



Fairest, Volume 2: The Hidden Kingdom

Lauren Beukes (Writer) , Iñaki Miranda (Illustrations) , Adam Hughes (Cover Artist) , Mathew Sturges (Writer) , Shawn McManus (Artist)

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In a stand-alone tale, Beast must hunt a beauty, but what is her relation to his past? And then, in a 6-part epic, Rapunzel lives one of the most regimented lives in Fabletown, forced to maintain her rapidly growing hair lest her storybook origins be revealed. But when word of her long-lost children surface, she races across the sea to find them--and a former lover.

Collecting: *Fairest* 7-13

Fairest, Volume 2: The Hidden Kingdom Details

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Download and Read Free Online Fairest, Volume 2: The Hidden Kingdom Lauren Beukes (Writer) , Iñaki Miranda (Illustrations) , Adam Hughes (Cover Artist) , Mathew Sturges (Writer) , Shawn McManus (Artist)

From Reader Review Fairest, Volume 2: The Hidden Kingdom for online ebook

Amélie says

[turned out bisexual (hide spoiler)]

Jani says

I read interview of Lauren Beukes and got immediately interested in her work. Started reading one of her shortstories and was completely sold after few pages (she reminds me of William Gibson in a very good way). Since I heard she also writes comicbooks I just had to pick up "Fairest". So Lauren Beukes (writer of vol.2) was the reason I started from vol.1 which was quite a disappointment.

Good thing that vol.2 "The Hidden Kingdom" is very much better storywise than vol.1 "Wide Awake".

Story is about Rapunzel (yup, the girl with hairgrowth of 4 inches per hour). Her past is really dark and she is haunted about her lost newborns that were tricked from her. In this collection she gets mysterious message that leads her to Tokyo to find her lost babies. In Japan a tons of japanese fairytale/folklore characters are introduced to the story ... in past and present.

Artwork wise vol.2 wasn't as good in my opinion as vol.1. Even Adam Hughes covers weren't as great as before ... but that mostly is because of darker subject matter.

Lauren Beukes writes great story and she is brilliant with her japanese references and that completely forgives lack in artwork.

This collection definitely is worth a check.

Jamie (Books and Ladders) says

I thought this volume was a lot stronger than Fairest, Vol 1: Wide Awake but it was still lacking something. I liked the characters and their motivations but I was expecting more. I think part of the problem is that each story/character is contained to ONE graphic novel and there isn't as much time to expand upon a story line as I would like so it feels rushed and compact rather than explained fully. I will be continuing with the series though because I love love love it.

Books and Ladders | Queen of the Bookshelves | Books Are My Fandom | Twitter | Instagram | Bloglovin'

Lauren says

I liked this volume better than the previous one simply because it was significantly less sexist and the plot

actually stayed on Rapunzel the entire time with a really cool plot that was definitely dark. I am actually invested in this storyline I think.

colleen the convivial curmudgeon says

This 2nd installment of 'Fairest', a spin-off from 'Fables', gives us some history on Rapunzel. She of the hair has more of a past - and more skeletons in her closet - than you might expect.

I like the concept of this series - to give us some backstory of the ladies fair that we don't get in the main series because they aren't really part of the larger arc, per se, though there's a part of me which wonders why the ladies story can't be fit into the wider world and why they need to be shunted to the side, as it were.

But, that aside, I found this story interesting, and it certainly adds a layer to Rapunzel that I wouldn't have thought from prior encounters with her.

My favorite part of the story, though, was that it takes place in Japan and we get to see our first glimpse at Japanese fables.

I also find myself wondering just how many backstories Frau Totenkinder can possibly actually be a part of...

I liked the story, overall, though there was a bit of a troublesome ending and I wonder if it'll play some part in another story, or if it's just going to be forgotten (view spoiler)

The artwork was good, but some of the transitions were awkward and abrupt.

There's also a short story after Rapunzel's which focuses on a dryad at the farm and her attempts at dating, told from the perspective of Reynard the fox. Since this is meant to be the ladies' series I sort of wonder about telling the story from a guy's PoV, but, still, it was an ok story, if a bit of a throw-away - despite the ominous tones of the last page.

