

*Truly Devious* by Maureen Johnson

*“For anyone who has ever dreamed of finding a body in the library.”*

Are you an Agatha Christie fan? Give this book a try! Although written for young adult audiences, this book will sweep even “far-from-teenager” adults into the world of true-crime aficionado Stevie Bell.

Set in the mountainous region of Vermont, teen Stevie Bell has been accepted into Ellingham Academy – an eclectic private school built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its founder, Albert Ellingham, was a wealthy man fond of riddles, games, and secret passageways. The school became famous, however, due to tragedy. Ellingham’s wife and daughter were kidnapped in 1936. The culprit’s signature on a spine-tingling poem was “Truly, Devious.” The body of his daughter, Alice, was never found.

Stevie Bell’s career goal is to work for the FBI, and she is obsessed with the Ellingham cold case. Her school project: solving the mystery. Along with new friends, Stevie explores the hidden past at Ellingham. Soon someone is dead though, and *Truly Devious* has possibly been resurrected.

Even though I’m one of those “far-from-teenager” adults, I really enjoyed this book. The author, Maureen Johnson, is a gifted storyteller and she really brings to life the characters and the setting. She captures the awkwardness of teenagers – especially gifted ones – and also shows how they should never be underestimated. Especially Stevie. With an eye for details like Sherlock Holmes and an innate sense of something not being right, Stevie takes us along a journey of deduction with all the requisite twists and turns.

Maureen Johnson also knows how to keep you hanging! *Truly Devious* is the first of three books and ends on a bit of cliff hanger. Book two, *The Vanishing Stair*, and book three, *The Hand on the Wall*, continue Stevie’s story as she unravels the mystery of the Ellingham kidnapping and the tragedies of the present. Lucky for us, all of these books are already published – so you don’t have to wait a year to find out what happens next!