



## Reconstructing Jackson

*Holly Bush*

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## **Reconstructing Jackson** Holly Bush

1867 . . . Southern lawyer and Civil War veteran, Reed Jackson, returns to his family's plantation in a wheelchair. His father deems him unfit, and deeds the Jackson holdings, including his intended bride, to a younger brother. Angry and bitter, Reed moves west to Fenton, Missouri, home to a cousin with a successful business, intending to start over.

Belle Richards, a dirt poor farm girl aching to learn how to read, cleans, cooks and holds together her family's meager property. A violent brother and a drunken father plot to marry her off, and gain a new horse in the bargain. But Belle's got other plans, and risks her life to reach them.

Reed is captivated by Belle from their first meeting, but wheelchair bound, is unable to protect her from violence. Bleak times will challenge Reed and Belle's courage and dreams as they forge a new beginning from the ashes of war and ignorance.

## **Reconstructing Jackson Details**

Date :

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Author : Holly Bush

Format : Kindle Edition 191 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Westerns, Historical Fiction

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## From Reader Review Reconstructing Jackson for online ebook

### Vikki Vaught says

This was such an engaging read. Belle and Reed's story captured my heart. Reed moves to Fenton, Missouri from the south, 2 years after the civil war. He arrives in Fenton a broken man. During the war, he lost his left lower leg and the right is mangled badly so he's in a wheel chair. Once Reed meets Belle, things move very quickly. Due to some extenuating circumstances, Reed and Belle marry, even though they are virtual strangers.

I really enjoyed watching their love for each other develop. This novel is much more than a historical romance. It deals with the very real issues of slavery and the reconstruction period of history for our nation. Ms. Bush paints a vivid picture of the reality of the prejudices that existed then and still exist today.

This is a story that will linger long in my mind and one that I will read again in the future. I highly recommend this book and could easily give it 5 stars. I look forward to reading other works from this author. I've read all three novels she's written and each of them have touched my heart.

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### Deanna Sletten says

Reed Jackson returns home to his family plantation after the Civil War a broken man in a wheelchair and considered unfit by his father to claim his inheritance and his bride-to-be. So he leaves his home and moves to Fenton, Missouri to start a new life. The country is still struggling with the newfound ideas of free black men and women and the fact that it is no longer split between north and south. In this atmosphere, Reed also finds himself with an internal battle between his own past upbringing and the changes of the new United States. When he meets a young woman, Belle, who has no prospects and is treated like property by her family, he is not only enthralled by her beauty but also by her perseverance to better herself. Together, he and Belle forge a life as they learn what to love and respect about each other and how to break through their limitations for a full, rich life.

Reconstructing Jackson once again reminds my why I love novels by Holly Bush. Her ability to place you into a previous time period and enthrall you with a story so compelling that you can't put it down is incredible. Her characters just jump off the pages and her historical knowledge rings true. In Reconstructing Jackson, she delves deeply into the uncomfortable topic of slavery and race relations from our country's history and writes about it thoughtfully and with integrity. Not only will you fall in love with these characters, but you will be entertained by this thought-provoking story.

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### Joy says

My first novel by Holly Bush and I'm not disappointed. What a thought provoking story, heart wrenching yet beautiful. She has a talent for creating characters that you grow to love, her descriptions of race relations and slavery make you cry. I really liked this book and give it 5 out of 5 stars. Can't wait to read another by this author.

I received an ecopy of this book free from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says**

Wheelchair bound, lawyer/ex-soldier, Reed Jackson arrives in Fenton, Missouri after being more or less disinherited by his father because of losing a leg in the Civil War. Reed, the eldest son was set to take over the family plantation and marry a local Southern Belle, until the unfortunate outcome which has the elder Jackson handing said bride-to be and the plantation over to another brother who has no infirmities.

Once in Fenton, he moves into the Ames Hotel, which is owned by his cousin Henry and wife Mary Ellen. Upon his arrival, Reed meets the hotel manager Beulah who is a freed slave. Having been a soldier on the losing side of the Civil War, Reed is uncomfortable with Beulah's status and stature when he first arrives, but soon becomes fascinated by her pride and her determination.

