



Vampire Vow: A Novel

Michael Schiefelbein

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Michael Schiefelbein, after spending ten years studying for the priesthood, graduated from the University of Maryland with a doctorate in English. He is a professor of writing and literature in Memphis, TN.

An interview with Michael Schiefelbein author of *Vampire Vow*

"I wanted Jesus. That's how it started. Yes, the Jesus they built a religion on, the one they say rose from the dead."

With this opening sentence, it becomes immediately clear that this is not a typical novel, and by the time you have raced through the remaining 213 blood-soaked, terrifying pages, it is clear that *Vampire Vow* is not a typical vampire novel either.

Victor Decimus is perhaps the most horrifyingly amoral creature of the night ever created, and yet in Michael Schiefelbein's skilled hands he is almost as attractive as he is repellent. Combining sex, religion, and blood lust is a tricky business and not for the faint of heart, but as we discovered from our conversation with *Vampire Vow* author Michael Schiefelbein, he knows whereof he speaks:

Alyson: Your novel violates quite a few taboos-the sex-religion combination, the subject of Jesus' sexuality, vampires and Jesus-I mean, you have a man falling in love with Jesus and becoming a vampire to spite him. Are you nervous about reactions?

Michael Schiefelbein: Like crosses burning on my lawn? The thought has crossed my mind, especially here in the Bible Belt. But I strongly believe in a real, human Jesus who might have been gay. Who knows? And to me, the ultimate tribute you can pay someone is to desire him, body and soul. In terms of sex in the novel, it's appropriate. Victor, the protagonist, is a ruthless, passionate Roman guard who uses sex to assert his power. He's not admirable for that, but his fury with depictions of Jesus as otherworldly and asexual is justified. Victor certainly exploits the Church by posing as a monk and pretending to play according to the monastery's rules. But he also brings some flesh and blood-no pun intended-into spirituality.

Alyson: So the idea of Jesus as a lover isn't blasphemous to you?

MS: Some of the great Christian mystics saw him that way-St. John of the C

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