

# A Fairy's Guide to Understanding Humans



Margaret  
Meacham

*A*  
Fairy's Guide  
to  
Understanding  
Human



The word 'Human' is partially obscured by a rectangular stamp. The stamp contains the Chinese characters '江苏工业学院图书馆藏' (Collection of Jiangsu University of Industry Library) arranged in two lines. The characters are in a traditional, slightly stylized font.

*by*

Margaret Meacham

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Spells are the hardest things in the world to get right. —*Diana Wynne Jones*

For my mother,  
Rachel Marks Redding,  
who gave me life, love, and laughter.  
See you in the next life, Mum.

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Summary: Gretta, who is making strides in her fairy godmother training, tries to help Morgan fit in at her new school as research for a book about her interactions with humans, but her own boyfriend problems get in the way.

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The title 'Chapter One' is written in a decorative, cursive font. The word 'Chapter' is in a dark, solid color, while 'One' is in a lighter, dotted or stippled color. The text is surrounded by several small, five-pointed stars of varying sizes. A large, light-colored, swirling pattern, resembling a stylized infinity symbol or a decorative flourish, is positioned behind the text, partially overlapping it.

# Chapter One

Morgan loved her new room. She loved her new house. She loved her new family, which now included her best friend Sam and his mom, Sally. Last summer when her dad told her he and Sally were getting married, Morgan had been thrilled. For months she had looked forward to when they would all be living together in their new house. She thought it would be terrific, and it was.

Except that she was miserable.

Her dad and Sally had gotten married in October, and they had moved just before Christmas. Everything had been great until January, when she and Sam started their new school, Culver Junior High.

That had been five weeks ago and things had not improved. Morgan hated Culver. She didn't fit in at all, and she hadn't made one friend there. Starting in the middle of the year was impossible. She missed her old school, and she *really* missed her old friends. She talked to Ellen on the phone almost every day, but she hardly ever got to see her.

Morgan was lying on her bed, reading a magazine article called "Beauty Secrets of the Stars," with her green-and-blue-striped quilt tucked around her and Hattie, her basset hound, curled up beside her. It was late afternoon, and outside, a dark purply night was already sticking to the black branches of the maple trees in the backyard.

Morgan knew she should be studying for her English test, and she was just about to get up and go to her desk when she heard Sam shout from upstairs. A minute later he was banging on her door.

"Morgan? It's me. Open up. Quick!"

Morgan put down her magazine. "It's open, Sam. Come on in."

Sam burst into her room and flopped face-down across the bottom of Morgan's bed.

"Sam? What's wrong? Are you okay?"

"I don't know. I think I may be going crazy." He turned onto his side and propped himself up on an elbow. "Have I been acting weird lately?" he asked.

Morgan shrugged. "No more than usual. I mean, you're always kind of weird."

"I know, but I mean, I haven't, like, lost touch with reality or anything, have I?"

Morgan stroked Hattie. "Umm, not that I've noticed. Do you think you've lost touch with reality?"

"I'm not sure, but if I had, I wouldn't know it, would I? That's why I'm asking you."

"Have you started studying for the English test yet?" Morgan asked him.

"Nah. But it won't be a problem. It's not going to be hard."

"Bad news, Sam. You've lost touch with reality."

Sam sat up. "Morgan, I'm serious. Up in my room just now, I thought Marvin talked to me."

“Marvin the robot?”

“Of course Marvin the robot. What other Marvin do we know?”

“So what did he say?” Morgan asked.

“He asked me why I never play with him anymore. And then he said all I ever do is fiddle with my computer.”

“Well, he’s right about that,” Morgan said.

“And then he asked if I was scared of him, and he rolled toward me.”

“So? That’s nothing new.” Morgan shrugged. “Marvin’s never done what he was supposed to do.”

“No,” Sam said. “It’s not like before, when his program messed up. This is different. It’s like he’s *really* talking to me. Of course that’s crazy. There’s got to be a rational explanation for it. Either that, or I’m crazy.”

“You’re not crazy, Sam,” Morgan told him. “It’s probably just, I don’t know, a crossed wire or something.” She went over to her desk and opened her English text. “Want to quiz each other?” She was glad Sam had come down to talk. He had been so busy with his computer game

and his new Tech Club friends that he and Morgan hadn't spent much time together lately.

"Nah. I'm going to call Patrick and James," Sam told her. He stood up and headed toward the door. "They've built three different robots. I'm sure they'll have an explanation."

"Wait, Sam," Morgan said. "Let me see Marvin. Maybe I can help you figure out what's going on with him."

