



# The Drink Tank 448

ME





## ***What We Do in the Shadows***

### **What can I say about this show?**

It's fun, it's dark, and it's hilarious! I think I saw the movie what feels like about a hundred years ago, and then we started the series not that long ago, and I just love it! Since the movie, I've seen other things by Taika and Jemaine, such as *Jojo Rabbit* and *Flight of the Conchords* (also would recommend).

I hope you enjoy what our amazing contributors have put together for you. We are fortunate to have such talent available to be willing to be involved in our 'zine. We are so grateful to all of them.

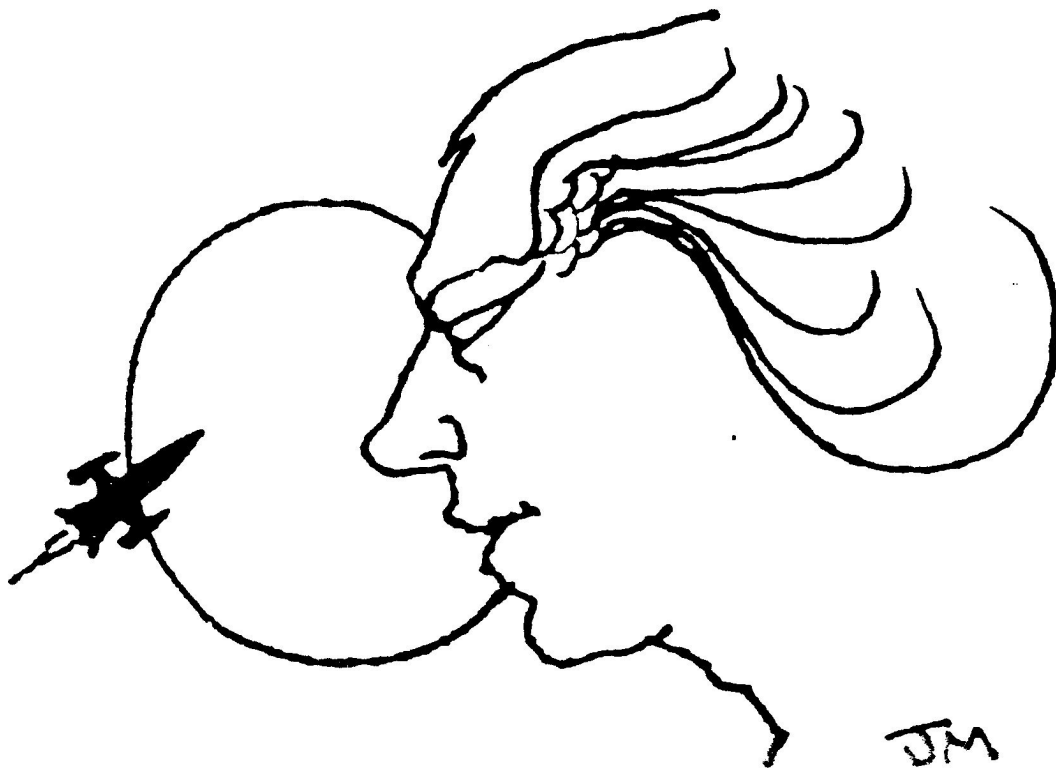
Please don't forget, our next issue will be on Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project and following that is the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Spider-Man. Get in contact with us if you'd like to know more.

Thank you, as ever, for reading!

Alissa

## **Cover by Meg Frank!**

**Editors are  
Alissa—Chuck—Chris**



**Letter-Graded Mail**  
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**By our loyal readers**

**And now, the wonderful Yvette Keller!!!**

Chris:

“Cozy Mystery Novels,” from issue 447, pointed out reasons why this delightful genre and its sub and sub-sub-genres are some of my favorite reads these days. Here are three aspects I wanted to comment on:

1) Explicit themes like foods, pets, and age ranges hook me by advertising up front what they include that I already love. As a tea lover, I can't get enough of the Tea Shop Mysteries by Laura Childs. As a woman of a certain hat color, Paranormal woman's fiction (featuring 40+ heroines who crave midlife adventures) literally speaks directly to me.

This is the reading equivalent of popcorn, nachos, or Milk Duds at the concession stand: when you need snacks (especially comfort food) you might as well buy exactly what you want. Cozies have something extremely specific for everyone.

