

Unholy Awakening by Michael Gregorio.

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The latest novel of Michael Jacob and Daniela de Gregorio takes Hanno Stiffenniis, the 19th century Prussian magistrate, into his darkest and most dangerous investigation yet.

Following the death of many citizens of Lotingen to an epidemic, including his son Anders, Stiffenniis is called to the grounds of a house where a young woman's body has been found at the bottom of a well. When the body is properly examined two small puncture marks are found in the neck and wild rumours about vampires begin to spread.

The tumult and instability brings the occupying French authorities into the picture, including Hanno's old collaborator and protagonist Colonel Serge Lavedrine, who sets out to help him solve the case and subsequent similar murders, and the involvement or otherwise of the mysterious Emma Rimmele and her ailing father Erwin.

No one writing at the moment evokes historical atmosphere for me better than Michael Gregorio, and this, the fourth in the Stiffenniis series, is the most gripping and chilling yet.

May there be many more.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh