



The Ludwig Conspiracy

Oliver Pötzsch

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Ludwig II, the Fairy-tale King of Bavaria, is today remembered for his beautiful castles—popular tourist destinations that inspired the Disney Castle, but whose origins were much more fantastical than anything Disney could dream up. Also known as the Mad King, Ludwig was deposed in 1886 after being declared insane by doctors who had never met him. He promptly died—mysteriously drowned in waist-deep water—his eccentric castles his only legacy.

Master of historical suspense Oliver Pötzsch brings the Mad King back to life in *The Ludwig Conspiracy*. An encoded diary by one of Ludwig's confidants falls into the hands of modern-day rare book dealer Steven Lukas, who soon realizes that the diary may bring him more misery than money. Others want the diary as well—and they will kill to get it. Lukas teams up with a beautiful art detective, Sara Lengfeld, to investigate each of Ludwig's three famous castles for clues to crack the diary's code as mysterious thugs and Ludwig's fanatical followers chase them at every step. Just what in the diary could be so explosive?

Combining contemporary mystery and a gripping historical saga and centered on an ingenious code that can be cracked only with a combination of modern computers and nineteenth-century texts, *The Ludwig Conspiracy* is a bold new thriller from the best-selling author of *The Hangman's Daughter* series.

The Ludwig Conspiracy Details

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From Reader Review The Ludwig Conspiracy for online ebook

Barbara says

3.5 stars

Just before he's brutally tortured and murdered an elderly gent hides a secret diary in an antiquarian used bookstore in Munich. The bookstore is owned by Steven Lukas, a young man who just wants to lead a quiet life among his tomes. Before long the old gent's niece, Sara Lengfeld, shows up. She and Steven soon discover that the diary - which is written in code and has some undecipherable passages in an even more mysterious cipher - was written by Theodor Marot, mad King Ludwig II's medical assistant.

King Ludwig was a well-known 'eccentric' who spent all of Bavaria's money building elaborate castles for himself before he died rather suddenly in 1886 - broke, bloated, toothless, and friendless. Was old King Ludwig murdered? Was he gay? Does the diary explain his sudden death? It seems a lot of people want to know. Thus when Sara and Steve race out of Munich and rush hither and thither looking for clues to decipher the diary they're chased by a variety of cut-throats and gangs who want to grab the book for themselves.

As Steven and Sara decode the diary we learn a bit about King Ludwig's life as well as political machinations in 19th century Bavaria.

Though there are a couple of surprising twists, all the clue hunting and deciphering eventually lead to a reveal that's less spectacular than I'd hoped for. Still it's a pretty good thriller/mystery with a little bit of romance, some interesting characters, and some intriguing blather about secret codes.

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

James (JD) Dittes says

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* gets the most attention of his books, but to my mind, *Angels & Demons* was Brown's groundbreaking book, inventing as it did a whole new genre, the "travel thriller."

In *The Ludwig Conspiracy*, Bavaria gets its own travel thriller, from one of its most widely read writers, no less. As with Brown, the characters are clunky (villains, a romance) and plot points depend upon solving puzzles and decoding obscure text.

But the settings...oh, the settings! Our hero, antique book dealer, Steven Lukas, follows the clues to "Mad King Ludwig's" castles, strewn throughout southern Bavaria. Does the climactic scene take place at Neuschwanstein? OF COURSE IT DOES! That's the point of the travel-thriller after all.

Pötsch has written better thrillers in his Hangman's Daughter series. But the purpose of this book isn't the thriller, it's the landscape, and Pötsch aces this aspect, taking the readers on tours of each castle and pointing out unique aspects of each.

This book suffers from a poor translation. I don't blame Pötsch for that. Some similes and descriptions were

laughably awkward.

But still, as a person planning a trip to Neuschwanstein next summer, I enjoyed the book, and I would recommend it to anyone planning a visit to Bavaria--or someone who would enjoy a fanciful return to that beautiful land through Pötzsch's book.