2) Relationships are a core element of cozies, whether B-plot romance, friendships, or family dynamics. Fictional bonding, fighting, or falling in love reminds the reader to enjoy humanity in the face of death. And since it's cozy, someone's dead by the second chapter. Add to this that the genre rewards long series of six or more books, and the overall genre message is life (and the next book) goes on no matter what, so make the best of it. That's a sentiment we all need from time to time.

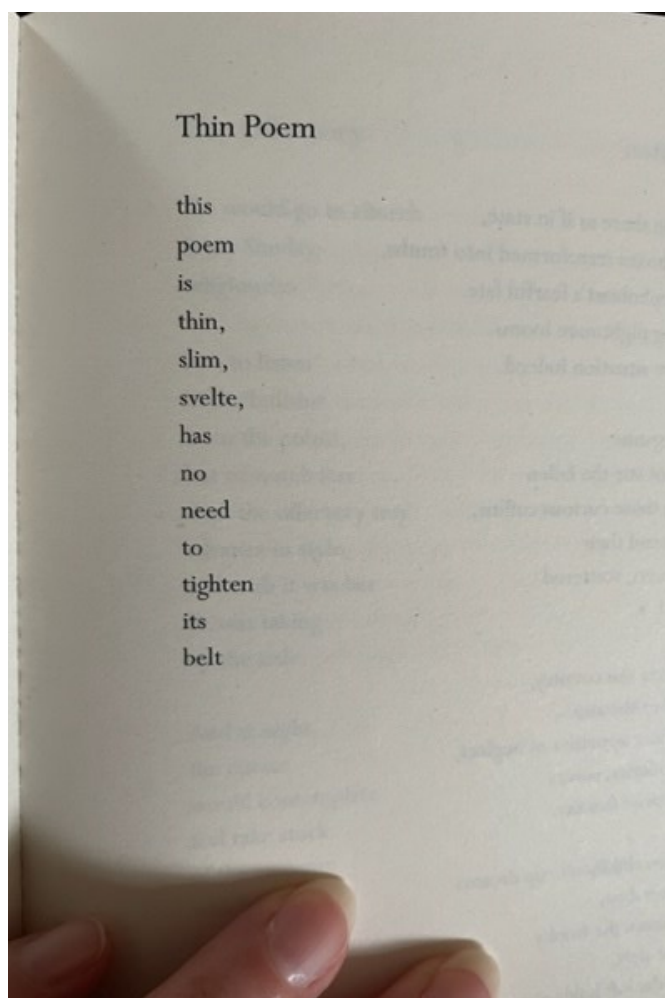
3) You wrote, "All of them that I read felt like they traded visceral for intelligence," and I agree this is the main attraction of the cozy! Authors who write cozies love mystery, puzzles, and problems (just like I do). But the relationship between the contemporary writer and reader often feels more personal than reading literary mystery fiction.

Having devoured hundreds of cozies (good and bad) and narrating half-a-dozen cozy audiobooks, the tone of a good cozy achieves a particularly intimate quality of reader engagement. You also point out, "They hang in a form that feels fresh, even if you can smell the wafting scent of 100 years of comfort mysteries coming off of them," and I think that has more in common with close friends trying to outsmart each other than an artful author, crafting the perfect turn of phrase that reveals and conceals in equal measure.

Cozies are like having a bestie that tries to throw you better and better birthday parties every year featuring treasure hunts, host-a-mystery-evenings, or DIY escape rooms. Red herrings, unlikely suspects, and unexpected twists are part and parcel of both cozy and mystery, but stupid puns, character gaffes, and insider knowledge from those loooooong series make readers feel seen; Like each cozy has been written particularly for them, with their specific tastes in mind. That is a unique, and in my opinion, absolutely killer kind of reader fun.

