



# **Sparks: The Epic, Completely True Blue, (Almost) Holy Quest of Debbie**

*S.J. Adams*

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*Do you feel lost? Confused? Alone? (Circle one): Yes or No.*

*The Church of Blue can help. We are not a cult.*

*\$5 for a holy quest is a good deal.*

Since sixth grade, Debbie Woodlawn has nursed a secret, heart-searing crush on her best friend, Lisa. But all those years of pretending to enjoy *Full House* reruns and abstinence rallies with Lisa go down the drain when her friend hooks up with Norman, the most boring guy at school. This earth-shattering event makes Debbie decide to do the unthinkable: confess her love to Lisa. And she has to do it tonight--before Lisa and Norman go past "the point of no return."

So Debbie embarks on a quest to find Lisa. Guiding the quest are fellow students/detention hall crashers Emma and Tim, the founding (and only) members of the wacky Church of Blue. Three chases, three declarations of love, two heartbreaks, a break-in, and five dollars worth of gas later, Debbie has been fully initiated into Bluedaism--but is there time left to stop Lisa and Norman from going too far?

## Sparks: The Epic, Completely True Blue, (Almost) Holy Quest of Debbie Details

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## **From Reader Review Sparks: The Epic, Completely True Blue, (Almost) Holy Quest of Debbie for online ebook**

### **Kike Ogundipe says**

I decided to read this book because I saw this book in a library and thought it was interesting, even though I don't normally read romance novels.

This book is kind of a romance novel, comedy and adventure.

I liked how the plot was very original compared to other romance novels I have read as most to me are quite boring and cliched. The fact that it had an interesting premise made more interesting to me. It was really funny and I read the book a second time and still found all the jokes hilarious. I enjoy comedy and I don't think any other book has made me laugh as much as this one. There wasn't anything I really disliked about this book and it made for an enjoyable read.

I found Lisa a very interesting character as although the book didn't share any of her thoughts, when she reveals that she knew Debbie had a crush on her all along I wonder how she dealt with it for a lot of her life. I found it a very interesting situation to deal with and thought she must have been a very strong person to have her best friend crushing on her and have to turn her down.

I really enjoyed reading Sparks and I would like to read more books like it.

Kike Ogundipe  
09DUN

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### **Tarryn says**

I've started conducting an unofficial survey of LGBTQ YA lit -- stories with lesbian protagonists, specifically -- in hopes of finding some novels that don't make being a gay chick seem like a horrible, traumatic ordeal. So many stories that deal with young girl-on-girl love are full of grim, punishing disasters of biblical proportions -- people lose their jobs, parents die in car crashes . . . its enough to make a young lesbian crawl right back into the closet!

But S.J. Adams novel, Sparks, is a wonderfully refreshing, quirky, and genuinely funny tale of coming-out to your best friend -- and long-time secret love! Debbie Woodlawn's relationship with Lisa, her straight-laced, uber-Christian best friend has been based around Full House marathons and hanging out with an after-school group called Active Christian Teens. But now Lisa has an equally religious new boyfriend, and Debbie is forced to come to terms with her feelings for best pal. Helping her to gather the courage to talk to her friend are two awesome, quirky loners, Emma and Tim, who have successfully dealt with their own personal demons by starting their own religion -- the Church of Blue. Debbie's newfound spiritual leaders take her on a quest to confront her fears and tell Lisa the truth, but the people they meet and the random adventures that take place along the way open Debbie's eyes to a world outside the confines of a life spent being her best friend's sidekick.

Bonus points for including an awesome soundtrack (the Mountain Goats, the Decemberists, & the Beach

Boys - oh my!) and the obscure Full House episode references. I did chafe at a scene where Debbie "pays" for some dumb stoner guy's assistance changing a tire by kissing another girl -- ugh. But I appreciated how no one in this story acted like Debbie's sexuality was a huge, horrible, shocking problem. And the humor and authentic teen narrative voice was super engaging -- a breath of fresh air! Thanks, S.J. Adams for filling a much-needed hole in the world LGBTQ YA lit -- a funny, honest, sweet love story for young lesbians!

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### **Laura says**

There need to be more books for LGBTQ teens. This is not a good one. Poorly written, one dimensional characters, unrealistic ending.

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### **Angie says**

I liked the concepts, but it wasn't very deep.

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### **Erin says**

A promising premise ruined by infuriating writing, pacing and character construction. The main character states her real problem at the beginning of the book (that she's framed her whole life around her best friend/crush, Lisa) and yet spends the rest of the book doing the opposite of fix it. The whole "epic" journey to confess to Lisa dragged on. And then there's Lisa, herself. I have no idea what Debbie saw in her. She's barely in the book, but when she is she comes off as moronic, an opinion that only grew stronger by the end of the book. I seriously hated her character.

