



## Out of This Place

*Emma Cameron*

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## **Out of This Place** Emma Cameron

In verse, three teen voices sound. Beach bum Luke works shifts at the local supermarket, and avoids trouble at school. His mate Bongo gets wasted, blocks out memories of the little brother social services took away and avoids the stepdad who hits him. Casey, the girl they both love, dreams of escaping to a free new life.

## **Out of This Place Details**

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Author : Emma Cameron

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# From Reader Review Out of This Place for online ebook

## Stuti (Turmeric isn't your friend. It will fly your ship says

Because this book was in verse, I took the liberty of trudging along the road less traveled and write the review in verse as well. Hope you like it. Even if you don't, remember it's my first try people!

And no, it's not a way to get out of writing a proper review. :)

Run Away  
Out  
is what they  
long for.  
Long for,  
like a blanket in the rain,  
when you can't  
catch up on  
sleep.  
Out of this  
place.  
Out of these  
memories.  
And run away.

No sense  
Dreaming,  
Wanting,  
Hoping  
to run away from  
a life  
of  
no sense  
and lust,  
and food,  
and violence.

Olden Fears  
Three kids,  
friends,  
people,  
three lives  
screwed up,  
in  
hands of  
same old fear,  
same old crimes;  
unchanged

since the olden times.

Minds and Times

A beautiful

book

and

a beautiful

story.

Never caught me,

though.

For

I have read,

and seen,

and heard,

perhaps

even done

it a thousand times

in a thousand

pieces.

My time

takes

over mind

and I was

just bored.

*More fantastic and longer reviews on my blog.*

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## Michelle Wrona says

**I love poetry.** I really do. And poetry incorporated with YA novels are just magnificent, and utterly unique than the normal way we see literature. One of the reasons why I picked this book up was because, well, *the poetry*.

This book disappointed me. I expected something better and wiser and so touching that it could just break my delicate heart that often cracks in half when characters just make me cry. **This book wasn't even close to that level.** Contemporary, yes, but no intriguing.

This is a verse novel. Three main characters/protagonists are telling the story, and each POV of theirs is split into three sections of the book, and each person gets to tell their story of how they get out of high school and survive with their problems in 1/3 of the book. Of course, there are mentions of the protagonists in the opposite characters' points-of-view. Luke is your average teenager who just wants to leave his hometown and go out into the real world, while his friend Bongo gets wasted all of the time and gets beaten by his stepdad. Casey just can't wait to start a new life. This is their journey of going into adulthood, and into the real world where there are even more challenges.

The largest dilemma that this book gave me was **the fact that there was no plot**. What was the main point of this book? I didn't see it at all, and that frustrated me very much. No-plot novels just seem useless to me, and I'm usually left questioned for the rest of the book.

I almost DNF-ed this book. But I really liked the characters, so I decided to read it until the end since it wasn't a long-length read. But if it was 350 pages+, I'd be out of here ASAP.

Since there was no use in the plot, a lot of the book went downhill, obviously. I really liked the issues incorporated with the book--abuse, hate, depression, all of it addicts me. The whole book was pretty slow-paced, with no much happening.

So, yes, I did love the characters, especially my hottie new-boy Luke.

No other words or photos needed.

I didn't like Bongo too much because he didn't believe in the real world, but he was acceptable at times, especially during his love moments for Casey and his love for his little brother. Casey was just awesome, though.

In conclusion, **this book was mostly bad, but it did have some good in it**. I don't recommend it, but you should give it a try if you want. Maybe your opinion will be different than mine. :)

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## **Laura says**

I have been “pal”-ing around with poetry ever since Shel Silverstein told me where the sidewalk ends. But novels told in verse? *Well* we bear a more complicated relationship. I ran shrieking in terror at first sight! Haha... With my head held high, heart hammering away—I dived into my first verse novel a little over a year ago though. I’ve been swooning, searching and craving for more ever since.

