



Fake News – Chapter 1 of FORTRESS: a Wayfarers Story

Author Jim Yackel © 2017 all rights reserved

The weather had been in a word – strange. But this was one of the rare, sunny mornings this cool and rainy season had seen, as the birds chirped merrily in celebration outside of forty-five-year-old Dave Jamison’s upper-level flat on North Peterboro Street in rustic Canastota, New York. Indeed, Dave was the antithesis of cheerful as he roared “aw, c’mon! This isn’t gonna get the rent paid this month” before slamming his right fist on the black particleboard desk that supported his PC. The desk also supported his cup of coffee, and the force of the paw making impact knocked the beverage over; whereby spilling onto the tan carpet of the white-walled, single-window spare bedroom that served as his pseudo office.

“Not advertiser-friendly?” he growled, while working his fingers through his brown hair touched with grey, that had the day before received its monthly buzz-cut. He feigned skepticism as he read the e-mail from YouTube, but he knew that his video titled *Kim Jong-un Threatens U.S. with Fiery Apocalypse* would meet with this fate, just as ninety-percent of the videos he’d posted over the last three months had. “How about if I do a video called ‘Transgender Makeup Tips for Millennials’ he carped, while massaging his temples in the hope that it would work the ache out of his head. “Would the Google-YouTube monolith allow me to monetize crap like that?” This independent news reporter’s YouTube channel was titled *Dave Jamison News and Views*, and in the three years since losing his “real job,” he’d amassed over 600,000 subscribers who sought the truth, and not the leftist, pre-fab, agenda-driven, Deep State-supported fake news provided by the mainstream alphabet networks.

“Coffee on a tan rug, so the stain won’t show when it dries” he mumbled, while rubbing his left pointer finger and thumb over the brown chin beard with grey and white speckles that was always meticulously trimmed, with nary a whisker askew. After confirming that all was well with his “chinny,” he stared down at the clear glass mug toppled on the floor, while working his right pointer and index fingers across the jagged three-inch scab on his forehead. His fingers were like the tiptoes of a burglar sneaking into a lightless living room, while the home’s residents slept upstairs with visions of big stock dividends, job promotions, and new Cadillac Escalades dancing in their heads. Ten days prior, while livestreaming from the “America’s Best Days Ahead” (Twitter hashtag #ABDA) rally held in Cleveland for President Derek Troop, Dave’s forehead was cut by a hunk of red brick thrown by a black bloc protester. While the cut was not as severe as it could have been, forehead lacerations are often bloody, and his vision had been blurred as the scarlet liquid flowed into his eyes that were as bright as blue lightning. As his 5’10”, 150-pound frame staggered while he’d struggled to pull a bandana from his backpack, his image was snapped by a photographer from USA Today. The photo of the dazed live streamer accompanied the following morning’s article on the rally that had morphed into a riot, and was given the caption *Justice, as Alt-Right Reporter Suffers Wounds of War*.

Ever resilient and focused, it was only a few minutes before he'd resumed streaming the moderate level of chaos on that block of downtown Cleveland that featured the city's top bars and eateries. Dave had his own means of measuring chaos, by using a scale of 1 being "negligible" and 5 being "intense." Immersed in the strident chants of "hey, hey, ho, ho, Derek Troop has got to go" and "no Troop, no KKK, no fascist U.S.A" as his olfactory glands were assaulted by the body odor and pepper spray lingering on the cool evening air, he relayed to the 7,011 viewers of his stream that the chaos was "level 3". Fortunately for the residents, business owners, and guests of the city, the riot gear-clad police kept the chaos from exceeding that level. The result was two trash can fires, numerous minor abrasions and lacerations, three sets of pepper-sprayed eyes, and 4 protestors and 2 "Troopers" (rallying supporters of the president) being arrested and later released.

Dave had livestreamed from several events since the election – or perhaps "selection" - that gave Derek Troop the victory, but the Cleveland #ABDA rally took a heavy toll on him. It wasn't the most uproarious or dangerous event he'd ever reported from, but he remained inexplicably fatigued and dispirited ten days later. Certainly, his financial situation was becoming dire, as YouTube had given into what it blamed on pressure from advertisers, and was refusing to monetize videos with what was deemed "controversial" subject matter. There was no clear delineation from what content was controversial and what wasn't, but most any videos uploaded by independent journalists were now being de-monetized. Up until the previous October, he'd been earning as much money as he did as a high school American History teacher. Now, in May, he was depleting his savings, which was a stash of cash that remained from his closed 401K, and kept in a small safe under his bed. He knew that it was likely that the dollar would soon collapse under the weight of debt, pressure from China and Russia, the loss of Petrodollar status, and the machinations of the World Banksters. And, he knew that a major military conflict or civil war would be the straws that break the dollar's back. While he loved America, part of him couldn't wait for the collapse, as he believed it would be the "great equalizer." But, most of all, Dave loved the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Despite that love, he'd been angry at God in recent years, and yet he knew the Lord had plans as per His written word, and they would change everything.

