

Frostfree & Copy Editing

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 01 May 2019

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6818>

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John Barach — 01 May 2019, 18:43

(Sorry if you got this twice. It didn't seem to go through; lots of bounding on the Urth list....)
Here's an example of how precise Wolfe could be when it came to details in his stories.
The short story "Frostfree" was commissioned originally for a Festschrift I was editing in honor of long-time Urth member, James Jordan. When I did the copy editing on the story, I noticed that "Frostfree" is not, in fact, the name written on the fridge. It says "frostfree" -- lowercase. And deliberately so.

I asked Wolfe about it and he replied, "The 'frostfree' on the freezer door is not a name, it's an ad claim. Stet."

"Stet." That's the word that I'd like to characterize all of Wolfe's future publications.

It's one thing for an editor to catch what he thinks might be a typo and run it past Wolfe for verification. But it's another thing to change what Wolfe wanted, even if it's as minor as capitalizing the word on a fridge. Apparently that mattered to him.

It just crossed my mind to check the published version of "Frostfree" in *Shadows of the New Sun*, and ... wouldn't you know it? An editor capitalized "Frostfree" on the fridge. It's on page 22.

In the original manuscript that I have saved on my computer, Wolfe had it like this:

"Good." Thoughtfully, Roy Tabak loaded a last corn chip.

"You've got a little plate on your freezer door. It says ?frostfree."

But in *Shadows of the New Sun*, p. 22, it's

"Good." Thoughtfully, Roy Tabak loaded a last corn chip.

"You've got a little plate on your freezer door. It says ?Frostfree."

Okay. That's really minor. But again, it mattered to Wolfe ... and they changed it, probably without asking him.

Why would it matter? Because it's the difference between a name (Frostfree) and a word written on a fridge that describes a feature of the fridge (frostfree). Wolfe is consistent throughout the story.

A few lines earlier, Jerry Pitt is talking to Roy Tabak about the woman in Roy's kitchen, who had a name tag that said "Frostfree" on it:

"She never said her name, only she was wearing one of those little name pins like waitresses have on sometimes."

"Keep talking, Jerry."

"Well, I read what was on it. It said Frostfree. All one word. I used to know a guy named Frost once. Was it Ed" Wait a minute. . . .

So Jerry thinks Frostfree is the woman's name. But when Roy talks to the fridge, he points out that the fridge has a little plate on the freezer door that says "frostfree." It's not a name. It's (as Wolfe says) an advertising claim, a description of the fridge. That's what the fridge herself says:

"It indicates, correctly, that I need never be defrosted."

Later on in the story, when the fridge is now a "fat blonde," Roy asks what her name is and she says people just call her "Fridge" and he sees and asks if he can call her "Frostfree." Capitalized again, because now it's a name. And from that point on, when she accepts that name, that's what she's called.

But the little plate on the freezer door? It's not a name tag. It doesn't have a name on it. It says -- in lowercase -- that the fridge is "frostfree."

Minor? Maybe. Who cares? Well, Wolfe did. Wolfe wanted it lowercase.

A copy editor or proofreader shouldn't have changed it without asking him. I did ask him, and he told me to keep it as it was.

John

P.S. I've spotted several other changes -- none of them significant -- between the manuscript I have and the version in **Shadows of the New Sun**. One that puzzles me is the change from "brunette" (which is what GW originally had) to "brunet" (in **Shadows** three times: pp. 29, 32, 33). Isn't the former usually used for women and the latter for men? At least, that's what all the dictionaries I've consulted tell me.

Marc Aramini — 02 May 2019, 02:11 · follows John Barach

From John Barach to the list below

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

From: John Barach <jbarach at aol.com>

To: urth <urth at lists.urth.net>

Sent: Wed, May 1, 2019 1:43 pm

Subject: Frostfree & Copy Editing

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