

A punny addiction

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(Based on a moderately untrue story)

It started out innocuously, like all grave illnesses.

Day 1: One day in class I sat down next to my friend, only to find him glued to his phone. That was pretty normal, and I assumed he was hung up on another one of his failed relationships. All of a sudden, he grabbed my arm in a rusty iron vice. Before I could do anything, a deep, gravelly voice emerges from the phone- "Seven days".

My friend bursts out laughing, telling me about this cool new app he found. Apparently it's an intelligent app that recommends context-appropriate humour. To me, it seems slightly weird for an app to overhear everything, but better a piece of intelligent technology than some shady organisation looking into my data.

Even though the ridiculous premise seemed fun, soon I realise the app isn't as effective as its marketing suggested. I know this because my friend hits me with a "yo momma" joke as the two of us are walking to the canteen. So much for "intelligent app". As I shake my head, I can't help but think of that strange "Seven days". Then again, my mind is probably still in disarray after that horrendous class test.

Day 2: Something strange happened today. When we were hanging out with a bunch of people at Shakeout, my friend did the unthinkable.

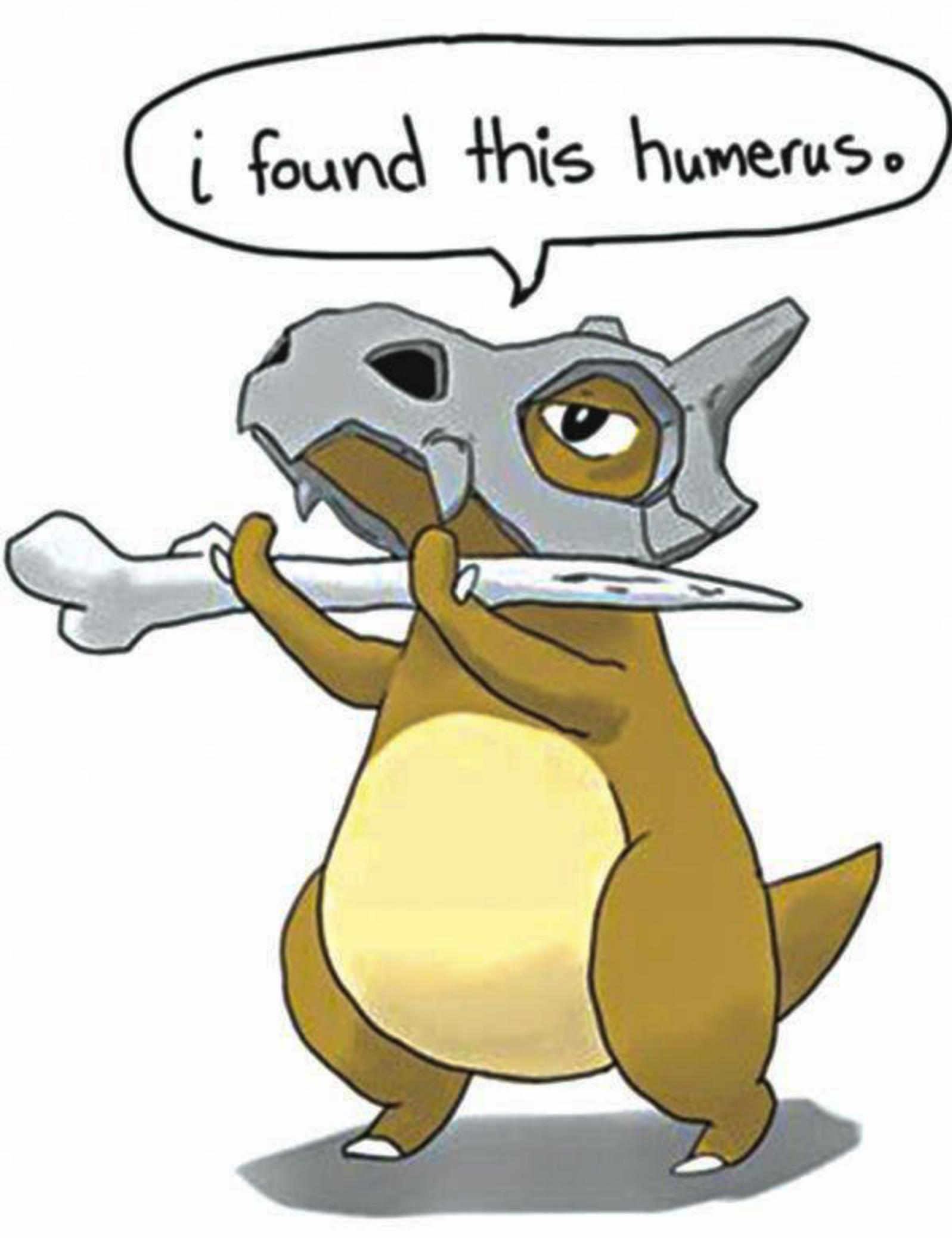
He made a pun.