Elizabeth (Miss Eliza) says

So, I really wish they would stop making excuses to bring Jack back. No more flashbacks, he's dead, move on. Also, aside from the covers, subpar drawing, but that's nothing to the stupid story. Japan and Rapunzel, with tons of characters you didn't care about or even know the name of. Felt kind of like a weird Japanese horror film/7 samurai mashup with lesbians, because, why not just make Rapunzel a lesbian... the only redeeming factor was the little final story with Renard Fox. Aside from that, nothing special and, I gotta say, for a spin off series, I think they'd want to make it a little friendlier to new readers, but no, this was way heavy with the mythology.

BookCupid says

Rapunzel fights dirt. In a boxing ring, my money is on her.

Once again, the series changed the Disney image I had of a princess. This time Rapunzel isn't only a survivor, but an entrepreneur who sells hair extensions for a living. But behind that peaceful exterior, Rapunzel suffers. Her newborn babies were stolen from her and she cannot miss an opportunity to find them, even if it means risking her life.

The action was fast-paced, introducing a change of scenery as we traveled with her to Japan. What I found less attractive, was the seductive covers on both sides. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with erotica, but it makes it very hard to read on a subway near children or seniors. Sadly, my hair isn't as long as Rapunzel to hide the covers and read in peace.

Louise says

3 stars - Review to come

I enjoyed the story of *The Hidden Kingdom* a lot more than I did the previous volume, *Wide Awake*, but it still gets three stars from me because I've become a much harder marker since then. It avoided a lot of the things I complained about in *Wide Awake* – *The Hidden Kingdom* is written by a woman (Bill Willingham is credited as 'consultant') and Rapunzel is very much the lead character, she has her own agency, and her presentation isn't filtered to us (too much) through the eyes of a male character. She does things for herself and the story can be (and probably should have been) told without a male love interest. But I just simply couldn't get into it enough for it to rank in the four stars.

The Hidden Kingdom ties Rapunzel, a very minor player in the main *Fables* storyline with only one minor appearance there so far, into Japanese mythology and folklore. The story is set several years ago in universe, with flashbacks going back several hundreds. With the exception of a couple of plot threads that are left hanging, it can easily be read as a stand-alone or out of order, as long as one knows the basics of the *Fables* universe. Though in part it seems to have been set in this time period purely to give Jack Horner the chance to appear. Why he has to be in this book though, I don't know. He's not necessary to the story, he's not been a part of Fabletown for years now and there's really no reason to set the story while he's still around just to give him a pointless cameo. But for some reason the writers of *Fables* always try to squeeze Jack in at any and all opportunities and pretend that he's just a harmless trickster rogue rather than a vile rapist shitbag, which is what he actually is.

Aaaanyway, back to the story. As someone who doesn't know much Japanese folklore I have to confess to feeling rather out of my depth and oddly disconnected while reading this. I could follow the plot along just fine (despite a few choppy cuts) but I felt like I was missing key context about certain characters that could have been easily addressed. Without just that little bit of context, explaining the stories the new characters came from, some scenes seemed little more than a barrage of flashy lights and weird monsters. Art-wise, though, it was pretty great to look at and Rapunzel has some fucking *fierce* outfits and hairstyles too.

But the love story. Well...nothing against Rapunzel being bisexual (I am *all* for it!) but the relationship

between her and Koi No Yukan never managed to feel like an enduring love story of the ages, the writing just couldn't convince me of it, neither in the flashbacks nor in the modern timeline. It felt like a lust-fuelled fling (which again is something I'm all for but probably shouldn't be presented as 'love'). The real disappointment though was the unnecessary heterosexual love story in the present-day time period. I'm tired of guys in stories 'earning' the heroine just by existing in their proximity and not being total arsewhipes. You cut her hair, Joel Crow, you're her hairdresser and her friend and she doesn't owe you fuck all in terms of romance. No, no matter how long you sit silently by pining in secret you will never have the right to get sulky at her for not somehow knowing and respecting your never-vocalised feelings for her. That's what nice guys™ do, and everyone knows they're sexist entitled jerkwads. Also, as a plot thread this romance felt tacked on and underdeveloped. By the way it was written it almost seemed to imply "see! she's not a lesbian!" or to put an "it was just a phase" filter onto her previous relationship. Both of which are yucky motivations for introducing a love interest. The story would have worked just as well, if not better (much better), with Rapunzel traveling to Japan on her own.

