asked the Elephant. “How can I live in the Gilded Palace when my followers love you more than me?” “Don’t worry,” said the Imp. “Your followers and their friends will never love you enough to award you the Gilded Palace. But give me the rest of your straw to spin into gold and I will make your followers and their friends wealthy and happy and they will give me the Palace. Then you will live there as well, even though you’re an Elephant. It will be beautiful. Believe me.” The Elephant gave the Imp the rest of his straw.

When the Imp promised to make the Elephant’s followers and friends rich with gold he spun from straw, they awarded him the Gilded Palace. The Imp moved into the Gilded Palace and invited all his friends, but the Elephant was not invited. He confronted the Imp and demanded to live in the Gilded Palace. “I’m sorry,” said the Imp. “You can’t. I gave your room to the Bear. I’m sure you understand. But, we made the circus great again, didn’t we?” The Elephant nodded. “Can I at least have my gold?” he asked. “Where is my gold?” “Here is the key to the vault,” said the Imp. The Elephant grabbed the key and headed for the locked vault. He opened the door and walked in. There before him was a huge room filled with golden – straw.

The Elephant lashed his trunk against his tusks. “It’s only straw,” he wailed, “nothing but straw!” The Imp feared the wrath of the Elephant and his followers. “I will distract them with my brilliance,” he said. Whereupon, he walked into the vault, struck a match, and set the straw on fire.