**AND Yvette sent this gem!!**

**Header art by Joe Mayhew, c. 1995**





**What If Mitchell Hurwitz Had Grown Up Playing *Vampire: The Masquerade*?**  
by Christopher J. Garcia

***Arrested Development* changed US television.**

Yes, it was *The Office* in the UK that made the mockumentary into the most widely imitated style of television and one of the all-time most successful. *Arrested*, one of the finest comedies to ever grace television, was built on a premise that was never 100% explained. It was clearly a documentary, but while *The Office*, and later shows like *Modern Family*, have acknowledged the “documentary” that is being made, in *Arrested*, it had built-in moments where the documentary-ness was built-in, like when Mother Lucile is about to flash the camera and the cameraman turns the camera around to miss the shot. Creator Mitchell Hurwitz was clearly working with an idea that was really meant for people who understood the idea of what television and documentary production and presentation meant, and then delivered small elements that were meant to catch the attention of those in the know. This is a part of why every insider loved the show, and mass audiences didn’t catch on quite as well.

*What We Do in the Shadows* is *Arrested Development*. The characters are built the same way, on the same archetypes (well, the TV version of archetypes) and paths, and the plots are structured similarly.

The difference? The source material.

While Hurwitz 100% based *Arrested* on the experiences as an adult in the industry, Taiko Waititi and Jerome Clement were clearly influenced by the long tradition of vampire fiction for the subject matter. While *Arrested* is passably about the Bluth family and a set of real-estate deals, but it’s really about the various relationships between the members of the family, and the overarching idea of a documentary and how it interacts with those that are a part of it. In *What We Do in the Shadows*, it’s the story of a small clan of vampires and their life on Staten Island, but it is also largely about what vampire stories mean when they’re placed against one another and the cracks between them become obvious.

*What We Do in the Shadows* is a fun premise: a clan of vampires, three old European-type vamps and an energy vampire called Colin Robinson, are living among humans on Staten Island and in the Pilot, The Baron visits and demands that they conquer the New



World.

Well, it's the "Baron" and the "New World" both of which become more complicated matters of language as the show goes on.

The vampires come from different source material, but they all reflect various forms of vampire found in the role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade*. This is, of course, to be expected because they share the same source material: a century+ of vampire media. *V:TM* took it seriously, and *WWDitS* made a comedy pâté out of it. The leader of the Staten Island vampires is Nandor (I'm certain named after the logic condition) who is clearly based on the *Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula* film's eponymous character. Well, the character, not Francis Ford Coppola, who is pretty much a caricature these days, but I digress. Nandor is basically the prime example of what, in *V:TM* they call this variety of vamp Asamite or Banu Haqim, depending on what edition of the game you're looking at. He's the leader, but he's only minorly effectual. He's an exact reflection of the lovable loser in charge character that Michael Bluth is used as in *Arrested*. He's got a familiar who sticks around. He's got the power and makes the right plays at times, including in a fight with a werewolf, but he's completely out of his element.

Next, in both the power structure and the age bracket, is Nadia. She's a whack job. She's ancient, a Romani, and she's been making more vampires. She's got the lusty female vampire thing we saw so often in 1980s vampire fare, and if she were a character in *V:TM*, she'd be a Brujah. She's the least refined vampire type of the clan that we see, and she's nearly a perfect vampiric version of Lucille from *Arrested*, that is, the lovable loser who sets much of the story in motion and sets much of the action that the lead is forced to deal with in motion. I will also say that Natasia Demetriou is so dead perfect at playing the largely unhinged, but certainly held together by her placement in a clan, that Jessica Walters was so good at doing in *Arrested*.

And then, there's Laszlo.

Matt Walsh is a funny, funny man. He plays Laszlo, Nadia's former English aristocrat husband who she turned into a vamp and eventually married. He's 100% the Torea-



dor mode from *Vampire: The Masquerade*. He's kinda foppish, very full of himself, and he's the lovable loser who has a much higher opinion of himself than anyone else around him. In *Arrested*, that's Gob. He's such a strong character, and when there's a problem that doesn't come from outside the little clan, it's usually Laszlo's fault. He bares the gentle wrath of Nadia at times, just like Gob does Lucile's, and it makes for great comedy.

And then, there's Guillermo.

Guillermo is Nandor's familiar, introduced as a combination best friend and slave in the very first words uttered in the series. He is, no doubt, George Michael Bluth from *Arrested Development*, who is Michael Bluth's son, and is the lovable loser who is dutiful to the family, but always hoping for more and never quite gets it.

