



A Fairy's Guide to Disaster

A.W. Hartoin

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Tiny fairies. Huge adventure.

Matilda Whipplethorn is about to get what she's always wanted, and it's a bad thing. Being a babysitter isn't much of a dream for the average thirteen-year-old, but Matilda is anything but average. She's half a centimeter tall, invisible to the human eye, and hearing-impaired. Her mother won't let her forget any of that. So for Matilda, adventures are in short supply. Finally agreeing to let Matilda take some responsibility, her mother gives her a list of emergency procedures for babysitting. The only problem; humans aren't on the list.

Minutes into her first job, humans appear in isolated Whipplethorn Manor. They tear her home, the fireplace mantel, right off the wall of Whipplethorn and Matilda's afternoon babysitting job goes long term.

When the mantel ends up on display in an antique mall, the security that Matilda always took for granted is gone. She can lock the doors, but that doesn't keep the kids in or spriggans and the fly-eating phalanx fairies out. Matilda's up for an adventure, if only she could hear it coming.

A Fairy's Guide to Disaster Details

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From Reader Review A Fairy's Guide to Disaster for online ebook

Riley says

I love this book which I read in no time - couldn't put it down. It reminded me of The Borrowers which I read as a kid and reread to my granddaughter. This wonderful fantasy of tiny fairies in the mantel and whole races of wood fairies in the antique mall makes for great adventure. I especially love Soren Maple, the leader of the fairies who look like sticks. Oh, for drawings or pictures. Matilda is the heroine of the tale who starts her babysitting career with the horrible Gerald. Boy, does this remind me of my own babysitting mishaps. Matilda is such a lovable character with all the fallacies of an adolescent but who steadfastly protects her charges through a war and on to a new home. I hope a sequel is in the works.

Marsha says

"A Fairy's Guide to Disaster" is a cute story about a thirteen year old Matilda who is a wood fairy. She and her family live in the wooden mantle at the abandoned Whipplethorn Manor.

Matilda has just received approval from her mother for her first babysitting job. Unfortunately, she will be babysitting her precocious eight year old cousin, Gerald. While babysitting, two men come into the manor and take down the manor to be sold at an antique shop. Matilda, her sister, Iris and Gerald are moved to parts unknown. Soon they discover they are not the only ones left in the mantle and they rescue a baby they call Easy.

Once they arrive at the antique shop, they meet a spriggin who steals Easy and replaces his with a spriggins baby named, Horc. He is stinky and always hungry. To make matters worse, Gerald goes off on his own and Matilda must find him as well.

The characters in this children's story are colorful and delightful although at times I felt as though I was reading a series of unfortunate events due to all of the mishaps. This is a perfect book and series for a sixth grader. It is definitely cute and fun.

R.A. White says

This book was fun and well written, and I stayed interested throughout. I've never read fairy books or watched fairy movies, and I admit I didn't have super high hopes of getting an intelligent story, but the world was well defined and imaginative. Instead of being a 'save the world' story, it's about a few fairies that are separated from their parents when the building they live in is demolished. There's plenty of banter, bad guys, and good guys, as well as a bit of intrigue. The only thing that seemed off to me was the fairies' size. At one point I thought they were half a centimeter tall, and then later when they meet people, they seem much bigger. Maybe I just misunderstood, and anyway, it's nothing that would take away from enjoying the book. Language: Clean as far as I can remember.

Sexual Content: None. I was hoping a romance would blossom between a couple of characters, but I guess I have to wait until book 2 to see if it does. For you romance readers out there, you still might like this book. It's a fantastic little world, and kind of romantic in its own way.

Over-All Message/Plot. The characters overcome their opinions of each other and learn to love people for who they are. The plot is simple but holds together well, and it's absolutely enjoyable.

Stephanie says

A quick little story about growing up, accepting oneself and others, and learning to be independent. Matilda is a thirteen-year-old wood fairy, and as she frequently mentions, she is very hard of hearing which is part of the reason why it took so long before her parent's allowed her to be a babysitter. When she does finally get to babysit, she is babysitting for her ten-year-old sister Iris and their neighbor, eight-year-old Gerald. While the adults are away picking blueberries, humans come to the deserted Whipplethorn Manor where Matilda's family and many other wood fairies live, taking away anything of potential value including the carved wooden mantle that Matilda's family calls home. It is the first of many shake-ups in their lives, as they are thrown about their home as the movers remove it from the building, load it into a car, and drive them all away. Thus begins their adventure to save baby Ezekiel (Easy for short), somehow keep together and work together, and eventually find a way to let their families know what has happened and how to find them.

