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The Face on the Milk Carton

By Caroline B. Cooney



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In the vein of psychological thrillers like *We Were Liars*, *Girl on the Train*, and *Beware That Girl*, bestselling author Caroline Cooney's JANIE series delivers on every level. Mystery and suspense blend seamlessly with issues of family, friendship and love to offer an emotionally evocative thrill ride of a read.

No one ever really paid close attention to the faces of the missing children on the milk cartons. But as Janie Johnson glanced at the face of the ordinary little girl with her hair in tight pigtails, wearing a dress with a narrow white collar—a three-year-old who had been kidnapped twelve years before from a shopping mall in New Jersey—she felt overcome with shock. She recognized that little girl—it was she. How could it possibly be true?

Janie can't believe that her loving parents kidnapped her, but as she begins to piece things together, nothing makes sense. Something is terribly wrong. Are Mr. and Mrs. Johnson really her parents? And if not, who is Janie Johnson, and what really happened?



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The Face on the Milk Carton By Caroline B. Cooney Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #14803 in Books
- Brand: Ember
- Published on: 2012-05-22
- Released on: 2012-05-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .46" w x 5.50" l, .39 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The picture of a missing child printed on a milk carton attracts the attention of 15-year-old Jane Johnson. A glimpse of the girl's polka-dot dress causes memories to surface, and Jane begins to review her past and question her true identity. It is nearly impossible for Jane to perceive her loving parents as kidnappers; the task of gathering evidence and drawing conclusions proves less difficult than confronting the undeniable truth. As the novel ends, Jane has found the courage to contact her real parents, but Cooney cleverly leaves the events that follow to readers' imaginations. Although the book's plot is based largely on coincidences, Cooney's skilled writing makes even the most unlikely events seem plausible. The roller-coaster ride Jane experiences with her emotions is both absorbing and convincing. Strong characterizations and suspenseful, impeccably-paced action add to this novel's appeal. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 7-10-- The message on the milk carton reads, "Have you seen this child?" Three-year-old Jennie Spring was kidnapped 12 years earlier, but Janie Johnson, looking at the photo, suddenly knows that she is that child. Fragments of memory and evidence accumulate, and when she demands to know about her early childhood years, her parents confess what they believe to be true, that she is really their grandchild, the child of their long-missing daughter who had joined a cult. Janie wants to accept this, but she cannot forget Jennie's family and their loss. Finally, almost against her will, she seeks help and confides in her parents. Her mother insists that she call the Spring family, and the book ends as she calls them. Many young people fantasize about having been adopted or even kidnapped, but the decisions Janie must face are painful and complex, and she experiences denial, anger, and guilt while sorting her way toward a solution. Janie's boyfriend--sensible, funny, with problems of his own--is an excellent foil for her intensity. Their romance is natural and believable. Cooney again demonstrates an excellent ear for dialogue and a gift for portraying responsible middle-class teen-agers trying to come to terms with very real concerns. A good choice for readers of Norma Fox Mazer's *Taking Terri Muller* (Morrow, 1983). --Tatiana Castleton, Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library, CA

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From the Publisher

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Johnny Ballance:

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Juan Dishon:

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Anthony Muller:

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