



A Little Bit Langston

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This book really ... takes its place in the marginalized-will-lead-us genre, as popularized by The Matrix and the X-Men franchises. - Kirkus Reviews.

Being different is a challenge, especially for James Kerr. He's no average teenager. James begins to channel a dead writer's poetry and then discovers he has the power to manipulate electricity. At the same time, romantic feelings for his best friend, Paul Schmitz, make him realize he's gay. But he has little time to explore the drastic changes in his life before heartbreak strikes at the hands of Paul's violent father. James is sent to The Paragon Academy, an institute specializing in juvenile paranormal research. There he meets Lumen Kim, the mysterious daughter of a famous Korean actress. Lumen's psychic ability might just be the thing that helps James unlock the secrets of both his poems and the origins of his supernatural talents.

A Little Bit Langston Details

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Author : Andrew Demcak

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JJ says

This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.

This book started strong, and I was immediately hooked on the mystery of James's powers. The story begins when James and his best friend, Paul, are studying together for school. They have to write a poem for class, but when James thinks of something to write, he goes into a trance-like state and writes words down on the paper. The resulting poem is spectacular, but James turns it in only to be accused of plagiarism. His teacher points out that the poem belongs to the famous, but deceased poet, James Langston. James professes his innocence, but they don't believe him until he displays the phenomena again. which results in him writing another famous poem. A hint of romance begins between Paul and James before James goes away to the special academy. After the academy, all sort of crazy things happen to them and they find themselves in the middle of a government conspiracy.

I really liked the beginning of this book. James's psychic abilities were intriguing and I was drawn to the budding romance between him and Paul. However once Paul gets into a confrontation with his father, everything just seemed to go haywire. The story went from being in the realm of possibility to being pure fantasy. Though I'm a fan of fantasy, the sudden shift from plausible reality to fantasy threw me off. Despite being somewhat disillusioned, I liked how the author used government conspiracy theories as a loose framework for the plot. I'm familiar with the details of a lot of the conspiracies, so it was interesting and at times a bit frightening to read the author's twists on them. Even though the romance is far from being central to the story-line, I was also pleased with the happy ending. I'm not sure if there will be a sequel, but it ended in a way that seemed to leave it open for the possibility.

B.A. Brock says

Genre: Gay YA Science Fiction

Length: Novel

James has a pretty boring life. Sure, his mom is nuts, and also sort of interesting, but that's par for the course for adults, who all seem a bit off. He's in high school, but he still has problems with reading, and his best friend, Paul, seems to have a few problems as well. But people pretty much leave them alone, and all in all, he has nothing to worry about—just the average life of an average teenager. Until one day when he blacks out, and wakes up to find he's written perfect copies of a dead poet's greatest works... works he's never seen before. On top of that, he starts zapping things with green electricity. Then things get weird, and he and his best friend have to face the facts: they aren't your average teenagers anymore, and nothing's going to ever be

the same.

I don't usually read young adult fiction—for many reasons—but I loved this book. I loved the two boys, James and Paul, and how their friendship turned into an adorable crush, and then into love. It had a very teenage boy feel—one scene in particular—and you'll know the scene when you read it. It was perfect in characterizing their fragile love, and the forces that tried to keep them apart, creating a compelling story line.

I also liked the little secondary characterization details from James's point of view: how poor Paul had to wear a helmet growing up, because his parents said his balance was off, and how Paul was always in front of James in line no matter where they went, and that was perfectly natural for both of them, or even how James's mother kept saying he was destined for greatness... in that overly eccentric way of hers. Those details were incredibly beautiful and complete in how they showed the characters.

James and Paul are just "a little bit Langston", and while that line is poetic in itself, I can also relate, because I'm just a little bit Langston too. The story, as well as these fantastic details, came off as more literary fiction than genre fiction, but then the world cracked open, and James and Paul were thrust into a crazy science fiction adventure, meeting new characters and creatures, and battling to save their lives, and maybe the entire world. Wow. Super good. Check it out.

Andrew Demcak has written much fiction, poetry, and other works, so if you favor a particular genre, I can assure you he has plenty to choose from. I can also assure you you'll love it, and I'll definitely be reading more.

His website: <http://www.andrewdemcak.org/>

B. A. Brock is a reviewer for DSP and QSF. He enjoys reading, writing, running, family and food, and fills his life with bent bunk. He especially loves to discuss LGBTQ+ literature. His website is <http://www.babrockbooks.com>. You can find him on Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/BABrockBooks>.

Dreamspinner Press—Where Dreams Come True... International publishers of quality gay romantic fiction since 2007. <http://www.dreamspinnerpress.com>

DSP Publications—Off the Beaten Path. Worth the Journey. <http://www.dsppublications.com>

Harmony Ink Press—LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction. <http://www.harmonyinkpress.com>

Alison says

This was imaginative and fast-paced and interesting, but it didn't really grab me. I didn't connect with any of the main characters and I wanted more character development. The plot was exciting and creative and I quite liked the setup, but I found the writing to be pretty flat. The ending is a little vague and open-ended, so I presume a sequel is in the works. Maybe this is one of those YA books that works better for younger folk. I think it was a little too simplistic for my tastes.

Carrie-Anne says

For some reason I hardly ever read sci fi, but it's so fun!

This was a nice change after so much contemporary this month for Pride. Weird powers, government conspiracies, alien technology and a diverse cast - what more could you want?!

Our MC James can suddenly recite whole verses by a poet he knows nothing about and control electricity, which catches the attention of a secret government institute for people with special abilities.

I liked the pacing in this book. I didn't realise it was part of a series until everything was kicking off and I was grasping a few flimsy pages before it ended. The complete sci fi element was a bit of a surprise though, the back read more X Men than alien, but it was a nice surprise.

Our main character is gay (or at least he likes a boy) but it's really not a main part of the storyline, it's good to see an lgbt lead whose sexuality is completely not important to the plot. He just is what he is

Sieran says

A cute and engaging book! James sounds adorable, maybe because of the way he speaks and thinks. He seems so young and innocent. (And not just because he's in secondary school.)

One thing I appreciated a lot about the book, is that it's racially diverse and that nobody is exoticized for their race or ethnicity. Montgomery Langston, whose name is in the title, is a black poet. Lumen, one of the main characters, is Korean; and I believe Paul (the love interest and best friend of James), is half Filipino. It's also really nice to see POC characters described as handsome, beautiful, or pretty, because it dismantles the idea that one must be white to be attractive.

One topic that was briefly touched upon, was the idea of having no labels on your relationship with someone, even though outsiders may see your relationship as romantic anyway. This isn't the first time I've heard of the "no labels" concept for relationships, but it still intrigues me. In fact, how does one define a "romantic relationship"? Despite my passion for reading romances, I do think sometimes that the partners are expected to follow some sort of social script, where they need to do certain things and avoid doing certain other things. Some of these rules make sense, such as needing to love, respect, and care about your partner. Some other parts of the social script look more like rituals than something actually necessary. For instance, think about the ritual of dating. Is dating necessary? What is dating? If there is no touching or sex involved, is it just a hang-out? Can you hang out platonically yet hug and kiss?

Regardless, I think James and Paul can love each other and be happy together, whether or not they call each other "romantic partners," "boyfriends," "significant others," or the like. Speaking of social rituals in romantic relationships, what about marriage? Is marriage necessary? My current belief is that if marriage makes the partners happy, then that's good. If not, please don't feel obligated to marry!

More on romantic relationships, I liked how some characters seem rather open-minded about sexual orientation fluidity. (view spoiler)

On the plot, it was fun and I enjoyed learning about their world and their powers. Lately, I've been thinking more deeply about mind-reading abilities. Can mind-readers only read thoughts but not emotions? (view spoiler) For a mind-reader who can only read thoughts, if the situation is unclear, and the target person is not that aware of their own emotions, then it's possible that the mind-reader would be clueless about the person's true feelings too, since the person's thoughts are self-deceiving and therefore misleading to the telepath.

In a similar vein, if the person being mind-read is not currently thinking about their goals and intentions, the mind-reader may have no access to their real motives (unless they are easy to work out from the person's current thoughts and behaviors). So the mind-reader might have to ask questions to gradually get at these hidden motives, just like any ordinary non-telepathic investigator would have to do.

(view spoiler)

Strangely enough, though I liked the action, adventure, fantasy, and sci-fi plots, I was more absorbed in the story before James got into the Paragon Academy. But I'm not sure why.

The very idea of James "channelling" poems from a dead poet was a nice one. It was a pleasant coincidence that Langston was a gay man too. (view spoiler)

Overall, A Little Bit Langston was sweet, interesting, and I look forward to reading the sequel!

A. Hunt says

(Goodreads Giveaway Win)

Sexuality, Telepathy, Conspiracy- in that order!

I have never suffered issues with identity that was more than the norm- what sort of music I like, why my boobs were bigger than my friends, why I hung out with boys instead of wearing make up and designer jeans and heeled shoes... But to change channels on tv without touching the tv or the remote? To connect with an arc of electricity and be permitted to see into my friend's home security system... Those I'm happy I didn't have to deal with!

Unlike an episode of X-Men, James is dealing with some strange occurrences. On top of that, he's realized he's in love with his best friend Paul, who's now disappeared, under unusual circumstances, around the same time James is supposed to go a new school.

? Paragon Academy is a special school, but not because James is slow in comprehension It's a school of paranormal study. Under the careful eye of Dr. Albion, James, along with a bit of psychic help will discover why he's channeling the famous African American poet, Montgomery Langston and hopefully return to a life that's normal and refreshing.

But Don't Get Me Wrong: This book is not what you think!

This book is an adventure of unusual design. I've never read anything like it- even through the sexual difficulties of the main character, James Kerr, I found myself caught up in, not a story of discovery but of rescue! .

For the full review: <http://tinyurl.com/gwc98vh>

**Book was a Goodreads.com Giveaway win from author, for an honest review

Skye says

A Little Bit Langston starts off in your head. No, YOUR head, the head of an LA teenager who has a learning disability and a demanding, self-absorbed mother and a bubbling volcano of feelings for his best friend. Or at least the book starts in the head of someone you love. James, the main character, is so engaging, so immediately present on the page, that I was willing to follow him right down the rabbit hole, no questions asked.

And it is quite a warren down there. I don't want to spoil too much, but let's just say if you're a fan of alien technology, secret government agencies, and gifted young people who can probably kill you with their brains, you won't be disappointed. Not to mention if you're a fan of Langston Hughes, the Langston of the title. The author doesn't use any excerpts of Hughes' actual work; instead he paraphrases, or in some instances inserts original lines that are clearly intended to remind the reader of famous Hughes poems. But the spirit of the poet is there--in the multifaceted identities of the main characters, in the brave actions of young men who get beaten for being gay, in the expansively hopeful feeling of the story as a whole.

The plot fits into the classic "chosen one" style of tale. James appears at first to have trouble reading at school, but a bizarre talent quickly emerges when he begins to channel the writing of long-dead poet Montgomery Langston (Langston Hughes). At the same time, his electricity-related superpower shows itself. After a period of being persecuted at school, and some harrowing real-world complications involving his best friend/love interest, Paul, James finds himself at a special academy for gifted teens like himself. Which is when the alien + conspiracy questions really kick into gear. I'm glad the author set us up for a sequel, because the busy, scheme-filled underworld he created is way too big for just one book.

