



# Quiver

*Holly Luhnning*

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## **Quiver** Holly Luhnning

In sixteenth-century Hungary, Countess Elizabeth B?thory tortured and killed over six hundred servant girls in order to bathe in their blood; she believed this brutal ritual would preserve her youth and beauty. Danica, a young forensic psychologist, is drawn to B?thory's legend. She has moved from Canada to England to work at Stowmoor, a Victorian insane asylum turned modern-day forensic hospital. One of her patients, the notorious Martin Foster, murdered a fourteen-year-old girl in homage to B?thory. He cultivates his criminal celebrity, and Danica struggles to maintain a professional demeanor with the charismatic Foster as she begins to suspect that his activities may be linked to a cabal that idolizes the countess.

Danica's life in London becomes increasingly complicated when Maria, a glamorous friend from Danica's past, arrives to do archival work in the city. She claims to have discovered B?thory's long-lost diaries and she slowly reveals to Danica the horrific, yet fascinating passages. As Danica's career and her relationship with her artist-boyfriend, Henry, falters, Maria lures her into a complex social sphere. Unsure of whom to trust as her professional and personal lives become dangerously entwined, Danica must decide what she is willing to risk to satisfy her attraction to B?thory's ominous legend.

## **Quiver Details**

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# From Reader Review Quiver for online ebook

## Danika at The Lesbrary says

I don't know what I expected when picking up a book that so heavily features Elizabeth Bathory, but this was gorier than I was prepared for. The other aspect is the toxic friendship (with sexual tension) between Maria and Danica, which I always find simultaneously engrossing and unpleasant.

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## Robert Campbell says

At its core, this book has a confessional autobiographical quality, contrasting the exotic allure of serial killers and psychopaths that draws people into the study of psychology with the stark, quotidian reality of standardized protocols, objectivity and tedium that characterizes the professional practice of psychology. Psychometrics and bureaucracy give way to aesthetics, especially as captured in the seeming external fragility and delicacy of women that can mask a ruthlessness and strength of mind, inaccessible to men. As if to emphasize this last point, the male characters are for the most part weak and flawed, playing secondary instrumental roles. At the same time, a possibly excessive amount of description regarding hair, make-up, dresses and shoes somewhat detracts from the story - the word tulle appears too many times for my liking. In places, the narrative seems clinical and detached, and the course of events is rather predictable. However, this is a well-written, well-paced, economical piece of story-telling that balances the historical with the contemporary and the horrific with the beautiful.

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## Anna says

I did not like this book at all. It's well-written, but it just disgusts me. I am so sick of reading fiction about Elizabeth Bathory and the consistent glamorization of what this monster did. There were no redeeming qualities. It wasn't erotic. It wasn't sexy. She was a sadistic serial killer with a serious disorder. And yet, author after author glamorizes her. People may not think that's what Holly Luhnig is doing and she probably doesn't believe it herself, but I had to stop reading. I'm still waiting for the fiction book that will finally portray this monster for what she really was. Gruesome, unspeakable torture isn't art and it shouldn't be eroticized.

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## Matt Schiariti says

This came up as a kindle daily deal the other day and the subject matter really piqued my interest so I took a chance on it.

I'm pretty impressed that this is a first novel. I found the story based around a supposed cult that worships Elisabeth Bathory intriguing.

Danica Winston, a training psychologist, met the mysterious Maria while at a conference several years ago. They were drawn together by a mutual fascination of Bathory..her crimes, her beauty, her monstrous nature.

Prior to the events of the novel they were scouring Europe for Bathory's personal journals. The mysterious Maria pops back into Danica's life when she's finally found what they looked for for so long. She wants to write a book and she wants more for Dani. She wants Dani to leave her job and consult with her on the book. It would be 'her time to shine.'

This happens at a time when Danica is assessing and counseling Mr. Foster, a deranged killer that also worships bathory and brutally killed a 15 year old girl. Did he act alone or did he actually have help? And why does everything in Dani's life seemingly fall apart when Maria's around, just trying to help her?

