



The Photo Thief

J. L. Delozier

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J. L. Delozier's eerie mystery novel *The Photo Thief* involves a detective, a murderer, and a teenage girl with unusual gifts.

Dan just lost his daughter to cancer; he's still reeling when he's asked to investigate a socialite's death. But Dan can't shake the feeling that the deceased, Erin, didn't fall down the stairs on her own. Erin's daughter, eighteen-year-old Cassie, agrees. Cassie is prone to solving cold cases using library records, sharp, methodical thinking, and her uncanny ability to speak with dead people's pictures.

Throughout, Dan's perspective is juxtaposed with Cassie's journal entries, resulting in insights into both of their thought processes. Thus, the novel stitches events that seem unrelated together, so that even the strangest and most ambiguous of the book's plot twists fit into its unsettling mood. A heavy, otherworldly atmosphere is accomplished through its gloomy descriptions, the possible presence of ghosts, and the grief that shadows Dan and Carrie all through the story.

Every person in the plot has a distinctive presence, speaking in their own ways, acting with transparent motivations, and working with self-preservation in mind. There are fantastic exchanges marked by push-and-pull throughout. And by the book's ending, the various story lines are made to combine, resulting in clarity and cohesion. Still, questions linger—about what's next for Cassie and Dan; about the staying power of their budding teamwork; and even about Cassie's reliability as a narrator.

In the atmospheric and thrilling novel *The Photo Thief*, a detective and a teenager come together to put a series of murders to rest.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (September / October 2022)

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