Inner Monologue

November 2026 Issue 47



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Essay: "Creatives Standing Against A.I."
News & Puzzles
Short Story: *A Daemon's Life*
Random Thought Bubble

Creatives Standing Against A.I.

There's been a lot of talk about the dangers of Artificial Intelligence lately.

One area it imperils is human creativity itself. With a few prompts, anyone can conjure up an image, whether photographic, painterly or cartoonish. Students already have A.I. write their term papers. It's like wishing from a genie. But as we've often seen from genie stories, there's an unexpected and unfortunate price to be paid. A.I. is no different.

Creativity is born of struggle. Through repeated trial and error, we learn what works, what doesn't, and why. A.I. just scans and steals from the Internet. This will cost many artists, photographers and writers their livelihoods. But also, it endangers human originality.

According to the Dunning-Krueger effect, one has to be good at something before judging how good something is. In other words, there must be expertise. If A.I. creates everything, how can humans ever develop expertise? For this reason, A.I. is a path to a world like Idiocracy, the 2006 futuristic comedy where people have lost all critical thinking skills.

It takes strength to persevere in this environment. Luckily there are people standing up against A.I.'s destructive path. One of those is Travis Knight, CEO of Laika, the stop-motion animation studio, which created wonderful animated films such as *Coraline*, *Boxtrolls* and the recently released *Wildwood*.



A scene from Laika's *Wildwood* (2026)

"In so many ways generative AI is antithetical to everything that we are at this studio," Knight said. "It's not that we don't believe in technology. We do. We use technology, we use computers. We're not just making films entirely with tools that we've inherited from a watchmaker's widow. A pencil is technology, a paintbrush is technology, a 3D printer is technology, a computer workstation is technology. But all of these

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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.

November 14, 2026
Saturday
11 am - 3 pm

Central Jersey Book Festival
110 Ross Street
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

CENTRAL JERSEY BOOK FESTIVAL

April 10, 2027
Saturday
11 am - 3 pm

Books in Bloom
30 Calais Road
Randolph, NJ 07869

Books in Bloom

April 17, 2027
Saturday
Noon - 5 pm

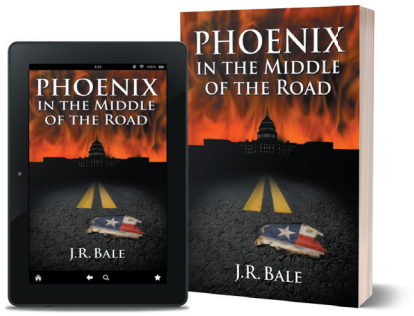
Books at the Vineyard
Working Dog Winery
610 Windsor-Perrineville Road
Hightstown, NJ 08520

BOOKS AT THE VINEYARD

May 1-2, 2027
Saturday-Sunday
11 am - 4 pm

Days of Wine Romance & More
Brook Hollow Winery
594 NJ Route 94
Columbia, NJ 07832

A Day of Wine, Romance, AND MORE!







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 *A Daemon's Life* by J.R. Bale

My name is Calgronock. I rarely have a chance to introduce myself properly. Most people just yell, "Oh my God, it's a demon!" before running away. I'm actually a Daemon. This ancient Greek word predates demon, which comes from early Christian writings. Daemons are neither intrinsically good nor evil. But it's hard to explain that with all the freaking out people do.

I totally get it. The horns. The scaly skin. The claws. It's stereotyping, borne of centuries of art portraying evil, not to mention all the horror films. These days, humans can't even agree on what evil is. But show them a guy with horns, claws and a bad complexion, and they scream and run away. No inquiry. No discussion. No empathy.

The only time I can move easily among humans is Halloween and the occasional ComicCon, where admittedly I do receive some very favorable attention. Outside of that, it's scream city. And I'd had my fill of it.

