

QUIVER – synopsis of a thriller by David Lowe

Sydney. A mysterious young woman, Lilla, is arrested for a brutal assault. The victim is an Italian man, Pirello, now in a coma. Lilla survives a suicide attempt, and escapes from hospital. The police corner her at the beach. She's returned to custody.

Michael Page, late twenties, works as a lawyer for his father-in-law, Christopher Knight, a wealthy merchant banker. His passion is his part-time work for Legal Aid. He's called in to represent Lilla.

The interrogation by Detective Senior Sergeant Robyn Mansfield is getting nowhere. Michael talks to Lilla alone. She reminds him of a girl he knew in his childhood, but Lilla won't cooperate with the investigation in any way. She claims Pirello raped her.

Christopher Knight offers Michael a promotion. If he accepts he'll have to give up his Legal Aid work, including Lilla's case. Despite pressure from his wife Karen, Michael doesn't accept the offer. Something about Lilla fascinates him.

He goes to where she's been living and retrieves a photograph of Lilla's father. Michael recognises the man, and is shocked when a neighbour establishes that his client's name is Liljana – the name of his childhood friend. Michael begins having visions of his past – their childhood by the river, her disappearance when they were kids...

Meanwhile a new forensic technique, known as UV-PFP, establishes a link between a number of apparently unrelated murders. The victims are immigrants from all over the world. All appear to have been murdered by the same person, for reasons unknown. Detective Chief Inspector Ted Hunt leads the investigation.

When Pirello dies, in suspicious circumstances, DCI Hunt takes a direct interest in Lilla's case. She's now a suspected serial killer. Michael's faith in her is shaken when a sniper's rifle is found at her house. When Lilla attacks him for helping the police, Michael decides to leave the case. A forced examination reveals evidence of serious sexual assault, but not recently.

Lilla stops eating. She becomes withdrawn. On her own in the cell, she remembers a terrifying past, in a rape camp during the Yugoslavian civil war. One particular tormentor, Grkic, appears frequently in these visions. Lilla also experiences positive memories of herself as a child, with her father, a fisherman.

After a hypoglycaemic attack, Lilla's taken to hospital. Michael goes to see her. They kiss for the first time. Now he can't let her go. Tensions build between Michael and his wife as it becomes obvious he intends to pursue Lilla's case.

Lilla changes her story, says she is the girl Michael remembers – her father took her back to Yugoslavia as a child. During the war she became a soldier, an assassin. Now she's pursuing a war criminal living in Australia.

As Michael falls in love with Lilla, losing his objectivity and breaking the ethics of the legal profession, his eyes are opened to a new landscape beneath the surface of the world he knows; a battleground of ancient hatreds and dirty secrets.

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Christopher Knight is implicated in the deaths of the immigrants by DCI Hunt, but DSS Mansfield doubts the link between Knight and Lilla, and begins an investigation of her own.

When Lilla betrays Michael, and escapes from custody, she comes face to face with the demons of her past. She will need to decide between the new world and the old, the path of compassion and the path of violence.

Michael is caught in the wheels of something awful and huge.

As the police case builds, Michael and Lilla each begin a journey to a dangerous but important truth. Can love end the cycle of violence?