Clarion Review

Picture Books

Morty Mouse: I Wish I Could Fly
Xlibris
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Three Stars (out of Five)

There are two sides to the "aspirations" coin in children's literature: One side encourages children to pursue their dreams at any cost without ever giving up, and the other side teaches them to humbly accept their limitations and be happy with what they have. Kathryn J. Wood handles both lessons admirably in *Morty Mouse: I Wish I Could Fly*.

Morty Mouse believes himself to be the handsomest mouse around. When he tries to coax compliments from his fellow creatures, they note that he looks nice but he can't fly, which causes Morty to feel the same jealousy he had hoped to inspire in others. After a failed attempt to fly involving dandelions, a newly humbled Morty is offered a ride from his bat friend, Bertie, and finally gets to fly.

Kathryn Wood took up writing after retirement, finding inspiration in her grandchildren and the animals in her garden—in particular, a robin who features prominently in *Morty Mouse.*

The illustrations in *Morty Mouse* are superb, but the writing occasionally falters, most notably in a poorly edited sequence in which Morty decides to make his own attempt at flying: "'I know, I'll climb up these plant pots and, if I hold on tightly to a dandelion clock, I might just fly. After all, when the wind blows, the seed heads are just like little parachutes,' exclaimed Morty, excitedly." The passage is fine by itself, but, two paragraphs later, a nearly identical passage from Morty appears: "'I know, I'll climb up onto the highest pot and if I hold on tight to a dandelion clock, I might fly. After all, when the wind blows, the seeds fly off like little parachutes.'"

Wood hails from the United Kingdom, and American readers, especially children, might find British terms like "dandelion clock" and "ladybird" (instead of "ladybug") a bit confusing.

Despite these issues, *Morty Mouse* delivers on its main message—Morty learns not to be vain or jealous. Perhaps the book's best lesson, however, is to think creatively about one's own limitations. Even though it's not Morty's idea, when he rides on Bertie's back, he gets to see

what it feels like to fly, even if it's in a different way than he'd imagined.

Morty Mouse: I Wish I Could Fly is a pleasant addition to the field of children's literature. If Wood continues to write, her career, much like Morty Mouse, might just take off and fly.

Peter Dabbene