



The Adventures of Flash Jackson: A Novel

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Set in William Kowalski's signature town of Mannville, New York, *The Adventures of Flash Jackson* is the story of tomboyish Haley Bombauer and her ambition to bust out of the confines of her smalltown upbringing. With compassion and humor, the novel tells of her emergence into a world that, in her words, "was not designed with girls in mind," and her efforts to find a way to fit in without having to give up her beloved independence.

Introduced to a vivid and exciting imaginary life by her now-dead father, who bestowed upon her the nickname "Flash Jackson," Haley Bombauer confronts the summer of her seventeenth year with glorious anticipation. She envisions herself roaming the surrounding hillsides and forests on her beloved horse, Brother, venturing farther and farther away from her sleepy hometown and her ultracautious mother, who since the death of her husband has remained rooted firmly in the past.

But when Haley falls through the rotted roof of the barn, she is destined to spend the dog days of summer in a thigh-high cast, stuck at home with her mother, enduring visits from her spooky, unintelligible grandmother, pondering the error of her impulsive ways, and dreaming longingly of adventure. The year that follows will, in fact, transform not only her life but also the lives of those closest to her. Haley's "imprisonment" affords her peculiar grandmother the chance to see finally what the girl is made of-and to pass along some of the mysterious and mystical arts that only she remembers. As Haley comes to understand just who her grandmother is, and what the old woman can teach her, she is transformed-from a tomboy reluctant to accept her femininity to an extraordinary, powerful woman.

Steeped in imagery and lyricism, touched with the wisp of magical realism that has become William Kowalski's trademark, *The Adventures Of Flash Jackson* is a poignant and hilarious tale of self-discovery and the redemptive powers of love.

The Adventures of Flash Jackson: A Novel Details

Date : Published January 7th 2003 by Harper (first published January 1st 2003)

ISBN : 9780066211367

Author : William Kowalski

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, Young Adult, Contemporary

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Sunflower says

From "I'm not a young lady. My name is Flash Jackson, and I'm a stuntman trapped in a female body" I thought that this heroine sounded interesting.

The two halves of the book could almost be different stories, and by the end of the tale Flash has undergone some major changes. The characters are well drawn and believable, and apart from some minor annoyances (one glaringly untrue medical statement, the mystery of her tampon supply while living a subsistence existence, and the way Haley speaks to her mother) it was enjoyable entertainment. 3.5 stars.

Karen says

this book is not even remotely what you would think from the title. It's about a girl with an independent spirit, growing up and her "adventures." Feminist, independent thinker, a bit of old/new age medicine, shamanism. Flash Jackson is a nickname her father gave her. I LOVED THIS BOOK.

D. Soares says

I like quirky. This book had that. But it also had a boatload of cliches and I was ALWAYS conscious that I was reading a man writing from a girl/woman's POV. It felt forced.

For 160 pages or so I couldn't tell what year (or approx. yr) this book was set in. It seemed to be fairly contemporary yet the 17 year old main character uses many references to 1950s celebrities (Nat King Cole and Hopalong Cassidy for example). Turns out it begins in approx. 1998.

On the surface the proper neighbor Miz Powell comes across as a way too familiar stereotype of certain type of British dowager right down to the pinky-crooking when sipping tea. She also meets the criteria of typical adult who understands the oddball main character when her parent does not. Turns out the proper outer appearance hides an eccentric adventuress inside (a triple cliched character). bleh.

The great climax in the woods seemed completely out of left field to me and the reactions to it totally unbelievable. The "Adam" character is a stick man.

The "Lilith" thread that explains the main character's snake phobia was bunk.

I was mystified by the main character's promise to give the late Frankie his Theater of the Human Spirit and then the casual dropping of that issue by the close of the book because she's pregnant and can only do one thing at a time.

HUH?

Erika Mager says

Ein Mann schreibt ein ausgesprochenes Frauenbuch und nennt es "The Adventures of Flash Jackson". Ich will nicht wissen, wie viele Männer kurz vor der Mitte aufgegeben haben.