One of the highlights of the book, I found, were the translated passages from Bathory's diary that Maria sends to Dani. VERY disturbing things. It's like seeing through the eyes of a perfect monster.

I also found Maria to be frustratingly fun to read. She obviously wanted to be the marionette to Dani's puppet which was very frustrating for Dani, but Maria's attitudes and actions were fun to read.

I do have a few complaints about the book though. While I liked the main character I felt her to be a little weak. She honestly follows Maria around like a lost puppy despite the fact that Maria (seemingly with good intentions) makes Dani's life a mess time and again. There are even flashbacks in the book where Maria treated Dani like garbage and she still kept coming back for more. It was plainly obvious that Maria was totally selfish and I was a little disappointed in Dani, a trained psychoanalyst, would just put up with that type of treatment and not see it coming a mile away. It's supposedly because she's fascinated by the whole Bathory thing that she puts up with Maria, but it didn't come across that way. She just seemed to get punished and loved coming back for more.

I also found that there weren't that many surprises here. I had a feeling which way the book was going to go and who was responsible for what early on. However, the Bathory journals and reading Maria's quirky dialogue made up for that.

Of note, the book is told in the first person PRESENT tense. I've read plenty of first person novels but not always in that tense so it took a little getting used to.

Overall, I enjoyed the book. It was a quick read with some good ideas and a good flow to the writing. I'll be keeping an eye peeled for further works from this author!

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### **Sarah E. says**

I don't know what everyone was talking about with this book being "slow" - I was hooked the whole time. I wanted to keep reading and keep reading. I like how it flip-flopped in time a little and I like how it included the diary entries of Bathory. I was just plain impressed.

It ended well and I am going to go looking to see if there will be a sequel. The story leaves it up in the air as if there could be a sequel.

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### **Nicola Mansfield says**

Reason for Reading: I already knew about Elizabeth Bathory and a thriller with a murder based on her crimes was one I simply *\*had\** to read.

Elizabeth Bathory was a 16th century Hungarian Countess who tortured and murdered young women and rumour has it bathed in their blood to keep herself beautiful. No one knows how many girls she killed but figures go as high as 650.

In this book a man, Martin Foster, kills a 14 year-old girl and says it was in homage to Elizabeth Bathory. Canadian forensic psychologist, Danica, moves to England to work at the criminal hospital where the killer is being treated. She has followed his case since the day it hit the papers and is thrilled when she actually gets to start working on his team. Danica has her own thoughts on his crime though, that he may have not been working alone and that he belongs to some sort of cabal that worships the countess. At the same time, Danica receives a message from an old friend, Maria, that she also is in London. The two had a falling out several years ago when they were working together in Budapest looking for the lost diaries of Elizabeth Bathory with plans to write a book together if they found them. With Danica's strange relationships with Foster and Maria her life begins to revolve around Bathory and her clinical observations of killers may just bring her face to face with with a killer on the outside, in the real world.

I had high expectations of this book and was really looking forward to the read. Unfortunately, I was very disappointed. The book is written in three points of view. The present from Danica's point of view, flashbacks to the recent past from an unknown source's point of view and excerpts from the Countess' diary. For me the book broke down with the second flashback as I figured out what the whole book was about and what the outcome would be at that point. Thus I found the rest of the book boring. Nothing really happens. There's a lot of talking and going places in the present, but no murders or crimes. The only crimes are the flashback to Foster's killing and then the diary excerpts; which are pretty gruesome reading but have no bearing on the plot, they simply are there for the violence factor. (No diaries have ever been really found.) The climax at the end is the only bit of excitement. I read the book through, though. I guess I must have found it engaging enough to do that, though I never found the book compelling or page-turning. I didn't particularly like Danica. She was weak, whiny and easily lead astray. Usually I would DNF a book like this but for some reason I read to the end. Sorry, but my final answer is ... Boring.

