

*Every Heart a Doorway* by Seanan McGuire

*Every Heart a Doorway* is the first novella in Seanan McGuire's Wayward Children series. Nancy Whitman has recently returned from the Land of the Dead, and her parents don't believe her story of where she had been. They instead believe that she had been traumatized from a kidnapping, making up a story about serving the Lord and Lady of the Underworld to cope. Nancy's parents send her away to a boarding school that can potentially help her process this perceived trauma. But this is not an ordinary boarding school like Nancy's parents think, it's Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children, somewhere for those who have traveled through portals to magical lands. Eleanor herself had traveled through her own magical portal as a child, setting up the school to help those like her who needed help adjusting to being back in the "real" world. Nancy comes to find that there are many others like her, and that she is not alone in desperately wanting to find a door back to the world that became her home. But there is a darkness lurking at the Home for Wayward Children, and Nancy and her new friends need to figure out the motive behind a string of killings that threaten the future of the school.

This book was nothing like I expected and so much more interesting than I ever could have imagined. As someone who is a huge fan of fantasy novels where the protagonists go through portals to magical lands, like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Alice in Wonderland*, I felt compelled to read McGuire's book about what these types of characters would experience when re-entering the non-magical world. It's not difficult to imagine that they might need to find others who have shared their experiences, even if they hadn't traveled to the same worlds, in order to talk through what it's like to be always looking for another portal to the place where they feel more at home. Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children is where they can find others who have been through the looking glass, so to speak. Nancy and her fellow students are teenagers who are trying to figure out their place in the world they are now forced to live in. And then on top of that they have to solve a series of murders in what should be their safe place in this world. While the majority of the characters are teens, this is definitely an adult read, since there are some gruesome bits and some brash language. But I must say that overall it's a really heartwarming story. McGuire has packed *a lot* of substance into a short book, which I could not put down once I started reading it. I can't wait to read more of this series!

GK