You'll notice the "lovable loser" is the archetype that every character has here, and it's a part of the show's charm. While you could argue that Nandor the Relentless is a powerful killing machine who is simply out of his element, in Staten Island, he really qualifies. It's an endearing character-type, and it's a part of how we can attach some sense of love to all these terrible people.

Well, terrible former people.

The fact is they kill and dismember all the time, they have no real sense of personal ethics or morals, but they are still the ones we follow, enjoy, and in some cases, love. That may be the television version of Stockholm syndrome, but I think it's more along the lines of recognizing the unreality of the scenario.

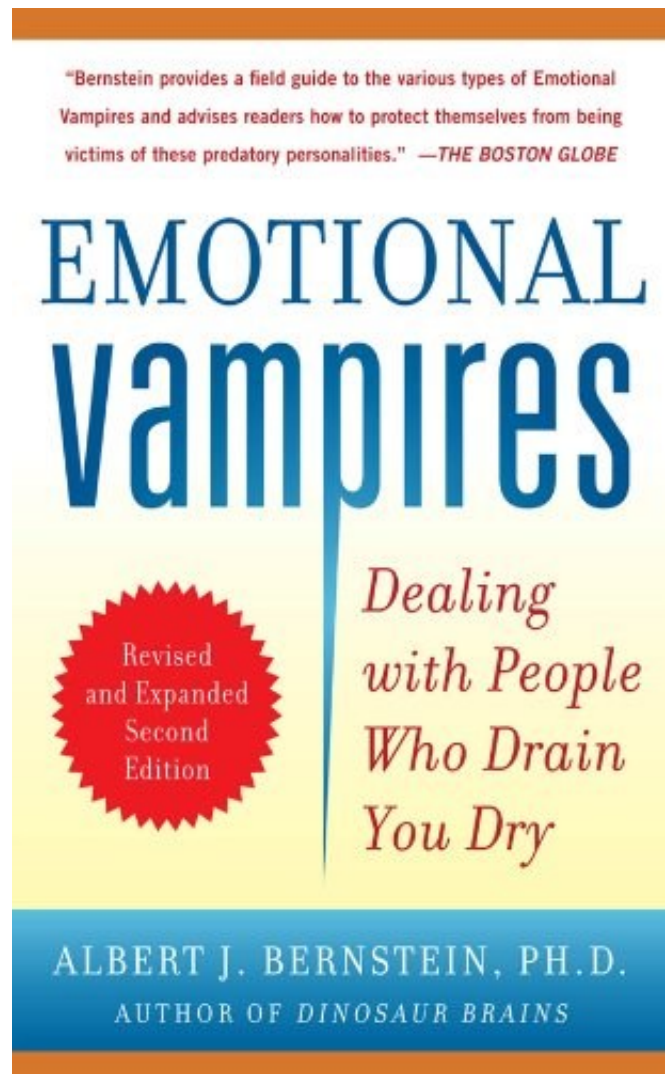
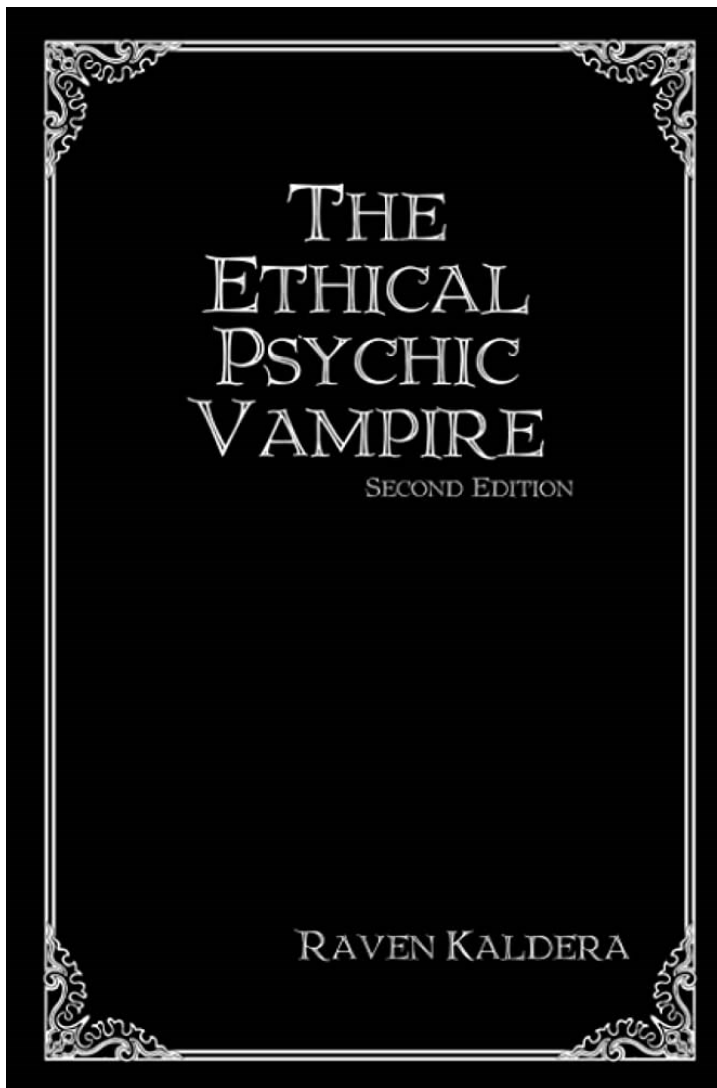
And part of that unreality is the documentary format.