Out of This Place is a verse novel beauty! Stark raving beauty. Words and language at their best. Emma Cameron strips these voices and pain right down to the bone. Bare, direct, honest, and gritty. Pure pain, pure frustration, and pure strength push these kids to get out and change their lives. Find what they want to do in life. Leave the pain behind. Escape the abuse. So few words on the page, but words that felt perfect, felt right rolling off my tongue. Words that brought these voices alive on the page. Ms. Cameron holds a true gift for capturing the grit in life, but also the hope and beauty.

**”On cement he sits,  
hunched over his guitar,  
fingers loving the strings.  
The last note quavers.  
My heart hovers  
in the hum  
and his smile.”**

We are introduced to Luke, Casey, and Bongo one by one in their own words. Friends and voices woven together. Each with his or her own struggle, loss, and sadness. Words did bring this story to life for me, but the unspoken words revealed just as much. I felt like the pages were ready to pop with hidden or unexpressed emotion. So much left unsaid, but yet somehow understood between them. Luke's unrequited love, Casey's suffocating silence and Bongo...oh, Bongo! They all found a way to my heart, but Bongo broke mine. Characters with paths they felt like they had to take and did.

What moves the story along and moved me the most though was the courage. I am in awe of these kids. All three displayed determination, strength, and kindness. They were good kids. You will feel it in their unwillingness to give up. They didn't sit there wishing for life to change—they did it! Worked and risked everything for something of their own. A part of me just wanted to say—stay, stay in school. But they knew what they needed to do to survive. I was so scared for them at times. Surrounded by danger and people looking to take, use, and abuse. But there are good people out there in the world willing to see, reach out and help too. Thank goodness! You will root for Casey, Luke and Bongo from beginning to end.

I don't want to say too much about the ending here. I will say that the ending is one of my favorites. The very last page is hold up to the heavens perfect. The hope it left in my heart. The hope I felt for them. It was the perfect way for these characters to end their story. The author's note is a thing of beauty as well. If you come across this book, be sure to read Emma Cameron's note at the end. Beautiful and inspiring! Dreaming is just the first step. We have to move, reach, and risk for change to happen. Casey, Luke, and Bongo did not wait for things to change or help to come. They made the changes happen with hard work and courage.

A hard story filled with pain, loneliness, and abuse, but a tremendous inspiration as well. There are so many different roads to take in life. I just hope we all find love and support along the way.

**"Strange, isn't it?" he asks.**

**"Where life takes you and**

**How much can change."**

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## **Sarah says**

*{This review was originally published on Clear Eyes, Full Shelves.}*

It stings--  
sulphur tears  
in cinnamon rain.

Emma Cameron's Cinnamon Rain embodies the Trifecta of Awesome in my reading heart: a contemporary older YA, Novel in Verse, from Australia.

Fortunately, after a long (very, very long) wait for my order of this book from Fishpond, the Trifecta of Awesome didn't disappoint--Cinnamon Rain is one of my stand out reads of the year.

Cinnamon Rain interweaves the stories of three friends: Luke, Casey and Bongo (yes, Bongo--his real name is David). They live in a rural town in Australia, each hoping to escape their lives. Luke plays cricket, hangs out at the beach and pines away for Casey. Casey's dream is to escape their town and everyone she knows,

while Bongo drinks to avoid his abusive stepfather and the memories of his little brother taken away by social services.

The whole group seems lifted  
by one small success.

Each character narrates a third of Cinnamon Rain (this seems like a more common narrative style in Australia than in the U.S. or U.K., am I right?), painting a rich picture of three lives in transition. We follow them separately out of their hometown in their first steps into adulthood.

But somewhere in the mix,  
I realise that  
she's not just running away.  
Her life has focus.  
I've got nothing.

What's most remarkable to me about Cinnamon Rain--aside from the writing, which I'll get to in a minute--is that the characters are in Year 10 (the Aussie equivalent of sophomore year), but it read as very universal. The characters could have been far older and the story of Luke, Casey and Bongo would have rang just as true. As someone who grew up in a small community in Oregon, I instantly connected with Luke, Casey and Bongo's experiences, and I think anyone who's ever wondered, "What else is out there?" will instantly see a bit of their own experiences in the story of these three Australian friends.

