

2nd in Series

Hetty Happens!



Written and Illustrated by
Martha Sears West

PREVIEW

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by
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CLEAN KIND WORLD
Los Angeles

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For my parents,
Gordon and Elizabeth Sears,
who provided a home of exceptional
love and harmony.

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Steve West,
and for his fifty-four years of support
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Thanks to
my editor and daughter,
Page Elizabeth West Mallett,
without whose wise advice and insight
I would never have attempted this book
in the first place.





I'm absolutely mortified just thinking about last night!

CHAPTER ONE

How Humiliating

Hetty arrived at school early and took her seat next to Melinda Morgenthal, her best friend in all the eleventh grade.

Melinda linked arms with her. “I guess my brother’s going to marry Katrinka Wallace. My parents are counting on it, you know. They’re giving a sort of pre-engagement party tonight.”

Hetty had expected Morgan to make the commitment sometime, but she felt a little sick now that it was real.

Melinda seemed unaware of Hetty’s distress. “The servants are taking off,” she said, “so my mom wonders if you could help me serve the food.”

“Oh, I . . . but . . . you’re sure she wants *me*?”

“She told me to ask a friend, and that’s what I’m doing.”

“Yes, of course I will. You know I would do anything I can for Morgan . . . for you . . . to make his plans work out perfectly. In fact, I’ll even make it kind of like my mission. I promise. Morgan deserves to be happy more than anyone I know in the whole world.”

That evening, after the party guests arrived, Melinda was in the dining room. Hetty found herself alone in the kitchen. She was folding tea napkins behind the pantry door when two girls entered the kitchen to talk privately. While hidden from view, Hetty overheard their hushed but animated whispers.

“You’ve done it again, Katrinka. You always get the cute boys. And Morgan’s absolutely gorgeous!”

“He’s more than just a handsome face with lots of money,” said Katrinka. Her voice sounded dreamy.

“I’ll say,” said the other girl. “He’s a real catch. Everybody knows that. And he won’t stand a chance now you’ve set your hook for him.”

“He is three years younger than I am,” said Katrinka, “but I know a good man when I see one.”

“Look at this place,” said the other. “Even the servants’ quarters are fabulous. I bet you’ll be married by next spring.”

Katrinka crooned her response. “I know what I want, and I’ve always wanted Morgan.”

“Uncle Phil will use his influence, Trink. You can count on that.”

“I’m not sure, Libby,” whispered Katrinka. “I don’t think Daddy would try that with Morgan.”

“Can I be a bridesmaid?” asked Libby. “It’ll be the most spectacular social event ever!”

“Shh . . . Of course. You’re my only cousin.”

As the two girls continued to defile the kitchen with their muffled conversation, Hetty felt nauseous. She thought,

How could they talk about him that way! “Cute” is what you call puppies. There has to be a better word to tell how his voice is so gentle and how he listens to everything you say. Morgan treats you like you’re important even if you’re not. A word like

cute doesn't begin to explain all that.

When you're not feeling sure of yourself, Morgan can just look at you and it gives you the courage to stand a little taller.

His eyes are a really deep blue and have little flecks of brown in them.

I bet Katrinka hasn't noticed how they crinkle at the corners when he smiles.

Hetty felt a case of the hiccups coming on. Hoping to remain silent, she took a big breath, held her nose, then leaned further out of sight into the shadows of the pantry. Just as she thought her presence might go undetected, Melinda burst into the kitchen calling her name. Upon seeing Hetty's bright tangle of hair peeking out from behind the pantry door, she cried, "Oh, there you are!"

Hetty startled even herself with a loud hiccup that echoed off the walls of the kitchen and probably amused a few guests in the dining hall. Now Hetty had little choice but to come out of hiding.

As Katrinka realized she and her cousin had been overheard, a moment of silent awkwardness followed. She teetered and sputtered briefly, glaring at Hetty through the red heat of embarrassment.

Katrinka clutched Libby's hand with her primrose pink nails until regaining her composure.

Hetty decided not to tell Melinda what she had overheard. If Katrinka should capture Morgan like a fish, maybe it was because he wanted her to.

She thought of the large graceful manta rays she had once seen rising from the swells of the ocean. They came between her and Papa Dan when they were swimming. Their giant forms rose through the foam, flying high above the waves, then slapped the ocean surface before sailing one last time against the brilliant blue of the sky. The beauty of

the gleaming white and black beasts left them speechless with the wonder of it.

Years later Hetty saw a large and imposing black and white manta ray mounted in a hotel lobby. She decided not to tell Dan about it. The magic of the ray's freedom and its graceful dance with the waves was over. It was just as black and white as it had been in life, but was now reduced to someone's trophy to gather dust and to be bragged over.

