



Every Heart a Doorway

Seanan McGuire

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Every Heart a Doorway Seanan McGuire
Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children
No Solicitations
No Visitors
No Quests

Children have always disappeared under the right conditions; slipping through the shadows under a bed or at the back of a wardrobe, tumbling down rabbit holes and into old wells, and emerging somewhere... else.

But magical lands have little need for used-up miracle children.

Nancy tumbled once, but now she's back. The things she's experienced... they change a person. The children under Miss West's care understand all too well. And each of them is seeking a way back to their own fantasy world.

But Nancy's arrival marks a change at the Home. There's a darkness just around each corner, and when tragedy strikes, it's up to Nancy and her new-found schoolmates to get to the heart of the matter.

No matter the cost.

Every Heart a Doorway Details

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Author : Seanan McGuire

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From Reader Review Every Heart a Doorway for online ebook

Pouting Always says

Eleanor West's School for Wayward Children takes in kids who have trouble readjusting to life after being found again. These kid's stories of where they have been are fantastic and hard to believe, leading parents to worry, especially when many of the kids seem depressed to be back. Kids are taken to the school to undergo therapy to let go of their delusions of the time they spent away from home and deal with the emotional fallout, or so the parents think. Eleanor West may tell the parents what they want to hear, but she knows that the children she takes in aren't lying and gives them a safe haven where they can talk about their experiences and meet other children like themselves. The school tries to help these children learn to navigate in the world now that they know about the other world that exists where they feel more at home, like they belong completely. Nancy is a new student at the school and soon after her arrival mysterious accidents begin to occur.

I enjoyed the book a lot actually and if I have any complaints it's that I wish there was more of it. It was more of a novella than a book and I really wish there was more details about the other worlds because I found that really fascinating especially hearing about the other kids experiences, not just Nancy. I also liked the whole murder mystery but it felt sort of obvious as to who it was and I wish that we had at least had some time to become attached to the characters before they started dropping dead so I could've cared more that they were dead. I do like the autonomy extended to the characters and the diversity represented in the book though and I really enjoyed that the children were allowed to talk about and make peace with their experiences which is important for people to be allowed to do. The characters were interesting too, I especially liked Jack and Jill but for some reason I couldn't get into liking Kade as much but it might just be because he felt like he was being put into the YA role of the broody hot guy and it automatically made me feel like ugh.

It's a creative idea and kudos for the diversity but again just wish there was more detail on the other worlds and maybe a better explanation of why there were more girls than boys because if anything I feel like parents tend to be more protective of their daughters and also does it matter how hard they search for a child if it's in a different world we can't access. I just want more explanation for all of it and more detail about the other worlds and kids experiences.

Regan says

3.5

Nat says

"You found freedom, if only for a moment, and when you lost it, you came here, hoping it could be found again."

This story started out grand and sprawling, a majestic, epic tale of finding out what happens when you come back to an unwanted reality after living in a magical place.
And yet somewhere along the way, it didn't work for me.

This book read more like a short story than a full novel and I liked that. But there were a lot of dull moments here and there, especially when tragedy struck. And I couldn't really seem to care about any of it because I wasn't attached to the world.

That's not to say that the storyline isn't incredibly intriguing, I just cared more about the stories of their journeys into the other world than what was going on in the aftermath of coming back. The stories they told in group therapy of finding *the door* and what happened when they went through it interested me so much.

"What about, like, Narnia?" asked Christopher. "Those kids went through all sorts of different doors, and they always wound up back with the big talking lion."

"That's because Narnia was a Christian allegory pretending to be a fantasy series, you asshole," said one of the other boys. "C. S. Lewis never went through any doors. He didn't know how it worked. He wanted to tell a story, and he'd probably heard about kids like us, and he made shit up. That's what all those authors did. They made shit up, and people made them famous. We tell the truth, and our parents throw us into this glorified loony bin."

What I missed from this novel was **something more**.

Halfway through the book I started to lose interest and I couldn't understand why. There would be a chapter where I would feel fully invested in the story, only to turn to the next and get distracted by almost everything.

The premise of this story is so different and intriguing, yet the execution of it did not work in my favor.

2.5 stars

Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **Every Heart a Doorway, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!**

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This review and more can be found on my blog.

Petrik says

A good enchanting short tale on acceptance and misfits.

Hogwarts, Narnia, Middle-Earth, every reader who has tasted speculative fiction will most likely have imagined themselves transported to one, Every Heart A Doorway (EHAD) showed the aftermath of going into these different worlds with no option of going back to them. It's a great premise and I love how the book told the character's struggle in coping with their new reality; where even their own family doesn't trust the things that they experienced in these worlds.

Picture: Official Artworks by Rovina Cai

“This world is unforgiving and cruel to those it judges as even the slightest bit outside the norm.”

For such a short book—around 2 hours read—EHAD managed to talk about a lot of important topics regarding diversity, bullying and most importantly, acceptance; not to mention McGuire’s prose is so damn lovely and enchanting to read. There are so many phrases that I highlighted just from the first part of the book.

