



# A True Home

*Kallie George , Stephanie Graegin (Illustrations)*

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When Mona the Mouse stumbles across the wondrous world of the Heartwood Hotel in the middle of a storm, she desperately hopes they'll let her stay. As it turns out, Mona is precisely the maid they need at the grandest hotel in Fernwood Forest, where animals come from far and wide for safety, luxury, and comfort. But the Heartwood Hotel is not all acorn souffle and soft moss-lined beds. Danger lurks, and as it approaches, Mona finds that this hotel is more than a warm place to spend the night. It might also be a home.

This delightfully enticing start of a new chapter book series tells a tale of friendship, courage, and community, with exquisite black-and-white illustrations throughout.

## **Praise for the Magical Animal Adoption Agency series**

"[This] gentle tale of magic and self-reliance will entertain confident new independent readers. Clover's sweet story is a good next step for lovers of the Magic Tree House."

*-Kirkus Reviews*

"Readers will be envious of the world of magic that Clover becomes ensconced in and eager to read future installments."

*-Publishers Weekly*

"[A] charming story, delicately written, with a winning heroine. . . [and] a conclusion that will satisfy young readers."

*-Booklist Online*

"Graduates of sparkly chapter-book series will be right at home and looking for the next installment posthaste."

*-Kirkus Reviews*

"[T]he gentle but intrepid Clover continues to charm."

*-Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

## **A True Home Details**

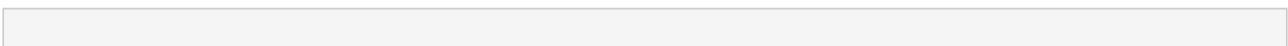
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Author : Kallie George , Stephanie Graegin (Illustrations)

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# From Reader Review A True Home for online ebook

## Jennifer says

This was fine for a child's book, but didn't appeal to me as an adult. It definitely skews to the lower end of the 3-5 SSYRA range and young girls and boys will like the cutesy animals.

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## Lee Födi says

Full disclosure: I was privileged to be a part of the journey as this book—and this world—came to life in the imagination of author Kallie George. I was lucky enough to read various drafts of the plots and stories along the way.

When Kallie first told me about her idea, I instantly thought of one of my favorite childhood series, The Bedtime Story-Books by Thornton W. Burgess. As a child, I loved entering a world where animals were highly anthropomorphized, but still inhabited a world with all the natural dangers of the forest.

Kallie George's new Heartwood Hotel series is much the same. She has teased whimsical personalities from the natural characteristics of her animals and constructed a world where there is delight—and danger—around every bend in the forest trail.

In particular, I really adore the Kallie's ability to turn a phrase, or to tease magic out of each sentence, giving the book a classical feel. This book makes a great read aloud!

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## Sarah says

Continuing with my research of all things children's books... this was a precious story. A story to read after playing in the snow or before bed. If you're like me and you like to create atmosphere for your audience, think about providing shortbread cookies and tea or hot chocolate while reading. MY one PROBLEM: do the wolves and coyotes ALWAYS have to be the bad guys? I'm tired of the predators always getting painted as evil and murderous. We need a children's book revolution. Pro-predators!

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## Karen says

Mona's house is swept away in a storm, just like her parents were long ago. The homeless mouse wanders looking for a new home until she comes to the Heartwood Hotel. A warm and safe place for woodland animals. Mr. Heartwood offers Mona a place to spend the night in exchange for helping the maid, a squirrel named Tilly, to clean up after a party that the hotel guests are enjoying. Tilly is not happy about it, but comforts herself that it is only for one night. In the morning Mr. Heartwood (a badger) offers Mona a position through the Fall and Tilly is dismayed again. Mona soon feels at home among the employees and guests and even saves the hotel from a sleepy bear with her courage and quick thinking. The tension between Mona and Tilly escalates into a final disagreement that sends Mona running away in tears. She discovers a

pack of wolves who plan to attack the Heartwood Hotel and dine on it's residents on First Winter's Eve. Mona returns to the hotel and uses an ingenious plan that involves a certain sleepy bear. She saves the Heartwood Hotel, her friends, and the First Winter's Eve festival! Tilly apologizes and they become friends.