Sam laughed. "Yeah, right, Morg. You know so much about remote-control programming." He bent down to pat Hattie and said, "Remember how scared she used to be of Marvin?"

"Maybe she was right all along," Morgan said.

"Yeah, well, don't worry. I'll call Patrick or James. They understand this stuff." He left her room and ran up the stairs three at a time.

Morgan sighed and lay down on the floor beside Hattie, stroking the dog's long, silky ears. "Even Sam doesn't want to hang out with me anymore, Hattie. He's always too busy with his new friends. And that stupid game of his." Hattie wagged her tail and gave Morgan a soft lick on her cheek. "It's a good thing I have you, isn't it, Hats?"



Later that night, after dinner, Morgan was in her room studying when Sam shouted from upstairs, “Morgan! Come up here. Quick!”

Morgan raced upstairs with Hattie at her heels. Sam was standing in the hall outside his room. “What’s up?” Morgan asked.

“Shhh. Listen.” He pointed to the closed bathroom door.

Morgan heard water running and then a tinny sort of voice singing, “They said it couldn’t be; they said it wasn’t me; but I told ’em, yeah I showed ’em. . . .”

Morgan stared. “Is that . . . ?”

Sam nodded slowly. “Marvin,” he whispered. “He’s rapping. In the shower.”

“But Marvin can’t rap. Can he?” Morgan asked.

“No. He can’t take showers, either.” Sam was about to open the bathroom door when his phone rang. “That’s probably James. He said he’d call back.”

Sam went to his room to get the phone, and that’s when Morgan heard it. Laughter. A pure musical sound that floated through the hall like a cool breeze on a hot day. That laughter meant only one thing.



“Gretta?” Morgan said. “Gretta! You’re back! I should have known it was you.” Morgan opened the bathroom door. The shower was running, but Marvin wasn’t in it. He stood motionless, no longer singing. Gretta laughed again.

“Gretta, that was a mean trick to play on Sam,” Morgan said, but she laughed, too. “It was pretty funny, though.” She looked around. “Where are you?”

There was a pop, and a tiny figure appeared on the edge of the sink. “Zeus, Morgan. This new castle is confusing. Where’s your room? Where’s my castle?”

“So it’s *your* castle now, is it?” Morgan said. When Gretta visited her before, she had lived in the dollhouse Morgan kept in her room. The dollhouse had belonged originally to Morgan’s mother, who died in a car accident when Morgan was two years old. It was a beautiful dollhouse with Victorian spires and latticework on the outside and wonderfully detailed miniature furniture inside.

Morgan held out her hand, and Gretta hopped onto it. “It’s about time you visited me!”

Morgan said. “I’ve been wondering when you’d come back.”

“Well, you know what it’s like at that dungeon they call a school,” Gretta said. “The minute we start having any fun at all, they slap some huge project on us.”

“I know what you mean. I have tons of work right now, too,” Morgan told her, putting the fairy on her shoulder. “My room’s downstairs. Come on. I’ll show you.”

As they passed Sam’s room, Morgan heard him on the phone, saying, “Electromagnetic waves. Yeah, that’s gotta be it.”

Gretta giggled, and Morgan whispered, “Gretta, you’re evil! Poor Sam. You really shook him up.”

“Here’s my new room,” she announced, flinging the door open. “What do you think?”

The fairy flew around the room, checking it out. “Great views,” she said, hovering in front of the windows. “And look at that nice, big closet! Now that’s a real improvement.”

Morgan sat down at her desk, and Gretta perched on the edge of Morgan’s math book.

“So. How do you like living here?” Gretta



asked. "Is it fun living with Sam and Sally? Tell me everything."

"The house is great, and it's fun living all together. We have a lot more room here. And have you seen the kitchen? It's amazing. Sally loves it. It's great for her catering business. So it's"—Morgan shrugged—"okay, I guess." She sighed and went on, "The thing is, my new school bites. I really miss my old school. I hardly ever get to see Ellen and everyone anymore."

"That's terrible," Gretta said. "What about Ben? Are you two still together?"

Morgan shook her head sadly. "No. We broke up when we moved. We kind of knew we'd never get to see each other."

Gretta nodded. "So. Is there anyone new?"

Morgan frowned. "I wish. The kids at my new school, I don't know, they're just . . . different. I don't really fit in there."

Gretta laughed. "You humans are so dwarfish. Of course you fit in. It just takes time. Everyone seems different when you don't know them."

"Yeah. That's what Dad and Sally say." Morgan sighed. "But what's been going on with you? How's Tuti?"