This is a good novella, but in my opinion, without a doubt highly overrated. This book is divided into two parts and let me tell you, the first part of this book is amazing, at this point I honestly thought it would be 5 stars read, which would also make this book automatically be the first YA book I’ve rated 5 stars. However, the second part of the book disappointed me, my interest dwindled as the story turns into a murder mystery and I can’t help but feel that McGuire tried to put too many things to discuss within this short story; at the same time, this made the character’s personality fell flat to me as well.

EHAD is a good short story but from the first book alone, I still don’t know whether I’ll continue with this series up until the end or not yet, especially after knowing there will be at least six books in it. However, I will read the second book before making my final decision. I recommend this to anyone who’s looking for a good short portal fantasy read. This book received tons of awards, quite highly praised among YA community, there’s a high chance you’re going to enjoy this much more than me.

“You’re nobody’s doorway but your own, and the only one who gets to tell you how your story ends is you.”

This review can also be found on my dear friend, Haifa's blog: [Booksprens](#)

You can find the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at [BookNest](#)

mark monday says

the novel has at its center a fascinating idea, one gleaming with potential: a school full of children cast out of their various Narnias, longing to go back (oh and there's a serial killer on the prowl). too bad that potential was squandered on a predictable and often inept narrative, gruelingly repetitious dialogue and ham-handed exposition, and characters who are trying awfully hard to entertain with their snarky dialogue while fitting themselves into the most au courant of demographics. I feel like I should be awarding points to the book for including both an asexual character and a trans character, not to mention a Manic Pixie Asian character, but. I. just. can't. I love diversity and that of course includes individuals (like me) who identify as something outside of the straight white norm, and frequently resent that norm... but these characters didn't resonate and actually felt more like boxes being checked than actual people. it's bizarre how overrated this book is.

note #1: people don't start nonchalantly boxing up a friend's possessions a scant couple hours after finding that friend's dismembered corpse and a small school would probably not just be moving on and getting back to classes in less than a day because, you know, GRIEF IS A THING.

note #2: having a second victim be alive while her eyes were pulled out of their sockets seems, I dunno, rather ridiculously sadistic maybe? I mean I get that the author didn't like this character and so for some reason had to punish her, but isn't that a bit fucking unnecessary for a young adult novel?

note #3: identifying a character as "Latino" and having their Narnia be some fantasy Day of the Dead Land only makes the author seem like a well-intentioned but basically clueless white liberal, checking off some demographic box, while not understanding that noting someone as "Latino" could mean they look like any shade of white, brown, or black... and it is certainly no equivalent to the generous physical descriptions given to every other character.

note #4: it doesn't help a story when the already glaringly obvious idea that is driving that story is stated explicitly and repeatedly because *uh yeah, I actually do understand that these diverse fantasy lands are an analogy to the diverse and very personalized worlds that children and teens live in, because that's already pretty damn transparent.* C.S. Lewis gets railed on because his Narnia adventures are such an obvious Christian allegory, but I don't recall any moment when a character from one of his books decides to say something along the lines of "hey everyone, did you realize that we are all living in some sort of Christian allegory OMG!"

note #5: strangely enough, I think this could have been much improved if it was twice its current length. at the very least there would have been room for the characters to deepen and grow and for the story to not feel like such a rush job (and checklist). Every Heart a Doorway is full of interesting ideas but those ideas are all delivered with an excruciating shallowness.

Kat O'Keeffe says

Such a charming, lovely book about magic and belonging. I absolutely ADORED the premise, the writing, and the cast of characters. My only real complaint is that I wish it was longer and the mystery aspect was a little more fleshed out. It's a very short book, and there's a lot of great stuff packed into the pages we have, but it was a bit too abrupt. Still, the ideas explored and the beautiful imagery far outweigh the negatives for me. Cannot wait to get my hands on the prequel/companion novel coming out in a few months!

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

? WINNER OF THE HUGO AWARDS 2017 for best novella?

As I hated them as a child, of course I had to write a review this way. That's my High Logic combating my High Nonsense for you. You're welcome.

? **START HERE** : Have you ever wished that you could escape this world and discover another one in which you would really belong?

- YES : Go to #1
- NO : Go to #8

#0 "This world is unforgiving and cruel to those it judges as even the slightest bit outside the norm." Want more? Go to #3

#1 First off, welcome! You're about to start a fantastic journey, full of adventures, friendships, betrayals, suspicions..... Okaaaay I'm overdoing it. When starting Every Heart a Doorway, you shouldn't expect an action-packed novel, because it couldn't be further from what you'll get.

? Are you still interested in this perfect mix of creepy atmosphere and hilarious dark humor?

- YES : Go to #2
- NO : Go to #10

#2 Not to say that this novel was *plotless*, because an important part of the story revolved around a murder mystery, but in my opinion its strength lay elsewhere : in the issues dealt with, first of these being the way we humans need to satisfy our thirst for acceptance and understanding - for *hope*.

? Now tell me, how would you describe your relationship with morally ambiguous characters?

- **I'd rather not say** : Go to #5
- **Pretty good, actually** : Go to #4
- **God, I hate them** : Go to #7

#3 Sometimes you find friendship in the most unexpected places, you know? Of course, of *course*, a boarding school shouldn't be so surprising a place, but given that 99% of the students want to run away *elsewhere* and suffer from some kind of PTSD, bonding with each other is often easier said than done. Yet Candy, Kade, Jack, Jill, Sumi and Christopher (Skeleton Boy! I would call dibs, but that would be Neanderthal-*ish*, wouldn't it? Sigh) delighted me with their interactions. **Fantastic characters' dynamics, really.**

? Need more convincing? How about some quotes, okay?

- "Because 'boys will be boys' is a self-fulfilling prophecy..." Go to #6
- "This is not an asylum, and you are not mad - and so what if you were?..." Go to #0
- "If they corner her because they've decided I'm guilty, she's liable to hurt someone just so she can get away..." Go to #9
- "Time resumed..." Go to #11

#4 Seanan McGuire's characters aren't morally ambiguous, **they use different scales of values as reference**. And yes, by that I mean that each and every one of them offers a different definition for the old Goods and Evils. Their past in the fantastic world they discovered and the way their life unfolded once they returned "Home" - they *matter* : These characters are different, intriguing and fascinating.

? Alright - Are you ready to meet the oddest group of friends?

- **YES** : Go to #3
- **NO** : Go to #10

#6 "Call it irony, if you like, but we spend so much time waiting for our boys to stray that they never have the opportunity. We notice the silence of men. We depend upon the silence of women." **Want more?** Go to #3

#7 The funny thing is, this is not relevant. Go to #4

#8 : I don't know what to tell you, really. I mean, have you watched the news? Please go watch the news.

■ **If you changed your mind** : Go to #1

■ **If you didn't** : Go to #10

#9 "I'd rather not get expelled right after I've disposed of a body. Seems like a waste of good acid." **Want more?** Go to #3

#10 : Hey, no hard feelings, but GAME OVER. Try again?

#11 : "Time had a way of doing that." **Want more?** Go to #3

PS. Tell me, was it supposed to be hilarious? Because somehow I couldn't stop laughing? Or is it yet another case of, Anna, really, your sense of humor sucks big time? I guess we'll never know.

Hole : credit

Old Book : credit

For more of my reviews, please visit:

Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says

Re-read 1/19/18: Y'all, this was SO much fun to re-read after knowing the backstory of Jack & Jill that we get in Down Among the Sticks and Bones. I can't wait to re-read it again sometime after I finish Beneath the Sugar Sky. I just love this universe SO MUCH.

Re-read 7/17/17: I loved this even more the second time around. I cannot wait to finally dig into Down Among the Sticks and Bones!

Original read 12/20/16: I really, REALLY liked this. My only complaint is that I wish it was 500 pages longer. I neeeeeed more!

emma says

THIS BOOK CHECKS ALL OF MY BOXES. Seanan McGuire may be...inside my very mind as we speak. (No but actually I kind of wish???)

<https://emmareadstoomuch.wordpress.co...>

First off, this book is teeny as all get out and oh MAN I love a short book!!!

Come to think of it...I *really* love a short book. Three five star ratings so far this year, and they're clocking in at 173 pages, 181 pages, and a whopping 190 pages.

Maybe I just hate reading?

No no no no I will not get distracted from the fact that this is the literary equivalent of someone hacking my Ok Cupid profile to build my perfect match. (I do not have an Ok Cupid profile.)

In addition to being the perfect length (which is to say, just a touch above nonexistent), this is also my ideal genre??? Say it with me: WELL DONE MAGICAL REALISM BABY!!! (Sorry if the improvised "baby" prevented you from saying it with me.)

This book is about a boarding school for children who have fallen into other worlds (magical ones!) and been unceremoniously dropped back into our boring old magic-less one. (Boo! Can you imagine.) Think Wonderland (!!!), Narnia, etc.

Which brings up two MORE ways this book is perfect for me! One, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (my favorite book ever of all time, in case you're new here) is canon in this world. Two, MAGIC BOARDING SCHOOL. Who doesn't loooove that trope.

Another perfect thing: a touch of MURRRRDERRRR?!?!?!! Yes! Murder! We have blood and mystery on our hands folks! (Hopefully not literally. That sounds unpleasant. You may want to hand sanitizer that sh*t. Except not actually because that cute lil keychain Purell you're holding is CONTRIBUTING TO ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE YOU LOON.) (Sorry for all the caps lock in this one. I'm excited.)

And perhaps the most perfect thing of all: This book is so diverse it puts literally every other book ever to shame. In 173 pages, this story contained more solid representation than pretty much every YA fantasy I read last year COMBINED.

Our protagonist, Nancy, is asexual. A pal of hers is trans. Essentially every single character is of color or non-gender-conforming or non-straight and there is so much mental illness rep it makes me griiiiin EAR to EAR. Which is actually a very off-putting image. But don't let the creepiness of my physically improbable smiling deter you from this book please.

To conclude: amazingly short + wonderful magical realism + Alice + boarding school + murder + mystery + effortless immersive diversity = I am one happy camper. Dare I say...the happiest camper.

karen says

congratulations! semifinalist in goodreads' best fantasy category 2016!