Pamela McLaren says

I have been fascinated by the death of King Ludwig the second since a trip to Germany about four years ago and while this is a fictional book, many of the facts are true and the story is interesting if a bit predictable.

Ludwig was the last castle builder in his country and it seemed that he was more focused on creating a world that had already past, rather than governing his country. So was he mad? Did he drown?

In this tale, it's because of his refusal to rule and the financial ruin he was putting the country in that appears to have driven many of the acts that lead to his death. And could you fault his ministers in that?

Oliver Pötzsch has created a creditable situation and story. The characters are OK ... I didn't think the heroes were drawn as well as the scenes and the villain -- truly a memorable adversary -- but still a good read.

Billie says

Awesome story from a great writer. SO different from the "Hangman's Daughter" series...the story was great and I couldn't guess anything coming up. It definitely made me want to learn more about Ludwig the Second and all the conspiracies surrounding his death. Good book!!

Cara says

Here is the problem with this book: No one does the Da Vinci Code better than the Da Vinci Code, and this book is no Da Vinci Code. My rating is probably only as high as it is because the subject matter is absolutely fascinating. Please, if you enjoy German/Bavarian history, or the history of monarchies in general, the plot of the book will absolutely hold your interest until the end. The problem is that the backstory of Ludwig II is infinitely more interesting than the modern day story of trying to find out what exactly the conspiracy surrounding him is. Odds are you will guess it before the end. The use of secret codes in the book actually gets in the way of the story, and they become more of an annoyance rather than anything that advances the plot. The modern day characters are extremely one dimensional - I don't care much for them, though you will find yourself deeply caring for Ludwig, who (no spoilers here) is quite dead when the novel opens. As I said, if you are a fan of German history, it's worth a read. If you are looking for a true nail biting conspiracy, there are better options.

David Schwan says

I gave this 3 stars but 3.5 stars is a better match. The story is based on the famous mad king of Bavaria. A mysterious book is secretly left in an antiquarian book store. Others are looking for this book and are determined to get the book. The book is known to be about Ludwig of Bavaria. What ensues is a search for a secret document allegedly about Ludwig's death. All of the castles built by Ludwig as visited in the search. There are some nice surprises in the story, but mostly the plot is predictable so what you read for is how that story is presented. Fun read.

Charles van Buren says

Not up to Mr. Potzsch's usual standard.

By Charles van Buren on February 26, 2018

Format: Kindle Edition

I have an interest in Imperial German history and have really enjoyed Mr. Potzsch's Hangman's Daughter series so naturally I downloaded The Ludwig Conspiracy via Kindle Unlimited. Unfortunately this novel is not up to his usual standards in writing, plot or research. In too many instances, his main characters behave like idiots. And the ending? It just goes on and on.

I will also give him a piece of advice which I've given to many authors of Westerns. If you don't know anything about firearms and are not willing to do the research, avoid specifics. The .41 rimfire cartridge is an anemic, underpowered round. The two shot derringer chambering the round is quite inaccurate except at close range. Glocks don't have manual safeties - the safety is part of the trigger group. The Walther PPK is not chambered for a powerful cartridge suitable for use on wild boar. Both the .32 (7.65 Browning) and .380 (9mm Kurtz) in which that pocket pistol is chambered are likely to seriously annoy a boar.

The thrust of this novel seems to be sympathetic to King Ludwig but it just doesn't work. He still comes across as a feckless lunatic or fool who abdicated his duties and responsibilities until he lost his crown and his life. His problems were of his own making not because of some conspiracy. Those who opposed the King could not have been successful if Ludwig had done his duty and lived up to his responsibilities.

Ghost of the Library says

I wonder if Dan Brown is america's answer to Mr. Postzsch here...the similarities are there, much to my amusement because i kept having weird deja vus all over the book.

But first things first -

a rare journal once belonging to a member of the entourage of King Ludwig II- falls into the hands of geek/nerd/fish out of water Steven Lukas, a book dealer in whose store the book is conveniently left by some mysterious person who then naturally proceeds to die.....

Before going further, i have to admit a sense of disappointment with this one, which makes kind of sad, since

i loved Potzsch's The Hangman's Daughter and considered it a fantastic read. Here however, although the idea is interesting and with merits - after all these years the death of King Ludwig remains a mystery - the fact is the execution of the plot turns out to become...it hurts to say it...boring as hell.

Yes Lukas is a geek, an antisocial, a dam near hermit or just about, happy to let his store remain deserted so he can keep peering over his precious books without fear of interruption by mere mortals.

Into this well ordered world comes the chaos the book brings in its wake and a lovely - and mysterious lady - Sarah, who seems to always know just what to do and how to do it.

So suddenly the geek loses his fear of his own shadow and off he goes on an adventure with Sarah.

There's a code to break, a journal to read, some mystery villains to defeat at this search game for whatever clue "Mad Ludwig" left behind and of course a romance blooming.....

See what i mean about serious Dan Brown deja vu?....

However, its not without its merits, and it does present an interesting possibility as to the demise of King Ludwig and his doctor that day on the lake, and a tiny little detail i admit to having never considered over the years....Ludwig the myth is a huge attraction to people the world over and a substantial source of income...so either it really was just a bizarre accident, or "the powers that be" will never really allow the myth to be shattered by something as prosaic as solving the enigma of his death.

Anyways...highly recommended for the conspiracy theorist in us all and the hardcore fan of the period/characters discussed.

Still....to fully enjoy the author's talent i would say try Castle of Kings or The Hangman's Daughter....those are worthy of your time and trouble ;)

Happy Readings

Happy Readings!

Elli says

The Ludwig Conspiracy by Oliver Potzsch. Excellent book I thought. It went through to separate times through two different eyes, but was not in the least confusing. It was fantasy, the fantasy of people who believe in a different side of reality, and this reality reflects a love of a golden age of myth, literature, and all based on it. Current, probably including Nazism, democracy and republic or no, really were far secondary, also to what degree some would go to preserve the memory of the monarch and what he represented to them. Rather Illuminati style, but different yet. And how far "different priorities and thought" were to just different way of looking at things. Or truly insane. The what and who and the how of the people, years past, and similar with people living during the time represented. I read The Hangman's Daughter by this author, too, who had a vested family interest in the life and the life of families in the executioner business. And the good translation of these really helped. Not all of us can read in German to get the full nuances of this. I also read a collection of mysteries by this author which impressed me so very favorably....a first rate member of the literary scene. And one when a new work comes out, I will be looking to read it!

Donnelle says

(Note: This review will include minor spoilers, but nothing earth-shattering.)

I read the summary of the book and was immediately intrigued because it seemed to include so many aspects that sounded absolutely fascinating: a mysterious murder; a diary full of codes and secrets; main characters on the run from deranged killers; and of course, the fairytale king and his fantastic castles. In fact, I'd say that Ludwig II was the hook that drew me in the most - he wasn't someone about whom I knew all that much (okay, actually, I hadn't known anything at all about him), but the tidbits included in the summary piqued my interest and prompted me to start reading as soon as I got my hands on a copy of the book.

To the credit of the book and its author, I found all of the information about the king to be, by far, the best parts of the story. He was someone who came into immense power but soon found himself disillusioned in and disappointed by the goings-on in the world and those who sought power heedless of the cost. He found refuge in turning his dreams into reality, in terms of building his opulent (to the point of sometimes being ostentatious) castles. He was someone for whom it was easy to feel sorry at times, but also someone who could be a petulant child with a frightful temper and ideas that would lead others to reasonably question his sanity. The scheme to depose him ended in tragedy, of course, with not only his death but also that of the doctor who declared him insane. The exploration of the various conspiracies regarding their deaths - he supposedly killed the doctor and then himself, but the doctor's pocket watch stopped almost 1.5 hours after the king's; the idea of him drowning himself though the water was only waist-deep and there wasn't any water found in his lungs; the witness(es) who heard gunshot(s); the portrait of his body showing what looks like dried blood near his mouth; and the list goes on and on - was incredibly interesting and I think that Oliver Pottzsche did a wonderful job of exploring the myriad theories as fully as one could in a work of fiction.

