



The Funnies

J. Robert Lennon

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A comedy on the world of comics featuring Tim Mix, a struggling artist. Opportunity knocks when Mix's father dies and Mix is offered to take over the father's successful, syndicated cartoon. Question is will the son match his father's sense of humor, part of the cartoon's popularity being that it pokes fun at the oddball Mix family. By the author of The Light of Falling Stars.

The Funnies Details

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From Reader Review The Funnies for online ebook

Jeffrey says

The characters of the Family Circus, or a comic strip closely resembling it without copyright infringement, are brought to life, and the result is just as horrible as one would expect. This satire kept me reading, but what was most unique was the portrayal of the paranoid schizophrenic brother--done with impressive sensitivity.

Marc says

I enjoyed this novel quite a bit. In some ways, it's reminiscent of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, but in a more user-friendly kind of way: a death, an effort at untangling the complicated life of the deceased, a growing sense that the world is a much complicated place than the protagonist initially suspects. In this version of the story, the son of a comic strip artist inherits his father's Family Circus style strip when the father dies. Meanwhile he's doing all he can to reconcile the perfect family from the comic strip with his completely dysfunctional real-life family, to little avail. All told, a strong, well-wrought tale that gave me a greater appreciation for the work of producing daily comic strips, no matter how insipid such strips may be.

Sarah Obsesses over Books & Cookies says

Funny story about a dysfunctional family. Narrator Tim is the son of a famous cartoonist who draws a strip ala family circus. he dies, leaves his artist son the strip, who will stand to inherit the strip and all the money if he can submit successful strips. He doesn't want to do it. we meet his schizophrenic brother who may or may not be the legitimate son (still haven't figured that out) and his two sisters and older brother.

I like the writing and glad to have stumbled across this writer.

Jessica says

I wish the author had left out all the romantic junk. It was like he was following your typical BS hollywood theory that in order for a story to be interesting there has to be some sort of love found. In the end it read as bad as a schmaltzy chik lit book. This is too bad since the major plot line of inheriting his father's comic strip was strong enough to stand on it's own.

Scott says

This could have been a very good book. It had a great story: the cartoonist who created a 'Family Circus' type daily newspaper comic strip died and his son had to take on the family tradition. But we quickly learn that the family depicted in the comic strip is nothing like the real family. And then about half way through the book, the story seems to just disappear. Characters, which could have been an interesting addition to the

story, are mentioned and then never mentioned again. The family may be dysfunctional, but not enough to make the story interesting. By the time the story ended I gave up caring about any of them. I was just glad it was over.

Sherry Chiger says

My interest in comic strips led me to buy this book, but it was the wonderfully vivid characters, their quirky but believable interactions, and the crisp writing that has made *The Funnies* one of my all-time favorites. The developing relationship between brothers Pierce and Tim in particular sets this novel apart, although the detailed depiction of the cartooning milieu (the cartoonist conference is especially fabulous) is kudo-worthy as well.

Marfita says

First of all, Not Funny Enough. That could be just because I had a mother in a nursing home and generally my own family life was pleasant and loving, so I really can't relate to anything else.

Secondly, fairly predictable - like Pierce's story. That wasn't difficult to figure out.

Tim is a failed artist in a failing relationship. Then his father dies. He's not sure how to feel about it because his father made his and his siblings' lives miserable with the "Family Circus" style cartoon he drew. The jokes were lame, everyone had heads like watermelons, and the kids never aged. Naturally, the cartoon was beloved by many and all thought the real children had been just like the drawn ones. Instead, both parents were alcoholics and made their kids' lives at least partially miserable.

His older brother Bobby is a control freak, his older sister Rosa is hostile (but her husband is nice), Pierce is a paranoid recluse, and little sister Bitty is unnaturally cheerful. Their mom is in a nursing home, physically and mentally breaking down. Hilarious, huh?

