Inner Monologue

September 2026 Issue 46



This Issue:

Essay: "Where in the Multiverse?"
News & Puzzles
Short Story: *Exorcisms & Chocolate Chips*
Random Thought Bubble

Where in the Multiverse?

We all exist fairly well. We put our shoes on. We feed ourselves. We've got the world figured out for the most part.

But then centuries ago, pesky philosophers and scientists started asking why things are the way they are. What makes the stars move? Why does gravity work? What are atoms made of? And actually, the answers are kind of interesting. It's good to know things.

Then through incomprehensible mathematics and experiments, scientists started to find things that were truly weird, like that certain particles act differently depending on whether they are being observed or not. I suggested they were merely shy. But real scientists have tried to answer this question through the field of quantum physics. Out of quantum physics comes string theory and the "many-worlds interpretation."

It's certainly popular with Marvel, which has made it the cornerstone of many of its recent movies.

The theory suggests for every decision we make, an alternate decision is made in an alternate universe. This means for every path we take, another version of ourselves has taken a different, possibly better path.

This is comforting in some ways. Another version of ourselves didn't make the stupid mistakes we made. And yet, another version of ourselves made even worse decisions than we did. Many people may find solace in that.



And while this is fascinating (and profit-making for Marvel) it has the danger of taking us away from the here and now. We don't live in a parallel universe. We will never meet our doppelganger. We have only one life that matters, ours. We need to keep our eye on the ball. Be the you that all the parallel versions of you will envy.

JR

In This Issue

Essay: "Where in the Multiverse?" 2
News & Events 3
Short Story: *Exorcisms & Chocolate Chips* 4
Off the Shelf: *Forgiveness* 5
Mental Workout: Maze & Wordsearch 6
Random Thought Bubble: "Bad Jokes or Dad Jokes" 7

© J.R. Bale 2026, All rights reserved.

www.JRBale.com

facebook.com/JRBale.author

@jrbale.bsky.social

@jrbale1

@jrbale1

News & Events

Upcoming Events

Below are the book events I've committed to so far. Each in-person event includes a range of talented authors.

September 12, 2026
Saturday
9 am - 5 pm

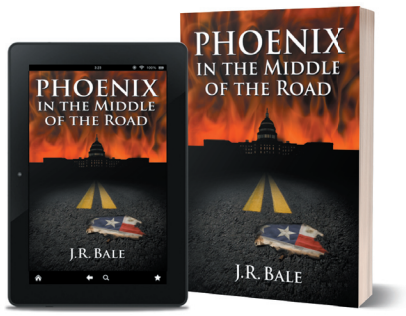
Authors Alley at **Belvidere Victorian Day**
Garret Wall Park
Belvidere, NJ

September 26, 2026
Saturday
10 am - 4 pm

New Providence Book Festival
1350 Springfield Avenue
Grounds of the Salt Box Museum
New Providence, NJ 07974
www.NewProvidenceBookFestival.com

November 14, 2026
Saturday
11 am - 3 pm

Central Jersey Book Festival
110 Ross Street
Woodbridge, NJ 07095







About J.R. Bale

J.R. Bale has always tried to explore the themes in his stories from an unusual perspective, whether it was politics in *Phoenix in the Middle of the Road* or consciousness in *Cognition Chronicles: The Redstone Legacy,* and *Cognition Chronicles: Destiny's Orphans.*

In his pursuit of diverse perspectives, he has traveled to over a dozen countries across four continents. He even applied to NASA's space program. When not writing books, he is a marketing consultant and college professor. You can learn more about J.R. at www.JRBale.com.



SHORT STORY

The following is a short story entitled ***Exorcisms & Chocolate Chips*** by J.R. Bale

Staten Island, NY - 1965

Father Martin O'Rourke was sitting in his rectory office at Sacred Heart Church, working on his homily for the upcoming Sunday. It was not going well. He heard the soft knock of Sister Honoria on his door. He welcomed the distraction.

"Come in Sister."

"Pardon me, Father," said the petite nun, dressed in her order's black habit.

"Yes, Sister."

"Brendan McAllister is here to see you. The boy from the school."

"Oh, yes. Send him in."

O'Rourke was trying to remember what this was about. He recalled that Sister Clark had referred the boy to him. Sister Clark was a very capable principal. So it was rare to have a situation that she couldn't handle. He just couldn't quite remember exactly what the situation was. He looked down at the scribbles in this diary. It read, "3:15 – Brendan McAllister, Chocolate Exorcism."