But at least, the story wasn't shown through the male character's eyes this time. Which, unfortunately, can not be said about the final stand alone issue in this book written by Bill Willingham. It's pretty much everything I dislike about the treatment of women in the *Fables* universe – a story about a woman's life – in this case her love life – told through the eyes of a man who wants to date her. It's just as skeevy as it sounds. And the 'joke' of the story is completely puerile. 'Hurhur, she's a dryad. Dryads are trees. Trees 'eat' manure. Dryads must eat poo. Hurhur! Dryads have poo breath!'. And that, in a nutshell, was basically the whole plot. The only part of the story worth reading at all was the "ominous epilogue" – and that could probably have been squeezed into any number of *Fables* stories without interrupting anything.

So yeah, three stars. The Rapunzel story was good and a definite improvement on the last volume in terms of actually doing what this series said it would by showing female characters having their own stories and adventures. But the Reynard Fox story was, much like a dryad's casserole, kinda shitty.

Ed Erwin says

The art gets 5 stars. The story, though, just isn't my cuppa' tea.

Donated to me by a friend. Since I haven't read other parts of "Fairest" or "Fables", I'm sure I missed some stuff. Also I didn't understand many of the references to things from Japanese culture.

StoryTellerShannon says

Rapunzel reveals her backstory of her travels into the Hidden Kingdom and how she created friendships but also enemies. When news reaches her that her children may still be alive she travels to Asia with some allies to find them.

Artwork was very good on average.

OVERALL GRADE: B plus.

Ari Eris says

Oh-ho, look what jumped up into my hands just a week after finishing *Fairest*, Vol. 1: *Wide Awake!* I'm unexpectedly up-to-date with the graphic novels, \$15 short on my rent, and very excited about how much I enjoyed *Fairest*, Vol. 2: *Hidden Kingdom*.

The heroine of this volume is Rapunzel, or - if you're an aficionado of Japanese rather than European folktales - Okiku, the doomed servant of the *Banchou Sarayashiki* (*The Dish Mansion of Banchou*). Lauren Beukes, who wrote this installment, did a clever job of combining the two characters and their respective stories into a wholly original and entertaining new drama. Even the author's original spins to the two legends have a disturbing, fantastical feel in the tradition of the best-loved folktales, such as Rapunzel/Okiku building a "nest" out of her hair in order to give birth to her children and Mayumi's lipless ghost haunting reflective surfaces. Inaki Miranda's pencils are perfect for this story, especially combined with Eva de la Cruz's colors, although I didn't care for some of the character designs. Komoko's cyber-punk-esque suit and Mayumi's hokey neo-ninja get-up looked like crummy costumes from a forgettable "Shounen Magazine" series and at worst reflects the dumb Oh-those-wacky-Japanese trend in Western comics. Personal pet-peevs aside, I really enjoyed this story. Rapunzel is a tough chick and her story is fascinating, intriguing, and heart-breaking. I can't wait to read more about her in *Fables*!

Oh right, I almost forgot to mention: there are also straight girls who make out if you're into that kind of thing.

The one-shot at the end of this volume was a little less interesting. Written by Bill Willingham, the mastermind behind *Fables*, it is basically about a bad date between Reynard T. Fox and Alder, princess of the dryads. Reynard's point of view makes the narration interesting but otherwise, I gotta admit, the story was pretty boring. (To be fair that is pretty much how I feel about any awkward date in a TV show, movie or comic.) Barry Kitson's pencils aren't much to talk about either, just another get-the-job-done house style. A dull story could really get a boost from an original artist; I'd love to see a *Fairest* story penciled by Sean Murphy, Garry Brown or Cliff Chiang. In the end, the final story made for decent filler but, unlike the one-shot in the first volume of *Fairest*, it didn't hold up to the main story.