This particular offence, which was completely unlike him, was committed after chancing upon an old schoolmate. When they remarked how my friend was getting an almost skeleton-esque physique, he started fidgeting. It was subtle, but noticeable enough for me to spot. As soon as socially acceptable, he discreetly glanced at his phone. Immediately afterward, he announced to the group at large:

"Hey guys, why is a skeleton a bad liar? You can see right through it."

The collective groan of the group was only eclipsed by his self-satisfied laugh. Someone threw a french-fry at him. What a waste.

Day 5: He's gotten very bad, very quickly. When earlier in the week he would wait to look for puns, now they were spewing out of him uncontrollably. I'm sitting a distance away from him, unable to stomach the constant stream of punny dad jokes. God knows what he'll turn



into when he actually has a kid.

In the middle of the lecture, the electricity goes out.

"HEY, WHY DID THE LIGHTS GO OUT? BECAUSE THEY LIKED EACH OTHER A LOT!"

I hide my face in my hands, trying to pretend I don't know him. The lecturer is exasperated, and not because the generator failed to switch on. As soon as the class is called off due to the lack of light, I go to see him. As I try to ask what the hell is wrong with him, I notice the bags under his eyes. The deadpan expression. The days-old clothing. Something is very wrong with him, and I need to figure out what. A brief inquiry reveals the worst.

That app is starting to consume him. He stays up all hours of the day looking through it, attempting to become one with the puns. Those are the one thing he can't handle, and now he's overdosing on them. In the middle of my spur-of-the-moment intervention, his face falls smack onto the desk.

When the rest of the class and I manage to get him back to consciousness, I yell at someone to get water. My friend, however, interjects weakly- "I want lebur shorbot. By the way, do you know what you get when you ask a lemon for help? Lemonaid." Most of the crowd disperses, regretting having gotten involved in the first place. Soon it's left to me to take him to the medical centre. When the attendant asked if he had any previous conditions, he replied: "I have colour blindness. It came out of the green." Great, now I would have to also make sure the doctors don't strangle him to death. Once the doctor examines him without any further incident, we are informed he had an infection of the bladder from lack of fluids.

"Oh no, once you get a bladder infection, urine trouble".

Once we were unceremoniously shoo-ed out of the centre, I got him home to his family, who could hopefully manage his strange addiction.

Day 7: Nothing worked. We tried medicine, we tried pseudo-medicine, we even got a witch doctor to show up and hit him with a *jharu*. In the end it was all futile; might even have worsened his condition.

Finding no other way, I deleted that app from his phone in desperation. Miraculously, it worked. Soon after his skin had unclammed, he looked less like a zombie, and best of all- he stopped trying to make incredibly cringey puns.

Let this be a PSA: be wary of anything that encourages people to use puns. If you see anyone engaging in this horrible practice, be a good friend and smack them upside the head. It's for their own good.

Wasique Hasan is starting a war against (bad) puns. Join him in his quest, or express your support for this noble cause at facebook.com/hasique.wasan