Along those lines, I have to say that my favorite of the book was actually the glossary for conspiracy theorists that Mr. Pottzsche included at the end of the book: it included entries about every historical figure, event, and term surrounding Ludwig II, his death, his castles, and his followers. In fact, this captured my interest so much that I think I'll be looking for nonfiction works about the fairytale king so that I can learn more about him, and I think that is a testament to the skillful job the author did in really delving into the intrigue of that subject matter.

Unfortunately, that's where my enthusiasm for the book (mostly) ends. The whole running-from-deranged-killers bit had its moments of suspense, and the way that the mystery played out did have one decent twist and compelled me to want to read on to find out exactly how it would be resolved. So, those were two pretty big pluses. However, the main characters - Steven and Sara - I found to be little more than ciphers. They were simply there to keep things going and explain things, but their dialogue was clunky and ran much more toward exposition than any kind of conversation that actual people would have. I suppose a relationship was inevitable, but that particular "journey" was painfully obvious and not so well-written, since they went from constant bickering and Steven being annoyed by her, to kissing and then the declarations of love started flying.

The villains of the piece were cartoonish, at best, and suffered from the desire to talk endlessly to their intended victims rather than carrying out their plans with anything resembling deliberation and timeliness.

The overall pace was on the slow side, the length could have (and should have) been edited down a bit, and some of the passages were clunky, which can be attributed to the translation. Those issues, in and of themselves, weren't deal breakers, but they certainly didn't help matters. Further, as other reviewers have mentioned, the action was propelled forward not by brain power or an organic progression of events, but by a never-ending series of very-forced coincidences. The code-breaking - which could have been immensely

entertaining and interesting - was actually kind of boring and repetitive. Also, I have to say that the super-huge secret that people were willing to kill for? Was something that readers could guess from very, very early on in the piece. Also, from the beginning, Steven had a mysterious connection with the diary that he didn't understand until someone clued him in near the end. The problem? That, too, was relatively easy to figure out.

All in all, I very much appreciated all of the information about the king, his death, his castles, and the conspiracy theories, and there was enough intrigue to keep me turning the pages until the very end. However, it was very slow-going at several points, and when I couldn't find anything in the main characters to care about, it made the reading much more of a chore than it otherwise would have been. Maybe the story would have been better served had the author removed the modern day aspects entirely and focused solely on Ludwig II and his death. Since that wasn't the case, though, I can say that I would recommend the book to those with any interest in the historical subject matter and Potzsch's fictional take on some aspects thereof, but anyone with his or her heart set on a tale filled with pulse-pounding suspense where the pages just fly by may want to temper those expectations before deciding to give this one a read.

Gail Baugniet says

The Fairy-tale King of Bavaria led quite an unusual life. I found chapters about him in a 1930s biography of the Wittelsbachs fascinating. Had I not already read other thrillers involving encryptions and secret societies, this book would have been a 5-star novel for me. But I couldn't help thinking, often, that I had "read that somewhere else before" in so many of the detection scenes. For the amount of research and thought that went into the weaving of The Ludwig Conspiracy, and the knowledgeable virtual tours of the king's castles offered by the author, I am still tempted to go with 5 stars.

My favorite chapters involved interactions with the king, but these came all too seldom. I did appreciate the argument set forth that the king was not mad. I enjoyed the idea of eliminating negative elements from one's life. Ludwig did stretch his fairy tale existence far beyond the pale, however, at the expense of many.

Marnie says

This book was more The Da Vinci Code and less The Hangman's Daughter

The good parts. It opens fast and captured me from the beginning. Some books start slow and build this started with a bang. I was in Munich last month and visited two out of the three castles mentioned . I think this helped me visualize the story better and the author didn't make any setting errors (which drive me crazy in a book).