Chocolate exorcism? O'Rourke was annoyed at himself for not writing a better description of the issue.

A moment later the young boy walked in, looking nervous.

"Good afternoon, Father," the boy said, his voice quivering slightly.

"Good afternoon, Brendan. What can I do for you?" He smiled to put the boy at ease.

"Can you perform an exorcism?" the boy asked.

"An exorcism? Do you know what an exorcism is?"

"Yes, Sister Egbert told us about them."

"Did she? Well, I don't perform them myself. If an exorcism were actually needed, Cardinal Spellman would assign a priest who has some expertise in exorcisms. You believe you need an exorcism? If you are having dark thoughts, that's what Confession is for."

"It's not for me," Brendan said. "It's for my younger brother, Jimmy."

"For your brother? Has he been particularly annoying lately?"

"No, he's great. Except after he has the Eucharist at Mass."

O'Rourke frowned.

"What do you mean?"

"His face gets all puffy, especially his lips. His throat tightens up. I was thinking if he is possessed by a demon, it wouldn't like the Eucharist, it being the body of Christ and all."

"I suppose not," O'Rourke admitted. "However, the puffy face and lips sound more like an allergic reaction."

"That's what Doctor Dolgin said."

"There you go then."

"But why would he be allergic to God if he wasn't possessed by a demon?"

"I don't know."

"The doctor said he might be allergic to gluten. Is gluten a demon?

"I've never heard of gluten," O'Rourke admitted. "But I'm sure it's not a demon. Hosts that are consecrated and become Eucharists can only be made of wheat and water, nothing else. Just like they had at the Last Supper."

"Doctor Dolgin," Brendan said, "says gluten is in wheat. Why can't you consecrate something other than a host, like a chocolate chip cookie. Surely, God can do that. Jimmy never swells up after eating chocolate chip cookies."

"I'm sure he doesn't." O'Rourke chuckled to himself. "I can't consecrate cookies. But, I'll tell you what. Next Sunday, when I'm giving out Communion, I'll only give Jimmy half a host. Let's see what happens then."

"Okay, Father."

"All right, Brendan, off you go. Don't forget Confession on Saturday."

"Yes, Father. Thank you, Father."

As soon as Brendan left, Sister Honoria brought in the tea tray.

"Thank you, Sister."

O'Rourke noticed a small plate of chocolate chip cookies on the tray, next to the milk and sugar.

"Chocolate chip cookies?"

"Yes," Sister Honoria said. "It's what we had in the pantry. Would you prefer something else?"

"No, no, that's fine. Thank you, Sister."

After Sister Honoria left, O'Rourke leaned over the cookies and whispered, "Should I exorcise you, or consecrate you?"

He chuckled to himself. He then picked up one of the cookies and held it up with two hands as he would a host before consecration and wondered.

"No," he said to himself. "The Holy Father might excommunicate me."

R

Too busy to commit to a full novel?

Try a great anthology with bite-sized short stories.