"Before I went through that doorway, I knew there was no such thing as a portal to another world. Now I know that if you open the right door at the right time, you might finally find a place where you belong. Why does that mean I can't go back?"

i started a review for this book when i read it three months ago, but i kept putting it off and as the pub date grew ever closer, i started panicking with "oh no, i loved this so much i want to write an amazing, persuasive review for it so no one will be able to resist reading this perfect perfect perfect book but it's been so long and details are so blurry aarrgghh!!"

so i read it again.

cover to cover, front to back and lemme tell you - rereading is NOT something i have any time for, what with this whole "no one lives forever" bullshit i just learned about.

but it was worth it.

now, this doesn't mean that the review will *actually* be amazing and/or persuasive, but it certainly stands a better chance now that it's fresher in my mind.

it's a stunner.

it takes place at a very special boarding school, called *Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children*; a safe haven for boys and (mostly) girls who, like alice or those narnia kids, went through doors leading to fantasy-worlds, spent considerable time in those worlds, and then for one reason or another, returned to their old lives.

and all they want is to go back.

"For us, the places we went were home. We didn't care if they were good or evil or neutral or what. We cared about the fact that for the first time, we didn't have to pretend to be something we weren't. We just got to be. That made all the difference in the world."

the school is run by a woman who has some personal experience with being kicked out of a magical world, who presents her school to concerned parents as a place where their afflicted, shellshocked children can receive therapy and be cured of their "delusions," but in reality, the therapy offered is less about addressing "delusions" and more about helping these damaged souls deal with the trauma of being booted out of their own personal edens.

"This isn't a place for lies or pretending everything is all right. We know everything is not all right. If it were, you wouldn't be here."

and you would think that in a school like this, where everyone can relate to these very specific feelings of loss and despair, where a supportive community can be formed, with comfort taken in their shared differences, you would think everything would be safe.

Even if they would never have the opportunity to go back home, they would have someone who understood, and the company of their peers, which was a treasure beyond reckoning.

the problem is that while their basic experiences are similar, the fabrics/rules/mechanics of all the possible

worlds are vastly different, so there is no true common ground. mcguire lays out this venn diagram/compass of the specific features of these various worlds, and develops an impressive number of them fairly comprehensively:

nancy returns from an underworld - the halls of the dead, which values quiet, peace, stillness, and shadows. sumi is that manic tansy/foxy type of character, returning from a nonsense world where to stand still would be deadly; there are fairylands, rigid and logical worlds, realms where running on rainbows is both common and dangerous, etc etc. so while they are all different from "normal" kids, they are all different from each other in different ways. theirs is a superficial similarity, like how agatha christie and ian rankin both write mysteries, but their books would find they had little in common about 25 minutes into their awkward first date small talk: "so, you like ... murder?"

and so, despite this very important common ground, there's still bullying and cliques and social hierarchies at the school.

and suddenly, also murrrrderrrr.

the book is a mishmash of many wonderful things - a mystery, a fantasy, a coming-of-age story that is itself a rabbit hole into something much deeper and more ... fantastic.

it also functions as an allegory for finding a nontraditional home among other misfit toys

and making your own way and staying true to yourself and all these other jejeune-sounding things like tolerance and acceptance and understanding, but it's much less superficial than i am making it sound, and it also addresses big-picture things like gender and sexuality and mental illness in very interesting ways that, while this isn't intended as YA fiction, would be a good crossover title for stronger teen readers.

there's an emphasis on racial diversity and a whole rainbow of gender and sexual identity that complicate the home lives of these children: there's a trans character, a character who is asexual, and there are other characters who are not accepted simply by not living up to parental expectations. some are abandoned at the school - discarded, and some have well-meaning parents who cannot comprehend or accept what their children have experienced and are hoping they come out of the school restored to "normal."

Her parents loved her, there was no question of that, but their love was the sort that filled her suitcase with colors and kept trying to set her up on dates with local boys. Their love wanted to fix her, and refused to see that she wasn't broken.

to those who have never been through a portal to a magical world, their children's accounts seem to be childish fantasies at best or, more alarmingly, a form of madness. they try to account for these changes in their children with medical explanations like eating disorders or post-traumatic stress or amnesia brought on by kidnapping or other traumas, refusing to understand that madness is just an altered perception of reality and it may have been altered for their children in precisely the ways they are claiming.

"My folks would let me come back," said Christopher. "They think this is all some complicated breakdown triggered by the things that happened after I 'ran away.' ...It's really sad, because they care so damn much, and they're so completely wrong about everything, you know?"

and this kind of dysfunction-story could be irredeemably horrible and bleak in other hands, but mcguire has such a deft, light touch, and it's written with her signature energy that infuses humor and poignancy and honesty into a dark story and what you end up with is her trademark brand of beautiful horror. it's got all those dark-funny zings you'd expect from her: *"An unreported death is just a disappearance in its Sunday clothes,"* and her characters are, as always, phenomenal.

on this second reading, i took pages and pages of notes and went a little nutso analyzing it, but i don't want to ruin anything for anyone so i'm just gonna scrap it all. i just want to say that this book is a beautiful heartbreaker that is incredibly densely-written for such a little shorty, but it reads so feather-light.

i have no idea what the rest of this series will be - it ends on a note jaggedy with possibilities. i'll be a little disappointed if the next book follows the path of the character this book ends with, because that is the least interesting character to me, but i have complete faith in mcguire's instincts, and i will follow her anywhere.

