

Worm Enters Brain

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Bookish JORDAN BOONE, 30s, plugs a microphone into his computer. After a few adjustments, he's ready for broadcast.

He dims the lights and tilts his thick eyeglasses into place.

Recording starts. A quick burst of introductory theme music.

JORDAN

Jordan Boone here with another episode of "Wordsmiths," your resource for the writer's craft.

The intro music fades. Jordan leans closer to the mic.

JORDAN

We've got a compelling topic for tonight's podcast: Artificial Intelligence and writing.

A cordial, neighborly tone of voice.

JORDAN

Here are my first questions: How well can a machine replicate the storytelling process? And can the next bestselling novel or Oscar winning script be written via A.I.?

Jordan inches closer to the glow of his computer monitor.

JORDAN

Well, to test this out, I teamed up with some of my computer buddies to have an A.I. program write a story.

A slight smirk.

JORDAN

And you're going to hear part of that A.I. composition right now. You can judge for yourself whether it's of human quality or not.

Jordan cues up a track on his computer.

JORDAN

I'm going to let the synthetic voice reader on my computer narrate the story to you.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 Let's listen to just a short
 segment and then we'll evaluate.

He taps his mouse and a synthetic voice emits.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)
 "Snowy Crossing" by A.I. Joe.

The pronunciations are slightly off--typical of synthetic
 voices. Jordan turns up the volume.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)
 The sun rises on a cheerless,
 brimful January day. A man of no
 name walks alone in a snowbound
 field. The ache in his feet
 compounds, but his heart is chock-
 full.

Jordan stops the audio.

JORDAN
 Chock-full of what? That's kind of
 bizarre word choice, isn't it?

With a mouse click, the story resumes.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)
 A chill, no coat, however stout.
 Onward he makes his way. Resolute.

JORDAN
 Plausible?

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)
 Around the curve he spots a fowl,
 just as he had designs upon.

Jordan interrupts

JORDAN
 I think the National Book Award
 will not be going to a robot
 anytime soon, but let's hear more.

The synthetic voice drones on, but the words become muffled.
 Jordan zones out/lets the words wash over him.

The computer monitor shines. Jordan's face reflects in the
 darker corner of the glass. Zoned out.

Then Jordan snaps back to attention. The words of the story
 become clear once again.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)
 A trap. Jaws wedge into flesh.
 Shackled. Compelled. No longer in
 control of his wits. Sundown.

JORDAN
 Wait. What?

His lips twist. He seems mesmerized by what he just heard and tries to repeat it.

JORDAN
 A trap? Jaws wedge into flesh?
 Shackled. Compelled. No longer in
 control of his wits. Sundown?

He tries to concentrate.

JORDAN
 I need to hear that again.

He rewinds. The synthetic voice repeats hypnotically.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)
 A trap. Jaws wedge into flesh.
 Shackled. Compelled. No longer in
 control of his wits. Sundown.

Jordan straightens up. The monitor's glow intensifies, casting new and strange shadows across Jordan's features.

JORDAN
 A trap?

Jordan searches his desk, retrieves a marker, pulls off cap.

JORDAN
 Jaws wedge into flesh...What's that
 all about?

With the marker Jordan scrawls on his face--crazy, random lines and circles. Around and around. Nose, cheeks, brow. He can't stop himself.

JORDAN
 Shackled. Compelled. No longer in
 control of his wits. Sundown.

He stops drawing. Confusion and alarm spread over his magic-markered face. He stammers.

JORDAN
 Something weird just happened. You
 can't see it, but...

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)

A trap...

Jordan spits out the rest.

JORDAN

Jaws wedge into flesh.

He snatches a roll of tape, pulls out a long section, and wraps it around his head.

JORDAN

Shackled. Compelled.

He pulls the tape across his nose and cheeks.

JORDAN

No longer in control of his wits.
Sundown.

He drops the tape roll. He looks half mummified. His eyes stare out in shock. What just happened?

The synthetic voice returns--still hypnotic. Jordan chants in unison with it. A horrifying, maddening duet...

JORDAN

A trap. Jaws wedge into
flesh. Shackled. Compelled.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)

A trap. Jaws wedge into
flesh. Shackled. Compelled.

Jordan grasps a stapler off the desk and wedges the tip of his ear into the opening.

Crunch. He staples his ear cartilage with a painful snap. He cries out, but finishes his chant with the synthetic voice.

JORDAN

No longer in control of his
wits. Sundown.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)

No longer in control of his
wits. Sundown.

Jordan's eyes widen with fear. He stammers into his mic.

JORDAN

Something's happened. My mind
is...Please stop. Please turn this
off. I'm not myself...the words...

He reaches for the power cord. Tries to yank it.

The synthetic voice returns.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)

A trap.

Jordan releases the cord. Powerless to act.

JORDAN

A trap.

Jordan grasps a scissors from a desk drawer. Sharp. Pointed. Hand trembling, he aims it straight at his neck.

JORDAN

No. Please.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)

Jaws wedge into flesh.

JORDAN

Wedge into flesh...Sundown.

A thrust. Punctured skin. Jordan's blood hits the microphone, keyboard and screen. He gurgles and thuds onto the floor.

The monitor glows. The microphone hums. Blood spreads.

INT. SYLVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sylvia, 20s, sits at a desk piled high with grad school books and papers. From her device flows Jordan's podcast.

JORDAN (V.O.)

We've got a compelling topic for tonight's podcast: Artificial Intelligence and writing.

Sylvia nods. Cool. She's down for that.

JORDAN (V.O.)

Here are my first questions: How well can a machine replicate...

As Sylvia listens to Jordan's voice, the contents of her desk come into greater focus.

Among her piles of paper is a pair of scissors, not as sharp as the ones Jordan had, but dangerous enough.

No blood on them...yet. But the podcast isn't finished.

SYNTHETIC VOICE (V.O.)

A trap...

FADE OUT: