



The Incredible Adam Spark

Alan Bissett

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A dazzling performance (think *Forrest Gump*, think *Curious Incident*, think Anne Donovan's *Buddha Da*) from one of Scotland's brightest new talents.

Adam Spark. Eighteen going on eight-and-a-half. Fast-food worker. Queen fan. Last in the queue for luck. On waking from an accident in which he saves a child, he has the distinct impression that all is far from right. What are these curious lights that seem to surround people? Why are animals and machines trying to speak to him? And can he really control time? Is it just his imagination, or has Adam Spark been chosen to become Scotland's first, and only, superhero? This, however, is the least of his problems. The local gang is luring him into deeper and darker peril. His sister and lone carer, Jude, is giving all her love to another woman. And if Jude abandons Adam - or Adam drives her away - all the superpowers in the world won't be able to save him.

The Incredible Adam Spark Details

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Author : Alan Bissett

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From Reader Review The Incredible Adam Spark for online ebook

Andrew says

this review first appeared on [<http://intraspace.blogspot.com>]

it's amazing what you come across when you're not looking for anything in particular at the library. our library has a new book stand that i always have a look at. take a punt, and sometimes it pays off.

this is a story (in first-person) about a scottish down-syndrome teenager with superhero abilities. as the tagline reads: 'at last, scotland has a hero'.

adam spark, or 'sparky' as he's known, has all kinds of adventures and rides the waves of people's prejudice and the realities of a disfunctional family. it is brilliantly written in sparky's own voice complete with scottish dialect (a la irving walsh) and unique punctuation and spelling. everything is seen through his eyes. at times the harshness of life seems to wash over the hero, but the truth comes out in subtle ways.

and now, for some unforgivably lazy reviewing. i shall quote wholesale from the publishers blurb about the book:

Adam Spark. Eighteen going on eight-and-a-half. Fast-food worker. Queen fan. Last in the queue for luck. On waking from an accident in which he saves a child, he has the distinct impression that all is far from right. What are these curious lights that seem to surround people? Why are animals and machines trying to speak to him? And can he really control time? Is it just his imagination, or has Adam Spark been chosen to become Scotland's first, and only, superhero?

This, however, is the least of his problems. The local gang is luring him into deeper and darker peril. His sister and lone carer, Jude, is giving all her love to another woman. And if Jude abandons Adam — or Adam drives her away — all the superpowers in the world won't be able to save him.

ah- so there you have it. recommended.

Lisa says

Amazing book. You need to read it a while to get into the Falkirk lilt, but fab story. You really get to know Adam, and his daft pals. I found it funny, interesting and h=thought the ending was fab. Good luck wie yer life Adam. xx

Paul says

/took me a while to get into it as a rather misleading blurb on the back, but once I'd worked out what book I was reading I really enjoyed this. The family at the centre of it are very familiar and rung true. Quite tense as you don't know what way things are heading... which I guess is how Adam feels.

Pomme says

Twas good, you ken? Twas like, ow-ri-dji-nal and touching. Notwhatexpected, but hey, lifes like this.

Katy Noyes says

This was a random recommendation generated on a website that I took a chance on. I'd never heard of the author or title before.

The premise I felt was a little different to the actual plot, but I did still enjoy it.

It was a surprise though, from the first page, to have to read this quite slowly, as it is written in both Scottish dialect, and reflecting the learning difficulties of the narrator, Adam. This made it hard to read, with little punctuation and words spelled in 'interesting' ways. I'm a fast reader, so to read so carefully was quite annoying at first, but I did get used to it. I can see that some reviewers haven't enjoyed this aspect at all. For me, I eventually did come to terms with it and liked the insight into Adam's mind.

Adam Spark has always been different. It seems he's always been bullied, taken advantage of at school, and never really had many friends. Now 18, he lives with his sister who is clearly exhausted trying to live her student life while paying the bills and taking care of her brother while their parents are 'in Oz' (clearly no longer living). Adam spends a lot of time listening to Queen music and working in a fast food chain, doing his best to become Employee of the Month but more of a hindrance to everyone in his workplace than a help.

The story takes us through a few months of his life, as he tries to fit in with a local gang, meets and feels an attraction for a new co-worker with her own health issues, and tries to be a superhero (possibly even gaining superpowers!) helping others. All the while, his sister is yearning for her freedom and a new love that Adam is doing his best not to notice and then not to accept.

The reader is aware of the wider world Adam lives in, what is going on around him that he either isn't capable of seeing or chooses not to. It makes for a fascinating narration, and Adam can be both frustrating and endearing.

Jude, the socialist student sister, is a strong feminine influence in his life, with her own backstory that Adam seems oblivious to, and I really enjoyed Adam's burgeoning romance with a fellow Queen fan.

It would work well on film/television, with some wonderful parts and lines.

Humorous and at times moving, this is a memorable read about an unusual young man that ends nicely for him and those around him, with just enough hint at what is to come for a feel-good close.

One that older teens might like (if they have the patience to wade through the writing style) and adults who enjoy stories with unique narrators.

Judy says

Not even worth 1 star. The less said about this book the better

Bekki says

Are you kidding me?! The ENTIRE book is comprised of sentence fragments, spelling errors, pretend words, and an utter lack of capitalization and proper punctuation. I am sure this is written of as "art", however, I found it extremely distracting. This "art" made the book completely unbearable.

Robert says

More like 3 1/2.

The Incredible Adam Spark is a coming of age novel but with some twists.

First of all it is told in a stream of conscious style and in Scottish dialect. Bissett's use of dialect is not too heavy going and after a while you do get what is happening.

Secondly Adam is special and we get to see the novel through his point of view, which makes him a very unreliable narrator as he has trouble understanding people's motives.

Other than that the novel is about coping with loss and changes. As this is told by Adam it has got some funny moments and tender ones.

There's quite a bit of charm in the novel but sometimes the writing style can distract and in a way the plot itself has been done before. I didn't mind the book, I did feel unsatisfied when I finished it.

Andy says

I absolutely loved this book. The writing style is very fragmented and littered with slang but after a few pages this only goes to enhance the story and make me identify with Adam more and understand how his mind works. A gripping story that's consistently funny throughout while also being terrifically sad.

Kyle Kyle says

this was a very sweet little book that was completely different from what i was expecting...i had been expecting a silly scottish tale about superheroes but it turned out to be more like the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime...it was both heartwarming and hilarious at the same time...well recommended

Ketan Shah says

A great example of first person storytelling from a slightly skewed perspective. Alan Bissett puts you in the head of mentally challenged Adam Spark, who seems to gain superpowers after a football accident. By turns funny and tragic. It takes a while to get into it, as the narrator has a very distinctive 'voice', but once you do, you're hooked. If you enjoyed the first person storytelling element in this, you'd probably enjoy the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time by Mark Haddon, Flower's for Algernon, by Daniel Keyes and Rule of the Bone by Russell Banks. Jonathan Lethem's Motherless Brooklyn also has an unusual narrator, a Tourette detective. David Lodge has a similar way with humor and tragedy in his Henry Pratt novels, especially the first one, Second from Last in the Sack Race. Anthony Burgess's A Clockwork Orange also is told from a skewed first person perspective, but with a much more violent dystopian bent. You might also like Alan Bissett's previous novel, Boy Racers. For a sci fi take on the first person narrative, you can try John Sladek's satirical novel, Roderick, told from the perspective of a robot trying to learn about human society.

Kel McGowan says

So I'm on week 3 on my 52AZ reading challenge and this one I finished within two days. Not because it was short, but because I was so desperate for it to be over I went into super Kel speedread mode.

I give you The Incredible Adam Spark by Alan Bissett. The comic-book-red-and-yellow cover jumps off the shelf at you and once I'd read the blurb I thought I'd actually found a book I might like to read.

Alas, it was precisely the sort of book I don't enjoy. It just tries too hard to be 'different'. Adam Spark, special needs, works in McDonalds. Has a lesbian sister, his parents have topped themselves from the sounds of it (although the story is told by Adam so sometimes the details are a bit hard to grasp because he sees the world differently due to his learning difficulties - or so we're led to believe) and if that wasn't edgy enough for you, his girlfriend has cystic fibrosis.

It's written from a first person point of view and as a result it can get very jumbled up at times. Not to mention the fact that it's also told with a Scottish accent. As a result, if you read it for long enough, when you put the book down, you may find yourself 'thinking' in a Scottish accent. I know I certainly did.

I suppose it's supposed to be gritty and downbeat when it's set around rundown Scottish council estates but the fact is I don't like depressing stories like this. I read to escape bad days or the grim normality of every day life and I can't understand people who want to read depressing tales. There isn't even any humour in the book. The Big Issue in Scotland called it a comedy in their review; well I'm sorry, but any attempt at jokery was a complete miss. It does seem to get a bit better towards the end but maybe that was just me looking forward to getting it over and done with. Very disappointing. And a very misleading blurb too. 2/5
