

Book Review: Untethered
By Angela Jackson-Brown

I received a complimentary copy of this book. Opinions expressed in this review are completely my own. Expected publication date is December 3, 2024.

Reading “Untethered” by Angela Jackson-Brown is akin to gaining access to the entries in a personal diary. That’s the place where we open our heart and our mind to capture uncensored thoughts and feelings. It’s as honest a view of an individual as can be expected.

The first-person narrative in Jackson-Brown’s work of historical fiction takes us into the life of Katia Daniels. It’s Troy, Alabama in 1967. Katia is the executive director at the Pike County Group Home for Negro Boys. She pours her heart into nurturing those young lives, harboring a longing for children of her own; a recent hysterectomy leaving her unable to do so.

Katia also bears the weight of family responsibilities. She lost her father to cancer and has assumed the role of caretaker for her mother, with whom she lives, and her twin younger brothers – one of whom is missing in action in Vietnam, the other just recently returned but a shell of his former self. In many respects, Katia is tethered to the lives she has poured her heart into.

Then Seth Taylor reenters her life. Katia tutored Seth in high school. She had a huge crush on him, but thought the popular star of the football team was out of her league. Now, a wounded veteran who has started his own local business, his presence brings a reminder of a time when her life was less tethered.

Throughout this character-driven story, Katia wrestles with the push-pull of emotions, torn between her heart, and the responsibilities she feels to family and the boys at the group home. Those emotions lead to decisions that have a profound impact on her life and the lives of those she cares for.

The narrative is well written and reflects a strong sense of character development. It's easy to understand and relate to Katia, because who among us hasn't been there. That makes rooting for her a no-brainer. And as the pages unfold, we hope that she takes to heart her brother's words, "You're vulnerable, and you can't save everybody."

But that doesn't mean she stops trying.

"Untethered" is a solid read that provides insight into a person's heart, set against the challenges of a changing time in the South. The dialogue comes across a little forced or awkward in some places, but overall holds together well.

Four out of five stars for "Untethered."