Oh, Morgan! Please don't let yourself be a fish hanging on the wall! I guess it's none of my business though, is it?

Though the kitchen might provide a refuge from embarrassment, Hetty couldn't stay in the pantry forever. Melinda had arranged some little lobster puffs on a lace doily, and it was her turn to pass them to the guests on a silver tray.

Hetty regretted wearing her papa's old Forest Service boots. Why had she forgotten her best shoes? She felt tall and clumsy. Maybe Morgan would see her that way too.

At least she had on her dress with the yellow sash. It looked a bit out of date though, and it didn't fit very well anymore.

In the dining hall, Hetty tried not to look straight at Katrinka, but she had never seen such a perfect-looking person and had to try consciously not to stare.

Her toenails were the same pink as her lips and they peeked flirtatiously from the front of her dainty silver shoes. Katrinka clung to Morgan's arm with a graceful ownership.

As Hetty considered this, she felt numb, and her hands turned all weak and rubbery. Without warning, the lobster puffs slipped off the platter and caused Katrinka to spill her purple drink down the front of her satin jacket. Her eyes squinted like she was trying not to squeal, but something still squeaked out between her teeth.



I'm absolutely mortified just thinking about last night!

“Don’t worry about my favorite dress, honey,” she said. “I’m only sorry that you’ve embarrassed yourself.”

Then Hetty got down on her hands and knees to pick up the lobster puffs. She didn’t mean to cry, but she couldn’t help it. She tried to tell Morgan she was sorry, but nothing came out. A tear dripped off the end of her nose right where she was starting to get a pimple.

She needed to reach for the handkerchief in her pocket. But Morgan took both her hands to help her stand up, and she didn’t want him to let go.

“You,” he whispered, “are the guest I’m happiest to see. Please allow me.” He cleaned up the lobster puffs himself.

Katrinka said, “That’s so sweet!”

She had absolutely perfect, pearly-white teeth and gave Morgan a smile that would melt anyone. Hetty thought her smile could catch a fish better than any hook she ever saw.

Morgan didn’t see it. He was busy making sure Hetty wasn’t tangled in her bootlaces.

As soon as he remembered to look at Katrinka, he introduced them. Katrinka acted like she’d never seen Hetty before.

She said, “Oh, you must be a friend of Morgan’s little sister. I would be happy to show you how to fix your hair sometime, honey. It’s always so satisfying to conquer something that looks as unmanageable as yours.”

Hetty thought it best to tell her that would be fine, if Melinda could watch.

Katrinka gave Hetty an elegant smile. Was it so Morgan would admire her generous condescension? Hetty knew she mustn’t think so unkindly of her.

That night, Hetty had trouble sleeping.

The next morning, she rose at dawn. The magnificent oak tree she called Hannah often gave her comfort, so Hetty

pulled on her boots and ran into the forest. Climbing the tangled vines to Hannah's broadest branch, Hetty hoped to think more clearly there. Leaning back against the massive trunk, she closed her eyes and reviewed her painful experience.

Oh, Hannah . . . I'm absolutely mortified just thinking about last night! I hope I'll never be so embarrassed again the rest of my life.

I positively ruined Morgan's pre-engagement party. I have to make up for what I did. I promised Melinda I'd help make his plans work out. I believe in keeping promises.

But why did I ever promise to make it my mission?

And why was I so clumsy! I guess the doily was slippery. Melinda thinks the servants know some little trick to keep food from going kerplop down the neck of the Duke of Windsor, or whoever they serve. But they never told us what their tricks were.

I didn't want to look Katrinka in the eye. But when I did, I realized she was possibly the most gorgeous, magazine cover, Miss America type person I would ever see in my entire life.

She had a movie star kind of mouth. You know, the way they paint their lips like crayons going outside the lines of the coloring book but they look really gorgeous anyway. Besides that, my big toe would have filled her whole shoe, her feet were so tiny. Her high heels were absolutely skyscraper tall. Maybe she had to hang onto Morgan to keep from toppling over.

Her waist was so small that I thought of Scarlett O'Hara in Gone with the Wind. After I read it, I asked Mother if ladies still wore tight corsets like Scarlett did, and she said to this day you can still buy waist cinchers if you don't mind carrying smelling salts around with you just in case you pass out from not being able to breathe.

I bet Katrinka was wearing one, but she didn't faint. Probably because she had plenty of space for lungs.

Her hair had a kind of pouf on top that must have taken hours

with some famous hair architect named Antoine who probably told her to sleep nose-down on her pillow for the next five days to preserve his masterpiece.