I also didn't get how Debbie was pretty much in the closet at the beginning and yet seemed to have no problem with her new friends outing her at every second to total strangers.

And finally, it is becoming a cliché that outcasts are uber welcoming and perfect friends-in-waiting to protagonists. Maybe I've just read too many fish out of water/ coming of age books lately but I'm getting sick of it. People who have no friends = good. People with friends = close minded, mean-girl/boy types. A little simplistic imo.

Sorry about the rant. I read this book all at once on a flight and while it's got some interesting points on religion (loved Debbie's snark on organized religion, but again it's another overdone theme imo.) Also, extra points for the Full House references.

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### **Ms. Patterson says**

Debbie Woodlawn has been secretly in love with her best friend, Lisa, since middle school. Now that Lisa has a serious boyfriend and is considering becoming more involved with him, Debbie decides now is the time to confess all. What starts off as a simple quest to find Lisa and confess to her ends up as a life-changing quest for Debbie where she discovers more about herself and the choices she's made over the years.

You will either love the quirky way Adams portrays this story of a girl coming to terms with her sexuality and her life's choices or you'll hate it. Organized religions and spiritualism are treated irreverently in this story and some might not appreciate that. Everything from FCA to New Ageism receive a dose of snark from Debbie (not to mention the made-up religion of Bluedaism). Stereotypes of all types abound here -- from the hippie mother to the "bowling alley skank," to the "hairy nerd" to the Christian hypocrite -- they're all here and I hated them. All of them! No character development for any of these people. They stay firmly as stereotypes.

The best part of this book were the two friends with whom Debbie completes her quest. They are both unique and interesting. I liked them and would read their stories!

Also, if you're not a Full House fan or someone that at least watched the show more than once or twice, you will be completely lost reading this. There are a ton of references to the show, the characters, and even specific episodes throughout this entire book.

I'm rather indifferent to SPARKS. I don't think it's one I will recommend a lot. I think there are better lesbian stories for teens. D+/C- rating.

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### **Ann says**

This book drove me a little crazy, in a good way. No cliches here; Debbie is one-of-a-kind, and her quest is surprising because it's (almost) completely true. Of course, lesbian teens have thought and felt these things for ages, but seeing it written down in a book for young readers is exciting. You can ride this one all the way. Debbie's final realization about the best friend she's been crushing on for years is sane, not sugar-coated or just plain depressing. The best review for this book is by Tarryn (please read!). I even agree with her one caveat: "I did chafe at a scene where Debbie "pays" for some dumb stoner guy's assistance changing a tire by kissing another girl -- ugh." Which leads me to...I really don't think the author Adam Selzer (there--I'm outing him) needed to use a gender non-specific nom de plume for this book. The point being? I would find that really annoying if it wasn't such a great read.

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### **Flossy Marley says**

'Sparks' is a story about a 16 year old lesbian trying to get over a crush on her religious best friend by beginning a 'holy quest' with some mavericks who invented a made up faith called the 'Church of Blue'. In brief this book is different because upon reading the first page everything is all jumbled up, it seems as though the author wrote different stories and jumbled them up together, basically all is irreverent but hysterical. All in all I think after reading this book I felt very accomplished because I found a new religion!

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### **Jackson says**

the VOYA review said there were too many "Full House" references, which obviously spoke highly of the book in my eyes (even though it didn't get a great review--maybe if it was a "Full House" fan who reviewed

it that would have been different?)

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## **J. Peters says**

I wasn't really sure what to think at first, and even after reading it...I'm not totally sure what to think.

It's a bit of a mix for me. I liked the general premise of the book, and the tone of the characters and the quirkiness of everything. But too often, the quirky tone and the relationship/real life stuff kind of clashes, and it feels off.

While reading it, the first thing that came to mind was that this was kind of a teen version of something like Recess or Ned's Declassified - it's an exaggerated version of reality, with eccentric character tropes that act out more than they would in real life. And it's an odd bunch, from "snuggle puppies" to the girl that dresses as a flapper from the 20's. There's these weird social groups - and that's not even touching the whole religion of Blue that Debbie gets involved in. It has a quirky set of rules and goals, and only consists of two members until Debbie decides to go along for the crazy ride.

Now, all of that quirky stuff? I liked that. It was fun. The character stereotypes were a bit much at times, but overall, I kind of like that sort of thing - it's why I liked Recess as a kid and then Ned's declassified later on. You can't approach it expecting it to be something realistic.

