



The Girl Who Raced Fairyland All the Way Home

Catherynne M. Valente, Ana Juan (Illustrator)

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This final book in the New York Times-bestselling Fairyland series finds September accidentally crowned the Queen of Fairyland. But there are others who believe they have a fair and good claim on the throne, so there is a Royal Race--whoever wins will seize the crown.

Along the way, beloved characters including the Wyverary, A-Through-L, the boy Saturday, the changelings Hawthorn and Tamburlaine, the wombat Blunderbuss, and the gramophone Scratch are caught up in the madness. And September's parents have crossed the universe to find their daughter.

Who will win? What will become of September, Saturday, and A-Through-L? The answers will surprise you, and are as bewitching and bedazzling as fans of this series by Catherynne M. Valente have come to expect.

The Girl Who Raced Fairyland All the Way Home Details

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From Reader Review The Girl Who Raced Fairyland All the Way Home for online ebook

Bradley says

So gorgeous.

I think I've said that about the rest of the series, before, but it doesn't make it any less true each and every time I read a Fairyland Book. The fact that it's the last one is sad, true, but the ending makes up for all my trepidations. :)

This one felt slightly more dense in the puns, the hidden treasures, and the storytelling than the previous novels, or perhaps I was simply a bit more anxious to squeeze every last dollop of goodness out of the book because it would be the last. Either way, never imagine that the Cantankerous Derby is a race that follows straight lines or even logic. This is, after all, FAIRYLAND, and things are absolutely bonkers, bonkers, bonkers.

I was really taken for a ride this time, even if the Model A only had a walk on part, but at least we had the boy who lived in all directions at once, our fire-breathing library, a blunderbuss made of yarn, and more than enough shadows to rivet in all our desperate times.

The DUELS were awesome.

The more I think about these books the more I realize they're even better for adults than the ostensible child they're written for. Or is it really for the child that all of us will become Saturday to be? Or is the first kiss really the Kiss That Stands For All Time?

Well anyway, the kiss is the kiss that transcends time because it is the kiss of Story and Story is absolute and utter king. Or Queen.

I'm not blowing any wind here, folks. This book is AWESOME.

Hell, the whole Series is AWESOME. I'm sitting here looking at my little girl and willing her to grow a little bit older so she'll be ready for me to read all of these glorious glorious glorious works of imagination to her. :) I keep showing her the books and she lights up, saying, "Is that Fairyland?" And I say, "Yes, girl, this is Fairyland, and soon you'll be ready to ride the Leopard." "Yay!"

Yeah, yay!

Lindsay says

I've loved every book in this series, but this one I loved the most.

September is again the main character, and Hawthorn, Tamburlaine and Blunderbuss from the previous book are all major characters in this one. After all, once you introduce a Combat Wombat into your story, she's going to be a major character. You even get a look at the Land of Wom :) There's a race to find the Heart of

Fairyland complete with rules, racers and duels. And lots of September, Saturday and Ell.

Valente has a remarkable gift for fairytales and poetic prose and she infuses every one of these books with a lot more depth than you'd expect in what are ostensibly children's books (they are *really* not, unless you count reading them to your kids ... there's a story for both parents and children here). You should be able to see the cleverness from all the quotes in the book from my (frequent) updates. Well, all except for that terrible lavish pun :)

This is the final volume of this round of Fairyland stories and the ending is beautiful. Worthwhile and, in some ways, inevitable. But I've been used to reading these every year like clockwork so I can't help but feel a bit sad.

I wish there was some way of giving this six stars.

Magali says

I am insensible right now and it's ALL CAT VALENTE'S FAULT. Oh September, how I've missed you. And how you have grown up. And how I'm sad to see you go.

The last Fairyland book goes a little something like this (it may sound familiar):

The Lion and the Unicorn (and the Marquess, and the Ancient and Demented Raven Lord, and the Moose-Khan, and the Rex Tyrannosaur, and the Elegant Emperor, and others...) are fighting for the crown, and poor September is caught in the middle, once again. She was crowned the Queen, the Engineer, just hours ago; now all rulers past and present of Fairyland are caught up in a bizarre and Cantankerous Derby for the right to rule the most beautiful and irascible kingdom of all.

