

3rd in Series

# Hetty or Not



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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Edited by Page Mallett

*Hetty or Not*

Third in Series

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

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*There's so much love in the cottage, I can feel it from this far away.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Hetty Waits*

Hetty couldn't remember a time when she didn't love Morgan Morgenthal. She was almost sick with love for him. It seemed as though dreams of him had always been there, just waiting to become a part of her living and breathing.

As her eyes opened to the beginning of a rosy sunrise, she swept back the tangles of her pale hair and felt under her pillow for his photograph. Hetty held her breath at the sight of his serious blue eyes.

She had arrived at her home late last night, following a warm sendoff from her college roommates. Now rising from her bed, she unlocked the trunk her papa, Dan, had placed next to the dresser. On the very top were her 1960 yearbook and the diploma she had just received.

Moving them aside, she pulled out a pair of well-worn elk leather boots. Dan had worn them years ago while fighting forest fires, and now they were hers. Hetty pulled them on, tucking her pajama legs into the tops of them, and hurried through the forest to the magnificent oak tree she

called Hannah.

Eagerly, she climbed the familiar tangle of vines that clung to the massive trunk. With the lacy canopy of leaves above her, Hetty lay along Hannah's broadest branch. She breathed deeply to remember the fresh earthy scent of Morgan. Four years ago, she had looked down into the sadness of his face from this very place.

He had come to say goodbye.

Hetty shared the memory aloud, with Hannah. "What if I hadn't spoken to him?" she said. "He would have married Katrinka in the morning."

Hannah's leaves quivered in the soft breeze, as if to agree with her.

Suddenly the morning sky blazed with color. Hetty tried to see it as a message of optimism, but there was a dark heaviness weighing on her mind. That heaviness was the beauty queen, Katrinka Wallace. Would Morgan's former fiancée insinuate herself back into his life?

All Katrinka's ambitions had revolved around Morgan and the Morganthal business empire from the time she was nine years old. But with Hetty's unexpected proposal four years ago, her plans to become Mrs. Morganthal went up in smoke.

Hetty shivered. How did Katrinka feel about it now? Did her plans still include Morgan?

Hetty resolved to stop dwelling on her fears. She didn't want to think about Katrinka. Not today.





*With the lacy canopy of leaves above her, Hetty lay along  
Hannah's broadest branch.*

*The Career Woman*

This was a big day. Katrinka had heard rumors that Morgan would be back in town, but that was not all. His father, Maximilian Morganthal, sent her to apply for a job at Luvliness Conglomerates, one of the many Morganthal subsidiaries.

Just inside the lobby of the spacious office building, a waiting receptionist escorted her to the open door of Dart Duncan, the man responsible for hiring. Katrinka had heard Max call Dart the day before, preparing him to receive her.

He had said, "I believe you will want to hire Katrinka Wallace." Just like that.

*Nobody would argue with the boss*, thought Katrinka. *Least of all Dart Duncan*. According to Tilly Teller's gossip column, Dart enjoyed the company of Max Morganthal's daughter, Melinda.

Katrinka entered his large office, and Dart's eyes widened with something beyond curiosity. When she smiled to make her dimples look especially adorable, he removed his horn-rimmed glasses and rose slowly from his deep leather chair.

Tilting her head slightly, Katrinka flounced daintily toward him. Dart straightened his tie and came out from behind his large desk to greet her.

"Tell me, Miss Wallace," he said, "What sort of job were you hoping for here at Luvliness Conglomerates?"

Katrinka opened her glossy pink lips to reveal a row of pearly-white teeth. "Mostly I want to be in charge of some really important things," she purred. Katrinka was pleased with his look of surprise.

"Normally," he said, "I would have an applicant fill

out this form independently. However, I can probably assess the suitability of your previous experience better if we do it together.” He took a moment to fill his fountain pen then looked at her. “Full Name?”

“Katrinka Wallace,” she said.

Dart Duncan wrote slowly, as if to make the interview last as long as possible. His pencil hovered over the next blank. “Gender. . . .” He said it rather to himself, then checked the box *F* for female and emphatically circled it as well. He moved on to the next question. “Married?” he asked.