Belle Richards is the sacrificed young daughter of a dirt poor family in Fenton. The seventeen year old is beaten regularly by her ignorant and evil brother Jed, and her equally ignorant alcoholic father consistently but that doesn't break the young girl's spirit. In fact, it spurns her to better herself by fulfilling one of her dreams, to read. Beulah and her brother, a reverend, secretly school Belle and others in reading, but trouble begins when Belle's brother finds out. Post war Missouri is still reeling with prejudice as many of the Southern states are. Jed is so angry his sister is being taught how to read by blacks, that he beats Belle severely.

Beaten and bloody, Belle winds up outside the Ames Hotel in the company of Beulah. Reed Jackson, quickly takes control of the situation and has Belle brought to his room to be doctored and watched over.

When Belle's family comes to the Ames Hotel to force Belle to return to the hovel they live in, Reed asks Belle to marry him so she would be taken care of and never fear from her family again. She agrees.

Marriage between these two people, so different from one another but so intriguingly compatible, makes this story extremely compelling. At first, Reed is resigned to the fact that he would never be able to do any better than the poor Belle, but soon he comes to realize that this woman has unflinching determination and a Hell of a lot of heart. All Belle ever wanted was a home a husband to love her and children, and once she is given the chance, she takes the bull by the horns.

Tragedy soon strikes too close to home threatening the very lives of all Reed holds dear and when his new wife decides to take on the world, Reed must overcome his disability to become the man he has always meant to be.

What can I say about this book? Well I have to tell you, Holly Bush is an extraordinary writer. Every time I read her books a cry and rejoice. Being the history buff that I am, I am always drawn to a good story pertaining to the highs and lows of our country. Holly Bush is not afraid to take the post Civil War sentiment and make it a lesson to all, even if it's in a fictional romance like Reconstructing Jackson. This is a fabulous read and I am proud to say that I have read every one of Holly Bush's books, am a big fan of hers and hope she continues with these stories that are so worth the time to read. I highly recommend Reconstructing Jackson.

~KIMBERLY~  
Re-read Sept 2015

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~KIMBERLY~

5 Stars (Hook Line a

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### **Laura (Kyahgirl) says**

4/5; 4 stars; A

I can honestly say "I loved the way Holly Bush told this particular story" even though its many disturbing aspects prevented it from being a story I totally loved (in that warm and fuzzy way one seeks to love their escapist fiction!) Bullies, abusers, bigots, and monsters of that ilk really infuriate me and it's never easy to read about their deeds and misdeeds. However, there are many bright spots of human decency, courage and kindness sprinkled throughout the story so the mood doesn't become too dark.

Reed Jackson returned from fighting in the American civil war; a man broken in body and spirit. Reconstructing Jackson is an apt title because, although it was at times very uncomfortable to watch, the reader joins him on the journey to physical, mental, and spiritual health. The author didn't romanticize Jackson or spend a bunch of times waxing on about how handsome he was. Reed was an angry, ugly character at many times in the telling of the tale. Luckily he was also an honourable, courageous man under all that anger and, throughout the course of the book, we see more and more flashes of that character. The backdrop of 1860s American south provides a boiling cauldron of social upheaval and tension to catalyze his change.

Belle was a great foil for Jackson. She had suffered a difficult upbringing but instead of detracting from her character it strengthened it. Her character was solidly rooted in a bedrock of integrity, courage, and faith so when Jackson desperately needed a moral compass, a kick in the butt, and some plain examples of how to do the right thing, Belle was there to provide it.

Holly Bush has a great skill in drawing characters and speaking with an authentic and smoothly flowing voice. Even though the subject matter was hard to take in spots, I still highly recommend this book to anyone looking for a story that exemplifies the ability of humans to grow and heal as well as a love story that has depth and complexity.

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### **Jill says**

*Reconstructing Jackson* is a finely written historical western, well-balanced between the history and romance.

Full review in October issue of ***InD'Tale Magazine***  
<http://www.indtale.com/reviews/recons...>

Reviewed for ***InD'Tale Magazine***  
<http://www.indtale.com/>

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### **Jenny Q says**

2.5 Stars. After being so impressed with *Romancing Olive*, I had really high expectations for *Reconstructing Jackson*, but I just didn't enjoy it as much as I'd hoped I would. I had been really drawn to the idea of a hero in a wheelchair, and the setting and time period--Missouri two years after the Civil War--is perfect for a good, dramatic romance, but the story lacked the emotional connection that reached out and grabbed me in *Romancing Olive*. I had a hard time connecting to either of the main characters. As much as I wanted to love Belle, she just didn't seem to have much substance. All cheerfulness and sunshine, and often described as meek, but when she did decide to take a stand, her righteousness and backbone seemed to come out of nowhere. And Jackson was the reason I wanted to read the story, but he was bitter and judgmental, and not at all apologetic about it. That was fine in the beginning, but I wanted to feel more growth from him as the story went along. He is different at the end, but it seemed superficial. I felt like I was told a bunch of things about him, but never shown the real changes taking place. It didn't seem like he was very proactive in changing his life, rather he was influenced more by others. I kept waiting for his emotional breakthrough, but I didn't feel like it really ever came.

