

## Holiday Gift Guide

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And be sure to check out the gay-owned ONDA Studio and Gallery, 2215 N.E. Alberta St. This year's Holiday Gift Showcase features lesbian artists Serena Barton, Mariah Ureel and Sierra Briano through Dec. 24.

The lesbian-owned Plain Jane, 2936 N.E. Alberta St., recently reinvented itself as a gift gallery. In addition to a diverse and exciting array of art, small items are being added to its offerings.

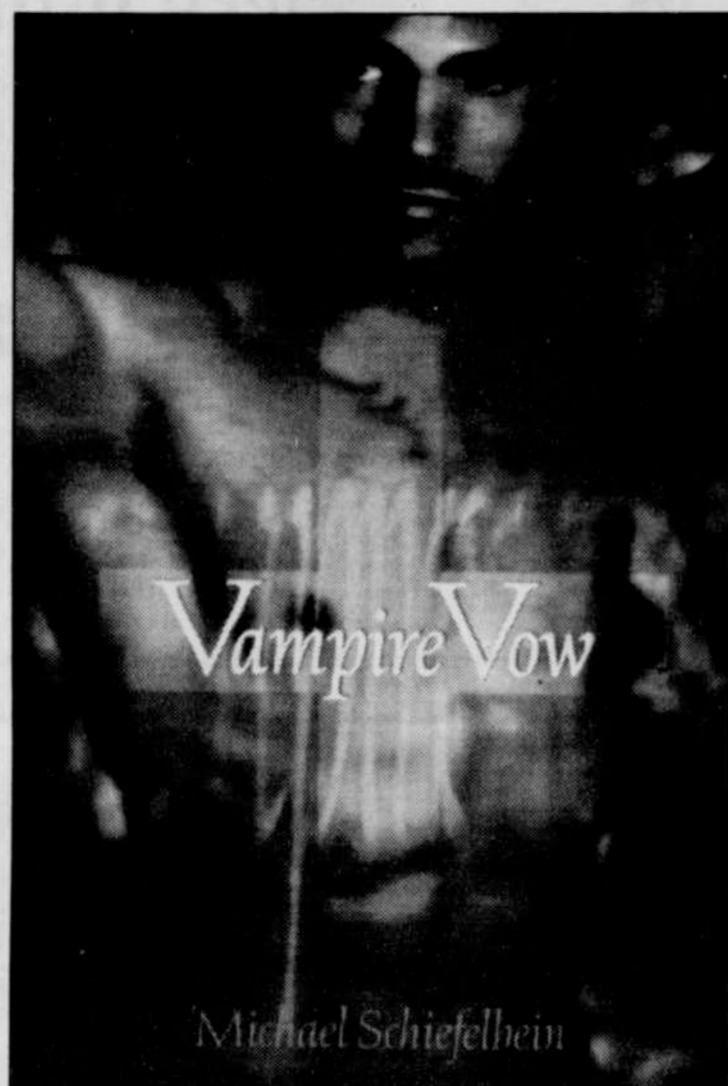
The new merchandise includes colorful papier-mâché bowls made by South African women with HIV/AIDS. The items are fairly traded, which means the impoverished artisans are being paid higher prices and given access to markets otherwise unavailable to them.

The bowls are created by the non-profit Wola Nani, which is Xhosa for "we embrace and develop each other." The organization facilitates job creation programs for those affected by the disease and offers community support services such as counseling and child care.

—Jim Radosta

**VAMPIRE VOW**  
by Michael Scheifelbein.  
Alyson, 2001; \$12.95 softcover.

If one really wanted to break a bunch of taboos all at once, how about this scenario: An ex-priest writes a book about a Roman officer who tries to seduce and rape his friend Jesus Christ, then becomes a cursed vampire and slaughters monks through the ages. That's *Vampire Vow* in a nutshell—and a nastily erotic nutshell it is.



Although flashbacks tell us the story of Victor Decimus' cursed past, the bulk of this short novel is set in the present, when he is a monk at an Appalachian monastery. There, he finally finds a man whom he loves and whom he also wants to turn into a vampire. But the seduction carries with it a price, and because Victor's dreams are haunted by an erotic yet forgiving Jesus, things are not destined to end well.

Michael Scheifelbein writes smoothly—even in the first-person voice—and the chapters fly by so quickly, I read most of the book while waiting on a car repair. A sequel is already on the way.

My one complaint is the brevity of this book; it seems like it should have been longer. But as every writer wants the reader to desire more, Scheifelbein did his job.

My job is to recommend *Vampire Vow* with a caveat: If you have issues with either bloody gore or the mixture of eroticism and Jesus, you won't want this book. More adventurous readers—and Anne Rice fans—will devour it whole.

—AM

### QUIET DAYS IN HOLLYWOOD Image

**Q**uiet Days in Hollywood is one of those films that almost seems to be ad-libbed, yet the plotting is so intricately intertwined that it had to have a script. An ensemble cast of eight people wending their way through Hollywood covers the spectrum.

Hilary Swank represents the low end as a wig-wearing streetwalker Lolita, while Peter Dobson sets the tone at the high end as award-winning closeted actor Peter Blaine (think Tom Cruise), who's in love with a screwed-up, coke-head boy toy. This young guy has a sexual encounter with a high-profile Hollywood type whose equally high-profile wife is having an affair with an asshole lawyer whose waitress that morning just

happened to be witness to a murder that connects back to Lolita.

It's all quite complicated, and *Quiet Days* tries too hard to fracture the myth of a perfect Tinseltown while indulging in some clichés of its own, but the performances are almost all great, and it's refreshing to see a film deal with the industry's gay closet.

The DVD and video feature the same print. The film was not shot in widescreen, and there are no DVD extras.

—AM



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