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Historical

Emma and the Vampires: A Jane Austen Undead Novel
Jane Austen
Waynee Josephson
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In the annual glut of summer beach reads, Jane Austen's novels likely still hold a respectable place on many readers' lists. Austen's fictional recountings of the doings of her era's English society and classes make for a pleasant option for whiling away a few hours. *Emma and the Vampires* weds Austen to the contemporary preoccupation with horror for a result that is no less entertaining.

The original *Emma* featured the eponymous heroine's attempts at matchmaking, simultaneously winsome and comedic. Less than a busybody but something more than an observer, Emma wishes to bring romantic happiness to those around her who are still young enough to appreciate it. Her family's wealth and status in the village of Highbury is well established, and Emma seems to think that this should give her *carte blanche* in affairs of the heart. Her lifelong friend and conversational foil Mr. George Knightley chides her for her interference in others' lives, but Emma sees it as her duty to her friends to assist them in finding wedded bliss.

Then the vampires appear, courtesy of Wayne Josephson, and shenanigans ensue. Emma finds a new calling, and a different viewpoint on her own romantic future. Austen's works were among the popular books of her day, delivering common-sense commentary with the events described therein. Many readers undoubtedly compare Austen's stories to their own lives, and perhaps learn useful things thereby. Josephson adds a *soupcon* of the paranormal to spice up Austen's tale of romances gone awry, and achieves a work that is eminently readable and more than apt to produce laughter.

Josephson has had an interesting career trajectory, moving from Wall Street research analyst to screenwriter to novelist. "My retelling of *Emma*, aside from the vampire humor," he writes in the acknowledgements, "is an attempt to make this delightful novel accessible to

modern readers, especially young adults." His method of upping the ante when rogue vampires attack Emma and her friends is both silly and satisfying: a little silliness is a good thing, after all.

A delightful romp that fits neatly into the recent craze of parodying the Austen canon via the supernatural world, *Emma and the Vampires* is light but engaging reading for anyone interested in Austen or her work seen from a slightly paranormal angle.

J. G. Stinson