I give the story big props for the setting and tone: the coming together of people from different ways of life, trying to figure out how to exist in the newly reunited United States. The story tackles serious issues and holds no punches, but I think the development of the romance suffered for it. With so much focus on racial tensions in the town and what was going on with other characters, there was no time to focus on what was going on between Belle and Jackson, and that's what I wanted more of. Even the ending seemed to be tacked on as an afterthought and I really wanted to get invested in these characters' lives. Other reviewers are raving about *Reconstructing Jackson*, so I seem to be in the minority with my opinions, but for me there just wasn't enough romance or emotional connection. However, I think it's worth a try for someone interested in this time period and in reading about a different type of hero.

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### **Ruth Hill says**

I am so pleased I was able to give this a five star rating. This is the third Holly Bush book I have read, and when I first began reading it, I was afraid I would not like it. It took me a good couple chapters to get into the story, and I guess I was prejudiced. The fact that Holly featured a man as the main character of a romance failed to capture my attention--that is, at first. Once Belle entered the story, I was hooked! And I found myself appreciating Reed for who and what he was.

This book was full of everything that makes an amazing historical novel: romance, humor, social injustice, mystery, and more. This book deals with the horrors of this country following the Civil War. It was something to see a book feature a crippled vet as a main character. I don't think I realized just how bad things were for the free blacks in this country following the War. My heart bled for the blacks in this book. Yes, there are some derogatory terms used for blacks in this book, but when you take into account the time period, I believe these terms must be used. There are racist people in the book, and then there are those who truly care about these free blacks. And then there are those whose views change.

The romance is unbelievable, and I mean it. I love the fact that a marriage of convenience becomes passionate love. There are some bedroom scenes, but it is typical Holly Bush. The people get married first

and then they move to the bedroom--not before! There is some profanity, but it is minimal. I also appreciate the fact that God always makes an appearance in the book. The characters always give credit to God for helping them through difficult times and ultimately changing them.

This is a book that may take some time to get into it, but the book is certainly just as good as her other books. So if you like historical fiction and romance, this is the book for you!

I was sent a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not financially compensated, and all opinions are 100 percent mine.

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### **Vibina Venugopal says**

The novel opens with Reed Jackson's sour spirit and a contagious aura of despair..Slowly I realised that he has every reason to feel dejected, he has lost his leg in the civil war, considered as no good nothing by his father, worse he not only loses his family inheritance but also his bride-to be to his younger brother...Worn out and utterly disappointed he moves to Fenton, Missouri to gather up the pieces and start all over again in the wild part of the country ..But he is quite taken aback by the warmth of his cousin and his wife right from day one...He starts his life at his cousin's hotel The Ames hotel..His cousin Henry and his wife Mary Allen come across as a wonderful couple , understanding about Reed's mood, they take every care to keep up his spirit light...They are quite friendly with the negro staffs dine with them and share a wonderful relationship with them...War had a terrible effect on Reed , he loses his older brother, his leg and everything around that took his life from being normal...Thus he contemplates

"His thoughts of family were as muddy and murky as the bayou, filled with pride, resentment and the undeniable knowledge that he may have done the same things under the same circumstances. Maybe, just maybe, his mother's encouragement to begin a new life elsewhere came from the heart. And maybe she was right. He had best try and forget the hurts and the wrongs of the past and make something of himself in a new land..."

Enter Belle hardworking, family bound, earnest and loving daughter and sister whose feelings are never taken into consideration by her family,she washes her father and brother's clothes, cooks the meals, tends the garden and manages to keep their meager farm operating. But nothing was enough, she was treated like a dirt by her father and brother, her brother has plans to marry her off as a part of bargain, in exchange of money to buy a horse...Belle is on the edge of life ,until she meets Reed, she discovers a spark in him that some way ignites her path of darkness, in spite of his physical disadvantage she sees him as a complete man...