### **Love.**

It sure is blind,  
or at the very least,  
stark, raving mad.

Cinnamon Rain doesn't tie anything neatly up with a bow as is often the case young adult literature.

[This is where it gets hard to talk about the book without being spoilery.] I had very much hoped for a certain outcome, and that outcome wasn't what happened. However, therein lies the beauty of Cinnamon Rain's story--it made me root for something to occur, but when that didn't happen, I felt satisfied nonetheless with the realistic resolution. And really, the conclusion of the novel stays true to the theme of new beginnings.

Frankly, if I had to say anything critical, my only issue with Cinnamon Rain is that I didn't really understand why the two male narrators were so enamoured with Casey. I loved the section of the novel from her point of view, and I kept thinking that I wanted to hit Luke and Casey over the head with a cricket bat (are they called bats in cricket?) for not understanding that she needed to get out of town and just live. But, that's also Cinnamon Rain's strength--the trio's relationship is such a small town reality (think Tim/Jason/Lyla in Friday Night Lights).

I think,  
if Casey lived  
in another time or place  
she'd be like a fountain--

bubbles reaching everyone around her.  
Instead,  
she's as still  
as a leaf-littered pond,  
dark water evaporating,  
waiting desperately for rain.

Cameron's debut (and, gosh, it sure doesn't read like a debut--this is one sophisticated novel) is written in free verse, which I love. I know there are folks out there who cannot stand free verse, and I completely understand why it may seem like just a bunch of disjointed sentences strung together. However, free verse is so much more.

Like all successful free verse novels, Cinnamon rain is rich with metaphor and intriguing literary devices.

It's about (as Laura referenced) the "space between the words" as much as the words that are present. There's a continuity between each verse that works brilliantly (I leave it for you to discover). With this type of free verse, you'll find yourself savouring the words, the descriptions and the rhythm of the story. Don't expect bloated poetic writing, however. The writing in Cinnamon Rain is quite sparse, which is an engrossing contrast, as it is also very visual and emotive.

I walk the city,  
through its crush of people  
and its smells:  
body odour, rotting food,  
vomit and urine.  
A cocktail  
of oppression and freedom.  
I walk further  
and further,  
sometimes left,  
sometimes right.  
And I am lost.

Sadly, Cinnamon Rain is only published in Australia.

That means that if you want to read this marvelous novel in verse and you're not in Oz, your only option is to order from Fishpond. I know that Maggie has had great luck with them, but it's not been a great experience for me--I think it took over six weeks for this book to ship and I was constantly bombarded with mysterious emails about how it would be sourced and dispatched soon and my bank flagged their transaction as non-PCI Compliant and potentially fraudulent.

Anyway, despite all that, Cinnamon Rain was wholly worth the wait and annoyance as it is a remarkable little book and one of my favorite 2012 debuts.

**FNL Character Rating: That strange, often uncomfortable, yet ultimately compelling Tim/Lyla/Jason relationship, with Tony Lucca's unforgettable rendition of Devil Town as background music.**



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## Joy (joyous reads) says

I am a fan of verse novels. Sometimes, I prefer sparse words over wordy novels. It doesn't take long for me to get into the meat of the story. In this case, three stories. Three friends on the cusp of adulthood, deciding how to live out their future. I mean, sure, it's not the most original jump off for a coming of age novel but each of their plight is not that easy to plan out.

This book tackled a whole slew of issues characteristic of the usual YA realistic fiction. Surprisingly enough, it didn't hit me with the angst that I'd expected from such a novel. In fact, I think that some discerning readers would consider it as a negative point because it will not necessarily move them to tears. But, I digress. Who says a book must make you cry to be good, anyway? *Out of This Place* had just enough emotional pull to incite your sympathy and hope that in the end, the characters will get a lovely happy ending.