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## **Wicked Lil Pixie (Natasha) says**

Danica, a forensic psychologist, has left Canada and moved to England to work in a forensic hospital. One of Danica's patients is the infamous Malcolm Foster, who has been imprisoned for murdering a young girl. He's been surrounded by much media attention as his crime has been tailored after Elizabeth Bathory. Danica has always had a fascination with Bathory, which in part has been made worse by Maria, someone Danica met in her travels.

Once Danica arrives in London, she receives a note from Maria that states she has found Bathory's Diaries. Maria starts to insert herself into Danica's life, which starts many complications in Danica's professional life and private life with her boyfriend Henry. But Danica is in too deep with Maria and it may be too late for her.

I'm going to begin this review by telling you briefly who Elizabeth Bathory is:

"Hungarian Countess Erzsébet Bathory (1560-1614), who tortured and killed over six hundred of her servant girls. She often bathed in her victims blood as part of a beauty ritual designed to preserve her youth. The

Countess's famed "honey torture" involved coating a naked girl in honey and making her stand in the woods for a day. The honey attracted various pests, and the girl would eventually die from excessive insect bites and exposure. -pg. 93"

Elizabeth Bathory was a brutal mistress and ended up being bricked into her castle for her crimes. I have been intrigued by the legend of Bathory, so once I heard Quiver was based on the Bathory legend, I had to read it. I was not disappointed, Holly Luhnning's debut was the most brilliantly written thriller I have read in 2011!

Quiver reminded me of Silence of the Lambs meets Single White Female, in terms of the "dear god, what am I reading, I'm freaking out people" and then "Run Danica, get away from that woman she's straight up crazy". Alas, book characters don't listen to me, so Danica didn't run but it made for one helluva story! It drew me in right from the start and even when I wasn't reading it, I kept thinking about it which would lead me right back to the book.

Maria is one hell of a "friend" to Danica, you can see Danica wanting to trust her but pulling back. But by the time she realizes what Maria's been doing, it's too late. All I can say is DAMN. When this book all ties together near the end, your mouth will drop. You suspect things through the book, but once everything's been pieced together you want to shout "SEQUEL". It's been over 12 hours since I finished the book and it's all I can think of, it was just that fantastic.

In between Danica's part in the story, there are bits of Bathory's Diaries which are horrifying and graphic. \*Shudder\* but they are written in a way to keep you hooked, even when you want to do anything but visualize what Bathory did to her servants. There is a part that horrified me so bad, I saw horses on TV that evening and had a Quiver flashback.

Quiver is action packed and full of things you don't want to read about late at night, but you won't be able to help yourself.

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## **Sara Meehan says**

Oddly enough, "Quiver" makes two books in a row that mention Elizabeth Bathory. Or, as she's known in her native Hungarian and in Holly Luhnning's book, Erzsébet Báthory.

Bathory, for those who haven't heard of her, is a 16th-century countess who is infamous for having tortured and killed hundreds of girls before she was arrested and bricked up in her castle, where she later died. "Quiver" is the story of a young woman who is fascinated — really, you could say obsessed — with Bathory. Danica is completing the last of her training as a clinical psychologist, a field she entered because of her interest in psychotics. She's managed to get herself a job at a mental hospital in England, where she's assigned to work with a convicted murderer who claims to have killed his victim for Bathory. Danica's work there attracts the attention of an old acquaintance, Maria, who tempts Danica with what she says are pages from Bathory's diary. What Maria really wants is a more complicated question, and it's one that Danica will have no choice but to answer.

I was more than a little put off by Danica's interest in Bathory. The story doesn't work unless she's borderline

obsessed, but it's still disconcerting how little the extent of the countess' cruelty and monstrosity bother her. She blames her interest on a supremely safe childhood.

"Technically, I was fixated," she says later. For sure. When she reads scenes Maria sends her from Bathory's diary — scenes of unbelievable torture, total dismissal of the value of countless human lives — her reaction borders on aroused. (And, yes, there is a subtext of sexual tension between Danica and Maria, who resembles the countess in many ways.)