I ought to think of it as thoughtful of Katrinka to fix my hair.

Actually, I don't want to sleep standing up—or with my nose down in my pillow all week. But I thought it was best to tell her to go ahead and do it.

I've made a foolish promise. The trouble is people judge your character by how well you keep your word.

The sun was now rising above the horizon. Little blue patches of ocean were barely visible through the trees. Had she really been sitting in Hannah that long? Hetty gazed out over Olive Witch Forest and wondered at the shimmering beams of light sifting through the leaves. Hannah's branches were warm and comforting. She had every reason to be happy.

Oh, Hannah! I don't know what's the matter with me, I feel so restless. If only I could be like you, happy about the way things are, or at least resigned.

Marian Reed read me something. Willa Cather likes trees because they seem more resigned to the way they have to live than other things do. She's right about that, don't you think, Hannah?

I should be absolutely and positively content. After all, Dan and Dora are the most perfect parents ever. No matter what I call them, they'll always be my mother and papa.

It's really easy for me to be with Leaf, too. He says every day is Father's Day since he found me, and I love calling him Father.

If Dan and Leaf hadn't become friends fighting forest fires together, he might have given me to someone else. I could have been raised by an anchovy processor, or someone who breeds horseflies for export, or something awful like that.

Leaf worried about me every day for seventeen whole years — ever since I was born and my mother died. He didn't know I had

a heart operation and got better.

Sometimes I stay in the cottage with him and Aunt Freydis after music night. Those recitals are really fun, even if they are mostly for family.

Dan always claps his hands till they're red and Dora taps her toes—sort of in time with the music. She sings a little off key, but nobody minds, because it's so fun to be together.

Leaf makes his violin absolutely sing. While he was growing up, no matter what instrument he chose to play, Aunt Freydis loved to accompany him on the piano. Even when he went through what he calls his "kazoo stage."

I like inviting friends to have blackberry cobbler for music night. Dora always gets to the cottage early and helps Aunt Freydis bake things that make the whole cottage smell heavenly. I'm absolutely certain heaven smells exactly like blackberry cobbler with cream and freshly grated nutmeg.

When Melinda brings her brother Morgan with her, I sing my absolute best.

Marian Reed comes when she can leave an assistant in charge of the library. Her eyes get all dreamy while she's watching Father play the violin.

Marian doesn't seem ten years older than me. Probably because she's such a good friend.

It's going to be impossible to take piano, violin, and voice lessons when I go away to college, so I'd better enjoy all three while I can.

Mother will have some good ideas for Morgan's party, and we'd better figure out the refreshments together.

Leaf and Aunt Freydis can advise me on the best music. We'll have to start rehearsing together. And we'll dedicate the recital just specially to Morgan and Katrinka.

Maybe Melinda will give me some ideas about decorating with a backdrop behind the piano.

We haven't made any specific plans like tying them together

with garlands of flowers or sprinkling them with a love potion, mostly because it's nonsense. People used to put bats' blood in their potions, and that's a cruel way to repay bats for all they do for us, getting rid of mosquitoes.

We'll serenade Morgan and Katrinka with music that makes them look deep into each other's eyes and inspires them to speak rapturously of one another's various facial features.

That way, long after their fiftieth wedding anniversary, when Katrinka's wearing bifocals and has gotten all droopy, which Morgan never will, she can remember that he said her eyes were like limpid pools and made his heart race like the engine of a red Corvette, all because the music was so heavenly.

In Japan, if you want to tell your ladylove that her eyes are beautiful, you say they look like grapes. I'm serious! I guess the word for grapes doesn't sound as blunt in their language.

Limpid pools probably translates into some gross-sounding Japanese word, so people there would hear us say "limpid pools" and laugh so hard that their miso soup comes out their nostrils like what happened to me once when I was laughing and drinking grape juice.

I'm glad I have school tomorrow, so I'll have something besides last night to think about.

My pimple will probably look like Mount Vesuvius by then.

The Missing Dead Language Book

A week later, it was a sweet-smelling afternoon. School was out for the day, which was the custom before exam week in May. Hetty's plans for the music party were well under way.

She ran to Hannah and climbed to the broadest horizontal bough. Sitting high under the canopy of leaves,

she gazed out over Olive Witch Forest at the soft puffy clouds playing over the ocean. They kept their distance to avoid casting shadows upon the scene.

Hetty had been eager to look through her brand-new Latin book—the one they would use next year. But she had been disappointed not to find it with her other schoolbooks when she got home from school.

