FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Picture Books

The Chicken Without a Coop
Kathleen Cameron
John Wilson, illustrator
Lost Coast Press
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Children love hearing true stories. They are often more surprising than fiction. In this embellished true story, a homeless chicken and a black cat meet, become friends, and find the chicken a coop.

Columbus the cat brings Henrietta the chicken home to his family—a mother and her daughter, Katy. Although Katy's mom allows the chicken to stay, they have no coop, forcing the distraught chicken to roost in the trees. "If I survive the night," Henrietta wails to the cat, "where will I lay my egg in the morning?" Columbus tells her not to worry: "In the morning, I'll show you my secret passageway, which will lead you into a new world."

Columbus shows the chicken how to use the cat door and invites her onto Katy's bed, where she lays her egg. Katy hides the eggs at first, fearing her mother's reaction, but the story twists again, concluding with Henrietta getting her very own quilted coop.

The author is an educator and animal enthusiast; this is her first children's book. The story follows the true experiences of her neighbors in Northern California who had a pet chicken that actually used the cat door and laid her eggs on the little girl's bed. Told in a casual way, the story is more believable and entertaining because it is based in reality.

The illustrator lives and works in the Scottish Highlands but captures the lush colors and landscapes of the rainy California area. Using details such as printing "Mendocino Children's Choir" on the back of Katy's pink jacket, he brings the story to life. His patchwork paintings offer a memorable picture of a family learning to include a chicken.

Animal lovers will enjoy the friendship between the cat and the hen. All readers will appreciate the creative problem-solving skills of the animals and the warm welcome Katy and her mom gave them. Sometimes true stories really are the most amazing.

Anna Stewart