

MARTHA SEARS WEST

Love Me On Purpose: Book 7 in Hetty Series

Martha Sears West, author



Both a standalone young adult romance and an offshoot of the wholesome Hetty series, *Love Me on Purpose* details the awkward reunion of childhood friends who realize that their devoted affection has grown into adult love. Sears West shifted the series to focus on Hetty's beloved daughter in the sixth book, 2020's *It's Me, Pippa!*, which chronicled the adventures of an irrepressible nine-year-old. Now 18, Philippa "Pippa" Morgenthal returns home from college to find that her adoring best friend, 16-year-old Alfonse "Val" Ostler, has morphed from gawky boy into a manly figure not unlike the chiseled comic strip hero Prince Valiant, whose noble derring-do inspired her to bestow the nickname on him.

Like Austen's Emma Woodhouse, Pippa is an incorrigible matchmaker who views herself as above the fray, cushioned by her family's fortune and a persuasive charisma. But in the spring of 1979, she finds herself following in Hetty's footsteps, tormented by a perfect companion who's right at hand—and just out of reach. Sears West illuminates Pippa and Val's thorny family trees, whose roots were intertwined by their grandfathers' friendship, catching up readers new and old on their eccentric upbringing and why most outsiders view them as kin. The spunky, confident girl and thoughtful, protective boy aren't related, but their close proximity and complementary personalities created an intense bond, especially when Val took on the role of chaperone to the impetuous beauty.

With kinetic line drawings over bold blocks of fluid paint, Sears West's illustrations perfectly compliment her lively storytelling and traditionalist morality. The obvious sparks of their adolescent attraction result in communication misfires and painful misunderstandings until Pippa and Val can prove that it's no fleeting passion. The anodyne made-for-each-other romance *Love Me on Purpose* celebrates the solid stability of commitment, and the joy of recognizing your soulmate in the boy next door.

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REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

LOVE ME ON PURPOSE

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BOOK REVIEW

Two childhood best friends contemplate their futures in this YA novel.

Pippa Morganthal, hometown heiress, has just finished her first year at a Midwestern college in 1979 and can't wait to start the summer break in her Washington, D.C.–adjacent home. She's most excited to reconnect with her loving parents, Morgan and Hetty; her former driver Ignatz "Natz" Gorman and his wife, Louisa, who are trying to have a baby; and, most of all, her best friend, Val Ostler, who's still in high school. Formerly known as Alphonse, the son of Pippa's father's ex-fiancee has lived on the Morganthal property his whole life. Pippa has fond memories of having adventures in the woods, building treehouses, and dodging makeup and beauty lessons from Val's mother, Katrinka. Pippa is also focused on finding her one true love—and she's counting on Val to vet potential suitors, per a mutual agreement the two came to when they entered the dating scene. Several men begin vying for Pippa's hand in short order, including Val's new music teacher, Mr. Dasher; distracted single father Harry Hubbard; and college classmate Dylan. Though Val tries his best to be fair and honest as a friend, he's harboring romantic feelings of his own for the dynamic, generous teen (who only has a minor problem with bending the truth) he's known since they were very young. But will Pippa return his affection? This is the seventh and likely final book in West's Hettyseries. The installment, which features black-and-white illustrations by the author, seems to be intended for a YA audience due to the characters' ages (in the previous volume, Pippa was 9 years old and Val, 7). Fans of the Hetty series will enjoy seeing their favorite characters again and witnessing Pippa navigate adulthood in this charming story. But while the two protagonists are significantly older, West's writing style has not aged up, and the tale sometimes comes off as borderline saccharine. Pippa never seems to face consequences for her actions, which are sometimes selfish or hurtful, and her desire for a husband at just 18 years old feels incredibly old-fashioned when it's almost 1980.

A sweet but uneven teen tale.