We're supposedly watching a doc being shot by a crew that the members of the clan are often telling us to ignore. If you're making a doc and someone points out the crew making the doc, you're basically doomed to a specific kind of work that's usually seen as either self-reflective or downright egotistical. These things fit in perfectly with the idea of *What We Do in the Shadows*, and so much so that they play with it. That alone makes this a great reference not only to the format, but to the very idea of the oft-portrayed powers of vampires in the media.

The show is smart, at times requiring you to completely grok the concepts that other mythologies have been playing up. The werewolf-vampire rivalry (and the pact of 1993) is full of *Twilight* references, many of which are so subtle I missed them first viewing, as well as what I'm pretty sure was an Anthony Boucher ref, though those have filtered down into the zeitgeist so much that they could have come from anywhere.

This is a blast of a show, and I can see why there are so many hard-core fans, and more than a few detractors. It doesn't demand you be an Ann Rice nerd (and have I mentioned my boss published her first work???) to enjoy it, but there's so much there for those of us who are!

Mostly, *What We Do in the Shadows* is a show that plays with sources and does it well. It would never have worked in any other era of television, not just because of the language and blood and subject matter, but because the brand of humor it deals in, post-modernist droll and often deadpan, only became viable on American TV in the last twenty years and was still feeling out the corners until very recently. This required *The Young Ones*, and *Dark Shadows*, and *Twin Peaks*, and *The Office*, and *Arrested Development*, and *SOAP*, and *Twilight*, and *True Blood*, and every other vampire film, and book, and play, and other thingies. It required the Internet to make us aware of the weirdness that are modern subcultures, which is a part of what the show explores deep down, looking at what a group that is isolated in unfamiliar waters and still trying to make their mark. It's an impressive piece of metafiction wrapped-up in a brilliant piece of traditional comedy, and nothing is better than that. Is it?



**Colin Robinsons Among Us: A Brief Look at Psychic Vampires in the Real World**  
by Chuck Surface

**By far, the most interesting and entertaining character on** *What We Do in the Shadows* must be Colin Robinson, portrayed by Mark Proksch. Unlike the bloodsuckers with which he shares a Staten Island abode, Colin sustains himself by draining others of life energy, not blood. Not traditionally immortal, energy vampires like Colin die then “regenerate” every 100 years, a unique reproductive method, even among cryptids. I mean, the offspring essentially is the same person, a strange cloning analog most assuredly. Colin possesses other supernatural powers. He can transform into a gecko, levitate, and throughout his century-long lifespan he remains ageless. Of course, the more psychic energy he consumes the stronger he becomes.

Energy vampires have extraordinary manipulation skills. They engage in windy monologues, trite humor, and other maddening behaviors all pointed toward driving their victims into extreme states of boredom or annoyance, creating the energy they can draw into themselves for sustenance. We’ve witnessed Colin directing this feeding activity toward the show’s traditional vampires, at times making him a less than ideal housemate.