and as a complete aside - the first time i saw this cover

and before there was a description up for the book, i got SO excited because i thought seanan mcguire was sticking her pen into mira grant's parasitology ink and i started doing a little dance and squeal-chanting:

*some lies better left untold;
some dreams better left unsold.
the broken doors are open.
come and enter, and be home.
my darling girl, be careful now,
and don't go out alone*

but, no. different door. i guarantee you she did that on purpose, to give all the parasitology kids a little heart attack because i know i want an illustrated version of *Don't Go Out Alone* and i can't be the only one.

and i don't care what you say, there are definitely little nods to that other series here - naturally there's an emphasis on doors: *"You shouldn't close doors just because you don't like what's on the other side,"* and these are characters who have been booted from fantasy worlds and whose doors are, in a sense, *broken* because they have become inaccessible to them, and nancy's disdain for the "quick, hot, and restless" reminds me of the peace and comfort sally finds in the "hot warm dark."

and none of that can be accidental.

someday my prince will come in the form of a *d.g.o.a.* graphic novel, but for now i'll just bide my time and hopefully there won't be too long a gap between this book and its follow-up.

please.

LOOK WHAT I GOT AT THE BOOK RIOT LIVE THINGIE!!!

i did not win when i entered the firstreads giveaway, and i'm still pending pending pending on netgalley, but now who needs 'em!?!? thank you so much macmillan/tor.com and now that i just found out this is the first bit in a series, my mind is exploding.

review is coming, i just gotta freak out a bit more first.

come to my blog!

Melanie says

Buddy Read with Cory!

Seanan McGuire was able to pack so much representation into 173 pages! How many 1,000+ page fantasy novels have I read with zero representation? This story has an asexual main character and a transsexual main character. The story does a pretty great job at abolishing gender roles, too. This book really is nothing short of a masterpiece.

“This world is unforgiving and cruel to those it judges as even the slightest bit outside the norm.”

Some of the passages in this book blew me away. This story's prose is so lyrical and beautiful. The Atmosphere is haunting, yet captivating. The characters are so important and memorable. I know I'm gushing, but this book was so enthralling, and easily only of the best books I've read in 2016.

“Because ‘boys will be boys’ is a self-fulfilling prophecy,” said Lundy. “They’re too loud, on the whole, to be easily misplaced or overlooked; when they disappear from the home, parents send search parties to dredge them out of swamps and drag them away from frog ponds. It’s not innate. It’s learned. But it protects them from the doors, keeps them safe at home. Call it irony, if you like, but we spend so much time waiting for our boys to stray that they never have the opportunity. We notice the silence of men. We depend upon the silence of women.”

Basically, this story is a murder mystery that takes place inside a boarding school. The boarding school houses children that have been to faraway, magical lands and no longer fit into society, because they want nothing more than to go back through their magical doorways, to the places they consider home.

As I mentioned before, this book is filled with diverse characters, but this book always touches on a very important topic: Trauma. These kids no longer feel like kids, because of the way time passes in these magic lands, are suffering from PTSD. On top of that, their loved ones don't even believe them when they tell them where they went, and are sending them off to this boarding school to "fix" them.

Thankfully, these kids have Eleanor West's School for Wayward Children. Eleanor is one of the very few, special people, that are able to find and open their magical world's door at any given time. Yet, she lives in our world, taking care of kids that have to deal with maybe never going back to their magical world.

“Because hope is a knife that can cut through the foundations of the world... Hope hurts. That's what you need to learn, and fast, if you don't want it to cut you open from the inside out.”

And each student has a very different magical world. Our main character, Nancy, lived in the Underworld that even name drops Persephone. The Lord of the Dead promises Nancy that she will return, once she is ready, but after a few months back in our world, and with parents that refuse to accept her for who she is, Nancy is starting to have her doubts.

“Their love wanted to fix her, and refused to see that she wasn't broken.”

Other characters' worlds are a vast array from a real life *Candyland*, to a *Frankenstein*-like town filled with murderous vampires, to judgmental faeries and goblins fighting a war, to skeletons who could care less about losing their mortal bodies.

I am so happy that Seanan McGuire is giving us more of these worlds. *Down Among the Sticks and Bones* comes out in June of 2017, and I've already preordered it. I loved this book so much, and it is so very important. I have nothing but high hopes for its successor.

*“You're nobody's rainbow.
You're nobody's princess.
You're nobody's doorway but your own, and the only one who gets to tell you how your story ends is you.”*

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Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

Unpopular Opinion Time

I very rarely give books 1 star ratings, but I just didn't like it. The majority of my friends and the world loved it and I'm glad they did, but it just wasn't for me. Enough said =(

destiny ? howling libraries says

#1 Every Heart a Doorway ★★★★★
#2 Down Among the Sticks and Bones ★★★★★
#3 Beneath the Sugar Sky ★★★★★
#4 In An Absent Dream ???

I somehow lived a full 25 years of my life without experiencing Seanan McGuire's writing, and now that I've seen how incredible her story-telling is, I can't imagine ever letting it go. This book sucked me in so wholly in such a short number of pages – it made me laugh, cry, and my heart soared. I was so invested in these characters, so fearful for them and desperately wishing I could protect them, that by the end of the story, I felt stunned. How could Seanan possibly do, in 173 pages, what so many authors fail to do in 600?

Eleanor West spent her days giving them what she had never had, and hoped that someday, it would be enough to pay her passage back to the place where she belonged.

In a world where children stumble upon doorways leading to other worlds, sometimes, those children are sent back – and left without any way of coping with the “real world” that they’re expected to mold seamlessly into. They spend their lives suffering through parents and doctors insisting that everything was a dream or delusion, when all these children want is to find that door again, and to go back where they belong.

She was a woman with something to protect. That made her more dangerous than they could ever have suspected.

That's where Eleanor West comes in: a woman who gave up her door, to give these children a safe place to continue their searches whilst living as peacefully as their minds will allow. She is fiercely protective and loving of her students, determined to offer them a home away from the worlds they so desperately wanted to return to. I loved her instantly.

“If anyone should be kind, understanding, accepting, loving to their fellow outcasts, it’s you. All of you. You are the guardians of the secrets of the universe, beloved of worlds that most will never dream of, much less see... can’t you see where you owe it to yourselves to be kind? To care for one another?”

Of course, not all of these children are returned unscathed, and that's where our murder mystery comes in. Students at the school keep turning up dead, corpses brutalized. Nancy is new to the school, but having been a child of the Underworld, death doesn't scare her, and she finds herself joining in a small team of students determined to track down the murderer by any means necessary. Seanan's writing is dark and heavy – gruesome, at most – but the suspense isn't even the best part (though the mystery is, in fact, fantastic).

“We notice the silence of men. We depend upon the silence of women.”

At its core, this story and the characters within it are so inherently feminist and inclusive, and I love Seanan *so much* for that. Despite it being a fantasy tale, a tremendous amount of the advice given and commentary made was incredibly relevant to our own world and society.

She'd known girls on diet her entire life. Most of them had been looking for smaller waists, clearer complexions, and richer boyfriends, spurred on by a deeply ingrained self-loathing that had been manufactured for them before they were old enough to understand the kind of

quicksand they were sinking in.

There's not only a great deal of talk about toxic masculinity and how our culture accepts terrible crimes from men, simply because they are men, but there's also commentary on the unfair standards women are scrutinized under. It felt incredibly important to me that one of the characters even points out that there are so few boys at the school, and is answered with an explanation that, as men are typically allowed to do as they please, they don't suffer the same fine-toothed combing that a woman's every move and word is passed under. When they go away to the other worlds, their disappearance is viewed as less of a shock, and when they come back changed, their newfound behaviors don't deem them a *problem child* in the same ways.

She could have flirted forever. It was just the things that came after flirting that she had no interest in.

Of course, the feminism in the writing isn't the only delightfully inclusive aspect to it; it's also a book with wonderfully diverse representation throughout the cast, including both an asexual protagonist and a trans friend/love interest. Their sexual orientations and gender identities aren't merely hinted at; they are displayed proudly on the page, which isn't something we see often in fantasy novels, much less little novellas like this one. It was evident from the start that Seanan cares enough about representation to find room for it no matter how small the page count may be, and I appreciated that so much.

This was always the difficult part, back when she'd been at her old school: explaining that "asexual" and "aromantic" were different things.

Not only does she offer such wonderful rep, but she also takes the time to dismantle a few myths, tropes, and assumptions. We have an asexual character, explaining that ace does not equal aro, and that she's capable of romantic interest and physical affections, regardless of her views on sex itself. I don't think I've ever read a book with such prominent ace rep, and while I'm not on the ace spectrum myself, I thought that it came across as fantastically positive rep.

"You're nobody's doorway but your own, and the only one who gets to tell you how your story ends is you."

I could honestly ramble forever about this little story, but the bottom line is that it is an incredible tale of acceptance, healing, friendship, trauma, and finding yourself – be it in this world, or another. I cannot recommend this series highly enough, and I am so eager to continue it and see what else Seanan has in store.

Catrina (LittleBookOwl) says

Rating: 4.5 stars

Emily May says

"We went down, and at the bottom there was a door, and on the door there was a sign. Two words. 'Be Sure.' Sure of what? We were twelve, we weren't sure of anything. So we went through."

This book is exactly my kind of weird.

I have to try and explain Every Heart a Doorway somehow, but it isn't easy. It's a kind of dark, creepy fairy tale about all those children who slipped through the cracks - a wardrobe, a rabbit hole, or a simple doorway - and found themselves somewhere else; somewhere no one would believe they'd been. No one, that is, except Eleanor West.

Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children is where despairing parents send their troubled kids. The ones who claim to have been to a different world. Eleanor West promises to help them, and she does, just not in the way the parents imagine. Because Eleanor has been to her own world and she knows the sadness and loss these children experience when they are dragged back to the "real" world. She offers them a place where they can be believed.

Very atmospheric and strange, but also full of wit and humour, **this story is just damn near perfect**. I loved the eerie style of writing, and the diverse cast of characters that included an asexual protagonist and a boy who is transgender. There's also a whole lot of creepy murder going on.