Sort of a cross between "Anne of Green Gables" and "The Wind in the Willows" this book is sure to appeal to readers of all ages who love personified animal tales. The characters are extra fun in their slightly predictable personalities (the cook is jolly, the maid is grumpy, the proprietor is generous, and the lizard is haughty) by the fact that they are animals who live a bit like we do and a bit like themselves. Mona is a brave and courageous character who is a good example for children to follow in her very teeny footsteps. Black and white illustrations are sprinkled through the text and are cute; but some color, depth, and detail would be appreciated as the story seems to warrant pages and pages of oil painted illustrations with lots of warmth and homey goodness. Full pages of illustrations would greatly enhance the telling of the tale and add a deeper sense of welcome to the words. In this story, the good guys are good guys and bad guys are bad guys so don't look too hard at the plot, but this is the perfect story to read to children on a crisp autumn night or two with delicious caramel apples in hand.

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### **The Keepers of the Books says**

Seeking shelter during a storm, Mona the Mouse finds herself at the Heartwood Hotel. Hoping they'll let her stay, Mona gets hired as a maid for the hotel. This, however, causes her to become automatic enemies with Tilly, who thinks Mona is trying to take her job. Attempting to get her fired, Tilly causes lots of trouble for Mona. This causes Mona to have to soothe guest's ruffled feathers. Can she become a valued addition to Heartwood Hotel?

The illustrations are cute, loveable, and detailed. The plot is engaging and the perfect level for early chapter book readers. The characters are human-like, complex, and unique. Fans of animals, adventure, and fantasy will enjoy reading this book.

This book was featured on The Keepers of the Books' "July Weekly Reads #2" episode. For more book reviews, recommendations, or online librarian advice, please visit us at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK3v...>

Please Note: A copy of this book was given to us in exchange for an honest review. All opinions expressed, however, are our own.

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### **Laila R. says**

on page 19

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### **Karen says**

Que bonito, historia con mensajes muy positivos y llenos de coraje, ilustraciones que dan ganas de observar

indefinidamente.

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## **Carla Johnson-Hicks says**

This is a delightful story for late primary readers who are ready for more difficult chapter books. It's the story of Mona, a mouse, and an animal hotel in the woods. Mona accidentally finds the hotel when her house is flooded and she ends up getting washed down a river. She stumbles upon a large tree and when she rubs her hand over the heart carved in the trunk, the hidden door opens. Heartwood Hotel, hidden in a tree, provides refuge for lost woodland creatures, safety as well as participation in several conventions and festivals, all within its cozy branches. Being homeless, she is offered a warm place to stay in exchange for work. Children will be amused by the delightful world within this Hotel, as well as the many life lessons that Mona learns and teaches others along the way. The various animals at the hotel are all varied and have different talents and interests. The owner, a badger named Mr. Heartwood, is kind and generous to a fault. The guests all have different needs that must be taken care of. It is a wonderful cast of characters. There is some adventure, problem solving as well as a little danger. This would make a nice read aloud in a primary class where there is a chapter read each day with some good discussions to follow. I really like the ideas about friendship, class structure as well as facing your fears and helping your friends. There is also lessons about loss, self-confidence and to some degree bullying. It is not in your face, but the ideas are all there. A good addition to a school or class library. The publisher generously provided me with a copy of this book via Netgalley.

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## **Liz says**

A hotel is often said to be a “home away from home.” This is how the animals of Fernwood Forest see Heartwood Hotel. In *A True Home*, Kallie George brings this adorable new chapter book series to life and introduces us to Mona the mouse.

Flooding drives Mona the mouse out of her newest home. With her suitcase in hand, she heads out into the storm. Fate sweeps her to the door of the Heartwood Hotel.

Gilles the front-desk lizard intercepts Mona and regretfully informs her that the hotel is fully booked due to the Acorn Festival. But Mr. Heartwood, the owner, takes pity on Mona. He offers her a temporary position for the night as a maid and a place to sleep in the staff quarters. Mr. Heartwood then extends this one-night job throughout the fall festival season.

Although Mona works hard, she can't win the friendship of the other maid, Tilly the squirrel. Mona also attracts trouble over and over again—with skunk guests, with Tilly, and even when a bug tries to stay at the hotel!

Mona is sure to become a much-beloved character in many young readers' homes. Her hard work on behalf of the hotel, her penchant for mishap when she is trying to help others, and her creative solutions to problems will make her a favorite among little ones. Those young readers will be spellbound by Mona's tale, as they worry with her about where she will go after the fall festival season is over.

I received an advance reader copy of this book in exchange for my unbiased review and am looking forward to the next books in this series!

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## **Peyton says**

The Heartwood Hotel series by Kallie George follows the life of a mouse named Mona on her adventures in the perfectly cozy Heartwood Hotel. Mona works at the Heartwood Hotel with other staff and a colourful cast of guests and visitors. All small creatures are allowed to stay at the Heartwood Hotel, from bunnies to bugs and all furry and feather fowl in between so long as they follow the rule “We live by ‘Protect and Respect,’ Not by ‘Tooth and Claw’”.

