



★ **The Photographer of Mauthausen**

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Moving and suspenseful, *The Photographer of Mauthausen* is a based-in-truth story of survival in a Nazi concentration camp.

Francisco, a Spanish photographer, is imprisoned by the Nazis because of his communist beliefs. So are many of his comrades. Inside the prison, he's able to get a job assisting one of the German officers who has an eye for photography himself. The subjects of the Nazi officer's work, however, are grisly scenes of prisoners killed in a variety of ways, often staged after death to please his warped sense of aesthetics. With the help of fellow prisoners, Francisco concocts a dangerous plan to smuggle copies or negatives of the photographs to Russia to inform the outside world of what's happening in the camps.

Francisco's plan fails. But after the war, photographs that he managed to hide from the Nazis serve as incontrovertible proof that the atrocities of the camps were known to German leaders. This valuable evidence leads to convictions of war criminals.

The book takes historical documentation and weaves it into a taut, gripping thriller. Francisco and his confederates are always at risk of being killed upon discovery of their plans, or even as the result of an innocent offense like bumping into a guard. The complicated steps of their plans carry the tension of a heist caper, but with much higher stakes. The art serves the story well; its drawn replications of Francisco's photographs are as haunting as any developed print.

The Photographer of Mauthausen is an inspiring historical graphic novel whose visionary hero persists in the face of incredible adversity.

PETER DABBENE (November / December 2020)

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