Spreading the skirt of her school uniform over the warm bark, Hetty thought of it with disappointment.

If it's anything like the book we used this year, it's going to be positively delicious. In fact, that's exactly what I said to Melinda. I made sure nobody else could hear what I said.

Melinda specializes in eye rolling, so she made a wonderful cross-eyed face that absolutely could not be mistaken to mean, "Oh, yes, I agree. In fact, this Christmas I'm planning to give a Latin III textbook to everybody I know. We can all recite the Gallic Wars together instead of singing carols and hanging our stockings by the chimney with care."

Hetty smiled to think of Melinda. She was so creative with her face. Hetty Annette Lawrence and Melinda Morganthal would probably always be seated next to each other, as long as the Haxton Country Academy for girls arranged the students alphabetically. That was fine with both of them.

Their senior year at the school promised to be another good one. Hetty had started there in the sixth grade. At first, she had known Mrs. Fairburn only as the headmistress of Haxton. Hetty's life changed dramatically when she discovered her beloved headmistress was her "Aunt Freydis," as well. Mrs. Fairburn lived near the school in a cottage she shared with her brother, Leaf Locke.

In time, Hetty made the most wonderful discovery of all: Leaf was her father.

For Leaf Locke, Hetty's birth had been shrouded in

deep sorrow. Not only did his beloved wife Anne die in childbirth, but their baby was born with a defective heart. Anxious to do what was best for the little girl, he felt unprepared and inadequate to care for such a frail child himself. At the same time, his close friends, Dan Lawrence and his wife, were unable to have children.

Everyone involved felt it was wise for Dan and Dora to adopt the baby, so Leaf's sister Freydis arranged for her speedy adoption.

Leaf wanted his daughter and the Lawrences to grow close and undisturbed as a family. To give them every possible advantage, he made the painful decision to step out of their lives.

For many years, he had been careful to remain undiscovered; however, after his chance discovery of Hetty, Leaf and Freydis watched over her quietly and undetected for three years. They loved the child and spoke of her as Annette, or little Anne.

Flying

These were the things on Hetty's mind when she heard the soft rustle of dry leaves. She looked down from her perch in the giant tree, into the clearing beneath her. Morgan Morgenthal was there.

With his dark thatch of hair and thick eyebrows, Morgan's appearance reflected the heaviness of his home responsibilities. He devoted much of his energy to his sister Melinda's happiness, for there was little contact between the Morgenthal parents and their two children. Morgan and Melinda were seen mainly as an inconvenience, as they interfered with an active social life. The Morgenthal home was very different from Hetty's, which was brimming with

love.

Morgan cleared his throat, almost with reverence, as if to acknowledge this was a private place in which he ought not to speak uninvited.

Hetty's smile of surprise and pleasure provided the consent he thought necessary, so he spoke.

"I hope you don't mind. I've come with your Latin book," he said, holding it up for her to see. "Melinda must have gathered it up with her own things."

Hetty imagined she could see his words floating up in the golden flecks of sunlight, parting the branches. The leaves seemed to flutter their quiet approval of his presence. She thought,

Morgan isn't saying how he knew where to find me. Father Leaf must have told him where I'd be, but Morgan didn't say so. That means he was willing to take the blame onto himself, in case I didn't want him to come here.

Hetty looked down toward the tangled vines emerging from the forest floor. She almost willed them to put forth a welcoming appearance. Hannah seemed to understand Hetty's trust, and a ray of dappled sunlight fell across the vines, indicating the way to Hetty's private world.

Morgan reached her quickly with the book.

Looking at the wide view before him, Morgan appeared suddenly thoughtful. It seemed to Hetty as if the whispered words of some dream were trying to come from his lips. For a time, he quietly watched the distant clouds billow above the blue patches of the sea.

If Morgan hoped for an excuse to delay his departure, he found it when Hetty eventually interrupted the stillness.

"This is Hannah," she said. Then she heard herself add, "She's a tree." Hetty flushed. She thought how foolish these obvious words must sound.

I don't blame old-fashioned people for saying things like "Twas the dawn of the day," or "Ah, the dew from heav'n distilleth, forsooth." At least it shows an effort to be charming or something. But what possible excuse could there be for my saying, "She's a tree!"

That sounded so idiotic! If I were Melinda, I would for sure be rolling my eyes or going cross-eyed.

A smile crinkled the corners of Morgan's eyes. His face was so friendly that she forgot to feel embarrassed about what had escaped her mouth. She thought,

I hope he will sit here forever and ever, so the smell of him will cling to Hannah and his voice will blend with the wind, and we'll both fly up through the leaves and he'll pull me up beyond the clouds. Like eagles high above the sun, lifting each other. Higher and higher toward the light . . . brighter and brighter, until the perfect day . . . Don't let go, Morgan . . .

