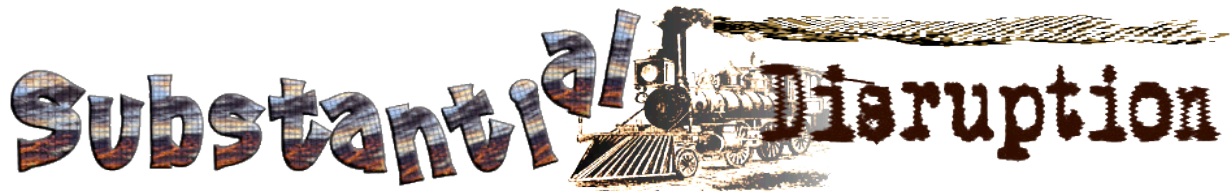


Substantial Disruption



Animal White House

By Mike Tully

The Orangutan was volcanic. He loved to foment discord within the zoo, but it was his zoo. He would watch as the other animals undercut, jumped and encircled one another in a fawn-fest choreographed for the Orangutan's entertainment. He had long ago convinced himself that spreading chaos within his organization was a sound management practice and a whole lot of fun besides, but he had always remained above the chaos, floating like eiderdown over the gaggle of sycophants he set atumble. Suddenly it was different. One of the animals not only complained about the chaos to somebody outside the family, he – or she (“Do we have any she’s?” wondered the Orangutan) -- had complained in the pages of the Failing *New York Times*. The Orangutan turned red and sputtered like Kilauea.

“Sarah!” he bellowed. “Get your oversized stinger in here!” Sarah the Hucka-Bee always buzzed nearby, waiting for orders from her cantankerous orange master. “Bzzz. Yes, sir? What do you need, Mr. President?” “I need to put out a statement,” he replied. “Need to put that coward in his place!” “What coward is that, Mr. President?” buzzed the preternaturally clueless Sarah. “The one who wrote that piece of crap for the *Times*,” he told her. The Orangutan looked sideways at the Bee. “It wasn’t you, was it?” “What’s that, sir?” she buzzed. “The piece in the *Times*!” bellowed the Orangutan, his blonde coif spinning like a helicopter. “That whiny, gutless, fake-news anonymous op-ed, the one that said I was amoral.” “Amoral?” buzzed the Hucka-Bee. “I don’t understand, sir.” “That’s okay,” said the Orangutan, waving her away. “I don’t know what it means either.” “Will there be anything else, sir?” buzzed the Hucka-Bee. The Orangutan shook his head. “Thank you,” she buzzed. “I need to run out and buy Tiffany a birthday card.” The Orangutan jumped in his seat, turned, and looked at the Hucka-Bee. “It’s Tiffany’s birthday?” “Just a month away,” buzzed Sarah, who scurried out of the room as the Orangutan shooed her away. He leaned toward his favorite personal aide. “Alexa,” he said. “Buy Tiffany a birthday card. Send it the day before her birthday. Sign it, ‘Love, President Daddy.’”

There was a knock at the door and the Orangutan looked up to see Don McBeaver standing in the doorway. “McBeaver,” cried the Orangutan. “Haven’t you left, yet?” “Not yet,” said McBeaver, the Orangutan’s staff lawyer. “You said you wanted to meet with me about the piece in the *Times*.” “The totally fake, cowardly piece in the *Times*,” corrected the Orangutan. “Fake, cowardly piece in the *Times*” repeated McBeaver. The Orangutan stood up and pointed his nose at the space between McBeaver’s eyes. “Did you write it?” “No, sir,” replied the legal Beaver. “I would never do that to you.” “The Orangutan squinted at McBeaver. “But you spoke to the wolves for thirty hours,” he said. “Thirty hours! What did you tell them, Little Beaver?” “I didn’t give up anything,” said McBeaver. “I just strung them out, wasting their time, giving nonsense answers. Once,

when they asked about Russian oligarchs, I spent two hours describing my recipe for blueberry pancakes. They didn't know what do. You should have seen it, sir. It was hilarious." The Orangutan didn't hear a word he said. He could not stop thinking about blueberry pancakes. McBeaver, seeing his chance, quietly slipped back to his dam down the hall. He didn't tell the Orangutan that he knew who was responsible for the op-ed piece in the *Times*. It not was one person, but the work of half a dozen. He was not one of them and hated them for keeping him out of the club. Besides, he could have written a much better piece -- and did. He decided to hold onto the drafts, just in case.

He was not the only one. Most of the zoo animals were fed up with the Orangutan, from Mad Dog to Kellyanne the Raccoon, from Kelly the Badger to Beauregard the Lemur. They won't say anything, of course. Not out loud. But subordinates in their packs, or herds, or prides, or murders – they hear it. The Orangutan's zoo was a reverse autocracy where power flowed from the top to the lower ranks as rumors and anecdotes trickled down the bureaucracy to safely insulated layers with a side channel to the media. The only thing the zoo did well was leak. McBeaver knew who all the leakers were, but he kept his knowledge secret. A secret hoarded has value; a secret shared has none. In the Orangutan's zoo, secrets and whispers were the coin of the realm.

The Orangutan stalked back and forth in his Oval Pen, occasionally cursing when he accidentally stepped on one of his tiny hands. Just who was this Deep Zoo actor with a pipeline to the *Times*? He marshalled the zoo animals into a mental police line-up, facing forward, as stone-faced as safari trophies. He visualized all of the animals taking a lie detector test – *Are you the disgusting turncoat who wrote that pack of lies for the Times?* – and getting zapped when they are caught lying, [like the kid in *Ghostbusters*](#). That was one of the Orangutan's favorite movie scenes, where Bill Murray as Dr. Peter Venkman repeatedly shocks a student played by Steven Tash. How the Orangutan would love to have one of those machines, right here in the Oval Pen. He'd flip the switch and they would jump, twitch, spit and maybe even lose their lunch. That's what this boring job needs: electrical shocks.

For the first time in months he missed Reince Priebus.