So I decided to go for a makeover. As it was my most prominent feature, I wanted to get rid of my horns first. But how? Luckily, I met a teenager named Ben at one of those ComicCons. His father was a surgeon. Ben was a wonderful advocate for me with his father. Dr. Adelstein didn't remove my horns, but rather cut them down severely.

Yes, it felt odd. I felt light-headed. If you had eight pounds of horn removed from your head, you'd feel light-headed too. I also needed a wig to cover the bases of my sawed-off horns. Ben helped me obtain one of those too. Ben's a good kid.

Then I went to a dermatologist, a referral through Dr. Adelstein. Worst cases of eczema and psoriasis the dermatologist had ever seen. Once I applied the three salves she gave me for a few weeks, my skin looked absolutely translucent. I'm now a big advocate of good skin care. I rarely skip my daily skin regimen.

The claws were tougher. First, I had to take them down with an industrial grinder. It's a little jarring on the nerves. After I got them 90% down, I went to an old Korean manicurist, Mrs. Kim. She looked at what was left of my claws and said she would have to charge me double. I don't blame her. Mrs. Kim went through a lot of those little nail files.

Next was getting color contacts to cover my yellow eyes. Brown contacts worked best. And the contacts also corrected some minor near-sightedness I didn't realize I had.

People looked at me differently after that. The fear was gone. But there was still my voice.

Then I found Jean, a professional voice coach to soften my deep raspy voice which was hard work. To my surprise, Jean recommended me for voice work on animated cartoons, anime and such. Of course, what parts did they have me play? Usually the devil or a demon. Occasionally, I'd play the part an alien warlord. Not much of a difference. I could complain about vocal typecasting, but now I earn some nice residuals.
I signed up for my SAG card under the name Cal Gronock. To register, the union needed a first and last name. Daemons rarely need one. But I guess I'm more than a daemon now.

My life has definitely improved. I even met a young lady. Her name is Helen. We've been dating for a few weeks. Nothing too serious. Just the occasional movie and dinner. She particularly likes superhero films.
Then last week, after the movie, Helen and I took a walk. The evening air was cool and quite pleasant. It was late and some thug decided to take advantage of the darkness. He jumped out in front of us and pulled a knife. More like a machete.

Over the centuries, I'd faced plenty of weapons. Knives. Swords. Lances. And more than my share of pitchforks. As I'm not particulary thin-skined, sharp

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metal doesn't faze me. But to threaten sweet Helen, that made me angry. In my rage, I grabbed the machete by the blade. As I twisted it, my claws grew. My head became heavier. I realized my horns had grown back too.

The mugger ran away. I closed my eyes and hung my head. Had Helen already run off?

I turned slowly to see Helen looking up at me, her eyes wide.

As softly as I could, I asked, "Are you okay?"

"Wow, you're like the Hulk," she said.

"You're not afraid?" I asked.

She squinted. I couldn't tell what she was thinking.

"Can I touch them?" she asked.

"Excuse me?"

She gestured upward toward my horns.

"If you like." I shrugged.

She caressed them gently, as if she were afraid she might break them. I had never had anyone caress my horns before. I kind of liked it. Very soothing. Then she stopped.

"Cal," she said, "I think we need to talk. Want to come up to my place for some coffee?"

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things have meaning and value when you put them in the hands of an artist."

Laika confirmed that it will never use generative A.I. in its films: "AI is theft. It is the ingestion of years of human creativity and ingenuity, vomited back. It has no humanity or spirit." I applaud Travis Knight and Laika for taking this stand.

Why should anyone spend the time to master their craft if their job will be taken away by A.I. If, as a society we allow this to happen, everything will become A.I. slop. I encourage everyone to non-A.I. projects like Wildwood. It is commitment to the human spirit and soul.