“Almost,” she said, blinking sweetly. “What I mean is I almost was. I would be now, except the night before our wedding, a little high school girl proposed to my fiancé. You know the kind I mean . . . pretending it was all about how Morgan’s so kind and considerate? They’re all the same, those silly, star-struck types.”

She hoped Dart couldn’t sense the way her heart beat faster when she pronounced Morgan’s name. Was it really over with Morgan? How could he possibly choose the tall, skinny Hetty Lawrence instead! It was especially hard to understand in light of the conditions Max Morgenthal had set. Max had fixed it so Morgan would receive an inheritance only by marrying Katrinka.

“He would have married me,” she said. “He promised he would.” She purposely neglected to mention Morgan had been six years old at the time.

Katrinka paused briefly and leaned toward him in a confidential manner. “But would you believe it? An elephant stepped on him the night before our wedding!” She sighed and her eyelashes moved languidly up and down, fanning her soft pink cheeks.

Her face brightened. “Are you?” she asked. She knew

his marital status perfectly well. He was single.

Dart's cheeks flushed. He continued as if he hadn't heard her. "What is your current employment?" he asked.

"Oh, I've never worked," she said. "Isn't this going to be the funnest thing ever?"

Dart laid his pen down on the leather-framed blotter and raised one eyebrow.

Katrinka began again. "My father and I can live on the Morganthal estate as long as we want. Daddy manages the circus for them," she said. "He's very clever, but in case something should happen to him, he wants me to have some work experience."

Dart Duncan raised his eyebrow again. "Is he ill?"

Katrinka was pleased she had aroused his sympathy and paused briefly to encourage it further. "Well, he's having some complications because of his dwarfism," she said. She became reverently thoughtful for a moment or two.

Katrinka was flooded with feelings of love and admiration for her father. Phil had advised his daughter to tell people about his condition directly, in case his appearance might cause any awkwardness in the future.

Fearing her last comment might remove her from consideration, suddenly Katrinka decided she should say something amusing. It might make her seem more employable. "If you're not a dwarf when you're born," she whispered, "you can't become one later in life!" She winked at Dart.

Instead of dealing with her sense of humor, Dart looked down at the form and continued boldly. "Do you have a preferred nickname, Miss Wallace?" he asked.

She gave him a subtle, intimate smile. "Mostly, I'm called Katrinka," she said, "but *you* may call me Trink."

She wondered if Morgan would ever call her Trink the way he had when they were little. *If only I could be near*

*Morgan every day. If I get the job, I'll use the same smile on him.*

She fingered the little pearl buttons on her blouse. It was easy to see why Morgan's sister Melinda would like the handsome Dart Duncan. Even though Katrinka could see he was no match for her, Dart might prove useful if she played her cards right.

He hadn't asked her age, and Katrinka was glad. Her mother had a saying: *Never trust a woman who tells you how old she is. It sounds so calculating.* On the other hand, maybe Dart would think she was just right for the job at the age of twenty-seven.

Maybe someday she would be in charge of designing those forms herself. As for the letterhead, Katrinka thought the company should be called LuvCon. A person could choke on a mouthful like Luvliness Conglomerates.

As Katrinka had expected, the longer she displayed the charms of her abundant qualifications, the more dazed became Dart's expression. Rather than further investigating her suitability for the job, Dart stood to signal the end of the interview.

"Can you start Monday?" he asked.

### *I Have a Plan, Daddy*

The guard grinned broadly and tipped his hat when Katrinka's car approached the entrance to the Morganthal estate. She raised her chin and drove through the massive gates as if she owned the place.

In a moment she would be home at the gatehouse, behind the mansion. Katrinka knew her father would be

lying on his bed listening for her to pull into the driveway. His old friend Max Morgenthal had installed a hospital bed in the living room of the gatehouse.

From there Phil could look out over the sculpted boxwood gardens and the manicured lawns of the vast Morgenthal estate. Of greater importance to Phil was the bed's location near the center of Katrinka's activities. Max knew Phil treasured every moment he spent with his daughter.

Katrinka knew just what to expect: her father would watch the door, awaiting her arrival. When she turned the knob, he would pretend to be asleep. But she would hear him breathe deeply to smell her perfume.

Quietly she would tiptoe toward him, and when he opened his eyes she would fluff his pillow and put on her prettiest expression. Yesterday he had said he was sure her dimpled smile would ease his way to the grave.

