



Fairest of Them All

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If life were a fairy tale, Oribella Bettencourt would have a "happily ever after" kind of future ahead of her. A Hollywood producer has come to Des Moines in search of a perfectly modern Princess Rapunzel, and Ori -- a model, dancer, and star of the beauty pageant circuit -- lands the part. And why shouldn't she? With her hardworking, self-sacrificing mother guiding her career, Ori is stunning, dedicated, poised...and then there's her hair. Breathtakingly lustrous blond hair that sets her apart from all the other girls at school. So what if she doesn't have any friends her age, or anyone to talk to other than her mother? She's on the verge of having everything she's ever dreamed of.

But in this fairy tale, the beautiful princess wakes up to her worst nightmare -- when almost overnight, Ori begins to lose her hair....

Fairest of Them All Details

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From Reader Review Fairest of Them All for online ebook

Sabrina says

reallyyyy good!!!! kinda sad because she loses her hair but i really enjoyed the ending!! 'big smiley'

Adele says

While I credit Blazanin for tackling the relatively low profile, hair loss condition alopecia, I am not sure she was entirely successful in writing a novel that broke the mold. Oribella (yikes) has been trained to be a superstar since the age of three. With the assistance of her focused mother, she's aiming to be the greatest thing since sliced bread. Amongst all the preparation, competition and some more preparation, Ori forgot to have something called a life.

Ori is what is kindly called socially inept. She can schmooze pageant judges and talk it up with costume designers but put her in a room of teens and she's an ice block. It broke my heart that this girl is pushed so hard, to meet so many unattainable goals, by a uncompromising mother towards superficial success. Ori's evolution into an average teen with friends but no hair was a great transition. However, my problems with the novel stem purely from the aspects that deal with the mother. The mother flip flops twice in the book and it's the second flip that felt out of character, rushed and ultimately clunky. While I understood and sympathised with the sentiment that Blazanin was trying to convey, it comes across forced and unnatural.

Fairest Of Them All provides great insight into the expectations we place upon ourselves, parental pressure, friendship, independence and finding joy. A great read.

Nancy Morales says

The book 'Fairest of Them All' was a great book. It's about a girl, named Orbiella, becomes a famous model and actress. She has been in beauty pageants before she could walk. Orbiella seems to be the girl that has it all. All this was so because of her lustrous blond hair and with the help of her mother. Then she wakes up one morning she wakes up to her worst nightmare, just overnight, Orbiella begins to lose her hair. This book was one of my favorites to read because it shows that the thing you truly want to be it's always what you are wanting to do since you are little but it is what you are passionate about. It also shows that the a beautiful model at a young age, doesn't become model when she is older. This is mostly about beauty versus character. I recommend this book to those that like fiction.

Joanne says

Oribella Bettencourt has the world at her feet. She's won the Crowning Glory pageant title, due in part to her lustrous blonde mane of hair, and has just snagged a role in an upcoming movie opposite a hot young star. Sure, she doesn't really have any friends at school, but that's okay - she has her mother, a frustrated beauty queen herself, and she has her brilliant pageant and acting career. She doesn't need anything, or

anyone, else. At least, that's what she tells herself. Then clumps of her beautiful blonde hair start falling out every time she brushes. Or showers. Or does just about anything. The horrifying word comes down: she has alopecia, a rare condition resulting in hair loss. She loses her movie role. The Crowning Glory title is taken away from her. And her mother can barely bear to look at her. Now, outcast and alone, all Oribella has is herself - and that simply isn't enough. When, to her surprise, she begins to develop an unlikely friendship with a tomboy classmate, she realizes that for the first time in her life she may just figure out who Oribella Bettencourt really is without her crown - and what truly matters in the end. From Amazon UK

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed this book! It's not what I was expecting at all, but it was fantastic! I am just so, so glad I got to read this book! It has some really important things to say!

Oribella is blonde and beautiful. She's a model, an actress, a dancer, and she has won several beauty pageants. So this means she's a stuck up, nasty queen bee who rules the school, right? Wrong! Ori is socially awkward, she has no friends, and has barely a minute to herself; when she's not at school she's going to modelling gigs, or dance classes, or preparing for the beauty pageant or her audition for an upcoming movie role for a modern day princess. This girl doesn't stop! It's something I would have thought was suffocating and a lot of pressure, but Ori thrives on it! And, being inside her head, you can see she's a nice girl - yet she's bullied.

So there are our first stereotypes out the window. This beautiful girl is good and nice, isn't scared of hard work, but isn't good at making friends, and bullied for what people perceive about her - like we just did. The only person she has is her mother.

'At Highland High I'm a disease nobody wants to catch. The girls hate me, the guys avoid me, and the teachers think I have a single digit IQ. It's hard to concentrate on my studies in the face of so much blind adoration.' (p15)

People look at her, make these assumptions about her, or smother her in compliments - yet it's wonderful to see that this beautiful girl isn't completely shallow either:

'Most people act like beauty is something I've accomplished. But it's no different from congratulating me for having eyebrows or a nose. I'd rather be praised for mastering a tricky dance step or earning a C - if that's possible - in math.' (p13)

But then Ori's world gets turned upside down when she starts suffering from alopecia - a condition which causes your hair to fall out. The part she got in the movie is taken away from her, her agent dumps her which means no more modelling or acting parts, she can't face going to her dance classes with the hair the way it is, and her mother stops talking to her. She loses everything. And the bullying gets worse.