Now that I'm caught up on the graphic novels its time to catch up with the monthly issues. I'll be sure to let you know how the next volume turns out as soon as its released, because *Fairest* is fast becoming one of my favorite series of the year. And how!

Cathy says

The story was good and the art by Inaki Miranda was great. Miranda got the familiar characters like Frau Tottenkinder exactly right, something no other guest artist has done. And the other art is fantastic, it's a real pleasure to see all of the detailed and gorgeous panels. The little story at the end was fine, it wouldn't have mattered to me if it wasn't there, but it was kind of cute with a dark twist at the end. I'm seriously not into the covers though. I am not now or will ever be a fan of marketing these books as though they're soft p/rn. The front cover had absolutely nothing to do with the book. If it had been a violent picture with her hair writhing all over the place, that would have represented the story. It didn't happen in the book and it makes no sense representing the book. And though the back cover at least has a place in the story, it's such a small part of the story, why pick out the one small sexy scene and put that on the cover? This must be what men are paying

for, they must know their markets. I'm just sick of having covers that I can't leave out in the open because my father might see when he's visiting. It's a dark action story, I would have liked covers that reflected that.

Doyle says

Though the plot wasn't bland it at times felt like someone else's story that the authors tried to forcefully adapt into the Fables world. Some of the bigger, primary questions were never answered. At least not answered resolutely. The introduction of Japanese Fables was interesting (it took us 10 years to tap that well?), however I don't feel like there was much of an introduction. The Arabian Fables got an excellently crafted introductory story arc in Fables, Vol. 7: Arabian Nights. The Japanese Fable characters are just sort of dropped in your lap.

And then there is the fashion-show-style-art. I'm not sure who the target audience for this book is, but I doubt it is me.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

Once again, Bill Willingham and company have created a fresh spin on a fairy tale. And he takes Rapunzel to a very adult and at times disturbing journey to the Land of the Rising Sun.

Rapunzel has been looking for her children for many, many years. Even though she was forced to forget them, she never really does. That was a poignant note in this story. An interesting touch was that Rapunzel's hair grows continually, and she experiences very rapid growth spurts of her hair under strong emotion. You can guess how that plays into the story! Her companion is one of the Crow brothers, who is also her hairdresser. Her time in Japan opens the doorway to a story full of Japan's very imaginative, and in some ways very frightful folklore.

If you're like me and Japanese horror movies scare the you know what out of you, you might find this volume therapeutic. There is an interesting twist on the drowned maiden in the well. And I will never look at hairballs the same way again.

There are some dark elements in this one, probably the most out of all the Fables/Fairest volumes I've read, so reader beware. Having said that, I loved it just as much as the other ones. Rapunzel is both sympathetic and at times, really kind of scary. I've never thought much about her, so this volume definitely has me seeing her in a different light.

Overall rating: **4.5/5.0 stars**

William Thomas says

Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in.

News of "Fairest" had me excited. I thought that having a new perspective on the Fables from different writers was going to be exactly what their world needed. Then the first issues hit and it was Willingham on

the writing chores. Damnit. A few issues later and a different arc and aha! We got it. Lauren Beukes.

This is what I'd hoped this series would become, would be. An edgy, surreal and bold take on the histories of the women of Fabletown. Beukes fires on all cylinders, weaving horror and fantasy together flawlessly with Rapunzel as the leading lady of the story. What could have been schlocky becomes something fantastic as Rapunzel gets her hands dirty in Japan, sheds quite a bit of blood herself, and is shown to be so much more than a damsel in distress. The infusion of Japanese fables, animal spirits, and hidden kingdoms made this the best fables story since before The Arabian Nights arc.

If you like horror and grotesquerie, like Beukes at all, or are willing to give Fables another go, I'd suggest picking this one up from a local comic shop, not the library. It's worth having on your shelf.

Writing: A

Art: A