Luke, the straight A student has to decide whether or not to stick out the rest of his high school life or pursue a scholarship that would enable him to work and go to school at the same time. Money is tight, so he needed to find a job. His family life is as calm as a dove. In fact, he worries more about his two best friends than he does his parents: Bongo, the abused and Casey, a prisoner at her own house. He's also in love with her but he could never have the courage to cross that line just in case his already skittish friend pushes him away permanently.

There's also Bongo's story which is on the surface is the direst of the three. Abused, uncared for with no decent prospects to speak of. He's on a downward spiral to nowhere: drugs, alcohol and had to contend with a heavy-handed stepfather. All he ever wanted was a chance to get his brother back from the 'system'. From one foster family to another, Bongo's dream is getting farther and farther away. He too, is in love with Casey but he refuse to do something about it because he could never hurt Luke, his best friend.

Casey's life was a never-ending days of suffocating parenting that led her scheming for ways to check out. She can't breathe; she can't move a muscle without the approval of her father. She schemed and lied to get a job for money she would use to leave the tyranny of her father. When she found her wings, she met people that treated her with love - love that her own family seem reluctant to dole out. Out there in the world and on her own she also found love of a different meaning - or what she thought was love.

Three kids too young to face the realities of life. But if there's one thing they all have in common, is that their trio of friendship and love is all they would need. There's no love triangle here, folks. So no need to worry if you're not into that sort of thing. The romance between them wasn't really explored. It's mostly friendship, camaraderie and love akin to that of siblings. They looked out for each other as much as they could.

If there's one thing this book has in common among its Aussie compatriots, is its ability to tell a gut-wrenching story that ends exactly how you'd hope it would end. My only problem though is exactly that, the book ended even though I'm left wanting to read how their lives turned out. Over all, Cameron can go toe-to-toe with the best of them. She perfectly captured what it is that made Aussie contemps worth spending considerable cash for. I, for one, am adding her on my list of Aussie authors to watch out for.

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## Shirley Marr says

To be honest with you, I wasn't that keen to read *Cinnamon Rain*, a new Aussie YA title from debut author Emma Cameron. For starters, I found the title "Cinnamon Rain" perplexing as it doesn't really conjure up anything particularly visually and/or emotionally impressive (or even familiar) in terms of poetic vernacular for myself. Cinnamon Rain... what the heck... is that?

Secondly, the blurb describes it as about a boy trying to stay out of trouble at school. With a friend who has an abusive stepdad. This friend is called *Bongo*. And a girl whom "they both love". If that doesn't sound like an Aussie cliché, it's probably be next week's plot line on *Neighbours*. Then I also find out it is a verse novel. No offence, I don't either "do" or "not do" verse novels, it just never interested me. But I am a stickler for sniffing out new Aussie talent, so I decided to, as Harold Bishop might say, "give it a burl".

Elaborating on what I said before, *Cinnamon Rain* is told from three different viewpoints in three separate volumes within the novel, following the final year of junior high school when the protagonists decide whether they should continue with their senior education or go out into the world and make their own way. The novel chronicling this delicate transition period and beyond when naive teenagers become - so to speak - independent young adults.

Reading the first few pages, I confidently declared to my husband that it was what I expected - a standard 3 star read. "Wait till you get to the end," Hubby sagely advises perhaps used to the fact that I often changes heart easily and always can be swayed by strong character development, storyline, writing etc despite my pugnacious intent to either love or dislike something to begin with.

And change my heart I do. It doesn't take long for me to fall into the swing of this novel. When I think poetry, I think of elaborate, purpley wankage. This book though is intensely readable, in very sparse language and in all of it's simplicity, it is the most poetic "verse" I have ever read. It is quite simply - beautiful. I am so impressed that despite saying so little, how much I learn about the characters and how intensely I come to care for them. If this novel was written as standard prose, I don't think it could have said twice as much or said it as well.

I love how the novel is set out, with the three inter-related volumes. How we get to get to see the world from one narrator and then the same thing from another character. As opposed to being repetitive, it is actually illuminating and it is clever how the middle volume adds more to the story, with the final volume pulling the story full circle.