The first in the series, Heartwood Hotel: A True Home tells the tale of Mona’s adventurous journey of finding the hotel and learning about her family and her history. Mona goes through all sorts of terrifying escapades in the forest before finding the warm and welcoming Heartwood Hotel, a place that she can finally call home.

Heartwood Hotel: A True Home is followed by Heartwood Hotel: The Greatest Gift. Set during the animal’s version of Christmas holidays, Mona learns about gifts and the importance of helping others. New characters are introduced and more risk is found as the Heartwood Hotel is put through winter. Hibernation has started, and those not sleeping need to stay warm and fed in the cold, snowy nights of winter.

Animals are common characters in children’s stories and fit perfectly in the world of the Heartwood Hotel. Mona is a cute little mouse and seeing her grow in the stories is moving and encouraging. All the characters grow throughout the two tales. Each character has their own background story and special place and importance in the Heartwood Hotel. They have a lesson to learn and a role to play that contributes well to the story.

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## **Katie R says**

This book was great and it was one of my favorite SSYRA’s. My favorite part was when Mona had a great idea and Mr.Heartwood listened to her and she was thankful that Bumble helped her out too

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## **Just Commonly says**

"Sleep in safety, eat in earnest, and be happy at Heartwood." (15)

What a sweet and adorable story Heartwood Hotel: A True Home by Kallie George is!! The illustrations by Stephanie Graegin adds a bit to the story in a visual way for young readers. A story of courage and the true meaning of home, it will be a favorite for kids young and old.

I'm not typically big on stories with mice or insects, but Mona the Mouse is sweet, cute, and have a quiet strength that inspires readers to look beyond the physical, but see the person inside. Simple, yet profound topics such as jealousy and prejudice comes into play and is a great lesson for readers to pick up on, and possibly self-evaluate or even just to understand.

"We live by PROTECT and RESPECT, not by TOOTH and CLAW." (11)

I've been a fan of Kallie George's since the Magical Animal Adoption Agency and I think this new series,

Heartwood Hotel will be another favorite.

This review first appeared on Just Commonly blog.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the author/publisher. I was not required to write a positive review, and have not been compensated for this. This is my honest opinion.

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### **Jamie says**

3 stars for kids, but as far as adult appeal it is lower. I'm Lao just not that into stories with animals as characters.

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### **Heidi says**

Four and a half stars: A charming, cozy read all about friends and family.

One stormy night, Mona the mouse is washed out of her home. Soaking wet, alone and scared, Mona stumbles through the woods clutching her suitcase with the heart looking for shelter. Then she comes across the Heartwood Hotel, and the kindhearted owner, Mr. Heartwood, takes her in even though they are full. In exchange for a hot meal and a warm bed, Mona will help clean up after the big festival. After fulfilling her obligation, Mona expects to have to leave, but she is delighted when she is asked to stay on. Mona quickly adapts to her new home, making friends and helping others, but there is one animal, Tilly the Squirrel, who doesn't like Mona. Will Mona be able to stay?

What I Liked:

\*A True Home is the first book in the Heartwood Hotel Series. I had the pleasure of reading this aloud with my children. We loved the sweet story, the cozy atmosphere, the fun, eclectic characters and the positive messages. This is an excellent series for young readers.

\*I loved Mona the Mouse's big heart, courageous spirit and her willingness to help others, even a big bear. Mona may be small, but she has a huge heart and she is bursting with kindness. She is nice to everyone, even a lady bug and a bear, which makes all the difference. I loved watching this little mouse find her way, conquer the troubles and find a home.

\*At the heart of the story is the message of friends and family. Mona is an orphan mouse, she can't remember her parents, or what happened to them. She was alone in the world until she came to the Heartwood. Mona quickly makes new friends, and learns what a family is. I loved the focus on the importance of friends and family.

\*Tilly the Squirrel is a tough nut to crack, as she is often mean to Mona. I loved the way she finally came through for Mona, and the friendship that the two formed.

And The Not So Much:

\*I was sad to learn what happened to Tilly's family, and also that Mona had lost her family. This may be troubling to younger readers.

\*I finished wishing that I had learned more about Mona's family. I am hoping this mystery will be solved in the next book.

A True Home is a sweet, cozy and delightful story about a kind, little orphan mouse who helps others, and



finds a true home and a family along the way. This is an excellent book for younger readers. I loved the characters, the setting and the positive messages.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own, and I was not compensated for this review.

Posted@Rainy Day Ramblings.

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### **Kathie says**

This was a very cute book, and a great beginning to a series I look forward to reading.

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