It's such a strange little book and I genuinely enjoyed both the writing and the insights into human behaviour. For example, Lundy's response to Nancy's question about why there are more girls than boys:

"Because 'boys will be boys' is a self-fulfilling prophecy," said Lundy. "They're too loud, on the whole, to be easily misplaced or overlooked; when they disappear from the home, parents send search parties to dredge them out of swamps and drag them away from frog ponds. It's not innate. It's learned. But it protects them from the doors, keeps them safe at home. Call it irony, if you like, but we spend so much time waiting for our boys to stray that they never have the opportunity. We notice the silence of men. We depend upon the silence of women."

There are many, often subtle, nods toward gender issues. And there's a rather hilarious moment when Nancy's roommate asks if she minds that she masturbates. I love how the book manages to be comical and serious, dark and light, fairy tale and psychological thriller, all at the same time.

Many of these kids just want to get back to their home, their real home, the place where they truly feel like they belong. How hard it is to live in this world while knowing that somewhere out there is a doorway that leads to where you're supposed to be. But, as Nancy finally comes to realize:

"Nobody gets to tell me how my story ends but me."

Riley says

This is hands down my favorite book of all time. I have read it 6 times now and I love it more and more each time. This book is for anyone who has ever felt different and weird. ever felt like they didn't fit in and dreamed of a place that accepted what others denied.

"For us, the places we went were home. We didn't care if they were good or evil or neutral or what. We cared about the fact that for the first time we didn't have to pretend to be something we weren't. We just got to be. That made all the difference in the world."

If you ever read a book based on my recommendation, please let it be this one.

Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

This was definitely not what I was expecting it to be, but it was a fun read! I liked the mystery aspect of it and I enjoyed getting to know the cast of characters and the different worlds they had come from. I did want a little more of a punch with the ending, but it was overall satisfying.

C.G. Drews says

So I honestly expected to adore this but...**I accidentally did not??** It had a LOT of greatness, though, and magic. My childhood was basically 80% obsession with books where children stumbled into other worlds (and like the remaining 20% was just wondering when I could eat cake) so this kind of spoke to my childhood soul a bit. **BUT. Agh, I have negatives.** So we'll just break it into lists, right?! LISTS ARE LIFE.

L I K E S:

- Obviously the whole premise of a school for the children who grew up in "other worlds" and are now back in reality and not doing well. IT'S SUPER COOL. The whole boarding school felt like Professor X's School for Gifted Children a bit so hello: I am a fan.
- There is SO MUCH DIVERSITY. Almost everyone falls into a minority category and that's *so so refreshing* to read about. Nancy is asexual and one of her best-friends is a trans boy. There are characters of colour, characters who don't conform to gender-norms, and a lot of the kids have some sort of mental illness or disability representation after switching worlds. #applause
- NICE COVER. IT NEEDS TO BE SAID.
- Very stabby! Very murder!
- Little bit o' blood everywhere which is nice.
- The headmistress was downright *awesome*, like that zany grandma trope, but complex and interesting. I LOVED ELEANOR.

D I S L I K E S:

- The murder mystery was freaking obvious.
- And, well, let's just say I was really peeved how it was handled. When people start getting murdered in a school, YOU KIND OF DO MORE THAN JUST BURY THEM, DUDE???? They tampered with evidence. Kids weren't sent home. People were like "oh just go around with buddies" while kids are turning up dead on the lawn. There was like no real investigation happening on the page. It was more like "oh dear there's murder, I hope it stops soon". AND JUST NO. (Obviously I belong in a High Logic world not a nonsense world omg.)
- Omnipresent narrative. Which I honestly hate. Because who knows whose POV we'll be in?? One minute it's Nancy, then the headmistress, than a quick single-paragraph over to someone else. NOT A FAN.
- I didn't really care for any of the characters (except for the one who died...typical) and Nancy seemed to be a very passive protagonist. Like she barely did anything??
- IT DISSED NARNIA AND I HATE IT FOR THAT.

"What about, like, Narnia?" asked Christopher. "Those kids went through all sorts of different doors, and they always wound up back with the big talking lion."

"That's because Narnia was a Christian allegory pretending to be a fantasy series, you asshole," said one of the other boys. "CS Lewis never went through any doors. He didn't know how it worked. He wanted to tell a story, and he probably heard about kids like us, and he made shit up. That's what all those authors did. They made shit up, and people made them famous. We tell the truth, and our parents throw us into this glorified loony bin."

You know what? SHUT YOUR LITTLE MOUTH. I hate when authors diss other authors. And like obviously I'm protective of Narnia because it was my childhood, but it was *half the reason I wanted to read THIS book*. And how can an author say another author is dumb for doing what THIS AUTHOR IS ACTUALLY DOING?? So yeah. Go spit somewhere else.

ALL IN ALL: look it was magical and it creative, but it had too many flaws for me. Like the Narnia insults aside (EXCUSE MY RAGING NARNIAN SOUL) the murder mystery was just too obvious and cliche. And the book was too short to really delve into any characters' personalities enough. SAD FACE. I'LL LET MYSELF OUT.

Emma Giordano says

I cannot remember the last time I read a book in one sitting (given, this is a novella under 200 pages) but the reason I finished so quickly is because I was ADDICTED to reading, it really had nothing to do with the length. I literally picked this book up on a whim because I've been bored at work, and it quickly became much more than a distraction. I can't tell you how much I loved it!