Katrinka made sure the moment of her arrival was as sweet as he expected. When Phil opened his eyes, they laughed together as if this daily game were entirely new to them both. She kissed his prominent forehead and helped him sit up.

"How was the job interview?" he asked.

She squeezed his stubby fingers and cocked her head. "I was a dumb blonde," she said, "and Dart Duncan fell for me,"

"No, honey," he said. "No, he's Melinda's beau."

She patted his cheek. "Not necessarily," she cooed.

Katrinka thought this a good time to divert his thoughts, so she went into the kitchen and prepared him a tall glass of pink lemonade on ice.

When her father seemed to have forgotten her previous comment, Katrinka gave him a crooked little smile and said, "Do you know who gets home today, Daddy?"

"Yes, but Morgan is no longer any concern of yours,"

he said. "Even Max can see how happy Morgan and Hetty will be. You can win over anyone else you wish, but not Morgan. Why not Marian Locke's stepbrother, Joseph? The three of us got along well when we traveled together."

"I know. It was fun in Australia, and I like talking to Joseph," she said. "But there's one problem. He's not Morgan. That's all."

"Fine, honey. But Morgan's chosen Hetty, and that's who he'll marry." He folded his short arms to emphasize the finality of his words. "Not Morgan," he repeated.

Katrinka tilted her head to show she was politely questioning her father's pronouncement. "But you want him to be happy, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Phil. "I love him like a son."

"Well, what if he loved me most? Wouldn't that be the best thing of all?"

"But he's chosen Hetty."

"Think of it this way, Daddy. . . . He let me keep the diamond ring."

Phil appeared puzzled until he thought of an answer. "He's just generous."

Katrinka straightened her back to appear triumphant. "Then why doesn't Hetty have a ring at all?" she said. "Besides, if Morgan thought it was completely over between us, he would've asked me to give it back."

Phil was speechless. Katrinka hoped the silence meant he was admiring her tenacity and spunk.

After a brief pause, she summarized her thoughts. "I say we're still engaged."

Phil was alarmed. "No, honey . . . no, no!"

Katrinka's voice grew serious. "Don't worry, Daddy," she said, "I have a plan. You'll see. I'm the one he'll want in the end."

Her voice brightened, and she kissed him on the cheek.

“He’ll be coming to see you before you know it, Daddy.” Katrinka knew her father was proud of his role in raising Morgan. He often spoke with satisfaction of the fine young man he had become.

Sometimes Morgan had felt unwelcome at home, especially when his parents, Max and Mimi, went through those binges of heavy drinking.

After her mother’s death, Phil sent nine-year-old Katrinka away to boarding school for fear his dwarfism might cause social problems for her. If it hadn’t been for Morgan’s frequent visits, those would have been lonely years for Phil.

Katrinka tidied her father’s covers and adjusted the pink lemonade on his tray. She thought, *When I tighten the noose, Hetty will never know what happened. But I can’t tell Daddy about my plan. He wouldn’t approve.*

Katrinka’s mind wandered to the problem of what to wear in case Morgan should come.

*I’d better have on my pink gingham dress when he’s here. Morgan can’t help but notice how nicely it fits me. Gingham looks kind of homey. I’d like him to picture me with a white ruffled apron, making a cherry pie.*

*But I never want to make pies. Not really. I just want to look like I could, so Morgan will get the impression I’m the happy homemaker type. Why should I have to be what he thinks I am? It sounds so dull. I want to be cherished without making pies.*

The sun would soon be in Phil’s eyes. Katrinka noticed it and lowered the blind a little so he could enjoy the view without discomfort.

“You’re as good as you are beautiful, honey,” he said.





*I never want to make pies.  
I just want to look like I could.*

*The Album*

Morgan packed the car with his belongings, but his right front tire had to be replaced before he could safely drive on the highway.

After he pulled into the gas station and parked in the service lane, he picked up a carefully wrapped package that lay beside him on the front seat. It was a scrapbook belonging to Hetty's father. Leaf was letting him keep it just until the end of school, and Morgan wanted to look at it one more time before having to return it.

Morgan entered a small waiting room littered with outdated magazines and took an empty seat. Across from him a woman with her head against the wall was trying to sleep while a little girl tapped on her arm to make sure she couldn't.

