

# THE ZOMBIE RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

## Positive Role Models in the Media

It is hard to find positive depictions of the Undead in our often anti-zombie society, so we here at the Zombie Rights Campaign have compiled a list of some of our favorite works of art and entertainment showing the Differently Animated in a more positive light. Enjoy!

### Books:

Many Works By Terry Pratchett

Terry Pratchett has proven to be a pioneer in the Zombie Rights Movement, writing many stories exploring the complicated and yes, **human** world of the Differently Animated. Best known perhaps for the seminal work 'Reaper Man', Pratchett has continued to shed valuable light on the plight of the undead in his Discworld novels.

In particular, the ZRC recommends:

*Reaper Man* – A true classic of zombie literature, *Reaper Man* poses the living an interesting question: what if \*you\* became a zombie...what if, in fact, everyone started rising from the dead... and it wasn't so bad after all? As a bonus the book features the development and activities of a (fictional) pro-undead civil rights organization, somewhat like our own!

Subsequent books in the Discworld Universe to *Reaper Man* sometimes feature further adventures of Reg Shoe the civic minded zombie (particularly in the Watch series of novels), as he pursues a rewarding career in civil service and becomes a well-liked and respected member of the larger community.

(Some other Discworld books featuring positive zombie portrayals include *Jingo*, *Monstrous Regiment* and *Night Watch*.)

The Discworld novels also occasionally feature zombies, such as Mr. Slant, the longtime head of the Guild of Lawyers (and sometimes antagonist of Samuel Vimes), who, while not wholly positive role models, are nonetheless complicated and human characters rather than undead stereotypes. (see *The Truth*)

### Webcomics:

[\*Skin Horse\*](#) by Shaenon Garrity and Jeffrey Channing Wells – This comic, set in the same universe as the earlier Narbonic series, features an artificially created undead bioweapon named U.N.I.T.Y. as a member of a comically understaffed and underfunded government black operation. Though UNITY occasionally struggles with her cravings for brains, she is a valued team member and friend, and the comic reflects the complexity of Undead-Living relationships with a lighter, humorous tone. Special applause is also given to the thoughtful advocacy for workplace integration that *Skin Horse* quietly and nobly conducts. No more separate workspaces for the living and the Differently Animated, no more separate water fountains (though it's always a good idea to disinfect such things frequently). Living

and Undead alike can work together as a team, further mutual goals, even share a break room, all without calamity. This is exactly the sort of positive and uplifting, relatively peaceful coexistence the ZRC was founded to advance. Kudos!

**\*\*Unity won the Zombie of the Year 2009 award from the Zombie Rights Campaign**

*Overcompensating* by Jeffrey Rowland – Fan-favorite character Joanna the zombie cat isn't what you'd call a go-getter. She's lazy, self-absorbed, and spends most of her time sitting around like a lump.

In other words, she's just like any other cat. We here at the Zombie Rights Campaign applaud this even-handed portrayal of zombiism in the feline community.

**\*Joanna was nominated for the Zombie of the Year 2009 award from the Zombie Rights Campaign**

*Erfworld* by Rob Balder and Jamie Noguchi/Xin Ye – Erfworld takes place in an alternate universe, or perhaps dreamworld, which mirrors many conventions of tabletop gaming in our (presumably real) existence. As such it was only natural that it feature Zombies, or at least, the depictions of such commonly found in these games.

However, in the aftermath of the Battle for Gobwin Knob, the Croakamancer Wanda discovered a method to create what one might call 'perfect' Zombies using the power of the Titans themselves, and called these new, Undead people the 'Decrypted'. This is where it gets interesting from the perspective of the ZRC.

The Decrypted seemingly violate every 'rule' ever devised for the depiction of the Undead in media. They aren't rotting, shambling, brainless hulks – to the contrary, they possess all the intellect and ability they had in life. In fact, their Undead state makes them more desirable, as they require no resources for upkeep and possess a number of other abilities as yet unexplored.

