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# I Know How You Feel About Trump

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EVAN VUCCI / REUTERS

Remember when we couldn't wait to say good riddance to 2016? We'd had it with that abusive spouse of an election year. We were sick of the emotional rollercoaster. We needed an armistice, a breather. We were desperate to rise from the political sewer to the shining city on the hill.

Fat chance. This 2017 thing is even worse. I know how you feel: beat up, battered down, fetal, furious. But just remember, there's nothing wrong with you. It's not you – it's him.

Of course you're depressed. You know that the news is toxic to your spirit, and you admit you're addicted to it, but really, with all these nonstop horrors, who wouldn't be obsessed by political disaster porn? Even though the news leaves you feeling not informed and empowered, but helpless and fearful; even if your neocortex knows that Trump's game is to hijack your attention, and the media's game is to monetize it; still, your reptilian brain won't permit you to peel your eyes from the screen, won't let you stop refreshing your feed, keeps you texting and posting and tweeting and screaming, "Can you effing believe this?" Your news addiction feels no less compulsive than, but is the reciprocal of, an opioid addiction. You're hooked on pain.

No wonder you're ambivalent. You have empathy for voters whose struggle to make ends meet and whose loathing of corruption helped put this president in office, but you find yourself rooting that the real harm he'll do them – robbing their health care, wrecking their public schools, risking their retirement, rolling back their rights – will awaken them to the colossal con they've enabled and will eventually rouse them to resistance.

It makes sense to be incensed. You're enraged by the cowardice of Republican legislators who've put protecting their political skins above protecting the Constitution. You're livid that Trump's pooh-poohing of "political correctness" has exempted racists, homophobes, misogynists, anti-Semites and other haters from being shunned and shamed. You're infuriated by the toadies, fools, vipers and shmatta hucksters now wearing staff passes to the West Wing. You're angry there's no accountability for the Trumps' blatant conflicts of interest, no punishment for stonewalling his tax returns, no penalty for his bullying, laziness, lying and ignorance.

It's perfectly normal that you're freaked out by how fragile American democracy is, how vulnerable the Enlightenment machinery our Founders designed turns out to be. It's unsettling that the power of a free press to check political power has itself been checked by the conquest of journalism by entertainment, the displacement of reason by ratings, the substitution of Internet anarchy and

networked nihilism for the norms of civil discourse. It's chilling to concede that the separation of powers between executive and legislative branches can be so completely sabotaged by one-party rule. It's galling to know that a switch from Trump to Clinton of only 38,873 of the 13,890,836 votes cast in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania – call it the Kremlin margin, or the Comey gap – would have thrown the Electoral College to Clinton. The whole master narrative of the 2016 election – Forgotten Americans Give Trump a Mandate! – would never have drawn a breath had there been a ridiculously tiny 0.28 percent flip. No wonder our so-called president keeps peddling a cock-and-bull voter fraud story; he knows how puny his legitimacy actually is.

True grit is truly exhausting. "I can't go on, I'll go on," Samuel Beckett said, but it's awfully draining to be whipsawed between despair and determination. One day you're uplifted by millions of marching women; the next, another state outlaws abortion. You're heartened to see so many town halls where the Indivisible movement, already more potent than the Tea Party, is holding congressional feet to the fire, but you're powerless to prevent the most unfit Cabinet in our history from being confirmed. When a senator says a Supreme Court nominee told him he was "demoralized" by Trump's attack on the judiciary, you let yourself be hopeful, but when cable yakkers call that a ploy to create an aura of independence for the judge, you feel spun like a chump.

The storm still gathering over Team Trump's footsie with Putin invites us to imagine a sudden end to the 45th presidency. If evidence turns up that Trump swapped softer sanctions on Russia for Putin's feeding his Clinton email hacks to Wikileaks, maybe Paul Ryan would let the House vote to impeach him. Or maybe Trump's megalomania will be so undeniably sociopathic even to his own administration that the 25th Amendment will be invoked to replace him. Maybe Trump's misery in his job – White House aides are leaking he wishes he'd never run – will culminate in a resignation. Or maybe SNL, CNN and the dishonest *New York Times* will finally make his head explode.

Then again, maybe it's just the same old yoyo of hope and dread. You go up – okay, I go up – at the prospect that our national nightmare will be over sooner rather than later. Then I go down at the thought of President Pence. There's a way out of that, though, and the prairie fire sweeping congressional districts points the way: fight like hell, right now, for a Democratic House or Democratic Senate, or both, in 2018. Implausible? No one knows. But pushing to make it possible is a sure-fire prescription for feeling better.

*This is a crosspost of my column in the Jewish Journal, where you can reach me if you'd like at [martyk@jewishjournal.com](mailto:martyk@jewishjournal.com).*