

Del Rio

Jane Rosenthal

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Del Rio is a suspenseful international thriller involving two countries, multiple crimes, and a district attorney driven by the need to succeed.

Jane Rosenthal's fast thriller *Del Rio* tackles questions of justice, oppression, and racism as a district attorney rushes to find her lost brother and solve a series of murders.

When Callie moves back to Del Rio, California, it is with clear goals in mind: she wants to be the best district attorney possible, and to work her way toward a Senate seat. But a series of startling events, starting with the discovery of a dismembered child, send her organized life into a tailspin. Upon discovering that her brother-in-law, a state senator, may be concealing criminal activity, Callie heads to Mexico. Once there, she meets Nathan, a widower whose job puts him in the same path of danger. He's a confused, sometimes passive, partner in her investigation.

In this complex and atmospheric story, plot twists and surprises are frequent. One character buys a child when they are unable to adopt one; instead of turning a pedophile into the authorities, someone initiates a blackmail scheme. The characters exist in a permanent state of tension as Callie's race to solve a series of crimes moves forward. Still, though some story lines are dropped for long periods of time, all are returned to with care. Themes of racial injustice arise because the book's victims are almost all children of color; Callie reckons with such realities, as well as with her own unacknowledged racism, which is apparent in some descriptions of Mexican, Chinese, and Romani communities.

There are instances in which characters behave in ways that are contrary to their stated personalities. Callie's brother, Mike, is presented as a "do-gooder," though his later actions belie this. But the characters' conversations are realistic, from everyday exchanges between Callie and her friends, to a grief-stricken speech from a Mexican woman about the girls trafficked out of her country.

By the book's end, all loose threads have been addressed, and all possible holes in the story have been closed. Though some of Callie's final decisions are baffling, she ends the book on a note of hope, having grown and found closure when it comes to the questions that haunted her.

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CAROLINA CIUCCI (January 20, 2021)

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