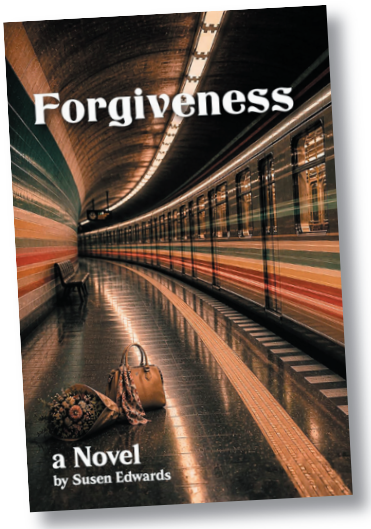
www.amazon.com/dp/B0G5PVQHXG



Off the Shelf

Forgiveness

By Susen Edwards

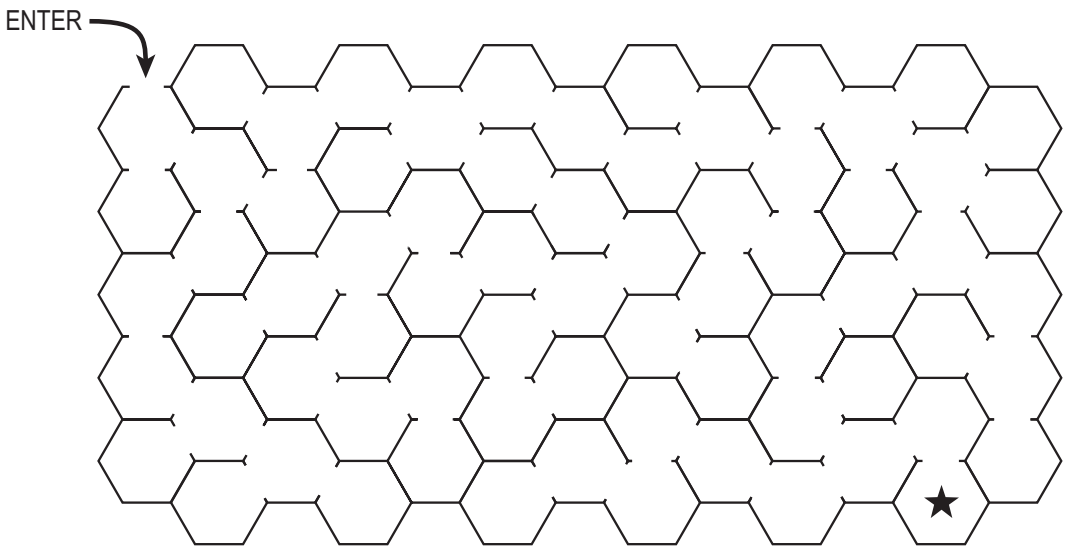


When her husband, Reuben—a journalist covering the January 6 Insurrection—is injured, Fiona is left alone with a past she has spent decades trying to quiet. The memories return in fragments: the Vietnam War protests that first bound them together, a fatal accident that shaped her youth, an affair that nearly destroyed their marriage, and a secret she has carried in silence for half a century. Continuing the story begun in *What a Trip*, this novel examines what it means to grow older with someone who knows your deepest failures—and whether true forgiveness is ever complete.

Learn more at www.SusenEdwards.com.

MENTAL WORKOUT

Hexagon Maze



Back-to-School Wordsearch

S	T	P	R	H	W	X	R	H	E	N	A	Z	W	K
W	M	N	E	F	Y	Z	A	Z	D	J	E	A	R	P
C	Y	A	E	N	K	D	C	Y	A	T	B	O	E	R
E	J	K	X	D	C	U	E	Y	R	R	W	U	H	I
W	D	M	Y	E	U	I	Y	W	G	E	G	S	C	C
P	Y	V	S	F	A	T	L	X	M	S	T	C	A	Y
Y	J	M	Z	G	P	R	S	O	C	S	P	W	E	C
K	S	E	D	K	P	D	H	O	E	O	R	Z	T	Q
N	R	T	L	R	L	R	M	T	G	E	I	M	W	I
V	I	O	G	J	E	P	G	H	I	B	N	Z	A	P
B	S	O	B	C	U	E	J	K	S	V	C	Z	O	H
O	N	S	E	T	V	S	W	C	D	H	I	R	B	F
F	S	S	E	L	O	O	H	C	S	N	P	S	O	B
R	S	R	N	O	T	E	B	O	O	K	A	R	V	G
T	E	X	T	B	O	O	K	N	Z	I	L	D	F	G

APPLE
COMPUTER
DESK
EXAMS
GRADE
HOMEWORK
NOTEBOOK
PENCIL
PRINCIPAL
RECESS
SCHOOL
STUDENT
TEACHER
TESTS
TEXTBOOK

RANDOM THOUGHT BUBBLE

Bad Jokes or Dad Jokes?

My uncle has the heart of a lion and a lifetime ban at the zoo.

Have you heard the joke about elastic. Nevermind its a bit of a stretch.

Never confide in a vacuum cleaner. They're always collecting dirt.

I just read a book about Helium. It was so good that I can't put it down.

Five out of six people agree that Russian Roulette is safe.

I have a phobia of over engineered buildings. I have a complex complex complex.

I'm an anesthesiologist. I get to pass gas for a living.

I wonder what my parents did to fight boredom before the internet. I asked my 17 brothers and sisters and they didn't know either.

What does an air conditioner have in common with a computer? They both lose efficiency as soon as you open windows.

The three unwritten rules of life: 1) 2) 3)



Thank you for reading this issue. If you'd like to receive future issues, please go to **www.jrbale.com/newsletter** to sign up for more. Or follow the QR code. You may unsubscribe any time.

Thanks and be well.