If I have anything negative to say about this novel (and it really isn't negative, just an observation) is that jury is out on the title "Cinnamon Rain" after the completion of reading. I know it is used in the novel, but I wouldn't say it is fully explained and is left more to the interpretation of the reader. I guess it means a red, stinging rain, but not as vicious as "raining blood", which brings me to my segue. This novel had the potential to get very dark, as more than one of our protagonist are forced to leave school earlier than they are ready due to tough family situations, but you just know they will be safe. And there is a feel to the novel that although realistic, is idealised and sweet. And I don't mean that in a bad way cos I loved that "hopefulness" of it and I especially loved the ending. So perhaps "Cinnamon" Rain is the perfect title for this book. Not the cold "November Rain"; not "Fire and Rain".

Obviously written and targeted to Year 10 students contemplating their future, this novel succeeds by being an excellent read for older and more savvy readers due to its sheer heart, universal themes of finding your

path (no matter your age) and excellent writing.

I still think the blurb is terrible and I feel it might turn readers off, but I eat my words about this book being like *Neighbours*. If *Neighbours* employed Emma Cameron as a writer, it would be a better show for it.

This book really moved me.

This review originally appeared here on my blog Books on Marrs.

...

Earlier... back on the ranch...

I did not know that this was a verse novel! Oh well, here I go regardless!

Why is this book called Cinnamon Rain? Is it some sort of reddish coloured tears that an emo would cry out? But then why is it cinnamon flavoured?

It's kinda perplexing.

BRB when I discover the answer.

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### **Bill Condon says**

I am so happy to be able to give Cinnamon Rain its first five star review. I hope there'll be many more. It deserves it. I read it to the very last drop, and enjoyed it all. It's rounded out so well. There were so many times in it that Emma Cameron perfectly nailed emotions. There was no clunkiness, no repetition, no purple prose. It's such a hard thing to put all that together, and make it seem so natural and effortless. I didn't get the feeling that there was a writer manipulating me; it felt like I was listening to the characters, Luke, Casey, and Bongo. It's a huge achievement.

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### **Nidah (SleepDreamWrite) says**

What I liked was not only the writing style in verse, the pacing but the three characters and what they're going through. A sad but really good read at the same time. Also that cover.

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### **Keertana says**

Rating: 3.5 Stars

*Out of This Place*, known and published originally as *Cinnamon Rain* in Australia is a novel I've been wanting to read for a long time. Whenever I'd saved enough money to indulge in an Aussie book, invariably, some other novel would rise up the list before this one and I'd tell myself that I'd buy it - next time. Thus, when it came up on NetGalley, like a starved child I lunged for it, fervently hoping I'd be accepted. You can imagine my surprise, though, when I opened it to find that it was a verse novel.

So, I'll say it now: *Out of This Place* is a verse novel.

I have nothing against verse novels, but the only one I can remember liking was *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech - a novel I read nearly a decade ago. As such, my excitement suddenly turned into skepticism, mostly because verse novels and I have not had a very illustrious history. Emma Cameron is an Aussie author, though, and I placed my trust in her words to guide me through this book.

And I'm glad I did.

*Out of This Place* is very different from your typical read. It is split three-way and told from the perspectives of three characters, all friends, all high school students, and all trying to find their place in the world. Quite surprisingly, I found that I loved the manner in which this novel was written and it worked very well for the story as a whole, enriching it even further. You wouldn't think it, but it turns out that an unexpected amount of depth can be conveyed through simple verse - a feat that Emma Cameron manages to complete seamlessly.

Nevertheless, I do have to admit that I felt as if something was missing from this. It took me awhile to really get into the style of the novel and the perspective changes, but even more than that, I think I was simply expecting a little more. As a novel, this book lacks nothing, but as a reader who has heard nothing but high praise for this little novel, perhaps I set my standards a little too high. I emerged from this novel satisfied, but not overly impressed and - dare I say it? - glad that I hadn't bought this one online after all.