This book is broken up into two stories. The historical fiction story from King Ludwig's time and present day. I found that I was very interested in the historical story and not so interested in the present day. The present day seemed very repetitive - go to a castle find one clue, fight with some bad guys...repeat. The present day plot twist were quite obvious.

If I rated this book on the historical story it would be 4 stars. The present day mystery 2.5 stars but the entire book gets 3 stars.

Anne Hawn Smith says

I really enjoyed this book and will probably read it again some time. I visited Bavaria a number of years ago and saw the castles, so it was easy to picture the setting. I also did a lot of research about Prince Ludwig II just because he was an interesting and complex person. He is Germany's most famous king and he actually helped the country in providing work for the people surrounding the castles when they were built and in the present. Thousands of people visit these castles and immerse themselves in his legend providing the German government with a substantial income.

Before I read the book I had already formed the opinion that he was an artist and a dreamer and totally unsuited for the militaristic government that was being formed around him. It is sad that he was overthrown because he continued to build castles that he couldn't afford. The militaristic German governments have cost the German people so much more, both in money and in lives.

This work of fiction is based on the idea that there was a diary kept by someone loyal and close to Prince Ludwig and that the diary told the real story of his death. What was interesting is that this fictional journal was written in the same shorthand that Samuel Pepys used for his diary and Pepys' journal was untranslated for 200 years. The main characters are trying not only to translate the diary, but also to follow a code interspersed between the chapters.

I can sympathize with the main characters because my family was left with more than 1,000 old family letters and some of them were written by my grandfather and his brother. They both learned a form of shorthand in college and it is no longer used. It's frustrating to look at those letters and not be able to read them, especially because there is a family mystery about why my great uncle suddenly left school and those letters probably refer to it.

Ashley *Hufflepuff Kitten* says

1/13/16 Thought this was already on my TBR, the title sounded familiar. Picked it up at Dollar General for \$1 last night, couldn't pass that up.

Ryan says

The Ludwig Conspiracy
Oliver Pötzsch
Read it in Hardback at 464 pages, they smelled wonderful.

Despite how the pages smelled, Pötzsch failed to truly captivate me with this pretty basic tale. Ever read a Dan Brown book? Good then you get the formula. Instead of Robert Langdon professor we have Steven Lukas, antiquated book seller. Add initial intrigue, mystery, a scary and formidable evil thug, and a plot that revolves around an interesting character and events of history and we are off to the Lost Symbol...wait, I

mean the Ludwig Conspiracy.

The last Bavarian monarch was an interesting guy, and probably legitimately crazy. In an era of industrialization and gun powder, Ludwig was building fairy tale castles in the Bavarian mountains and really doing his best not to get dragged into Prussian/Germany politics. He was spending vast amounts of money on what his constituents believed to be a complete waste of money. These things we know to be true. At some point though the vassalages of power switched to the various more modern establishments and Ludwig was headed straight down the path of disposition. It is never easy to dispose of royalty and the means in which it was done are still hazy to this day. These hazy bits are the vehicle used to propel the story.

Mr. Lukas is sitting in his abandoned book shop enjoying a book when all hell breaks loose, through some hazy circumstances he finds himself in the possession of the plausible one true source, a diary, of the events directly leading up to the disposition and events that happened after Ludwig had been captured. Of course there is more to the story, but you get the idea. Lukas has to run about the country decoding the journal and advancing the plot to the next big discovery. Along the way lays danger, intrigue, love, and everything else you would expect in a Dan Brown book. Mr. Potzsch is capable but obviously looking to a well-established formula for some success.

While I am fascinated by Ludwig, the castles that he built in the era he built them, and the general state of affairs of Bavaria in the late 1900's; the story was forgettable and the puzzles that his characters face were not all that interesting to me.

Nice try Potzsch but I'll refrain from your future work until I see something more original come from your type writer.