Für die deutsche Übersetzung wurde der Titel "Sommer auf der Schattenseite" gewählt, was schon weniger Assoziationen auf ein Männer-Action-Buch weckt.

Davon abgesehen: ein schönes Buch. Ein Mädchen kann sich nicht in die normale Mädchenrolle einfügen, fühlt sich eher als Junge, erträumt sich eine männliche Identität als Stuntman und lässt sich auch von Menschen aus ihrem Umfeld Flash Jackson nennen. Soviel zur Vorgeschichte, denn das Buch beginnt ausgerechnet, als die 17jährige Haley, so ihr eigentlicher Name, durch's Scheunendach stürzt und sich einen so komplizierten Beinbruch zuzieht, dass sie einen ganzen Sommer mehr oder weniger zur Untätigkeit verurteilt ist. Auf die Weise hat sie Zeit, sich mit sich, ihrer Weiblichkeit und ihrer gerade entdeckten Begabung als "Hexe" auseinanderzusetzen. Sie sieht die Tode dreier Menschen voraus und entdeckt, dass auch ihre Mutter und ihre Großmutter solche besonderen Fähigkeiten haben.

Sie beschließt, die Schule abzugeben und zu ihrer Großmutter, die als Heilerin und Hexer mitten im Wald lebt, zu ziehen und sich in der Kunst des Heilens und "durch den Schleier sehen", wie sie die Kunst des Hellsehens nennt, richtig zu lernen.

Eine harte Lehre, wie sich herausstellt. Sie verändert sich - körperlich und seelisch. Zum Schluss nimmt sie ihre ganz besondere Weiblichkeit an.

Ein etwas übersinnliches und doch ganz bodenständiges Buch. Mir hat es gut gefallen.

Anita says

An odd book that started out quite normally, but turned into a bit of a mystical fantasy in the forest. I like Kowalski's writing - this is the fourth of his books that I've read - and I will continue to read any of his books I can get my hands on.

Criss says

Who wrote the blurb for this book? Did they even read it? The titular Flash Jackson is the alter ego for Haley an erstwhile 17 year old female who begins her journey of self discovery by falling through the barn roof. She is profane, refuses to behave as a typical girl, has a crazy-most-likely-witch of a grandmother who lives in the woods and a mother who is in deep denial.

This is not a book that reveals itself all at once, but one that unfolds slowly and with much purpose.

Maria says

What a strange little book. Its been on my shelf for years and now that I've read it I'm not sure how I feel about it. The ideas on the force of women, their personal magic and the way that a woman can be all that she can be are values I try to live by anyway and I loved reading about them in a fictional context. Maybe it

was the fact that it was all written in the first person and so dragged on a little. I enjoy reading novels with multi-faceted characters and this book is based on the opinions and thoughts of a seventeen plus year old and I found this a little tedious at times. Despite this it did make me think about our roles as women, alternative healing and how we live our lives. I love a book that makes me think.

Hagar says

A great book have a lot of humanitarian meanings which's absent now from our world and modern life's mindset. Haley, 17 years old girl, who taught me how to accept myself, and how to have self-complacent, also to be independent. I also, liked the feminist expression in the book, especially when it came from a man. I felt it very cute to mix Germany with English. I guess the novel tackling the theme of modern world and natural world.

Sharon says

Kowalski characters are people that I like spending time with. The review for Library Journal called this one "not so much a coming-of-age as a coming-of-gender story." The Bombauer women are witches--well, at least grandma is--mom's taking a break from all that eye-of-newt stuff, and Haley's never shown much interest in the family business. But after a nasty fall leaves her with a summer of recuperation and limited mobility, she starts playing around a bit with spells. Mom's smart enough to know that what Haley needs is a teacher, so grandma steps in to teach Haley the healing arts (and a bit more...)

Jo Anne says

I had a hard time with this book since I hated it, then liked it, then hated it some more...Really, it was the character of "Flash" I had issues with. Flash Jackson is the nickname of 16 year old Haley Bombauer. Her father called her that when they would play "Stuntmen" together.

She's a tomboy, a smartmouth, a lonely girl who is restless and not in tune with the rest of the world. Her father is dead; killed in an accident of his own making.