Of all the kids, Tim is given a chance to continue the comic in his father's footsteps. If he can manage that, he will get his share of the merchandising as well as payment for doing the comic. Unfortunately, the syndicate doesn't have the incentive to go with him. If they hire a cheaper cartoonist, the evil Ken Dorn for example, the syndicate can keep all the merchandising proceeds. Tim hasn't drawn anything in years, preferring to create "installations." He must learn how to cartoon, not just draw, from crusty Brad Wurster. It all works out just the way one (me, anyway) would expect. That doesn't mean it wasn't satisfactory, just fairly predictable.

I shelved this under "NY State of Mind" because some of it takes place in Manhattan, a bit in Philadelphia, but most of it in New Jersey. And I don't have a Not Funny Enough shelf. Maybe I should. To be fair, I also thought *Sheila Levine Is Dead and Living in New York*, and "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" horribly unfunny as well. The former sank me into depression and the latter just made me cry through the whole thing although everyone else seems to think they were hilarious.

Heather says

When the author of a comic akin to Family Circus passes away, one of his sons is offered the chance to take over the strip. Despite being immortalized in their cartoon form as the perfect family, it becomes obvious early on, they were anything but. Anyone who has felt misunderstood by their family could probably find something to relate to.

Graceann says

Please see my detailed review at Amazon.com [Grace's "Funnies" Review](#)

Please click that the review was helpful to you at Amazon so that my rating continues to climb! Seriously, I'm getting a complex. :-) Thanks!

I didn't find "The Funnies" funny. I did like it, though. A lot. The ending was a little unsatisfying, but the dialog was intelligent and the progression was interesting. All in all, one I was really glad to get to read.

Vincent Desjardins says

Tim Mix, a man in early middle-age must face new responsibilities when he is called home after his father's death. The catch is that Tim's father was a famous cartoonist, a man who immortalized his family, against their will, in a terminally cute comic strip, very similar to "Family Circus." Now his will states that Tim can only benefit from the comic strip's profits, if he promises to continue drawing the strip himself. One of the most enjoyable aspects of this book is Lennon's thinly disguised descriptions of various comic strips and his satirical look at their creators. This is a funny look at the world of comics but more importantly a touching, and at times poignant look at the healing of a dysfunctional family and how one man learns to embrace the family that, for so many years, he had tried to distance himself from.

Marie Jensen says

You will never r read the Family Circus again after this.

Beckie says

this was recommended by a commenter at the comics curmudgeon, as part of a discussion of how dysfunctional the real family behind the family circus must be. the comic strip in the book is a fairly thinly-veiled imitation of the family circus so i was expecting it to be at best an amusing dig at that strip, but it was actually a lot closer to what i wanted the position to be. the parents were largely absent in this case, so it did focus on the different ways the children coped (or not) with being drawn as cartoon characters, and the disparity between their real and imagined families. it's also about figuring out how to have a life you actually want, rather than coasting along, reacting to old dynamics.

Emily says

How often do you read a book that's light and comical, but equally well-composed and clever? In the tradition of Jonathan Ames and Steve Martin, J. Robert Lennon infuses his narrator's story with witty quips

and frank self-reflection, then ties up the story neatly (but not too neatly), leaving the reader pleasantly satisfied. This terrific combination of ingredients shouldn't be so rare in fiction, but it is; fortunately it is very present in *The Funnies*.

Andy Quan says

I thought the premise was strong: a death in the family, taking on new responsibilities, a parody of the 'Family Circus' cartoon that I'd grown up with. But then I realized, upon reading it, that the themes felt too familiar: the child trying to find direction, the family that is not what it seems, the distant and mysterious father figure. I have to admit that I sped-read the latter part of the book. Seems like Lennon's style appeals well to some readers; but I somehow couldn't find that simpatico to get engaged by the prose. To each his own!

Lucy says

this was recommended by a commenter at the comics curmudgeon, as part of a discussion of how dysfunctional the real family behind the family circus must be. the comic strip in the book is a fairly thinly-veiled imitation of the family circus so i was expecting it to be at best an amusing dig at that strip, but it was actually a lot closer to what i wanted the position to be. the parents were largely absent in this case, so it did focus on the different ways the children coped (or not) with being drawn as cartoon characters, and the disparity between their real and imagined families. it's also about figuring out how to have a life you actually want, rather than coasting along, reacting to old dynamics.
