

Lupine Humor: A Challenge

The Urth list — 15 messages, 9 voices, 06 May 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3219>

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 06 May 2002, 15:56

In among all the serious discussion, I'd like to toss out something fun.

Now and again in reading (and more often in rereading) texts Lupine, I find the literary equivalent of an Easter egg in software, a joke (along the lines of Zelazny's infamous Shan-hitting fit, but far more subtle): something that

you only realize is a joke if you squint at it from the correct angle. None of these have made me faint, but I do not claim to be a strong man.

Presumably, most of you have seen some of these also. I'd like to challenge as many of you as possible to post your favorite example.

(In honesty, I'd like to collect them and cobble together an article on Wolfe's odd sense of humor.)

To roll the ball, the following is my own personal favorite. It comes from NIGHTSIDE THE LONG SUN (p.120 of the original h/c edition), as Silk is looking down from the roof of Blood's house, before his first meeting with Mucor:

...the talus rolled into view. He froze until it had passed. There was a chance, of course, that it had concealed, upward- or rearward-directed eyes; Maytera Marble had once mentioned such features in connection with Maytera Rose. But that, too, seemed less than probable.

I presume you all know what Marble actually said about Rose...

Jason Voegele — 06 May 2002, 17:28 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Now and again in reading (and more often in rereading) texts Lupine, I find the literary equivalent of an Easter egg in software, a joke (along the lines of Zelazny's infamous Shan-hitting fit, but far more subtle): something that you only realize is a joke if you squint at it from the correct angle.

[...]

Presumably, most of you have seen some of these also. I'd like to challenge as many of you as possible to post your favorite example.

I don't know if it's intended as a joke, but one of my favorite such "squinty" moments is in ON BLUE'S WATERS when Horn tells us that there was rumored to be a third book written about Silk (apart from Horn and Nettle's book and the book written by Scleroderma). He tells us it was written by a man in Urbasecundus.

Urbasecundus, of course, meaning "Second City". Do you know anybody who's written a book about Silk and that hails from Chicago, which is also called the "Second City"?

I'm also fond of the dig at Hartwell (I think?) at the end of EXODUS FROM THE LONG SUN...the reference to "Starcrosser's Landfall".

Jason Voegele

Roy C. Lackey — 06 May 2002, 19:57 · follows Jason Voegele

Dan'I wrote:

Presumably, most of you have seen some of these also. I'd like to challenge as many of you as possible to post your favorite example.

I don't suppose it's really a joke, and it's not that subtle, but I've always found it funny; it's one of Wolfe's little digs at the eggheads of academe, from CASTLEVIEW (pp. 36-37). Lisa Solomon is talking about the fireplace:

"Do you know, I read just today that open fires don't actually heat a building? It seems they draw in more cold air than they warm; just think of all those ignorant people who froze themselves to death, and never realized it, for thousands of years."

-Roy

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 06 May 2002, 20:05 · follows Roy C. Lackey

I don't suppose it's really a joke, and it's not that subtle, but I've always found it funny; it's one of Wolfe's little digs at the eggheads of academe, from CASTLEVIEW (pp. 36-37). Lisa Solomon is talking about the fireplace:

"Do you know, I read just today that open fires don't actually heat a building? It seems they draw in more cold air than they warm; just think of all those ignorant people who froze themselves to death, and never realized it, for thousands of years."

Huh. And I took it as more of a dig at Lisa -- because she's right as far as she goes, but Wolfe is enough of an engineer to know that "they draw in more cold air than they warm" is actually true for a house with any kind of central heating ... having an open fire in one room of the house can actually way raise your heating bill. (The best solution is a sealed fireplace with a passive or active heat-return system, which we actually have in our house, but that's getting way off topic...)

Roy C. Lackey — 07 May 2002, 07:08 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Blattid wrote:

"Do you know, I read just today that open fires don't actually heat a building? It seems they draw in more cold air than they warm; just think of all those ignorant people who froze themselves to death, and never realized it, for thousands of years."

Huh. And I took it as more of a dig at Lisa -- because she's right as far as she goes, but Wolfe is enough of an engineer to know that "they draw in more cold air than they warm" is actually true for a house with any kind of central heating ... having an open fire in one room of the

house can actually way raise your heating bill.

That reminds me of the professor who, about thirty years ago, _proved_ mathematically that the Apollo moon landings were a physical impossibility. :-)

Ann Schindler was cold and wet. As she and Wrangler drove to the "rambling fieldstone building" where Lisa and the girls stayed, she imagined a "red-hot pot-bellied stove in a bunkhouse". When she entered the house, what she found instead was "a wide rustic room, one wall of which was mostly fireplace; it held a bigger, redder, hotter fire than Ann could ever have imagined". Ann said she wanted to sit by the fireplace, which is when Lisa made her comment.