"Mommy, look. Mommy, Mommy, Mommy!" said the little girl, pointing at random to pictures in a magazine. The woman flinched like a horse shaking off flies and went limp again.

"Look, Mommy! What's that?" she asked over and over. Morgan smiled at her. Her persistent demands for attention reminded him of his little sister Melinda at that age. He doubted this poor mother got much sleep.

Morgan removed the wrappings of the scrapbook and opened it on his lap. It had a white leather cover with the name *Henrietta Annette Lawrence* embossed in delicate gold letters.

The little girl came closer and leaned her chin on the arm of his chair. When Morgan opened the album, a baby picture of Hetty looked back at him from the first page. She still looked quite fragile, as her heart defect had not yet been corrected.

"Is she your little girl?" asked the child. She didn't wait for an answer. "What's her name?"

"Her name's Hetty, and she's big now," he said.

"I'm big too!" she announced proudly.

On the next page, there was a more recent photograph of Hetty. "Here's another," said Morgan. "In this one she's all grown up."

Next to the picture of Hetty, he raised a thin sheet of vellum that protected the photograph of Leaf's first wife, Anne.

Morgan thought, *It must have been hard on Leaf wondering if Hetty survived. But he knew who she was the minute he discovered her . . . the way her hair comes to a peak on her forehead exactly like Anne's . . . and the dimple in her chin.*

"Nother Hetty!" said the child.

"She looks like Hetty, doesn't she?" said Morgan.

"Why?"

"Well," he said, "because she was Hetty's mommy. Her name was Anne, but she died when Hetty was born."

"Like my turtle. Flippy went to heaven." She went to her mother's lap again. "Right, Mommy?"

"If you can let your mommy sleep," said Morgan, "I'll show you a picture of Hetty's dog."

Before he could find the page with Pinky on it, the child leaned in closer and pointed to another photograph. "What's that?" she asked.

"That's Hetty's father and her papa," said Morgan. "Leaf and Dan. They were friends a long time ago." The two men were in the forest after battling a fire. They sat together on a boulder, holding their shovels. It reminded Morgan of his summers as a smokejumper.

The little girl looked puzzled. "I don't got two daddies," she said.

“Hetty has two because she was adopted.”

“Dopted?”

“Yes,” said Morgan. “That means some nice people let her be their little girl so they could take care of her.” He turned the page. “There they are. Dan and Dora Lawrence.”

“Why?” she asked, with no need for an answer. She seemed more interested in the way Morgan’s eyes crinkled at the corners when he smiled at her. After giving him a bashful smile, she ran to bury her face in her mother’s lap.

Morgan returned to the photographs. Dan and Dora had gathered them over the years, hoping they might see Leaf someday and give it to him.

Turning the page back to Hetty’s baby picture, Morgan thought, *Leaf couldn’t have cared for a sickly baby. Not after losing Anne.*

Again the child tried to get her mother’s attention. “What’s that, Mommy?” She didn’t have anything specific in mind, but slid her pudgy finger across the entire cover of a *Popular Mechanics* magazine. Morgan thought fondly of his younger sister. Melinda had been quite dependent on him while she was growing up.

Suddenly Morgan produced a shiny quarter. “Look what I found,” he said. She watched as his hand flashed, tossing it high in the air behind her. At least it looked that way. Morgan reached a magic hand behind her left ear and produced the mysterious quarter. She felt in her hair, wondering if there might be more coins where that came from.

He did it again. This time, the quarter came from behind her *right* ear. She giggled and jumped up and down. “Do it again!” she said. “Do Mommy’s ears!” She ran to her mother.

Morgan whispered, “Do you want to see more magic?”

She nodded. "Let's be quiet and let your mommy sleep." He glanced around and found the props he needed: two paper weights, a Coca Cola bottle, an ashtray, and his wallet.

Her eyes were big and round as she watched him juggle behind his back, high, low, and under his legs.

The car was ready sooner than promised. Carefully, Morgan wrapped the album and told his little friend he had to go.

She asked, "Why?"

"I'm going to see Hetty," he said.

"Why?"

When she waved to him through the window, he smiled and put his finger to his lips, reminding her to be very quiet so her mother could sleep.