Saturday and September and A-through-L and Hawthorne the troll and Tamburlaine and BLUNDERBUSS (my darling Blunderbuss, Combat Wombat and Biter of Things She Loves And Also That She Is Frightened Of And Sometimes Just Things That Look Yummy) help where they can, but in the end this is September's story, as it ought to be. One doesn't become Queen of Fairyland any other way. And if it doesn't end quite the way you'd expect, well, that's somewhat to be expected around these parts.

As a Lover of Narrative, I deeply admire the way everything in Fairyland comes together and everything comes full circle. And September's story ends--begins?--in the most colorful and wild and daring adventure of them all.

Five stars; Fairyland is weird and wild and wonderful and anyone who is any of those things will fall in love with her.

Beth says

I'm so sad that this is the last book :(

I adore this series!

Michael says

Dear Fairyland,

It is with great sadness that I have learn't about you're departure from the reading world. While I knew this day would eventually come, I simply did not want to even think about it. Over four wonderful installments, you have enthralled me with the sheer depth and imagination that you created in my mind and the wonderful characters that enhance and bring you to life.

The thought of being able to enjoy all the greatness that you provide in what is Septembers last adventure made me giddy with joy. While I always thought that she was born to be the queen of your land, I never thought the previous rulers (alive and dead) would all contest her natural born right to the throne. It was great to know she could count on the support of her friends wyverary A-Through-L, the dear Marid Saturday, the changelings Hawthorne and Tamburlaine, and, of course, the wombat Blunderbuss and the gramophone Scratch. My emotion levels were through the roof hoping September could win the cantankerous derby and avoid the evil Tanaquill.

Thank you, old friend for all the joy you have provided me over the years. I have gotten to know you so well, and although not always consistent you have always been reliable. Also cheers to the the wonderful characters, with September who grew up before my reading eyes, and who would of thought that crossing a wyvern and a library could create something so noble and loyal. Lastly I need to thank *Catherynne M. Valente* for bringing you to life. You will not be forgotten and may you're retirement be happy and peaceful. Maybe we will meet again some day.

Farewell
Michael

Book Riot Community says

The final book in Valente's wondrous Fairyland series, *The Girl Who Raced Fairyland All The Way Home* is by turns beautiful, harrowing, heart-wrenching, hilarious, and filled to the brim with love. Picking up directly after *The Boy Who Lost Fairyland*, September and company are free, only to find themselves surrounded by all of the madcap, murderous, and malignant rulers of Fairyland who ever were, and all of them want the crown that now sits on September's head. And thus, in pure Fairyland fashion, the only way to choose the new ruler, is with a race to find the Heart of Fairyland itself. Valente said that when she finished writing this book, she bawled her eyes, and honestly, I was right there with her. For four books, we've seen our girl September grow and change, seen her heart learn how to be full, seen how she learns to juggle bravery and common sense with one hand, how the most important thing a person can do is love and understand and exercise compassion and empathy over terror and intimidation, how that is the greatest magic a being can master. And as we've seen her grow, we've grown with her, too. Our own hearts are that much bigger, our own sense of love and empathy that much brighter. And at the close of this novel, we've explored every nook and cranny of this home, and while I'm sure we'll come back out to the porch and tell tales under the stars, this home is known to us, and now it is time for bed. *The Girl Who Raced Fairyland All The Way Home* ends the only way it possible can: perfectly, sweetly, with a smile and a wink and a promise of magic

to come. This book wrapped itself around like the warmest blanket and hug and home all wrapped in one, and I'll always carry a piece of this series in my pocket with me.

– Marty Cahill

from The Best Books We Read In April: <http://bookriot.com/2016/04/29/riot-roundup-best-books-read-april/>...

Arielle Walker says

It's arrived! It's here! I have this in my hands and as sad as I am that the story is finishing here, I can't wait to see how beautifully it ends...

Now after all that excitement I have to admit slight disappointment. Maybe expectations were too high? But there was a *lot* of zany description and not very much plot at all - which was fun for a time, but the stakes were high and never felt it and so the whole thing felt sugary sweet in a way that the *Fairyland* books really haven't felt before.

However the ending was remarkably satisfying for all this, and an author like Valente is readable at all times, amazing or somewhat less so.

Giedre says

Endings are rubbish. No such thing. Never has been, never will be. There is only the place where you choose to stop talking. Everything else goes on forever.

What a beautiful journey. What an amazing series. I'm both sad and happy to see it come to an end. And what a clever, cheeky ending it is!

Morgan says

I still loved this series, just not this book as much. Reason: I thought this could be done in two book instead of one (semi-longer) book. We are brought back to all the important characters in the previous books, but we are introduced to a new character almost in every chapter. Knowing this was the last book, I felt like some of these new characters weren't really needed. This book also didn't have the dream-like feeling/writing as the previous books. I feel like I was let down with this one.

Nikki says

Nooo, I don't want it to be the end! That said, it isn't as bad as I'd feared: it doesn't end like Narnia, with all the magic going away in favour of allegory. Fairyland remains as real and wild and strange, and the ending as bitter-and-sweetly magical as the other books. I was a little disappointed not to see more of Hawthorn and Tam's adventures; *The Boy Who Lost Fairyland* is really a one-off in going so far from September, and I'm not sure I like that I never got my answers to questions about Hawthorn and Tam and how they feel about leaving behind their human families.

The weird wonders of Fairyland continue, as beautiful and strangely perfect as ever. I want to meet most of the characters (or hide from the nastier ones). And sometimes I can't help but feel that the narrator looks into my heart just as much as she does September's. Especially when the hippos named after bottles from the liquor cabinet come in (if you know me, you probably know about Helen, and if you know Helen, you know my heart).

Also, Blunderbuss! I love that at least we get Blunderbuss in this one, and A-Through-L being awesome and the whole bit with the main library and the book bears and...

No, I'm probably not capable of writing a coherent review of these books. This one is just as charming as the rest, though perhaps a bit sadder, because you know it's the last, and because various things that happen during the race to be ruler of Fairyland make you worry about the characters and whether things can ever be the same.

Oh, and some things that some characters have been waiting for since the first book finally come to pass. So all in all, it's a very satisfying end to the series, except for the fact that nobody wants it to end. The whole series might be marketed as young adult, but I think perhaps it has more for the adult who can still dream.

Originally posted here.

Mari says

Full series review to come.

I've been talking about this series for years now, and yet I put off reading the final installment since I purchased it in March. I reread books 1-4 before I finally settled myself in front of this final entry. It was hard to accept that after this, September's adventures in Fairyland would be over.

Because these books are so amazingly self-aware, Valente addresses this idea right before the end. The narrator assures us that the end is never the end. There is always a place for us within these stories when we open them back up. And don't I know it? I'm constantly in some state of wanting to reread these books.

There's so much to say about this beautiful series as a whole. For this entry, though, suffice to say that it was as well-written, witty, full of heart and still replete with details and descriptions. It didn't end how I'd imagined and how I'd hoped, but it was such a rational ending. It was a neat ending, but because the story veers a little off from the projected path, it wasn't to the detriment of the story.

Lots of characters made small appearances. I would've loved to spend more time with each of them, but I appreciate the effort to tie up so many things. Sometimes it happened a little too quickly and a little too much like a revolving door, but that's probably from the perspective of someone who could've spent another 500 pages just basking in Fairyland goodness.

I love this series to bits and pieces. It's so smart it hurts. Now that this is all finished, I'll start focusing on Valente's other work and seeing if she'll end up as one of my favorite authors ever.

Trish says

So we have come to the end. I will not pretend that I haven't spilled a tear or two or might even be spilling one or two just now.