Oh, don't let go!

Hetty looked down at her hand and realized it was gripping the Latin III textbook.

"Thank you," she said. "I should have kept better track of it myself."

Different Worlds

Morgan scarcely heard her words. The branches surrounding them swayed in the soft breeze. The scent of honeysuckle reached his nostrils . . . or was it Hetty's breath . . . Morgan marveled at her curls as they lifted, light as sea foam. Or was it feathers . . .

His thoughts went back to when he was seven years old and he was jumping on a featherbed. His grandmother said,

“Morgan, stop that right now, or it’s going to burst!” She asked his father, “Can’t you control him?” then she added, “He’s your son!”

Morgan was about to stop jumping, when he heard his father grumble, “*Unfortunately*,” and the two grownups stormed out of the room.

Morgan’s jumping then became frenzied and confused. His little fists flailed the air and battered the soft bedding. Anger and tears came in waves, and his grunts became a loud and lonely wailing. Feathers were everywhere, and Morgan was in the middle of them.

After a time, he grew quiet and straightened his shoulders. Morgan thought of his baby sister Melinda. They had each other, and Melinda was someone who loved him.

He went into the room where the plump child was sleeping, and gathered her up. Together they blew the downy fluff lightly into the air like bath bubbles. It made her laugh from her belly as only a three-year-old can do. She gave him a big soggy kiss he didn’t bother to wipe off. Morgan decided he would always take care of Melinda.

The word “*unfortunately*” still hovered over him, but it wasn’t going to hurt any more.

The leaves surrounding Hetty shimmered in the soft breeze. Morgan watched a blush of pink spreading across her cheeks. It swirled in his head together with flecks of dancing sunlight. Weightless as swan’s down, the pale wisps of her hair captured the glow to form a silken halo. He wanted to spread his wings and fly above the world.

I want to reach for the light I see around her. If she could fly with me through the clouds . . . beyond the sky, and higher. Where everything is clean and bright . . . bright and beautiful . . . and never let go.

Hold my hand, Hetty! Hold tight . . . hold tight!

Morgan realized he was gripping a branch. He released his hold, blinked, and quickly looked away from Hetty.

He resolved to stop noticing her altogether.

Morgan tried to revise his thinking, and gazed at the distant clouds. He must no longer imagine soaring above the clouds with outstretched wings. Not with Hetty. It was time for real life.

He remembered . . .

Katrinka's waiting for me back at the gatehouse. She's here in town to see me, so it won't do for me to neglect her. Katrinka wasn't my idea, but I need to give her a chance. Getting engaged to her might be the one way I could hope to get my father's approval.

"I guess you and my sister will be sitting together again this year," he said to Hetty. Morgan thought how pleasant it must be to sit next to Hetty.

If Hetty weren't going to a girls' school, the boy behind her would probably dip her braids in his inkwell to get her attention, or bring her candy with corny notes, like, "Here's some candy for someone dandy." I know I would if I were her age.

Maybe she would let me carry her books while I recite the names of all the elements, maybe the planets, and the Gettysburg Address. I could conjugate a few Latin verbs. I think that kind of thing would impress her.

Then we could sit at the soda fountain of Whittlesey's Drug store and share a sarsaparilla float. She'd appreciate the soda jerk being a good friend of mine, and the way he would give us an extra scoop of ice cream.

Then Hetty would ask me all about my Forest Service job last summer. She already knows a lot about fighting fires from both Dan, who adopted her, and her father, Leaf.

Maybe I shouldn't tell her everything about being a smoke-jumper though, like how long we had to go without showers, and what we went through when they trained us. But I could tell her about the fire where the pilot of the Ford tri-motor dropped me on the spike of a pine tree and I swung from my parachute over the embers. She would listen with her eyes wide and ask me to tell it to her all over again.

What am I thinking? We're in two different worlds. None of this will ever happen. Instead of dreaming, I should just be content to know Melinda can sit next to her.



*He looked away to allow Hetty
to regain her composure.*

“... engrossing . . . charming,
as is the central love story
. . . mirroring the realm of
Anne of Green Gables.
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transition into adulthood.”

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Seventeen year-old Hetty is lovesick and miserable, yet not even her kindly parents know. She can’t speak about the one she loves. He’ll soon marry someone else. Does she suffer from a youthful crush . . . or is it lasting love? Gentle, imaginative Hetty can fix other peoples’ problems, but can she repair the damage she’s caused with her foolish promise?

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