“Tuti’s great. And Zeus, is she a wand when it comes to spells. She knows like ten times more than all the Elder Fairies put together. And I don’t mean to brag,” Gretta said, flipping her thick mane of blonde curls back over her shoulders, “but I hardly ever mess up my spells anymore, well, at least not as much—and I’ve learned some terrific new stuff.”

“Cool,” Morgan said.

“But I’ve just about had it with FGTA. Their rules are absolutely out of control.”

FGTA was Gretta’s school, Morgan remembered. The letters stood for Fairy Godmother Training Academy. “Really? Like how?”

“Honestly. You know what their newest rule is? We’re not allowed to talk on our cell phones during tests!”

Morgan laughed.

“It’s true. I swear on my crown. Is that the most ridiculous thing you’ve ever heard?”

“But Gretta,” Morgan said, “we’re not even allowed to take our cell phones to school. If we do, they confiscate them.”

Gretta rolled her eyes. “Well, human schools.

Everyone knows they're nothing but torture chambers."

"Yeah, well, so how about you? Anyone in the picture boyfriendwise?" Morgan asked.

"Well, there's Bristle." Gretta sighed. "We've been together for a while now. But I've had it with him. He is just way too possessive. He acts like he owns me! So I'm teaching everyone a lesson. I've run away. No one knows where I am. No one except Tuti, of course."

"But, Gretta," Morgan said, "do you really think that's a good idea?"

"It's fine. I'll only stay a week or so. And the best thing is, I can work on my book while I'm here. Did I tell you I'm writing a book?"

"No. That's, uh, great," Morgan said.

"Guess what it's going to be called."

"What?"

"*A Fairy's Guide to Understanding Humans*," Gretta said, beaming.

"Have you written any of it yet?" Morgan asked.

"Well, I've been concentrating on writing passages in my journal." Gretta rummaged in her

bag, pulled out a tiny pair of eyeglasses, and put them on. "You see, Morgan," the fairy went on, looking very serious, "once it's published it will rock the fairy world. I'll be famous, of course, so it's important that I keep up my journal. My public will want to know all about my formative years."

"Oh, right. That's, uh, that's great, Gretta," Morgan said.

"Yes. And being here will be excellent for my research. And of course, I'll have fewer distractions here, so I'm sure I'll make great progress with my book." Gretta fluffed her hair and struck a writerly pose. "By the way, what do you think of my new eyeglasses?" she asked.

Gretta was trying so hard to look serious and scholarly, it was all Morgan could do to keep a straight face. "They make you look very intelligent," she told the fairy.

"I know," Gretta said happily. She took a tiny hand mirror out of her bag and admired herself.

"But are you nearsighted?" Morgan asked. "I didn't know you had eye trouble."

"Eye trouble?" Gretta said, surprised. Then she let out a loud peal of laughter. "Oh, Morgan,

you really are a sili-ffrit. Just because a girl wears glasses, it doesn't mean she has eye trouble. They're a fashion accessory, of course."

"Oh, right. Of course," Morgan said quickly. "So tell me about Bristle. What's he like?"

"Well, he's extremely fetch, I must admit; but honestly," Gretta said, sighing, "I'm so tired of elves and wood sprites. They're so tedious. They never want to talk about anything but elf ball. And they're always upset about something."

"What do you mean?" Morgan asked.

"Well, take Bristle, for example." Gretta rummaged in her bag again. This time she pulled out a bottle of nail polish and started painting her fingernails. "Once I was just the tiniest bit late meeting him for lunch, and he was furious. It was so ridiculous."

"That is ridiculous," Morgan agreed. "Who gets upset about being a few minutes late?"

"Right. And then he kept complaining about how cold he was because the sun had gone down." Gretta frowned and shook her head.

"The sun was down?" Morgan asked. "Wait. I'm confused. I thought you said it was for lunch."

"I told you I was late," Gretta said. "Try to



pay attention here, Morgan. See, the problem was, I had this huge hag spot on my nose. Zeus, I looked like Baba Yaga! I could never have gone out looking like that. So Tuti had this great new spell for getting rid of hag spots, only it took a bit longer than we thought. So I was a little late, but only by a few hours. I mean, it wasn't like midnight or anything. And it wasn't *my* fault I had a hag spot, was it?"

"Well, everyone's late sometimes," Morgan said.

Gretta nodded. "That's exactly what I told him. And it's not as if I'm late all the time. I was on time at least once."

"So are you going to break up with him?" Morgan asked.

"I don't know. Maybe I just need a break from him." Gretta held her hand out in front of her and examined her newly painted nails. "So . . . Sam looks good. He seems a lot taller than he was."

"Yeah. He had a growth spurt last fall," Morgan said.

Gretta smiled. "I really go for tall guys, don't you?"