""Just don't expect anyone to feel sorry for you - because they won't. The queen fell off her pedestal, and the peasants are cheering."" (p154)

But she gains the world. I won't spoil the story, but in a way, Ori getting alopecia is the best thing that could happen to her. When she finally snaps, and rants at Phil (short for Philomena), a jock on the girls volleyball team and daughter of Ori's ex-agent, she finds someone who will listen, and who starts to understand. Through this one friend, so many other things open up to her. She experiences more, she does more, she realises more. And it's wonderful to witness this transformation.

Is there a happy ending? It really depends on what you would consider to be a happy ending for someone like Ori, but I believe there is. *Fairest of Them All* is such an uplifting and positive book, and I couldn't

recommend it enough! It's absolutely brilliant, and so great to see that the "negative" causes the "positive" this time round. Such a fantastic novel, everyone should give it a read!

From Once Upon a Bookcase - YA book blog

Katie says

Oribella Bettencourt is going to be famous. She just knows that her modeling and dancing careers are going to land her the role in an upcoming movie and her acting career will just take off after that.

All her life she has prepared for this. Her mom has spent so much time and money on all her pageants and recitals. Now it's finally Oribella's turn to pay her back for all her support.

But what happens when Oribella starts to lose her hair? There is no need for bald actresses or models. And how is she supposed to hide it until it starts to grow back?

When Oribella finally confesses to her mom that her hair is falling out, everything seems like it will just get better from there. That is, until the doctor tells them that Ori has Alopecia Areata, a condition that will cause her hair to stop growing and continue to fall out.

When Ori finally realizes that there is nothing she can do she decides to change her attitude. She begins to make friends and focus on her schoolwork. But no matter what she does her mom won't even speak to her.

Will Ori find a way to reconnect with her mom? Will she finally find a place she belongs with a new group of friends?

Fairest Of Them All was a great story about finding yourself and what really matters in life. I admit that I really didn't like Oribella's character at the beginning of the book and almost gave up. DO NOT GIVE UP. It does get better. I was so glad that I decided to stick it out because it had a great ending.

Carsyn Grage says

Fairest of Them All is about a girl, Oribella, that lives for beauty pageants. She wins the Miss Crowning Glory beauty pageant and gets all these modeling deal things. Her mother has to work two jobs in order to pay for all of Oribella's gowns and dancing lessons. And her mother has to take a lot of work days off in order to take Oribella to her pageants and lessons on time and she doesn't get paid for the days she takes off. Her mother also gets really bad migraines and has to take off work when she gets them. I just like the book because her mother believes that her daughter will make her filthy rich so she relies on her daughter to rack in the money. Her mother is a firm believer, and she knows what she's doing. Oribella starts to shed a lot of her hair. Her mother tells her she is just in shedding season, but its not so true. And it is kind of hard to get a modeling job when your bald.

Emily Linacre says

grabbed this one off the book sale stack because it takes place in des moines. there weren't as many local references as i'd hoped, the characters were pretty stereotypical and meh, but i appreciate the author tackling something uncommon and life-changing.

Amanda says

I liked this book and Oribella way more than I initially thought I would when I started reading. I mean, who likes a stuck up beauty queen who doesn't care about anything except how she looks? But there is so much more to Oribella than meets the eye. In her mind, looks are everything. However, when her hair starts falling out, she realizes that she doesn't have to look beautiful to BE beautiful. Her career may be ruined, but her life definitely isn't. Ori, with the help of her new friend Phil (Philomena), discovers that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and can be anything that person wants it to be. Ori still can be beautiful in the hearts of her friends and family, just maybe not in the eyes of people who don't know her.

This was a great book about finding true beauty. Looks aren't everything; it's what is inside that counts. Ori learns to except herself and others for what kind of person they are, not how they look. My one complaint is that the end seemed to go too quickly. I think that Blazanin could have drawn it out a little more.

Complexitykills29 says

I dropped every other book I was holding and picked up this one. Once I read the synopsis, I got hooked and I wasn't disappointed :) J.Blazanin did a fantastic job making the reader feel how Oribella felt while she went through the hell that was life. But all's well that ends well! Everything about this book was just flawless! Props!

Lauren says

First of, I absolutely love MTV books. So, I was ecstatic when I got the chance to read Fairest Of Them All, because I knew I was in for a great read.

Fairest of Them All opens up just when Oribella's modeling and movie career is just starting to go well. Though, soon she begins to loose her hair causing drama and suspense about what is happening to her throughout. I thought Jan Blazanin perfectly captured how it feels to be diagnosed with cancer in Oribella. Also, I give props to Jan for getting this little know disease out there. Since, I certainly knew nothing about alopecia until I read this and I know there are many people out there in the same deal as me.