Slowly as the silent relation progress there is stark and clear change in the stone man Reed.. His layers of complexities unravel exposing his true self of a kind and a warm person..He is drawn to Belle but holds back because of his physical state..He is cripple and how can he think of saving the girl from her trouble, but he also knows that she is the sole hope for a life with love...How can Belle collapse the wall that Reed has built for himself and free herself from her brother's iron fist trying to cage her...

Starting as a melancholy man, Reed's personality was something I really liked among all...

The result of civil war with freedom to Negros taking roots is written well...Their lives their good, not so good, and bad relationship with their white masters and employees are portrayed well..Set in an age where things are moving towards a life of equality Bush has set the stage just fine for reflection...The soft charm of the countryside with heroism and villainy is the best part of the novel...Prejudice, hope, loss, anger, despair, anguish love are all mood of the book in different stage in different proportions...I would definitely love to read more of the author's work.

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### **Keri says**

4.5 Stars!! Ok, so I started reading NTM Holly Bush's book and right off the bat it was suffering because the editing wasn't as good as it should have been. I was so sure that 3/4's of the way through the book it stayed firmly at the 3.5 mark and then I hit the last 1/4 of the book and OMGosh there was no way I could keep that next star from Ms. Bush. Had the book been more descriptive about certain parts I would have given it 5 Stars easy, peasy.

So the book starts off with southern man Reed Jackson making his way further west after basically being ousted of his inheritance by his own dad. Buford didn't feel Reed could handle the plantation after he came back from the war minus a lower leg and in a wheel chair. So Reed's dad just hands it all over to Reed's younger brother. Reed, at the urging of his mother heads to his cousin's hotel in Missouri. When Reed gets there after a long and difficult journey, his first test of his southern prejudiced upbringing is immediately put to the test. His cousin Henry has a manager of his hotel and not only is she a woman, she is black. He gets his back up, but eventually Ms. Beulah starts to win his hard head over. During this process, he helps rescue a young woman whom had been beaten by her own brother over the fact that she had been learning to read.

In order to save Belle, Reed offers her marriage. Although he doesn't love Belle, he admires her courage and looks down on her at the same time....at first. Eventually Reed's beliefs began to take a beating, as a double tragedy takes place right in his front yard. He is forced to defend the constitution of which he took an oath for a murderous bigot. I wasn't sure how it was going to play out, but HB did a marvelous job of not only bringing Reed around, but making me come to love him in the process, when in the beginning, he wasn't unlikable, he just wasn't hero material yet. But he sure was in the end. Bravo Ms. Bush!! I would have given the final 1/2 star had the love scenes been more descriptive and why I say that, Reed's handicap was an issue in his mind alone, not Belle's. I would have liked to have had Belle prove that to him in bed more than what was done. Also better editing would have been lovely. If you like post war Civil War romances, I would for sure give this lovely gem a try. Don't let my remarks about the editing and such throw you off, because this was well worth my time and money to read.

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### **Jonetta says**

Reed Jackson comes home from the Civil War in a wheelchair after fighting on behalf of the Confederacy. He lost one leg and seriously injured the other and cannot walk. His family's plantation, which was his legacy, has been turned over to his younger brother so he sets out to create a new life for himself. He is also a lawyer and joins a distant cousin in Fenton, Missouri to reinvent himself. Belle Richards is a young woman who is at the mercy of her father and two brothers who are dirt poor and treat her abysmally. In spite of that, Belle has simple dreams for herself and is convinced they will come true, especially as she has secretly learned to read.

Reed's struggle to deal with the post-slavery country outside of the South is harsh but realistic. The story is true to the period, including the vernacular common in the era. There are times when you'll really despise him and other moments where you see glimpses of the true and decent man. When Reed encounters Belle for the first time, he is struck by the purity of her heart, which was reflected in her whole being and expression. Their union was the most improbable but since both arose from harsh circumstances, it worked in a way that

ends up being magical. While Reed came from affluence, his father's cruelty impacted him almost as badly as Belle's family's fists did her, except she was able to keep her spirit intact.

I loved this story, even when some of the situations were almost unbearable. While there are some extremely sad moments, there were more where my heart was uplifted on so many levels. This is a mature story and a lovely, lovely romance. I plan to read the other two books by Bush and this will definitely be a re-read.

