



## *Symptoms of Being Human* By Jeff Garvin Reviewed by Mia Li

**Name:** Mia Li

**Grade:** 7

**Book Title:** Symptoms of Being Human

**Author:** Jeff Garvin

**Number of Pages:** 325

**Rating (on a scale of 1-5):** 5/5

### **Character List:**

- **Riley Cavanaugh:** Riley is a 16-year-old genderfluid person, who also just happens to be the daughter of a Congressman. She struggles to “blend in” in her new public school as bullies continue to taunt Riley about her neutral clothes and punk rock, boyish, girlish features. She takes all this stress from school and transforms it into an anonymous blog to speak out for the queer community.
- **Jason Solomona (Solo):** This Star Wars loving nerd who also somehow became a star athlete is the perfect kind of person to help Riley in her high school experience. But when conflicts arise between his football friends and Riley, he’s not sure how to defend Riley and also keep his other friends.
- **Bec:** Bec is a cross dressing girl who just happens to meet Riley by chance. They hit it off immediately as Riley goes on the journey for her parents’ acceptance. As the story continues, their friendship shifts into an awkward, romantic relationship.
- **Sierra Wells:** Sierra is one of the people who immediately judged Riley. Throughout the whole school year, Sierra makes Riley’s life a living nightmare while she deals with her own stressful problem.
- **Casey Reese:** Casey is a girl who finally had the guts to transition into a male. She is the girl that showed Riley the slightest bit of kindness and got her through the rest of her first week. They bonded over French class and later, Riley helped her accept and come out to the whole school.

### **Review:**

Riley Cavanaugh can be many things: punk rock, rebellious, sarcastic, and gender fluid. Some days she wakes up feeling more feminine and some days he wakes up feeling more masculine, almost as if there’s a compass pointing to one every day. To hide her true gender identity, she forces herself to wear neutral clothes. Because of the stress and anxiety of being the new, weird kid at school, she makes an anonymous blog under the name of “Alix” to just say what’s on her mind. Everything she can’t express to anyone in real life, she can easily put on this blog. After only one blog post and a witty comeback, Riley is overwhelmed with how many followers she received. She never expected for her blog to become so popular from just her speaking her mind. But she also never expected for one of her school bullies to find out the true identity of this blog.

This humor-filled teen novel teaches you that everyone has a voice to speak out for what's right. The author Jeff Garvin shows the struggles of an in-the-closet, genderfluid human, struggling to get through high school with the least amount of anxiety attacks. Riley faces events that no teenager should go through, no matter what gender. The author shows Riley's everyday life with a huge amount of humor, but also sadness and sorrow at the right times. I would definitely recommend this story to teens who would like to learn more about the gender-queer community, or if they're just looking for a good book.