

Wanted: A Forever Home

Janet Goodwin

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Animal lovers will delight in the wild adventures and earned luxuries of the fun and furry group in Wanted: A Forever Home.

Janet Goodwin's *Wanted: A Forever Home* is the sweet and heartfelt story of one wide fur-family and the determination that brought them together.

The story leads off with Gentleman George, a shepherd's dog who loves nothing more than to serve his master and tend his flock in the Spanish countryside. Tragedy drives George from his happy home, though—and on a fated path toward the puffed-up Senora, an adored house kitty who may just be willing to share her people with other searching animals. Wild kitties Tia and Bella—and Bella's three kittens—are her first adoptees, and their life together is happy—if with its fair share of feline reserve.

Irresponsible travelers set into motion a chain of events that leaves Gentleman George on Senora's doorstep, and the rest of her catty companions in the clutches of the local animal rescue. Charged by his new owners with a rescue mission of his own, George sets out to retrieve Bella and the rest—and picks up a few surprises along the way.

Senora is a purrfectly catty feline lead, who basks in human attention and who is reluctant to share her food with outsiders—at least, until she's really and truly done with it. Bella's kittens are somewhat indistinguishable from one another, but are a familiar cast as they get caught in tight spots and rush to catch each other's tails. Similarly, George is developed as a perfect canine: loyal, trustworthy, and always ready to dig beneath troublesome fences.

These characters don't push boundaries, but they do tug at the heartstrings, in a story that is *Lady and the Tramp* meets *The Incredible Journey*. The question of how they convey their given names to the humans who indulge them may nag, and their animal feats may sometimes breach normal bounds, but they're altogether a cuddly bunch, easy to worry over and root for.

The story contains plenty of dangerous and unhappy moments for its animal leads, from losing loved ones to wounds in the wild, but even as fires rage toward their homes and humans chase them down, the text's jaunty tone keeps tension at a rumbling level. The bulk of the story is devoted to fleshing the creatures—and their people—out gently: to exploring their motivations and fears in a relatable, often pert, manner.

Young readers who love animal stories will be enraptured, and the subtle messages woven in—particularly around caring for strays—will land effectively.

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MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November 30, 2016)

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