I will certainly be clamoring to pick up whatever Emma Cameron writes next, merely because she makes her characters and their problems seem all so very real, but for readers who, like me, have heard much hype about this novel, I'd caution you - but only slightly. *Out of This Place* is unique, different from the majority of other contemporary reads out there, and combined with its impeccable characterization and stunning writing style, it deserves to be read, regardless of that slight missing factor left in my heart afterwards.

You can read this review" and more on my blog, Ivy Book Bindings.

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## **Brandy Painter says**

Review originally posted at Random Musings of a Bibliophile.

I tend to like contemporary YA novels written by Australian authors so whenever an opportunity comes up to read a new one I will take it. *Out of This Place* by Emma Cameron is a beautifully written verse novel that originated in Australia under the title *Cinnamon Rain*. It is a good story and a powerful one that I enjoyed with some reservations.

I have said before that verse novels don't always work for me. I need to believe that it was the best way to tell the story. And in this case Cameron made believe that. Her words are well chosen and the imagery she

uses vivid. The way she uses them sparingly and yet tells so much is artistic. Like this take on Casey from Luke's perspective:

**I think,**

**If Casey lived**

**in another time or place,**

**she'd be like a fountain-**

**bubbles reaching everyone around her.**

**Instead,**

**she's as still**

**as a leaf-littered pond,**

**dark water evaporating,**

**waiting desperately for rain.**

I enjoyed the shifting perspectives and how some of the events overlapped but were told so very differently highlighting how each individual sees the circumstances differently. I also liked the realistic portrayal of the harder aspects of Casey and Bongo's lives while not allowing the story to wallow in darkness. I did think the turn around in Bongo's life was a little unrealistic. I wanted to see him succeed but in a way that was more likely to actually happen. It is possible my incredulity about this may be due to lack of knowledge in the way things operate in Australia though.

Overall the novel is a good one, another excellent addition to the many wonderful Australian imports we have received in recent years.

My one reservation is in the way sex is used and portrayed in the novel. I am not naive enough to believe that everyone shares my opinions on the subject of sex nor that teens aren't having it in exactly the ways Luke, Casey, and Bongo are. My concern is when sex is portrayed as something inconsequential or simple. Yes Casey is left with a lasting reminder, but she far too easily disregards most of the experience including her partner as inconsequential. All three do. Sex is complex and layered and when it is treated so cavalierly and easy it bothers me. I like when novels tackle this realistically, but I prefer for there to be more balance.

Despite this misgiving of mine, it is a good book and I really enjoyed the way Cameron ended it. At first I thought, "What? That's it???" It took a disgruntled ten minutes for me to decide I would not have wanted it to end any other way. She leaves so much room for the imagination. I was just annoyed because I enjoyed spending time with these characters so much.

Content Warning for Concerned Parents: As stated in the review there is some sex. Drinking and drug use are also referred to.

I read a copy made available from the publisher via NetGalley. Out of This Place is on sale Tuesday, May

## **Amanda says**

Cinnamon Rain by Emma Cameron is set in a small town in Australia. Luke, Bongo and Casey attend high school together. Luke and Bongo have been best mates since they were kids and Luke has been in love with Casey since she came to their school a few years earlier. While Luke, Bongo and some of their other school friends will hang out after school or on weekends, Casey never joins them. Luke learns that Casey's dad is mean and controlling and she is hardly ever allowed to leave the house. Bongo doesn't have it much better either. His mum is back in rehab, his younger brother was taken into foster care and he's left at home with his abusive step-dad. Luke often tries to rescue him but he can be there to save him every day. Both Bongo and Casey have plans to leave their town, both need to escape the lives they're currently living.

Cinnamon Rain is written in verse, it's the second novel I've read written in verse this year and I really enjoyed it. I found it flowed easily and quite quickly, the book was over 400 pages but it took me no time at all to read.

The book is split into three parts, each one told from a different perspective. Luke was up first, he's a good student, great at cricket and always tries to be there for his best mate and the girl he loves. Casey's story followed and we learn more about her home life. She's sure she was a mistake and that her parents don't love her. Her father is extremely impatient, uncaring and controlling and I wasn't surprised when she decided to get a job to fund her plan to leave home. Bongo, real name David, finished up the book. He's devastated when his mother abandons him knowing how horrible his step-dad is and when the family who adopted his younger brother revokes his visitation rights.