I enjoyed *Every Heart a Doorway* so much more than I could have anticipated. The characters are intriguing, the writing is delectable, the plot is superb. I really had a fantastic time reading it and would seriously recommend it to everyone.

I honestly had an issue with the writing for the first few pages. It felt way too lyrical and over the top - I love a beautiful writing style but the first few pages were too much for me. Once I fell into the story and the edges of this novella hardened a bit, it was much easier to love. It's honestly written in what I could potentially be the most beautiful prose I have ever read. I must admit, as the storyline deepened, that prose did seem to

disappear a bit. The last chunk of the book is mostly dialogue, so I ended up missing that special writing style by the end of the book. (That being said, I see there's two other books in this series and I am HERE for them.)

I really really loved the characters more than I could have anticipated from a novella. I wasn't expecting to get as attached as I am. Although I know the next two books follow different characters as their respective protagonists, I'm very hopeful for cameos because I just want more. I also loved the fact that we had an asexual main character and a trans main character. I can't personally speak for the rep, but I know this book has been highly acclaimed by readers for not only being one of the first "bigger" YA books to have an ace main character, but also for containing great ace rep! I was really really pleased with all the characters and cannot wait to read more.

In all, *Every Heart a Doorway* blew me away. As a huge lover of long books and extended series, I didn't realize I could love such a short story as much as I did. I would highly highly recommend this book over and over if you are looking for a fun yet dark, diverse fantasy novella with the most amazing writing that will only take you a few hours to read. I'm so happy I read it and am so thankful to the friends that recommended it to me!

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

Reality is harsh, even more so if you've been one of the numbers of children who went through magical portals to otherworldly lands, like Wonderland, or Narnia. Imagine escaping to a land magical beyond your dreams.

"I was looking for a bucket in the cellar of our house, and I found this door I'd never seen before. When I went through, I was in a grove of pomegranate trees. I thought I'd fallen and hit my head. I kept going because ... because..."

Because the air had smelled so sweet, and the sky had been black velvet, spangled with points of diamond light that didn't flicker at all, only burned constant and cold. Because the grass had been wet with dew, and the trees had been heavy with fruit. Because she had wanted to know what was at the end of the long path between the trees, and because she hadn't wanted to turn back before she understood everything. Because for the first time in forever, she'd felt like she was going home, and that feeling had been enough to move her feet, slowly at first, and then faster, and faster, until she had been running through the clean night air, and nothing else had mattered, or would ever matter again—

"How long were you gone?"

The question was meaningless. Nancy shook her head. "Forever. Years ... I was there for years. I didn't want to come back. Ever."

Returning to reality gets you labeled as "crazy" and gives you a one-way ticket to a mental asylum. Harsh indeed. The somewhat more fortunate children in this book get to go to *Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children* instead.

The "home for wayward children" brings to mind the more famous book with that line, naturally I'm referring to the book by Ransom Riggs. In my opinion, there is no question that **this is the superior book**.

The writing is exceptional, evocative, emotional, which is the reason I included that very long excerpt above, as a sample.

The characters in the book are well-developed from the many characters, each of whom have their own well-built tale, to the headmistress of the school, Eleanor West, who was a former visitor to another world herself. Expelled from said world for whatever reason, she spends her time with these children, helping them recover from the shock of reality, and in the meantime, trying to redeem herself in the hopes...

...that someday, it would be enough to pay her passage back to the place where she belonged.

And, you know, it may be a school for weird kids who went to other worlds, but it's still not free of the usual cliques and difficulties of your typical high school.

The boys, except for Kade, were all sitting together, blowing bubbles in their milk and laughing. No; not them. One group had formed around a girl who was so dazzlingly beautiful that Nancy's eyes refused to focus on her face; another had formed around a punch bowl filled with candy-pink liquid from which they all furtively sipped. Neither looked welcoming.

If the kids in this book had a psychological diagnosis, it would be PTSD; the school focuses on helping them get better. Not by helping them face the fact that they're home and they'll never return to Oz or whatever it is, but on helping them feel like they're not alone, that life will go on after the fall from heaven. Because how else can you describe leaving Wonderland?

This book can be considered progressive in how it subtly addresses gender identity. I know that these days, it shouldn't be a big deal, yet it still is. Characters who are not of the sexual and gender norm still aren't featured in most books, so I would like to commend this book for making it seem like it's not a big deal.

"Jill—you'll meet her at dinner—wanted to fuck him until she found out he used to be a girl, and then she called him 'she' until Miss Ely said that we respect people's personal identities here."

"Yes," said Nancy, recovering her composure. She began walking again. "I'm quite sure I don't want to ... have sexual relations with him, and I don't think his gender expression is any of my business." She was reasonably sure that was the right way to say things. She'd known the words once, before she left this world, and its problems, behind her. "That's between him and whoever he does, or doesn't, decide to get involved with."

This is a dark book, but it's not without dark humor. The teenagers in this book are, well, teenagers. And no matter what world they've visited, the snark and rebellion is still there.

Most fairy tales have happy endings, this book leaves it open.

You're nobody's rainbow.

You're nobody's princess.

You're nobody's doorway but your own, and the only one who gets to tell you how your story ends is you.