Energy vampires aren’t a concept created for *What We Do in the Shadows*. Like the traditional vampires with which he rooms, Colin’s type populates folklore and literature. The vampires from Nancy Collins’s *Sonja Blue* series, for example, feed off their victims’





fear while draining blood. Then there are the alien psychic vampires from Colin Wilson's *The Space Vampires*, the inspiration for the film *Lifeforce* (1985). Most strikingly, however, Colin Robinson's ilk has bases in real life.

Links related to two books immediately appeared when I entered "psychic vampire" into a search engine. The first, Raven Kaldera's *The Ethical Psychic Vampire, 2nd Edition* deals with actual energy

vampires that walk among us here in mundane reality. There are two types of psychic vampires. Primary vampires without the conversion circuits needed to change outside energy into psychic fare. Secondary vampirism, then, is learned behavior picked up through illness, trauma, addictions, or other occurrences that drive energies low. Kaldera, a psychic vampire himself, explains that such vampires aren't supernatural. Instead, they lack the "digestive" mechanisms that allow humans to process life force, or "prana," received from the world around us. This energy flows from trees, rocks, other humans, all of nature, like water or electricity:

As you take in the prana from the whatever, your psychic circuits alter and transform it into something you can use (human-flavored energy) just as your digestive system breaks down and converts food into something you can use. Now imagine that you were born without a GI tract. In order to be nourished, you'd have to have your nutrients mainlined into your veins. You couldn't do this yourself, especially as a child; your feeding would be dependent on others for the rest of your life.

And so psychic vampires must gather energies from others employing special methods to "feed." Kaldera points out that certain "flavors" are more desirable than others. Anger, boredom, annoyance, and other such emotions are what he terms filet mignon. So, yes, like Colin Robinson these folks often work to generate these moods for enhanced dining pleasure, but ethical vampires abstain from agitating others for selfish gain, and Kaldera spends many pages outlining proper ethics for those living with this condition. Unsurprisingly, psychic vampires may be sanguinary, taking energy from others through the blood, but Kaldera stresses consent and safe practices throughout.

Kaldera's not alone in believing that this phenomenon is real. Communities abound nationwide, the most famous being House Kheperu. Interested souls can find many others on Meetup.com, or they can read further by picking up Michelle Belanger's *Vampire Codex*, which many consider the central text on the subject. Because, you know what? You can be a psychic vampire and not realize it.

To say I was skeptical while reading about the above is an understatement. But the second book to appear in my searches has become legendary over the past decade or so, and it's grounded in behavioral science, albeit for mass audiences. Albert J. Bernstein asserts that vampires don't rise from coffins and roam through the night. They're in fact your neighbors, co-workers, and they might even be "on your softball team." In his book -- *Emotional Vampires: Dealing with People Who Drain You Dry, 2nd Edition* -- Bernstein outlines several types who don't rise to the level of formal diagnoses for personality disorders but still elicit behaviors that antagonize, abuse, exploit, and outright drain those who encounter them.

Fans of *What We Do in the Shadows* have experienced the emotional vampires Bernstein describes, and this is where the genius of the show's creators shine. Viewers can identify people in their lives that act like Colin Robinson, who leave them so drained after encounters they can barely think or move. Hell, sometimes many – yes, including me – could have been Colin Robinson on occasion. Colin's inclusion into that small Staten Island clutch moves the show beyond satirizing mythical vampire tropes into satirizing those real-life entities who inflict psychological damage, who suck us dry in so many low-key or outrightly manipulative ways. We're laughing through our pain, and I for one approve heartily.

Bernstein advises readers how to defend against anti-social, histrionic, narcissistic, obsessive compulsive, and paranoid types. Colin Robinson doesn't fit into any of these categories, but no worries since Bernstein's characterizations are overly rigid and at junctures unkind. Nonetheless, I want to give his housemates *Emotional Vampires*, so they learn how to push back when Colin invades their boundaries during feeding times. Consider this garlic soup for the soul . . . metaphorically?

However one approaches psychic vampires, Colin's garnered quite a fanbase. I can't wait to see what develops for his character next. His "rebirth" arc over the fourth season constitutes arguably the funniest moments I've witnessed while watching sitcom television. Colin may have come with the house when the other occupants moved in, but he's welcome to stay both there and within our hearts. Just don't be afraid to interrupt when those one-man verbal escapades enter a second hour.