On the day before she turns 17, she's on the roof of her family's old barn when she falls through a rotted spot and falls to the ground, breaking her leg in 3 places. It's the beginning of summer and there will be no running wild with a cast up to her thigh and crutches.

Why I didn't like Haley--I just don't care for characters who always have a smart or rude or sarcastic answer for everything. She was constantly popping off to her mother, who had shut down when her husband died. Haley had no sympathy for her.

The story is rather odd. The first part of the book gives the reader background for the main characters. Then an odd little fact sneaks in--Haley might be a witch, just like her grandmother. In the second part of the book, Haley has decided to go live with her odd grandmother, who lives deep in the woods in a house the size of a garden shed with no modern amenities. There she learns herb and healing craft and learns to listen to nature. The story gets even odder when she decides her smelly, rotting clothes are of no use and discards them, going around with only a piece of twine tied around her waist that holds a knife and a pair of scissors. Now the story gets a mystical "I talk to nature" feel to it.

I'm not going to go on about the plot. It has many "huh" moments but also Haley DOES mature. Which is why I decided I finally liked her and would finish reading. I don't know if this is a Young Adult book (no big deal I guess since anyone can read it) but I did feel out of reality while inside the story.

Apteryx says

Starts off well but then sort of loses its way.

Hilary says

A magical book literally; what seems to start out as a small-town coming of age story is transformed midway into an something far deeper and older as the protagonist discovers that her presumed grandmother is, among other things, a great deal older than she had ever imagined, and that she herself has a heritage she could never have suspected. Enthralling enough that I twice missed my tube stop whilst reading it.

Stacy says

I am not sure what to make of this book and I'm not sure that William Kowalski knew what he was writing. I very much enjoyed his two previous books and this book is written with the same kind of colorful character descriptions. I enjoyed reading this book but it took a left turn and just kept on going and then it was over.

Teagan Matterson says

I liked this story because it had a lot of strange events that occurred and had many interesting words and dialogue.

Shahzaib Mazhar says

"I see so many people around here just going through the motions, like. They don't care what goes on in other parts of the world. They don't care about anything, in fact. They just want to get through their day with nothing out of the ordinary happening. That's a good day for them- a day when everything happens exactly the way it's supposed to, and they don't have to learn anything new"

I was sorting out my bookshelf the other day, and my eyes fell upon the hardcover edition of Kowalski's *The Adventures of Flash Jackson*. I figured since this book is the first book I had ever bought with my own money, the first book I ever *owned*, it deserves its own review. So without further ado, here is my review of the book- or what I remember of it, at least (because I read it years ago) I suppose I could just reread it, but seeing as I have gazillions of unread books on my shelf, I won't.

"That's life. You can work and work to get to the top but you never know when everything is going to

collapse under you"

The main character of this novel is Haley. She is, as they say, *something*. She's witty, sarcastic, bad-ass, a feminist, and the i-won't-tolerate-any-of-your-bullshit kind of girl. In short, she's everything I love in a character. It is pretty clear that she doesn't feel as comfortable in her skin as she wants herself (and the reader) to think she does. Aside from her, we have her British neighbour, her mother, her witch of a grandmother (get it?), her half-loony friend, and a love interest (if one might call him that). The characters (including Haley) are nicely written, if a little cliché.

"Fear is a useless emotion, one that will map your life out for you if you let it"

The novel is set in the country, which is a place I am familiar with. The depiction of the country lifestyle is very real and makes it feel like one of those places I wouldn't mind visiting once in a blue moon.

"I don't give two craps in the woods what anyone thinks of me, whether it's ill or good or whatever"

The plot is just basically Haley's journey of self-realization and how she learns to accept herself for who she is. The first half of the book is way better than the second half of the book. The first half is a solid three stars. On the other hand, the second half is kind of boring and just plain. The ending is very.....corny.

"Sometimes a person just needs to run off for a while, when things get to be too much"

All in all, this book shows that Kowalski does have a lot of potential, and he is a nice enough writer. But I would only read another book by him provided it has a strong plot.