Decrypted characters have since become an integral part of the ongoing storyline, and are always represented as complex and fully functional individuals. The ZRC applauds this expansion of the concept of Zombiism in new media, and the elevation of the Undead in game-related literature from simple cannon fodder all the way up to Dramatic Leads.

**\*Decrypted Prince Ansom was nominated for the Zombie of the Year 2009 award from the Zombie Rights Campaign**

*Ask Dr. Eldritch* by Evan Nichols – Ask Dr. Eldritch features a diverse cast of individuals living, and in some cases persisting after death (ghosts) in and around a haunted mansion which also serves as a nexus of multiple realities. This mansion is cared for, and the larger world protected from harm by the eponymous Dr. Eldritch, an advice columnist and Jack of All Supernatural Trades.

Fascinating and humorous as that is, the ZRC's interest in the comic mostly comes from a backup story that runs occasionally in place of the main cast, featuring a workplace with a mixed Living/Zombie population. Essentially this storyline can be thought of as Undead Dilbert, as it deals mostly with office comedy and break room humor. It also touches frequently on the struggles for Undead equality in such workplaces, and the oppression that Zombies can face, including such hot button topics as segregation and labor rights for the Differently Animated, as well as harsh and unkind treatment many Zombie workers receive from their Living superiors in the management class. For these reasons we

here at the ZRC recognize Ask Dr. Eldritch as a positive, if occasionally downbeat, portrayal of the Zombie Community and its many travails in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Comics and Manga:**

*[Princess Resurrection](#)* (Adults Only) – This hyperviolent romp of sequential art takes traditional tropes about the undead and the supernatural as a starting point for a story of mayhem, carnage and black comedy. The main character Hiro is a sort of specialized undead, a Zombie-like person who needs small infusions of the blood of fellow protagonist Princess Hime to survive. Combining drama, comedy, excessive gore and subversion of traditional tropes and prejudices against the undead, *Princess Resurrection* is a fine choice for our older readers. (Not you, Tim!)

*Deadpool: Merc with a Mouth* (Rated Mature) – One of the ZRC's favorites, *Merc with a Mouth* is a monthly ongoing title from the normally anti-Zombie Marvel publishing empire. Whereas those works, including the infamous *Marvel Zombies* line(s), represent some of the worst and most vicious stereotyping that the mainstream media has to offer about the Differently Animated, *Merc with a Mouth* embraces its Zombie character, giving him room for personal growth and cooperative, productive interaction with living characters, including his alternate-universe self. Highly recommended.

\*Zombie Deadpool was nominated for the Zombie of the Year 2009 award from the Zombie Rights Campaign

## **Anime, Animation and Television:**

*[Inuyasha](#)* by Rumiko Takahashi – *Inuyasha* is a very long-running anime and manga phenomenon in Japan, now being brought to a final animated conclusion in *Inuyasha: The Final Act* (available subtitled and frequently updated with [new episodes on Hulu](#)). *Inuyasha* principally concerns the adventures of a small group of heroes and heroines struggling against the demon Naraku in the Warring States period of feudal Japan; however, it also prominently features a love triangle between modern day human girl Kagome, half-demon Inuyasha and Lady Kikyo, a priestess with powerful supernatural abilities – who also happens to be Undead.

Kikyo is a complicated character, and one often troubled by darker emotions and grief, so placing her, and Inuyasha as a series, onto this list was always somewhat up in the air. However her prominent role in the final season of the show, and some of the actions she takes in her fight against evil, tipped the balance for the ZRC and we are happy to include her on this list of positive portrayals. We don't ask for perfect, idealized individuals, after all; even Zombies have their faults. We simply ask that they be given a chance to grow as people, a chance given to living people every day, and we're happy to say that Kikyo was given that chance indeed.

## **Artwork:**

Zombie Baby by Ursula Vernon

<http://ursulav.deviantart.com/art/Where-Zombie-Babies-Come-From-6979550>

An adorable depiction of a happy zombie baby being brought by a vulture instead of a stork.

The Zombie Rights Campaign will continue to update this list as it becomes aware of more positive or even-handed depictions of zombies in media. Thank you for your interest in Zombie-Friendly entertainment!

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