I have no doubt whatsoever that Wolfe was ridiculing the author of the assertion Lisa read about. I doubt seriously that that ranch house had any sort of central heating; and I know for a fact that all those "ignorant people who froze themselves to death, and never realized it, for thousands of years" didn't. For uncounted generations all that kept people from freezing to death in the winter _were_ the "open fires" in the hearths of their homes. I am even more certain of that than I am of Neil Armstrong.

-Roy

Nigel Price — 07 May 2002, 11:51 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Blattid wrote:

I presume you all know what Marble actually said about Rose...

You've got me uncertain now.

I'd always assumed that Marble said something like, "That Chem must have eyes in the back of her head!"

Or did you think that a somewhat more robust sentiment had been expressed?

Nigel (busy trying to remember the funny bits, of which he knows there are many although he cannot now recall a single one - he was very interested in that business of the way open fires work, though)

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 07 May 2002, 15:10 · follows Nigel Price

I presume you all know what Marble actually said about Rose...

You've got me uncertain now.

I'd always assumed that Marble said something like, "That Chem must have eyes in the back of her head!"

Yeah, that's basically it -- though I was thinking of it a little more straitly -- "Never think Maytera doesn't see you -- she has eyes in the back of her head." (And, of course, Rose isn't a chem, Marble is; Rose is a bio...)

--D

Jerry Friedman — 07 May 2002, 15:47 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

--- "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

Blattid wrote:

"Do you know, I read just today that open fires don't actually heat a building? It seems they draw in more cold air than they warm; just think of all those ignorant people who froze themselves to death, and never realized it, for thousands of years."

Huh. And I took it as more of a dig at Lisa -- because she's right as far as she goes, but Wolfe is enough of an engineer to know that "they draw in more cold air than they warm" is actually true for a house with any kind of central heating ... having an open fire in one room of the house can actually way raise your heating bill.

That reminds me of the professor who, about thirty years ago, _proved_ mathematically that the Apollo moon landings were a physical impossibility.
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Ann Schindler was cold and wet. As she and Wrangler drove to the "rambling fieldstone building" where Lisa and the girls stayed, she imagined a "red-hot pot-bellied stove in a bunkhouse". When she entered the house, what she found instead was "a wide rustic room, one wall of which was mostly fireplace; it held a bigger, redder, hotter fire than Ann could ever have imagined". Ann said she wanted to sit by the fireplace, which is when Lisa made her comment.

I have no doubt whatsoever that Wolfe was ridiculing the author of the assertion Lisa read about. I doubt seriously that that ranch house had any sort of central heating; and I know for a fact that all those "ignorant people who froze themselves to death, and never realized it, for thousands of years" didn't. For uncounted generations all that kept people from freezing to death in the winter _were_ the "open fires" in the hearths of their homes. I am even more certain of that than I am of Neil Armstrong.

Right, but that's totally consistent with the statement that open fires cause a net loss of heat in otherwise heated buildings. Of course it's far better, when you're cold, to come into a building with a fire in the fireplace than an unheated building, but the building would be warmer (physically if not emotionally) if it had a stove instead. And of course, Ann is right that the area around the fireplace is the warmest part.

Jerry Friedman

Tony Ellis — 07 May 2002, 19:03 · follows Jerry Friedman

This one is hardly subtle, but I like it too much to miss the opportunity to quote it:

"Also he's big in aquarium supplies -- that's quite a small market altogether, but Ffoulkes is big in it, if you get what I mean." - Forlesen.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 07 May 2002, 19:06 · follows Tony Ellis

Okay, _I_ don't get that one. Would someone explain?

-----Original Message-----

From: Tony Ellis [mailto:LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk] Sent: Tuesday, May 07, 2002 12:03 PM To: urth at urth.net Subject: Re: (urth) Lupine Humor: A Challenge

This one is hardly subtle, but I like it too much to miss the opportunity to quote it:

"Also he's big in aquarium supplies -- that's quite a small market altogether, but Ffoulkes is big in it, if you get what I mean." - Forlesen.

--

Mark Millman — 07 May 2002, 19:51 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

There appear to be at least three jokes in "Under Hill"; as it's brand new, I leave it to you all to find them.

And thank you, Nick Gevers.

Mark Millman
(Nacre)

Andy Robertson — 07 May 2002, 18:17 · follows Mark Millman

Apart from the obvious parody of Ralph 124C41+ in the villains' name, I can't see any jokes. But is it not a notably Vancean story?

hartshorn

----- Original Message -----

From: "Mark Millman" <millman at heimdallr.dyndns.org>
To: <urth at urth.net>
Sent: Tuesday, May 07, 2002 8:51 PM
Subject: Re: (urth) Lupine Humor: A Challenge
There appear to be at least three jokes in "Under Hill"; as it's brand new, I leave it to you all to find them.

And thank you, Nick Gevers.