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### **Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

Where to start in reviewing Holly Bush's *Reconstructing Jackson* presents me something of a challenge. It is a fabulous book, solidly constructed and well-written, but it is the material itself that made an impression on me.

This is the kind of book that will ruffle feathers, first and foremost because Bush wasn't afraid to use historically appropriate language. I realize some readers find certain terminology offensive, but in context I always appreciate those who can recreate a time and culture without imposing modern ideology on their characters. The ability to do this as convincingly as Bush does is a hallmark of great historic fiction writers.

*Reconstructing Jackson* also touches on some intense subject matter: lynchings, murder, slavery, racism, child abduction... Again I was struck by how open Bush was to tackling such controversial material. These difficult and ugly concepts are central to her story, but she explores each, sometimes from surprising angles, forcing her readers to see and understand the prejudice and turbulence that characterized America after the Civil War.

Then of course we come to Reed. My favorite aspect of the book, he is a man who stands upon his principles. Through him, Bush recreates the same sense of honor that led Robert E. Lee to refuse President Lincoln and take up arms for Davis. This isn't Atticus Finch, the reader isn't predisposed to like or appreciate what Reed does. No. Bush asks her audience, challenges them, dares them to look deeper to understand her character's foundations and the convictions that led him to wear gray in one of our nations darkest hours.

I admit I am hesitant to read civil war fiction. Please excuse the pun, but I find most of it written in black and white when I know the truth is convoluted and penned in shades of gray. The courage Bush exhibits in creating a book that approaches these subjects without bias, offers such compelling characters as Reed, Belle and Beulah, combined with her obvious love and gift for storytelling make *Reconstructing Jackson* a remarkable and highly recommended piece of literature.

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### **Maureen Timerman says**

What a great book, I read it in one day, and could not put it down. The story is set in Fenton MO, just after the Civil War.

The country is trying to move on, at least some are, where others are convinced that slavery will return! Reed Jackson survived the War, but lost part of one leg and injured the other. His father seeing him in a chair

decides the woman he was to marry will marry his brother, and his brother shall have their Plantation. Reed decides to move on and start a law practice in MO. He comes and stays with his cousin Henry and his wife Mary Ellen at their Hotel.

Reed is surprised that a black woman is their manager at the Hotel. He was raised with slaves and this is quite a challenge for him. Also in this town is a lovely nineteen year old who is really being abused by her family. Belle's brother has picked out someone he wants her to marry, and he will get a mule...ugh!

When her family finds out she is attending a black church, and more, she is beaten within an inch of her life. Beulah, the hotel manager, is a friend of Belle's, and helps her. With her at the Hotel now there is quite a bit of time that Reed ends up spending with her. All Belle really wants is a husband, a home, children, and a garden.

This story will warm your heart, we may not understand why some of the things happen, but once you pick this book up, your in for a really great read.

I received this book from Pump Your Book Virtual Tours, and was not required to give a positive review.

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### **??™ says**

“A bridge of silver wings stretches from the dead ashes of an unforgiving nightmare to the jeweled vision of a life started anew.” ? Aberjhani, *The River of Winged Dreams*

the Civil War may be over but it leaves Southern lawyer Reed Jackson physically crippled and emotionally bitter. Reed then moves to Fenton, Missouri and stays with his cousin Henry Ames and his wife Mary Ellen. as Reed gets settled, he meets Belle Richards and makes a decision that will change his life forever.

author Holly Bush's historical romance takes a look at what the American Civil War has left in its wake and how it affected the lives of men, women and children in a small Western town.

readable and fast-paced, this novel is more than a love story. bigotry, spirituality, literacy, honor, loyalty and integrity are some of the deeper issues that are examined within its pages. Ms. Bush weaves all of these into her story and the result is an emotional and inspiring book with a message to deliver.

there are also intense and dramatic events that take place which Reed, Belle, the Ames and the citizens of Fenton must endure in the name of freedom and justice.

overall, this is one of those novels that is hard to put down and that stays with you long after the last page is read. i highly recommend it!

*Disclosure of Material Connection: i received a copy from the author. i did not receive any payment in exchange for this review nor was i obligated to write a positive one. all opinions expressed here are entirely my own and may not necessarily agree with those of the author, the book's publisher and publicist or the readers of this review. this disclosure is in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255, Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.*

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