I love a YA story where the superpowers appear at adolescence, where they overwhelm the character and then through the arc of the story he masters them. That's what growing up feels like: channeling electricity with no control, destroying all the lightbulbs in the house, knowing for a fact that no one can understand your side of the story. Even though James' demanding mother claims she always knew he was special, we see James changing into his true self on the page, as his feelings for Paul blossom and he discovers who he really is. In this case that's pretty literal; James gets a big surprise when he finds out who his father is. Good YA science fiction stuff.

The love story isn't center stage here, and that's a big strength of the book. There's plenty already going on in this story, and not all YA stories or coming-out stories have to be love stories. Another significant strength is Demcak's skillful, barely-there handling of race and ethnicity. Way too much science fiction is, historically, way too white. That's started to shift in recent years, but slowly. In A Little Bit Langston, the love interest, Paul, is Filipino, while James is white. Hardly anything is ever said about that difference between them, but Paul never has that insert-diversity-here feeling as a character. He's three-dimensional, with a complex family and history of his own, and his journey toward loving James feels very earned. When we meet Lumen, another student at the special school, James expresses curiosity about her Korean heritage, but when the two turn out to be half-siblings, no one misses a beat, because these characters live so easily in a multicultural world.

Don't miss out on A Little Bit Langston. I will be holding my breath until the sequel comes out.

Jay Hawke says

I was in a really bad mood when I picked up a copy of *A Little Bit Langston*, having had an especially horrendous week of insomnia. But I picked it up anyway, really just out of habit, hoping to kill some time before the end of the day. Before I knew it, I had finished half the book. If you can overcome one of my insomnia induced zombie states, you are an especially engaging author.

A Little Bit Langston is not at all what I expected. It follows a young teen, James Kerr, as he tries to come to terms with a highly strange occurrence. He is assigned to write a poem for class, and unwittingly, he writes a beautiful poem that just happens to resemble the work of the famous poet, Langston Hughes. The mystery is instantly gripping, as James tries to figure out what exactly happened. Is he somehow channeling a long dead, poet? His teacher naturally thinks he plagiarized it, and poor James doesn't know what to do. His quirky mother finally intervenes and decides to enroll him in a unique school, Paragon Academy, where they work with "special" kids. And that's where the strangeness intensifies. Now cut off from his mother and friends, James discovers that this school is not what it professes to be, and he must learn to tap his strange power, as well as rely upon some equally gifted teens, to solve the institution's very odd secret.

Demcak's strength as a writer comes through in the eminently likable characters he creates. James himself is a beautiful, if confused soul. And I loved his interactions with his new friend, Lumen, a Korean girl already familiar with much of Paragon Academy's strange secret, due to her own unique ability. And finally James has a love interest in his best friend Paul, who himself gets caught up in Paragon's bizarre past.

This was a great, quick read, and lots of fun — exactly what I needed during a long hot summer day and a week of insomnia. I enjoyed following James as he first discovers his strange powers, and then learns their true origins. X-files fans will especially enjoy the ride. Those steeped in UFO lore will get a bit more out of this, as Demcak makes references to famous cases throughout. And if nothing else, the book gives you the most poetic euphemism for "gay" that I've ever seen, a phrase captured in the book's beautiful title. I know the author has already penned a sequel to *A Little Bit Langston*, called *Alpha Wave*. I'll definitely be on the lookout for it to be published. This review first appeared at Queer Sci Fi. <https://queerscifi.com/review-a-littl...>

Jay Moseley says

Can't wait for the story to continue!

Melody says

I won this in a Goodreads giveaway. My opinion is just that...mine...and completely unbiased.

This YA science fiction novel by Andrew Demcak was well written and filled with topics that many a young teenager will relate to, or find an interest in. From teenage angst in dealing with school and peers, a loving but overbearing mother, a best friend with an abusive father, sexuality questions, discovering you have

paranormal talents to hooking up with aliens and finding out your father is one. Whew! The ending hints at a sequel and I certainly hope that Mr. Demcak has one in the works! This went straight onto the shelf of future "mature reads" for my grandchildren.