Mark Millman
(Nacre)

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 07 May 2002, 21:53 · follows Andy Robertson

POSSIBLE SPOILERS for "Under Hill" if you haven't read it yet.

Nacre counterchallenged:

There appear to be at least three jokes in
"Under Hill"; as it's brand new, I leave it
to you all to find them.

Well, there's some pretty sad Chinese-name-jokes of the level of the infamous "How Hi is a Chinaman".

(I'd have guess that "Gifflet le Fils de Do" was something similar but nothing came to mind and a quick search turned up this from the Prose Merlin:

And Kay served at tables as was reson, and two yonge
knyghtes of grete prowesse and were sones to two
casteleins -- that oon was cleped Lucas the Boteler,
and that other Gifflet, the sone of Doo of Cardoell,
which hadde be maister forester to Uterpendragon.

And he also turns up in Percivale and other old Arthurian texts, so that's just a straightforward name reference.)

I'd be willing to bet that there was something funny hiding here:

The princess lowered her eyes in shame. "There is
also my chop - my seal, perhaps? Has this humble
one committed some risible error, my lord?"

but I'm darned if I can figure it out.

my name's 12BFW-CY-, by the way, and I come
from the remote future.

H'mmm. That's a Gernsbackian joke -- a reference to "Ralph 124C41+" The "+" in Ralph's name
was a reference to his exceptionally high intelligence, wasn't it? Not sure what to make of the
mid-name -; possibly doubleyou minus cee would be tee, so 12BFTY-. Not much better...

At any rate, looking at the story as a whole, we see a smug, Gernsbackian superscientist is being
outwitted by a "man of the Dark Ages who show[s] a glimmer of intelligence," which I think is
kind of nice. It's not one of Wolfe's masterpieces by a long shot, but I like it.

Jerry Friedman — 08 May 2002, 22:26 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

--- Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <ddanehy at siebel.com> wrote:
POSSIBLE SPOILERS for "Under Hill" if you haven't read it yet.

Nacre counterchallenged:

There appear to be at least three jokes in
"Under Hill"; as it's brand new, I leave it
to you all to find them.

I smiled at "I like a man of spirit." "And he likes you." Also at "But anyone who rescues her can have her. The enchanter has promised her that." (Sure it's not a threat?)

Glossing "morning star", from a man who provided no explanation for "contus", might also qualify as a joke.

Well, there's some pretty sad Chinese-name-jokes of the level of the infamous "How Hi is a Chinaman".

Sad is right.

(I'd have guess that "Gifflet le Fils de Do" was something similar but nothing came to mind and a quick search turned up this from the Prose Merlin:

And Kay served at tables as was reson, and two yonge knyghtes of grete prowesse and were sones to two casteleins -- that oon was cleped Lucas the Boteler, and that other Gifflet, the sone of Doo of Cardoell, which hadde be maister forester to Uterpendragon.

And he also turns up in Percivale and other old Arthurian texts, so that's just a straightforward name reference.)

Ah, those quick searches! I never heard of the Prose Merlin. Anyway, it's kind of a funny name.

I'd be willing to bet that there was something funny hiding here:

The princess lowered her eyes in shame. "There is also my chop - my seal, perhaps? Has this humble one committed some risible error, my lord?"

but I'm darned if I can figure it out.

Well, she did make an error, from Sir Bradwen's point of view, but I can't see why it's especially risible.

my name's 12BFW-CY-, by the way, and I come from the remote future.

H'mmm. That's a Gernsbackian joke -- a reference to "Ralph 124C41+" The "+" in Ralph's name was a reference to his exceptionally high intelligence, wasn't it? Not sure what to make of the mid-name -; possibly doubleyou minus cee would be tee, so 12BFTY-. Not much better...

One to be if double-you (i.e., you two) not see why not? Since you suggested that that hyphen is a minus, maybe it means negative, meaning not?

At any rate, looking at the story as a while, we see a smug, Gernsbackian superscientist is being outwitted by a "man of the Dark Ages who show[s] a glimmer of intelligence," which I think is kind of nice. It's not one of Wolfe's masterpieces by a long shot, but I like it.

Didn't take a whole lot to outwit him. This seems like Wolfe-writes-a-children's-story. I'm reminded of Delany's "Prismatica". But possibly I'm missing something.

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 09 May 2002, 04:54 · follows Jerry Friedman

From:

"Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>

Okay, _I_ don't get that one. Would someone explain?

From: Tony Ellis [mailto:LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk]

This one is hardly subtle, but I like it too much to miss the opportunity to quote it:

"Also he's big in aquarium supplies -- that's quite a small market altogether, but Ffoulkes is big in it, if you get what I mean." - Forlesen.

Big fish in a small pond.

I'm not sure if it counts, but given the time of year it begins and the passage of time, TBOTNS can be read as an incredibly grandiose "What I Did On My Summer Vacation."

Jeff Wilson

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