The other main characters such as Phil, Oribella's mom, and the girls from volleyball, were great adds to the story. Since, even though the main focus was on Oribella, you got to find out their back stories. The only problem I had with a character was with Oribella's mom. I understand that she was scared for Oribella, but also mad about how Oribella wouldn't be able to start her career again for a while. Though, she treated Ori like crap once she was diagnosed.

Jan's writing was endearing and compelling. She definitely wrote a cute little story with many layers of well developed characters, plot, ex. I'm looking forward to reading more by her.

Overall, Fairest Of Them All was great debut that I'm sure many teen girls will come to enjoy.

Grade: B+

Sophie says

Jan Blazanin's debut novel, Fairest of Them All, is the great story of a girl who survives her whole world crashing down around her.

Beauty pageants aren't a big deal here in England so I began Fairest of Them All knowing almost nothing about them. I was kind of shocked at what goes into entering one. It's like another world full of hairspray, spades of make-up and haute couture dresses! That as well as Ori's dancing, modelling and acting made me realise why she didn't really have a life outside of her career. I felt a bit sorry for her.

This began to change as Ori went through alopecia. She was extremely brave and very strong. It helped her to really get to know herself again and finally allowed her to make friends. I also loved what she realised about the industry she so desperately wanted to be at the top of. The stress and pressure must have been enormous.

One of the only things that I didn't like about Fairest of Them All was Ori's mum. I really didn't like her at all. I was a little horrified at how she reacted to Ori's diagnosis, probably because I could never imagine my mum reacting in the same way. She did manage to redeem herself slightly at the end, however. I even started to understand what she acted the way she did.

I really enjoyed Fairest of Them All and I'm looking forward to reading more of Jan Blazanin's novels in the future.

Kali VanBaale says

Aside from the high quality of author Jan Blazanin's writing, I loved the message of this book for our young girls today. Just a very engaging story with so much take away value.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Jaglvr for TeensReadToo.com

Oribella Bettencourt has it all. At least looking outside in, everyone assumes she's got it all.

Ever since she was a toddler, she's been groomed to be a star. She has taken dance and modeling classes. She's gorgeous, and her crowning glory (literally her Crowning Glory, as she won the title in a pageant) is

her long golden tresses. Her lovely hair has even landed her a supporting actress role in a Razzi's Tale. Her hair was so important in landing her the role that there is a clause in her contract prohibiting her to do anything to her hair. She's going to be a star - and all of her mother's sacrifices will have been worth it.

When Oribella notices a few small clumps of hair have fallen out, at first she panics. But she reads up on hair loss and chalks it up to stress and poor nutrition. She pampers her hair even more, putting as little pressure on it as possible, and renews her efforts to reduce stress and eat better. After all, models have to stay thin and are known to constantly be dieting.

But when Gypsy, a rival at her dance class, makes a comment about a bald spot on Oribella's scalp, her nightmare just begins. When Oribella finally confesses to her mother, months after the initial hair loss, they embark on rounds of treatments to reverse her alopecia (hair loss.)

Just as her hair is unraveling from her head, Oribella's dreams are coming apart at the seams. Her bright future was within her grasp, only to be ripped apart at the finish line.

With her future changed, Oribella and her mother begin to dance around each other. Neither knows where they fit into each other's world, with the life of pageants and acting now gone. But for Oribella, the loss of her dreams isn't the total end. She realizes she is lonely and longs for a real teenage life. She is thrust into a world she's unfamiliar with...high school. Previously, she attended school simply to keep the authorities happy. But she was unconcerned with fitting in or achieving good grades. After all, if she was going to be a star, why would she need it?

Ms. Blazanin writes an amazing book looking at the true meaning of beauty. Oribella struggles to rewire her thought processes to get beyond the outer beauty of everything. She was brought up to look for imperfections. But when she becomes friends with the most unlikely group of girls, Oribella has to learn the hard way what it means to a friend and be a team player.

Ms. Blazanin takes a horrific event in Oribella's life and educates the reader on a little known condition, alopecia areata. It takes a lot of guts for Oribella to embrace her new situation and become an entirely different person. The reader gets to watch Oribella grow and blossom into a true beauty by the end of the story.

Melissa Menten says

Oribella is a seemingly shallow 15-year-old model who has the chance to win a part in a movie, the perfect next step in the plan she and her mother have for this beauty queen's financial success. She barely has the time or motivation to show up at school, and is too busy with her career to even try to make friends. But just when the movie role becomes hers, the gradual loss of her beautiful blond tresses that helped get her the part intensifies, putting all her dreams (and her mother's) in jeopardy. The alopecia forces them both to reexamine what's important, and for Ori, she undergoes a period of growth to get beyond her selfish, shallow ways with the help of some new friends.

Even though the heroine is fairly unlikable, she is presented so realistically and sympathetically that it's easy to root for her. Well-crafted, with a satisfying ending that doesn't stem from a magical solution to her problem.

Sharelle says

A funny, moving examination of teen values. Beauty versus character. The individual versus the team. A gripping beginning, a compelling middle, and a completely satisfying end.