Still, something other than getting beamed by a piece of brick had happened to him on that night in Cleveland. Driving home at 3:11 a.m. on the New York State Thruway, just east of Buffalo, his truck's radio was tuned to 88.1 FM out of Toronto; an infrequent, cloudless early morning sky allowing for clear reception, even at that distance. He was grooving to the chorus of "My Before and After" by Austin, Texas indie band Cotton Mather, when the melodic pop-rock track was replaced by interference in the form of a piercing buzz, not unlike that of an Emergency Broadcast System message. Seconds later, a blacked-out Chevy Tahoe 4x4 pulled up alongside in the passing lane, and then veered and tried to sideswipe his white Nissan Frontier pickup. Being forced to the shoulder, Dave had to slam the brake pedal to the floor to keep his vehicle out of a roadside swamp. The Nissan's tires screamed in protest as the vehicle spun and faced oncoming traffic, and was eight inches from being clipped by an eighteen-wheeler carrying a load of gasoline to be delivered to a nearby Circle-K convenience store. The wind created by the streaking tanker caused the Nissan to rock like a boat on rough seas. Then, as the sustained blare of the tanker truck's airhorn faded out in doppler, all became quiet; save for the pounding heartbeat in Dave's ears and the hiss over the radio, as both the buzz and the reception of 88.1 FM were gone. There were no other vehicles on either the eastbound or westbound side, and despite his shaking arms and legs, he possessed the wits to get his pickup back on the highway and headed eastward toward home. "You spared me Lord, even though I wish you hadn't" was his shuddering murmur, as the Nissan rolled

at 75 M.P.H. while his thoughts flashed and crackled like sparks from an electrical outlet, as though a curious toddler had stuck a screwdriver in.

Despite being wired on adrenaline from his near-death experience, his eyelids were heavy as he pulled into the Pembroke Travel Plaza to grab a 20-ounce cup of coffee to-go from the Tim Horton's. Being two hours from home, he needed the caffeine to keep him from falling asleep at the wheel. He was swallowing the first sip of the piping hot brew as he pulled open the driver's side door, and it was then that he heard from behind a congenial male voice proclaim, "Dave Jamison from YouTube!"

"Yes sir, I am" Dave answered politely, after turning toward the 6'-3" tall man, who was bald on top with grey, medium-length hair on the sides and back, and bushy grey sideburns. The man pushed his black-rimmed glasses from the end to the top of his narrow bridge of a nose, and the lenses reflected the beam of a nearby street lamp positioned in the parking lot. The man then cocked his head to the right as if studying Dave, while taking two steps backward. A smile formed on the left side of his face, but not the right. Dave likewise sized-up the fellow, who was clad in an unzipped green parka, an untucked black t-shirt bearing the image of the Beatles *Let It Be* album cover, well-worn Khaki slacks, and scuffed black dress shoes. The man appeared disheveled, and yet conveyed an air of self-importance. The man also smelled as though he could use a shower.

"You look thinner in person, even with the Kevlar on" the man chuckled.

"Yeah, well, I've cut back on the Spam sandwiches, and I need to wear Kevlar for protection when I stream, in case a riot breaks out" Dave answered, being unsure of how to take this gentleman, while glancing at a white limousine as it pulled into a parking spot a short distance away.

"That's a nasty cut on your forehead" the man commented, while pointing and squinting.

"Oh yeah, that. I got it while shaving this morning. Next time, I'll light the lantern in the outhouse so I can see what I'm doing" Dave answered.

"I watch you, Dave" the man stated pointblank, with all congeniality and levity gone, and his voice rose in shaking fury as he finished with "I watch you, and you lie, lie, lie!" The man then turned and stomped toward the limousine, while mumbling something that Dave couldn't decipher.

Now, ten days after Cleveland, that night's events continued to seep like toxic molasses through the cracks in the cookie jar of his mind. "Patreon donations might help me to make it this month" he whispered to no one except God, as he lived alone these days. "I've got to find the mother of all scoops; something I can livestream and get big money from Super Chat. As it is, I'm gonna have to start eating the food I've put away for when the shit hits the fan, and Lord, you know I don't want to have to do that." It was then that Philippians chapter 4, verse 19 popped into his head: *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*. He could have interpreted that as confirmation that the Lord had heard him, but he wasn't sure if it emanated from his spirit or his head.