But at least the author was very generous about the ending. I mean, she even tried to ease the parting for the characters as well as for the reader:

Endings are rubbish. No such thing. Never has been, never will be. There is only the place where you choose to stop talking. Everything else goes on forever.

I will always be here, in my old chair by the door, waiting for you, whenever you are lonesome. Our little house will always look just the same as when we first blew the dust off the bookshelves, and the kettle will always be just about to boil. Sometimes I will be young, and sometimes I will be old, and sometimes you will be young, and sometimes you will be old. But for as long as forever, I will keep a room for you.

That also brings me to the first wonderful notion in this book I want to talk about: the story being a house. Not just the story of this book but the entire series. Every adventure being a corridor with many rooms. We've been to the garden, we've been to the cellar, we've been to the roof ... we can always open the doors again. Beautiful.

So what was this last story about? Well, at the end of the last book, September became - more or less by coincidence - the queen of Fairyland!

Not that she had planned for it AT ALL. Also, she misses her home (having been gone longer than ever). But you can't just give Fairyland's crown back. Moreover, some magic happens, bringing ALL the former Kings and Queens back to race in the Cantankerous Derby for the crown. The problem? Most of them were never nice so September can't just let them win.

Seriously, I came to resent the fairies soooo much. Much like September, I was missing them in the first and second book but think the author made them into something different, yet still wonderful (in a villainous kind of way).

The race itself is of course not a straight thing as the ones we know, that would be far too easy. And too boring. It's a mixture of a treasure hunt, a riddle, duels and a final battle. Let's just say that that was another beautifully executed notion with a very satisfying conclusion.

So this book brings back almost all the characters from the previous books (some don't make an appearance but are mentioned at least) and what a gathering it is! So many things that didn't seem all THAT important

are revealed, (view spoiler) showing that the author really thought the entire thing through from the beginning and wanted to create something entirely her own (and succeeded).

The writing itself, again, is magical.

We have scenes like (view spoiler) but also wonderful quotes like this one by one of the bad Kings, Hushnow:

"Everything good is also ghastly. [...] You can ignore the ghastly, but it doesn't go away. [...]"

or the author's comments like this one:

But that is the way of theatre, girl. It is everything, and then the curtain comes down and all you've got left is a program and a half-eaten chocolate.

Then there are the usual fantastic descriptions and awe-inspiring regions of Fairyland the author came up with (new ones every time), like Saturday's grandmother, the ocean, and some of the places they see underwater!

It shows once again (and for all) that Catherynne Valente herself is a mage and her wand is a pen.

So we literally race through events, hardly ever stopping, definitely never getting bored - but always entertained, surprised, and even awed.

The ending was ... unique. Seriously, I did NOT expect that! But it absolutely works, it actually makes much more sense than anything other authors have come up with in the past when writing similar stories.

Finally, the illustrations were rich in detail again and wonderfully quirky as ever, giving the story its own (one might say familiar) flair.

A bitter-sweet ending to a fantastic series that I cannot praise enough. I really wished it was more well-known throughout the world because it will always be one of the best series I've ever read and does not need to shy away from comparisons to greater (more well-known) names!

Melani says

The Girl Who Raced Fairyland All the Way Home is the conclusion to Catherynne Valente's Fairland series for middle grade readers. The first book was a revelation, and is the book that introduced me to Valente. I adored that book, loved it. I enjoyed the second and third books as well, though I don't think they ever managed to really re-capture the magic in the first book. However the fourth book, The Boy Who Lost Fairyland, was a huge disappointment. Still, even given that I'd been disappointed with The Boy Who Lost Fairyland I immediately pre-ordered this last book and hoped that the conclusion would recapture the magic of the first book. Sadly, I've been struggling with this book for three months now and I think I'm just done.

I had a couple of issues with the book. The first is exemplified in the summary. Look at that cast of characters, there are so many. And each one is unique and quirky. It's Fairyland, so you can't just have

talking animals you have to have talking stuffed animals, and the child of a wyvern and a library, or any number of other unusual combinations. I love A-Through-L, but he's become just one more weird character in a book chock full of weird characters. I'm a big Oz fan, huge Oz fan, I love those books, and I can see Oz all over this series. However, Baum seemed to be willing to let some of his odder creations be one book characters, something Valente doesn't want to do. If the character appeared somewhere in the previous books then by golly it'll get a shot to show up here. This actually lessens the power of a character showing up at all, because you don't really get to spend time with anyone.