A scene from Laika's *Coraline* (2009)

Off the Shelf

Introducing the Scarlet Scrapper

By Leonard Apa

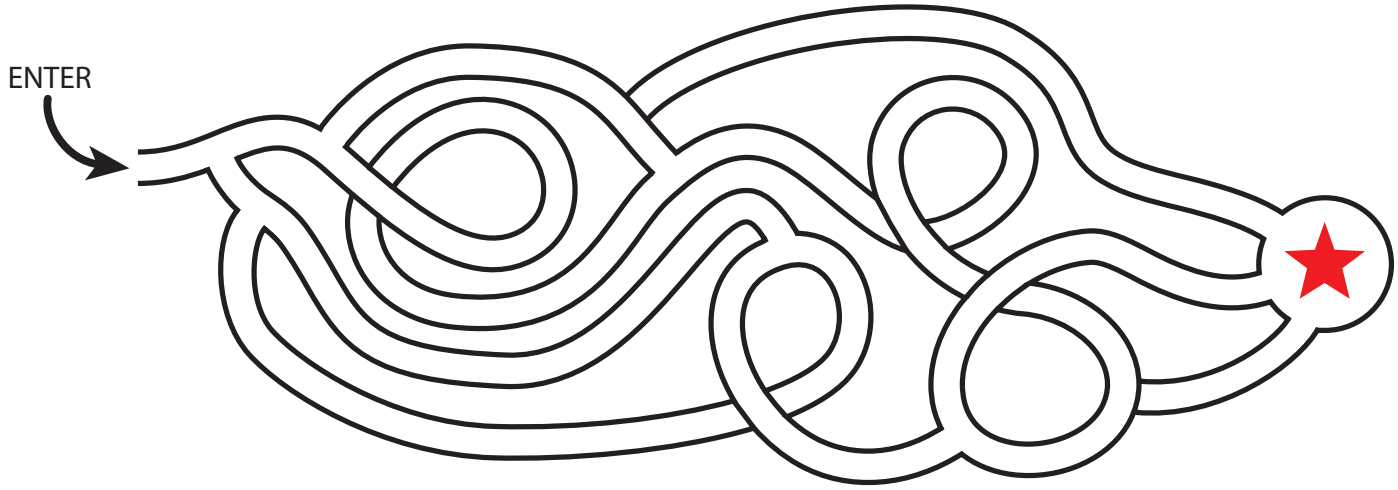


Thomas Malloy has just witnessed the worst trauma a child can suffer. With nowhere to turn he seeks out the only man he feels can help him, The Scarlet Scrapper! The trouble is that Frank Hodge is no kind of hero, he just plays one on the radio. Hodge, a veteran who drinks too much, is dealing with his own inner demons. Now he must decide if he will continue down the disastrous path he has been on since returning from the war, or if he can become the hero Thomas needs him to be. A story of action, adventure and heart, where hero and villain collide in a showdown for an innocent boy's life.

Learn more at https://leonardapa-author.weebly.com.

MENTAL WORKOUT

Loopy Maze



Supernatural Beings Wordsearch

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

ANGEL
BANSHEE
DAEMON
DEMON
DEVIL
DJINN
ELF
FAIRY
GENIE
GHOST
GREMLIN
GRIFFIN
PHOENIX
SPRITE
WRAITH

You Are a Winner!

No, I'm not some sweepstakes surprise patrol representative. And, I certainly don't mean any of that pseudo-psychological, esteem-building stuff. You really are the winner of one of the most grueling competitions in the world. Think back to health class. Yes, when a man loves a woman…blah-blah-blah…there is an eruption of millions of sperm, all competing against one another in a literal do-or-die, winner-take-all competition. (I'm waiting for someone to try turning this into a reality series.) In any case, congratulations! You were that winning sperm!

Now, please don't think this is some male-oriented, testosterone-drenched vision. Remember, there are girl sperm too. If you are female, be proud you beat millions of boys before they ever had a chance to pull on your pigtails. (And please, no survivor's guilt allowed.)

So, if you are alive and reading this, you should feel pretty damn proud. You were the Little Sperm Who Could. You made it to the egg, which was your ticket into the big world. Congratulations!



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.

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