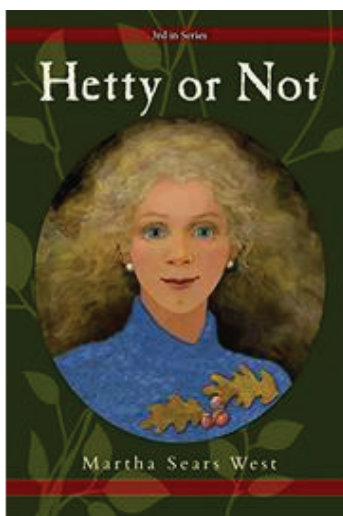


KIRKUS

REVIEWS



HETTY OR NOT

(Third in Series)

by Martha Sears West

KIRKUS REVIEW

A young woman poised to marry her beloved must face the machinations of his former fiancée in the third installment of West's (*Hetty Makes it Happen*, 2014, etc.) series.

In 1960, the shy, sweet 20-year-old Hetty Lawrence has graduated early from college and is thrilled to be back in her forest home. She visits "Hannah," the mighty tree that was once her dreamy childhood refuge and the place where she later confessed her love to Morgan Morgenthal. Soon after that confession, Morgan halted his wedding to Katrinka Wallace, the stunning daughter of a dwarf named Phil, who's Morgan's father's partner in a family circus business. Morgan is finished with law school and eager to start his new life with Hetty. Then Phil dies, and Katrinka leans on Morgan for support. She also hints to Morgan that Hetty, due to a heart condition, shouldn't have children and manipulates Ignatz, a former circus employee dismissed for animal cruelty, to help her trap Morgan into marriage. Hetty tries not to feel threatened by Katrinka's actions and does her best to fulfill Phil's dying wish for her to be a friend to his daughter. She also tries to help reignite the love between Morgan's parents and later undergoes a glamorous transformation. West once again combines charming illustrations of Hetty and other characters with a romance plot featuring gently humorous and slightly edgy elements. The tense marriages of Morgan's parents and Hetty's biological father and new stepmother, for example, darken the perspectives of the lead couple—at least for a time. Katrinka continues to be a compellingly nuanced character: devious yet also a loving daughter. The proceedings can be a bit silly at times, as when muscleman Ignatz gets distracted by thoughts of a juicy burger. Still, West wraps up this romance in her trademark rollicking, family-friendly fashion, complete with a Cinderella turn by the always-appealing Hetty.

An amusing, satisfying conclusion to a charming heroine's love story.