Buuuuut.

The problem is that there's also things in the book that are more grounded and serious. It's not a total comedy. And it's things like this that kind of took me out of the book. I can't really get into much without spoilers, but suffice to say, the driving force of the novel started to wear thin about halfway through the book, and by the end, it was kind of hard to care anymore - even the book seems to stop caring, because the ending comes about rather abruptly.

It was a fun, quick read. Not the best book ever, but certainly not the worst, and if like a quirky sense of humor and exaggerated stereotypes a la Recess/Ned's, then you'll likely enjoy it.

A few spoilers, hidden by the tag: (view spoiler)

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## **Annie says**

I got halfway through this book and just couldn't go any further. It's a typical first-person perspective, self-absorbed YA novel with inane humor and dialogue. Maybe it's just my age ...

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## **John says**

One of the best contemporary stories I've read with humor. This is one of those books that's criminally under talked.

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## Brittany says

Debbie is in love with her best friend, Lisa. Lisa is really into church though and her new boyfriend. Lisa is so into her new boyfriend, that Debbie feels lost and alone. Enter Emma, Tim and the Church of Blue. Debbie isn't sure she really wants to try this new religion of Blue, but she does want someone to hang out with. Emma and Time seem to understand her and are ready and willing to help her take the leap and admit what her heart wants. But, with all the chaos of the actual quest to get there, will Debbie work up the courage, or even get an opportunity? Will Blue provide?

This novel was fantastic. I loved Emma and Tim. Even if Emma was completely in denial about what was right in front of her. I loved that they had a list of tasks that they would check off as they went about their quests. Like mooning people and getting an autograph of someone named after a president. They were strange, but a good way to have fun. I really love it when people start their own religion in novels as a way to try to understand the world and themselves. I don't know what it is about it that makes me love it so much, but I do. Moira was FANTASTIC too. I really loved that she was a bit different than everyone else and on purpose. She was a time traveler, but one who just pretends she's in a different time period. It sounds fun. There were a lot of great characters in this novel, like the bowling alley skanks and their skank network. Debbie was an okay person I guess. I didn't love her Full House obsession. I know some teens who get hooked on old shows like that though, so it's not unrealistic. It was hard to understand fully her crush on Lisa, because she's not really in the novel too much. It seems like the point of the novel was not so much about Lisa at all, but Debbie realizing and excepting who she is by herself. Definitely check this out if you love funny novels that have a lot of driving and a lot of misfit characters.

First Line:

"My dad's a regular guy, and my mom's a total kook, so I guess I had a fifty percent chance of coming out normal. Leave it to me to screw it up."

Favorite Line:

"Broken hearts are fucking gross."

Read more: <http://www.areadingnook.com/#ixzz1xVa...>

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## Nicki says

The only reason I gave this book two stars is because the author actually gave the book a decent ending. I thought for sure they were going to take the safe way out & make the main character get what she wants.

This is a story about a girl who is secretly in love with her best friend. No one knows that she's gay so she can't really talk to anyone about how upset she gets when her best friend starts ditching her for her new boyfriend. The main character (whose name I have forgotten because the book is dumb) goes on a "holy quest" with two other kids who have made up their own religion called Bluism. Long story short, after a long day of completing "holy tasks" the girl admits to her friend she's gay, her friend says she knew all along but maybe they can change that by setting her up with a guy, and the main character moves on & finds someone else to date. Life didn't work out the way she wanted it to but it didn't have a bad ending either.

The characters are dumb, the story is unbelievable, and the main character makes at least a million references to Full House. That's right. Full House...

Did I mention this book is dumb?

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### **mg says**

Let me make this clear : These are five REALLY BIG STARS. I'm not sure I could have loved this book any more.

Thank you Stonewall Awards for introducing me to SJ Adams, who may be one of the funniest authors I've read in a long time! I had more moments than I could count where I laughed out loud in the book and had to read a section to whomever was closest. (Which meant that if I was reading alone, there were many times I greeted my partner with passages of the book instead of a formal "Hello.")

This book includes : humor, heartache, crushes, religion, spirituality, sexuality, Bob Dylan, and hilarious references to Nebraska. I think a host of people would appreciate this book, whether you're teen, or LGBTQ, or an book lover looking for a good read. It's fast; it's enjoyable; it should be read by all. (Unless you're offended by cussing and F bombs. In that case, have someone read it aloud to you and inserts the BEEPS where necessary. Yes, it's still worth it.)

Oh, and those in central Iowa could appreciate it all the more because it takes place in Des Moines.

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