Morgan cheerfully took the steering wheel. Maybe the drive wouldn't feel so long if he spent it imagining his homecoming. Though he was eager to see Hetty, he wondered if it would be better to speak to her parents first.

*Maybe when I ask for her hand, all her parents will be together. They often are.*

He remembered the year a tornado destroyed the Lawrence home. Leaf invited Dan, Dora, and Hetty to live in the cottage with him. *It's their love for Hetty. That's what keeps them especially close.*

Morgan thought of Hetty's young redheaded stepmother. He shared Hetty's affection for her. Long before Marian married Leaf, Hetty was already her dearest friend.

"Marian's unpredictable," he thought, "but in a good way. She needs the steadiness of a family more than I do. I had Phil Wallace while I was growing up, but she never had that kind of love and guidance."

Melinda was on Morgan's mind again. She was the only

person in his family who really loved him and needed him. It pleased him that Melinda and Hetty would be sisters-in-law.

Seldom had Morgan felt so deeply contented as he did now. The intense expression of his serious blue eyes softened. He was going to have a place within a loving family. Hetty's parents would soon become his as well.

### *The Gossip Column*

The day was perfect. Morgan rolled down the car window to invite the fragrant spring air into the car and aimed his contented smile at nothing in particular. From the Jeep next to him, a toothless man smiled back in recognition of his happiness. He sighed with contentment and let his thoughts wander.

*I'm living the perfect dream, and it's all because of Hetty.*

*The longest four years of my life are over, and she's there waiting for me. Finally we can talk freely of our feelings. I won't worry about being distracted from my studies, now that I've finished law school.*

*Her parents think we could use some time without chaperones, but they don't know how it is. I feel like I'll melt or turn inside out every time I look at her. If my sleeve touches her sleeve, I can't think about anything else.*

*For four years we've purposely stayed at a distance. We think it's still best to avoid spending too much time alone together. I wonder if we ought to talk about how it will change with marriage.*

*It may be an adjustment for her.*

At first Morgan was enjoying his thoughts too much to notice that his flannel shirts and a few boxes were blocking his rear window. As soon as he saw the need for organizing his unruly belongings, he pulled his car over to the curb.

When he walked around behind his car, Morgan saw a young man at the newsstand reading a newspaper. The fellow looked up at Morgan, and they nodded at one another.

Morgan stacked his shirts and shifted the boxes. He was amused to see how his roommates had labeled some of them. On one carton they had written, "Hetty is probably marrying you to get these mismatched socks." Another was labeled, "Things for Hetty to throw out." Both roommates had enjoyed meeting her at graduation.

The fellow at the newsstand looked alternately at Morgan and then at his newspaper. As he walked away, he tipped his cap and grinned. "Mr. Morganthal!" he said.

This seemed curious, so Morgan bought a copy of the same newspaper and sat in the car to open it. It was just as he feared. He'd had troubles in the past with Tilly Teller, the gossip columnist. The stories she wrote for her column, *Tilly Tells All*, could be unpleasantly inventive.

A picture of his face, taken four years ago, stared back at him from the society page. Next to it was a photograph of Katrinka Wallace posing in the wedding veil she had hoped to wear for their wedding.

Underneath were the words, *Yes, Girls. Morgan Morganthal Returns!* In large letters above the column it read, *Beauty Dumps Most Eligible Bachelor! Will Morganthal Rebound to Wed Unknown Bookworm?*

Morgan scowled. The next words he read concerned Hetty: *His young lady is not known by others in his social circle, but she is rumored to tower over the handsome Morganthal.*

There was more background information. He clenched

his fist as he continued to read the column:

*Faithful readers will remember 1955 as the year wedding plans were scuttled between Morgan Morganthal (son of Mr. and Mrs. Maximilian Morganthal) and legendary beauty queen, Katrinka Wallace. Before taking their vows, the groom was trampled by a circus elephant with the unlikely name of Blossom. Our sources say Miss Wallace has never been fond of the circus and feels relieved the unfortunate accident rescued her from that way of life.*

*An exclusive interview recently revealed that the father of Miss Wallace is the well-known dwarf Phil Wallace, who now holds an executive position in the Morganthal circus operations.*

*Tilly extends best wishes to the bride and groom. This time, may you keep all elephants at bay!*

*Stay tuned, dear reader. In next week's column Tilly will share a delectable interview with Katrinka Wallace.*

Morgan closed the paper and decided he had better things to think about. Even now, Hetty might be choosing the apartment they would call their first home.