The other issue I had is that I choked on the tweeness of the descriptions. I've said before that I love Valente's way with words, and I do. However, sometimes she lets her pure enjoyment with shaping visuals get away from her and you end up with words jumbled together in ways that add nothing to the overall visual. It's like an artist spending hours painting a pink and orange tree in a forest of rainbow trees. That one tree is going to get lost in the rest of the trees and you can't even see the overall picture because you're too overwhelmed by the colorful forest.

But my main issue with the book is that I think Valente started writing the later books for children and made them easier and simpler because she thought that's how a children's book should be. *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making* wasn't really written for children, it was written as a companion novel to *Palimpsest* where it appeared as an imaginary novel. Valente wrote it for the fans of that novel and it kind of took off and became its own beast and she became a surprise children's book author. I don't want to say that she started dumbing her novels down, because I don't think that's quite it. But she stopped allowing the danger of Fairyland to be a real danger, and the books went from something quite powerful to a cute little story that have little emotional weight because there's no real weight to anything.

I will say, the ending pulled the book from a one star disappointment. While there is little actual plot in the novel, Valente does have a way of wrapping things together in a nice bow and this ending is no different. It's a natural conclusion to the series, and I quite liked it.

Overall, I'm just disappointed and sad. I still love the first book, and I will re-read it often. I don't think I'll continue to re-read the rest of September's adventures in Fairyland.

K. says

I've loved this series so much that even though I got my hands on this one about a month ago, I put off reading it simply because I didn't want the series to be over. But now that I've read it, I'm so glad that I did because it was perfect.

Everything comes full circle in this book. Characters from the previous four books pop up throughout, and are just as wonderful as they were the first time around. The writing is as beautiful and poignant as ever, and throughout the whole series, all I've been able to think of is how wonderful these books would be to read aloud to kids who think they're too old for bedtime stories. They're such whimsical and peculiar and magical books, and I really wish I could persuade my niece that we need to read them together because I'm pretty sure she'd love them, but there's no way she'd pick them up on her own because reading is the Actual Worst (sigh).

Basically, I love this series a lot, I adore the relationship between September and Saturday (and it gave me a hell of a lot of feelings in this book), and everything featuring A-through-L made me smile in this one,

especially the librarian related parts.

In short, this was everything I wanted and more. Perfection, pure and simple.

Alex says

I was able to get an advanced copy through my work, and I am so incredibly happy that I did.

This book is beautiful. The ending is perfect, and honestly if I hadn't been reading it while at work I probably would have cried. This is the perfect end to the series, though to be honest I would love more, full books, different series set in the same world, novellas, short stories, everything. My heart bursts and fills over and over again when I read these books. Every time I read one it makes me want to go back and re-read them all over again.

September is in a race to rule fairyland. Everyone and anyone is welcome to the Derby, but it's not just a race they also have to find the heart of fairyland to win the crown and rule. Every ruler of fairyland is back from the beyond and everyone wants to win. With the help of Ell, and our beloved Saturday September wants to win fairyland but can she compete with the Fairy Queen, or the Ice Cream Man? How about fighting the Marquess again? Duels if you are in the same space as another racer determine if you have to go back from whence you came, and of course we have to travel all of Fairyland to find her heart. Is it in Ell's Great Grandmother on his father's side? Is it in the Sea that Saturday grew up in? Is it somehow in the land of Wom? Oh September how my heart loves you.

With the dreamy and romantic verse that we all love, let the narrator tell you the name of the amiable dog, let the narrator take you to the briary but this time with a queen, and let the narrator tell you the story of September and just let your heart sigh sweetly.

For those who have read all the others and are hoping this isn't the last one read this book you will love it.