After five seconds of staring like a statuesque zombie at his computer monitor, he closed his eyes and lowered his head to pray for direction and clarity. As he opened his mouth to begin speaking his petition, he was startled by a hissy, whispering voice admonishing "ah, you're the one who's fake news, Davey boy! You're living in a fantasy world of tabloid trash and outlandish conspiracy. I'm so disappointed that you believe the garbage you make videos about, and the garbage that you read. What a sad, sick life you're leading! And, what about all those freaks that live in their parents' basements and believe everything you say in those videos? Doesn't your God ever convict you in the spirit for misleading those poor souls who have even less of a life than you do?"

Dave's head snapped up, and he directed his gaze over his right shoulder and toward the corner of the room, adjacent to the walnut door that needed a coat of varnish. "It's stress, that's all it is. You're not

real” he stammered, as he looked upon the black-cloaked figure standing in the corner. The cloak had a black hood, and while it was obvious by the shape that there was a head inside of it, there was no face.

“Oh, I’m real, Davey-poo. I’m real, unlike the fiction that you peddle for the thousands of right-wing twits and conspiracy theorists that see you as THE purveyor of truth! No wonder Screw-Tube doesn’t monetize your work anymore. Do you think that they want you to make bank on your deception? Well, you’ll get yours, Dave. The Lord that you worship has a special place in Hell for liars like you! Thou shall not lie, Dave. You know Proverbs twelve twenty-two, right? It says, ‘lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.’ You Dave, have put the capital ‘A’ in abomination, and you are responsible for all those ‘sheeple’ that YOU man, YOU have misled” the hooded one taunted better than any schoolyard bully could.

“Who the hell are you?!” Dave bellowed, with a voice that quivered like lime Jell-O in an earthquake.

“Oh Dave, Dave, Dave, really now, how could you forget?” the figure hissed in faux disappointment. “I’m the hooded shadow, Mister Jones! Remember that insipid story you read?”

Before Dave could clear his head and attempt to rebut the figure, his LG smartphone buzzed to alert him that an e-mail from YouTube had come in, indicating new activity on his recent video *Israeli-Arab Peace Deal? Could Troop’s Son in Law be the Anti-Christ?* It was a new comment, which read “Jacob Cushman is not the A.C., you effing moron! Stop spreading lies just to draw eyeballs to your videos! Stop sucking up to the Zionist Jews! You lie, lie, lie and I hope you tear open your ‘shaving cut’ and bleed to death!”

His videos had received plenty of negative comments, and he’d learned to shrug them off. Some were so ludicrous and poorly-written that he’d laugh when he’d read them. But, when stirred into the pot of sewage soup that was the trying day he’d been having, reading this comment was tantamount to guzzling a bottle of Tabasco sauce. The commenter’s YouTube I.D. was *Watching U Dave*, and seeing that caused hot bile to splash into his esophagus, which produced a short but intense coughing fit. And when it came to “sewage soup,” he noticed upon catching his breath that Mr. Jones was gone, but the malodorous air of sewage hung in the room. “I don’t really smell that, and Jones isn’t real” he whispered, but his words did nothing to make him believe it. He drew another breath through his nose, and this time detected armpit stink, but he was sure that it wasn’t his own, as he was freshly showered and protected with antiperspirant.

His hands were trembling like autumn leaves on a November breeze, but he was able to mouse over the *Watching U Dave* user I.D., which revealed a generic “ghost” icon and the channel description of “Always watching, and always waiting, as a snake coiled to strike.” Undaunted, he clicked to the channel, and saw that the user had posted no videos, and had no followers. The faint aroma of body odor lingered, and he recalled the man in the travel plaza parking lot smelling the same way. He remembered the bubbling rage in the man’s voice as he stated, “I watch you, Dave.” And, he remembered quipping about his “shaving cut.” *Watching U Dave* most certainly had to be that man, the struggling indie journalist reasoned. As his throat and chest tightened with anxiety, Dave clicked back to the channel and attempted to block it from accessing his content. He was confused and yet relieved when the auto-response was “user does not exist.” And where confusion is concerned, he then muttered “whoa, what the…” as he noticed that a wrinkled black bandana lay on the floor in the corner where Mr. Jones appeared to have been. “Where’d that come from? I have two colors of bandanas - blue and green – and in one case blue and bloodstained,” he announced to no one visible, as he stepped through the wet coffee spot in his bare feet, which elicited a grumbled “ugh, I forgot.” After squatting and grasping the bandana between his pointer finger and thumb - as though it might bite him if not handled with caution - his sense of smell that

could rival that of dog detected three aromas that were imbued in the fabric: whiskey, marijuana, and the body odor he'd whiffed a moment before.

"Steve drinks and smokes weed, but he hasn't been in here" he thought to himself in reference to his landlord, as he proceeded to the kitchen trashcan with the bandana; the sticky soles of his feet smacking like kisses on the off-white linoleum floor tile.