Nothing could spoil this day. He was going to see his Hetty.

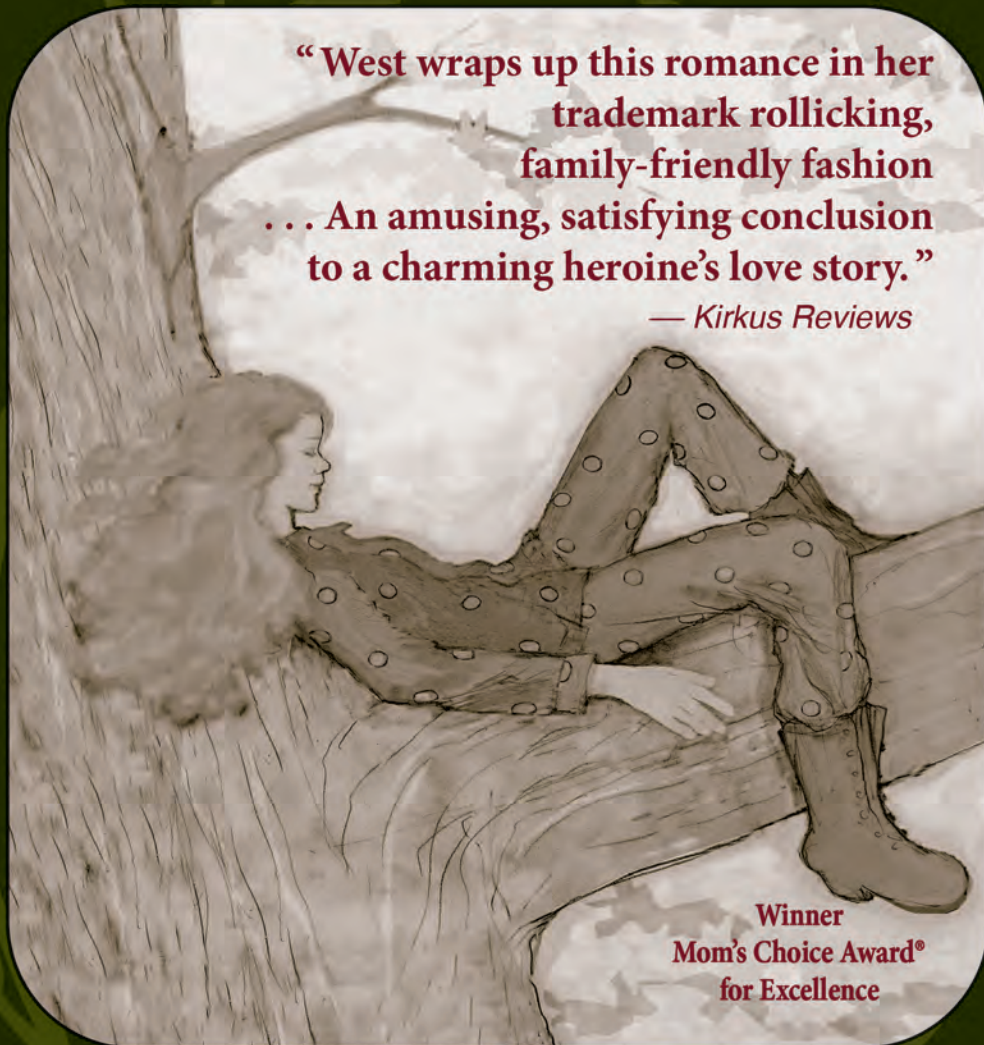




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**“West wraps up this romance in her  
trademark rollicking,  
family-friendly fashion  
... An amusing, satisfying conclusion  
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**Winner  
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**I**n this tender love story Hetty graduates from college early to marry her beloved Morgan. But the beautiful Katrinka joins forces with a cruel elephant trainer in a scheme to win the rich, handsome Morgan for herself. Against such beauty, ambition, and cunning, does Hetty’s pure and constant love stand a chance?



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