Without those diary scenes, this book would fall in line with the characters it describes, glorifying a woman who destroyed hundreds of lives and families simply because she could. With them, the reader is kept from buying into the warped adoration of Danica or, more so, Maria. (After I finished "Quiver," one of my first reactions was that no one would think of Bathory as Danica, Maria, and others in the book do. When I headed online to research some of the details of her story, however, I was shocked to find multiple sites whose authors defend her without denying her crimes. How sad.)

This isn't a book I'll be rushing to re-read, despite solid writing and editing. It certainly isn't uplifting, and the main character is both frustratingly obtuse and difficult to root for. If you enjoy horror and are a fan of movies such as "Hostel" or the "Saw" series (which I am not), you'll enjoy this book more than I did.

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## **Liv says**

[Dani, a psychiatrist, was the protagonist of the story. I wouldn't call her a heroine at all, because I saw her as a victim throughout the entire book - a victim of her own stupidity and brainless acts. It was so damn obvious that her so-c

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## **Christie says**

Saskatchewan native Holly Luhnning has written a compelling novel based on the shocking life of the Hungarian Countess, Elizabeth Bathory. Bathory, who was born in 1560, earned her shocking reputation for having tortured and killed over 600 young girls so that she might bathe in their blood and thus retain her youthful beauty.

Luhnning's novel, *Quiver*, is a creepy crawly book that follows Danica, a young forensic psychologist, who has moved to London with her artist boyfriend, Henry, to work at Stowmoor, a Victorian hospital for the criminally insane. Danica's patient is Martin Foster, a young man incarcerated for murdering a young girl as a tribute to Bathory.

Danica's fascination with Bathory grows when a woman from her past, the beautiful and duplicitous Maria, comes back into her life. Maria, it seems, has discovered Bathory's private diaries and as she translates them and begins sending the horrific snippets to Danica, Danica's life starts to shift.

We're all, to some degree at least, train-wreck fascinated by the heart of darkness. Danica's morbid curiosity about Bathory (and the translated diary entries are not for the weak-stomached, believe me!) is complicated by her attraction/repulsion to Maria. Maria is impossibly beautiful and crazy-cool. I didn't trust her at all, but I could see Danica's attraction. There was something sinister about her and always an undercurrent of sexual

attraction, too.

*Quiver* races along like the best thrillers, but it also has something compelling to say about art and that 15 minutes of fame so many of us seem to desperately crave.

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### **Renee says**

I was so disappointed by this book. I really wanted to like it. A crazy serial killer, Elizabeth Bathory diaries and a cult that worships her? What could be better? However the main character was obnoxious and in the end her life just plain sucks and she loses everything and the ending is depressing.

Also I HATE cheating and when the MC's boyfriend gets caught screwing someone else and he is cold and callous about it, well I almost put the book down at that point and refused to pick it up 1) because it was written so well that it actually hurt me and 2) I didn't find it needed to move the plot along, better to have killed him off, at least that would have been FUN.

This is one of those books where if the bad guy (or girl in this case) isn't going to get caught then they should at least have a "happy" ending. I wanted to MC to join the cult at the end and instead she picked the "right" path and winds up in an asylum.

It was one of the worst books I read in 2011, especially one with so much promise.

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### **Brittany says**

I'm sorry this book isn't getting better reviews because I think it's extremely well done for what it is. The problem seems to lie in the marketing - they keep saying it's supposed to be a thriller but it didn't strike me that way at all. It's much more of a psychological exploration than anything else and no, honestly, not a lot "happens" in the traditional thriller/suspense novel tradition. It is instead a fascinating look at the way people can form connections between violence and beauty, obsession, and the thin line that separates sanity from madness. I thought it was very, very well done.

That isn't to say it isn't a disturbing read. This book is certainly not for the faint of heart, the Countess was extremely violent. I have to admit I expected that though, having read about her before, and found the descriptions of animal cruelty to be the worst parts. I understand why they were there and what each illustrated but I was not happy to read them. My other disappointment is that the ending seemed to come very suddenly and it feels incomplete in some way. I didn't get the impression that there would be a sequel, as some have been speculating in their reviews, the book just seemed wrap up too quickly.

