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You Won't Believe What Happens Next!

Yellow Journalism Returns–Film at 11!

For the last few weeks, the news networks have been groaning about the 2016 invention of fake news. I'm surprised that professional news announcers have forgotten journalism school; they should know better. It's called 'Yellow Journalism', or more recently, ClickBait. Yellow Journalism became widespread in the tabloid newspapers of New York City around 1900, in battles for circulation between William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, but there is also a historical basis in satire and humor that goes back to at least the 1600s.

For now, I'm looking online and what I see is clickbait. That's an article headline that was written solely to tempt you to click on it. Truth is irrelevant. The contents of the page don't actually match the headline. The title is bait, and the catch they're fishing for is your click on an advertisement or a virus installer. Some is for political purposes, but mostly, it's for money.

Here are a few samples from Yahoo News:

'Giant Arctic Crocodile' Baffles Alaskan Officials

Leads to Weather.com. The page includes a very large video ad for noodle dishes, and 37 article links, including nine items of "Sponsored Content You May Like," There's a small headline with no article, 'Scary "Ice Monster" Spotted in Alaska,' but as that link doesn't work, the trail of the chilly croc goes cold there.

Ohio Couple Become Rich After Finding Secret Room

Leads to ViralThread.com, and a slideshow titled 'Homeowner Finds Secret Room In

His Attic, Leading To Him Becoming A Millionaire…' and the subtitle 'NEXT: What would he find?! Are you as excited as I am?' It's a 23-page slideshow, and on the very last picture, we hear that the suitcase found in the attic held $45,000. Each page holds 7 image advertisements. $45,000 isn't a million, but let's not be distracted by higher math.

That 23-page screenshow exists to show ads; 7 ads per page, at a Pay per View rate of 5 cents per thousand, would be around a penny of income for the authors of that set of pages, for each visitor that completes the slideshow.

You get the idea. These pages exist to make you view lots and lots of ads, at best. Some ads pay per thousands of views, others pay a few cents per click, and others pay a commission on a sale; these can all setup with an ad network, like Google Adsense, by anyone in half an hour.

At worst, these pages hold drive-by installers of malware, which are worth a few dollars each. Or they contain the scary popups with narration and sirens that your computer is infected (it isn't), and that they're Microsoft (they aren't) and that you have to call a toll-free number right now! (Don't!!!) That one is typically a $399 sale.

Another variation: The headline leads to a page with a secret to health or financial success, and the landing page is a video, with a sales pitch that can't be fast-forwarded, runs for half an hour, and finally ends in a sales pitch for the book that might hold the wisdom of the original headline, which was just well-known folk wisdom to start with.

These headline patterns are abused constantly. Don't click on them:

You won't believe how __any celebrity name__ looks now!

Yes, __any politician's name__ Generously Gives Howeowners a Bailot!

Leads to a full-page ad for paid services for home refinancing.

This Guy Went to __do anything __, What Happens Next Will Blow Your Mind

Any headline ending in: You Won't Believe What Happens Next!

10 of the Best __anything__ of this Year

You Probably Can't Pass this __topic__ Quiz

This is typically a 75-question quiz, with 3 pages per question (answer, score, correct answer), or around another 8 cents income in pay-per-view ads.

This __anything__ will be Bigger Than the Internet

More interminable slide shows, at best.

Besides avoiding the pattern headlines, you can avoid fake news and clickbait by watching for these words near a headline: sponsored or AdChoices. Or look at the link– Yahoo clickbait stories all go to web links that start with 'beep.gemini.yahoo.com', and NOT to a true online news source.

Fake news will also show up in email, especially if your email has poor spam filtering, or you're on the mailing list of any political advocacy group. If the article headline is too strange or hot to resist, it's either dangerous, or at best, a big waste of time.

Read more at WeeklyWorldNews.com: the December 1st headline states that

Donald Trump has purchased Scranton, Pennsylvania. Probably will make BigFoot the Mayor. Or look at any article on TheOnion.com. In all fairness, there is a line between fake news and comedy, and these two sites are clearly satire, and funny, if you aren't offended by claims that space aliens are running the government. But some people quote them as truth.

We've just passed an election that was loaded with all this stuff. This time, Facebook was a big addition to the mix, but it's still basic yellow journalism: Wild headlines and crazy images point to more at the next link, and there are just more sets of wild headlines and puffery waiting there.

Over at the New York Times, there's an interesting analysis of the modern fake news business model from the presidential season just passed. It seems there's a profitable way to do it.

Inside a Fake News Sausage Factory: 'This is All About Income'

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/europe/fake-news-donald-trump-hillary-clinton-georgia.html?_r=0

Real News: WebRoot Secure AnyWhere Now Available

Science Translations has WebRoot security software available now for managed computers. It's a cloud product, so detection of new virus and malware samples is done in real time, without the three-day lag time of products that rely on a local lookup. That means that protection against ransomware is now possible. Call me if you're interested in switching, even if your current antivirus isn't up for renewal; switching is usually possible mid-term.

Encrypted Web Sites are Becoming a Necessity

Starting in January, Google Chrome will display security warnings on web sites that ask for a password or a credit card number, but aren't encrypted. That's just the first step; Google is pushing to encrypt the entire internet, and has already begun ranking secured sites higher than sites that have no encryption. Adding encryption and the green safety padlock to a site has become far easier in the last year; basic encryption no longer has any setup expense at all. If I'm hosting your website, or you would like me to, call about encryption. Bonus: An encrypted website can also encrypt email between you and the mail server. That's not protection all the way to the recipient of your messages, but it does help protect your email when sending mail through a location that can't be trusted, like any open wireless network.