If something could go wrong in their lives, it did. The list of "Three Steps To..." that Matilda's mother gave her as guidelines does not cover anywhere near enough topics for the trials and tribulations they encounter and must find a way to get out of in one piece. However along the way they meet many interesting characters, both fairy and human alike, some of whom help them and some of whom cause them more trouble.

Largely, this is a story about growing to accept yourself as you are, learning exactly where your strengths and weaknesses lie, as well as understanding and accepting others for who they are no matter what prejudices society might have against them or their abilities. It is a middle-grade read, and on the simpler side of things with much set out as black-and-white and gray areas not staying so for very long.

These gray areas, while not exactly glossed over, are rather quickly resolved, such as the scene where Iris learns about Matilda's gift. Specifically, how easily Iris accepted it despite societal prejudices against the gift, and how firmly Matilda showed the reader that she was afraid of what would happen if her secret became known. I found the whole scenario to be a little too quickly resolved/Iris' acceptance to come too readily, even considering that they are sisters – maybe especially because they are such close sisters and Iris even says that Matilda knows everything about her, why would Matilda keep this hidden from Iris?

Another instance of something quickly glossed over is that we never did learn/figure out how (view spoiler) knew both Matilda and Easy's secrets... Does it quite simply have to do with them being (view spoiler), and if so, what does being (view spoiler) even mean? And how did (view spoiler) know just by looking at her, too? It made each of these peoples/groups seem to be almost omniscient with how much they knew about Matilda and Easy's secrets.

Throughout this journey, Matilda also learned how to listen to her instincts about the friendliness or dangerousness of new encounters – however, the manner in which she "examined her feelings" felt overly simplified, and could have been described in a clearer way, a more descriptive way to be easier for readers to relate to.

A little nitpicking on my part: After the dust more or less settles from the mantle being moved around, Matilda explains, “I probably looked like I’d been in a war, and in a way, I had. A war where I seemed to lose every battle.” (page 48-49) Given my history in reading middle grade/young adult/non-fiction books about war, this seems too much of an exaggeration without enough substance to back it up. There is so much more to war than just getting physically beat up, and she hardly mentions, if at all, any other form of being beat up. A better analogy would probably be something more like it looked as though she had been thrown through a tangle of brambles which scratched her up.

Then, there is the whole on-going issue of Matilda’s poor hearing. She all but bemoans her poor hearing through much of the book. Since she has had poor hearing for essentially all of her life, I would have thought she would have more tricks in place to help make up for her hearing difficulties (early on, page 10 or so, she did mention how she could read lips, but very briefly and in passing). Instead, she mentions her poor hearing overly much, like it is a very big deal to her even after all this time. I can see how given the shake-ups around the house she could start to really notice her hearing difficulties and have to swallow her pride to ask for the help of others to hear certain things, but it never felt/sounded like she was *suddenly* strongly feeling her disadvantage. It wasn’t until page 145 that we learned, along with Matilda, exactly how poor her hearing was (comparatively speaking) :

“That day watching Evan, I realized how bad it was. I couldn’t hear. I really couldn’t hear. No wonder Grandma Vi insisted I learn to lip read. I’d thought it was pointless, since I only needed it at a distance. But it wasn’t about distance or direction or the tone of the speaker’s voice. I needed it all the time.” – page 145

While it is great to have this realization come, it comes rather late in the novel, and it seems like something she might have already learned while growing up; this should not be new information. Furthermore, it also comes across as a bit extreme, as there are few indications that she has difficulty hearing normal speaking voices (such as when she meets new fairies/people for the first time, who cannot possibly know that they might have to speak up for her to hear them easily). I also never got a consistent feel for her hearing capabilities, as sometimes she would hear something it seemed sure she could not hear, and other times she could not hear something that it seemed she *should* be able to hear. Of course, I must admit that I am not personally familiar with hearing difficulties nor all the ways they can be surmounted, but based on a general understanding of hearing difficulties/hearing aids/lip reading/sign language/etc., I can make some extrapolations by which to go by. I’m open to correction and more information, of course, if anyone would like to share with me.

In conclusion, if you want a quick, roller-coaster read with nods to prejudices, disabilities, and stereotypes, as well as being overall entertaining, then this book passes muster as a topical experience and easily accessible to kids. With some editing, it could easily be improved to clean up some of the inconsistencies and discrepancies for a fuller, more accurate representation of experiences.

Favorite quotes:

Magic came when it came and one couldn’t choose the gift. – page 10

None of them looked very old anymore. I saw the girls they once were and still were in their hearts. Pretty girls both of them. Ready to believe. – page 162

My world changed forever, but in exchange I’d received a bigger world filled with more of everything. It was, in the end, quite a gift. – page 170

Specific quotes and comments:

(view spoiler)

Typos:

(view spoiler)

Story inconsistencies:

“Well, it’s not me. Oh, dude, it’s your freaking boot.” – page 85 – Except, these two guys just got over having a big old argument and tussle because the one thought the other lit his boot on fire, now suddenly it’s no big deal?

(view spoiler)

Patricia says

I found this book quite enjoyable. I know a few young girls who would really enjoy to read about the travels and trials of a teenage fairy.

Katrina says

This was a fantastic read. These fairies drew me right into their world and now I wonder what story my furniture would tell. I can't wait to share this book with my children.

Angela says

What an imaginative story! Away from Whipplethorn, by A.W. Hartoin, is a charming tale filled with fairies, other tiny creatures and plenty of adventure filled mishaps that keep our young heroine, Matilda, much busier than she ever thought possible on her very first babysitting job. The book is a perfect romp for the young reader. By the end of this story, Matilda, her little sister Iris and their cousin Gerald realize the importance of being just who you are and appreciate the differences in all of us. I highly recommend this delightful book.

Away From Whipplethorn A.W. Hartoin

Frank says

This truly was a refreshing book. It looks like the world of fairies, at least in the book world, might just have a new author, A. W. Hartoin. Right from the first chapter the story and writing is very fresh and deep in character, fun characters. This is one of those rare books that is both suspenseful and yet yet fun to read from beginning to end. She has me hooked.

Wood fairies living in an ancient mantel are displaced when the old mansion is torn down and the mantel is bought by an antique dealer. It ends up in an auction warehouse and the young "babysitter" (the only one home when the mantel was stripped from the mansion) struggles to face the challenges of keeping her three charges safe and deal with a world and characters she was not aware existed. And there are lots of challenges, not just from external forces but from the charges themselves.

Each of these tiny characters is a bundle of personality and fun as well as a handful for the first time baby sitter. The mantel finds it's way to a new home and how will she and her charges ever find their families again now so very far away? Can they turn to human's for help?

A nice fresh read which I really enjoyed from start to finish. I look forward to Hartoin's next book.

Dixie Conley says

A book about a bratty teen babysitting for the first time and everything that can go wrong. Except that usually giants don't move the house you're living in or steal the baby.

Includes the usual cliches, but mostly just to turn them on their heads. Clever and even touching in moments. (When the spriggan baby kept asking Matilda if she loved him... aw.) Ends just as you want to know more; perfect climax.

Courtney says

I was very disappointed in this story, the cover and the name suggested something other than what we originally thought it was going to be. If my children were older, I believe that they could have gotten more into the story, but with the way that the "fairies" talked to each other we had to stop reading before we even reached the end.

I am not saying that others could not read and enjoy this novel. I am sure that it would be a hit with the pre-teen to teen crowd; however, for my young children this was inappropriate due to the fact that the teenager characters were like actual teenagers (in attitude and speech).

Deserthomemaker says

A cute story.

Smwitges says

I loved this book. It was an engaging and imaginative read. I believe this book will appeal to both female and male readers of all ages but believe young girls will find the heroine very empowering. I stayed up late 3 nights in a row because I couldn't bring myself to put the book down. It would also be a great book to read aloud to younger children or students.

Katharina Gerlach says

I loved this book from the first page and recommend it to all who love fairies. The idea of these fabulous creatures being barely 1/2inch high is absolutely great.

Also, the story is very well written, with many interesting twists and turns. The characters come alive right away. I like the spunky heroine who struggles with a disability that she doesn't even know she has.

My favorite character was Horc. ;-)

Lyndsay says

As a bookworm teenager, I know a good book when I read one. Away From Whipplethorn provided just the right amount of imagination, action, suspense and mystery to keep me reading. I couldn't tear myself away from this book until I had read the entire thing, and even then I only wanted to read it all over again.

Addi Jones says**A rollicking ride!**

I very much enjoyed this book! Easy to follow and remember, which was good when I went through a reading slump. I could pick back up and finish without going back. I would recommend this to anyone who liked fantasy. I especially liked the main character, as I too am an older sibling who babysits for her siblings.