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### **Erin says**

Finds this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

Luhning's writing is pretty decent for a debut, but I can't bring myself to go any higher than three stars. She is definitely on the right track, I don't want to come off as discouraging, but the basic construction leaves



much to be desired. More than that though, I think the marketing department failed her in that they set the book up to be something it simply isn't.

I'll come back to the construction issues later; I want to address the marketing issues first. Quiver is advertised as a thriller. No offense to Luhning or her publisher, but I wouldn't shelve this next to *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* or *Angels and Demons*. It just isn't that kind of book. I personally feel it would do better if it were marketed as a contemporary mystery. Quiver is a decent story, but it doesn't have the edge of your seat momentum you would expect from a suspenseful whodunit or even the psychological drama of say *Silence of the Lambs*. Classifying it as such sets an expectation that the book just doesn't achieve.

Similarly, I think the blurb makes too big a deal out of the Bathory. This isn't her story in the same way that the *Da Vinci Code* isn't the story of Mary Magdalene. I don't know who makes the decisions regarding cover blurbs, but I think whoever created this one misstepped in relying too heavily on the drawing power of the *Blood Countess*. The name dropping ensures you will sell copies, but people who pick up the book expecting to find sixteenth century Hungary aren't going to be impressed with present day London, relationship drama and art exhibitions.

Since I'm already dissecting the blurb can someone please explain to me exactly which "discoveries" Danica's peers disregard? She brings up her concerns only in the final chapters of the book and while she is blown off, I don't think her employers were unjustified considering their assessment of her mental state and the time her information was given. And what are the "disturbing incidents" that seem to follow Dr. Winston home after hours? So far as I can tell the only incidents that affect Danica involve Henry's philandering and in all honesty, cheaters are a dime a dozen. Either I somehow overlooked several chapters worth of information or we are again over exaggerating the content.

The plot felt disjointed, a good idea but there wasn't enough to really get into Danica's story. There wasn't enough Foster to be disturbed, there wasn't enough jeopardy to evoke alarm and there wasn't enough suspense to keep the audience guessing (Not to toot my own horn, but I called the ending midway through the reading). The Bathory diaries were interesting but they are short, limited in scope and few and far between. I felt myself asking which story Luhning was trying to tell. The psychological aspects of both the present day cult and the historic mistress who inspired it are literary gold, but neither was satisfyingly fleshed out.

This is really one of the books you want to go into with little or no expectations. It isn't bad, but I think those who pick it up with an open mind will garner more enjoyment than those whose interest is sparked by the description of content.

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## Tracy says

I just finished reading this book which was one of our book club picks. Book club was on May 10th and today is May 15th.

The book sounded so exciting and interesting on the cover and then just did not live up to the write up. It was an interesting story and very well written in some ways however the story takes a long time to build, painstakingly slow I would say. The characters were interesting but there were many of them and most of them aren't likable although they are memorable.

Several gory scenes will make this a difficult read for many. It was not a scary or thriller type story.

This is also a story that jumps from place to place and time to time which is partially the reason it took so long to build.

I finished the book because I was determined that I would and it ended much the way I thought it would which did not endure the main character to me.

All in all not one I would recommend to many. Left me feeling betrayed because it didn't live up to the promise on the cover.

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## **Bondama says**

This is one of the most disappointing books I've come across. I picked it up because it purported to be about the infamous Elizabeth of Bathory, the "Blood Countess" -- In a way it is, but it is more concerned with a parallel modern story, which completely falls apart. There simply is such a scarcity of any factual information about Bathory that the book is just not worth reading. There are several, far better books for anyone interested in this distant relative of ... wait for it.... Vlad Tepes, Count Dracula himself.

I guess a thirst for either bathing in blood or drinking it must run in that family....

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