

KIRKUS REVIEWS

HONEYMOON SUMMER

From the Hetty series, Vol. 4

BY MARTHA SEARS WEST • RELEASE DATE: MAY 20, 2020

A woman goes on a honeymoon with her husband but wrestles with doubts in this fourth installment of a series.

In 1960, Hetty Lawrence finally marries Morgan Morgenthal, the man of her dreams, and the two embark on a fairy-tale honeymoon to Europe on an ocean liner. She is elated by the “beautiful beginning to their marriage” and basks in the “fullness of her joy.” But she remains haunted by worries about her marriage: Can Morgan really be happy choosing her and her “disheveled appearance” over his previous fiancée, the wildly beautiful Katrinka Wallace? This anxiety is only compounded when Hetty finds a telegram from Katrinka that seems to indicate she is planning to meet Morgan, an appointment he hasn’t mentioned. Hetty harbors other concerns as well. When Morgan married her, he sacrificed his inheritance and yet he continues to demonstrate a troublingly “casual attitude toward money.” In addition, she once had a traumatic experience with Cmdr. Slubbet—he was creepily forward with her—a man whom Morgan considers a personal hero. West (Hetty or Not, 2015, etc.) continues to artfully combine Hetty’s earnestly innocent charm with high drama. In addition to Hetty’s fears about her husband’s devotion to her, she has to contend with a murder committed on the ocean liner and the shocking realization that, due to a technical mistake, she may not actually be legally married to Morgan. As in previous installments, the author’s whimsically delightful, hand-drawn pictures are dispersed throughout the novel. West achieves the perfect pitch for Hetty fans: a tender love story woven into a murder mystery and brimming with drama. The author also thoughtfully examines issues of substance; for example, Hetty pines to become a lawyer, but Morgan frets about the suitability of that profession for a woman and the impact it will have on their marriage. The story has a fantastical character to it—the tale is far from plausibly constructed—but that almost dreamlike aspect constitutes a chief element of the work’s allure.

A sweetly enjoyable reprisal of a memorably drawn heroine.