All three of them move on in their lives and Casey and Bongo's situations were both heartbreaking and touching. I found their stories, sad, sweet and very moving and I was happy with the ending too. All of the stories intertwine and we learn more about each character from their friends' perspectives as well.

Cinnamon Rain is a book filled with longing, loneliness but most of all love and friendship. I recommend it to all fans of realistic fiction and Aussie YA.

Thank you very much to Emma Cameron and Walker Books for the review copy.

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## **April says**

I think whenever I read a mediocre book I should just balance it out with an Australian young adult book. For real, I have no idea what they do in the land down under, but they sure do produce a hell of a lot of great reads. After reading a particularly terrible American contemporary book, I picked up *Out Of This Place* by Emma Cameron for a change of pace, as it's told in verse instead of your typical prose. I loved that *Out Of This Place* wasn't a parade of privilege, but instead a deep book about teenagers with real problems yet there's hope and resilience peppered throughout the narrative. Frankly, I can't recommend *Out Of This Place* highly enough.

Read the rest of my review [here](#)

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## Reynje says

If I were to list all the issues that Cinnamon Rain touches upon, you could be forgiven for thinking this book is heavier than a box of hammers.

So I'm not going to, because it isn't. And I think that it would be doing this book a great disservice, if it were to be passed over on basis of a misconception about its content. Because rather than being just another book about *[insert topical teen issue here]*, Cinnamon Rain is one of the most insightful and hopeful young adult novels I've read this year.

That's not to say that Cinnamon Rain sacrifices authenticity for the sake of an uplifting subtext, or lacks depths in its discussion of complex social issues. In fact, the opposite is true. Cinnamon Rain is often painfully honest in its portrayal of abuse, homelessness, neglect and isolation.

Verse is not exactly my favourite medium of story-telling, but for Cinnamon Rain's purposes, it works. Cameron's particular style is sharp and direct, while handling her subject matter with grace. All of the gravity of the story is conveyed, without weighing it down or delving into overly dramatic territory. Rather, Cameron clearly captures the voices of each of her three central characters – and the rawness and yearning that permeate their stories.

This is a frank, open book that doesn't shy away from telling it like it is. I think I had unconsciously expected something softer, more cautious, so I was pleasantly surprised by Cameron's matter-of-factness when it came to subjects like drug use and sex. There's a lot of integrity in the way the circumstances and actions of each character are related. Rather than glossing them over, or alternatively gratuitously inflating them, Cameron writes candidly about the characters' experiences, making this novel one of the most accurately portrayals of high school in Australia that I've read. (It's also the little things, like the references to playing handball at lunch and spraying people at the bubblers. Which are both things I did a lot of.)

Possibly my favourite aspect of Cinnamon Rain is the fact that it addresses a section of young adult society that I don't often see tackled in YA (funnily enough) – early high school leavers. For various reasons, none of the main characters pursue a typical path through high school, yet never does the book “typecast” them for their decisions, or come across with some heavy-handed: “stay in school, fool” message. Instead, it skilfully demonstrates the point that there are different paths to a given destination – and that while life can take people in unexpected directions, this doesn't necessarily put their goals out of reach. Essentially the story of Cinnamon Rain, and the friendship at its centre, feels circular – each narrator picking up the thread and eventually weaving the ends back together.

My second favourite aspect of Cinnamon Rain is the handling of the core relationships between Luke, Casey and Bongo. (Yes, Bongo. Despite my initial reservations, I did come around to that nickname). A complicated blend of friendship, attraction, unrequited love and loyalty – the relationships between the characters are exceptionally well-rendered and above all, believable. I felt emotionally invested in these characters and what was happening to them, all the more so as their personal stories began to unravel. (I won't lie – this book made me cry.)

In a similar vein, I'm particularly impressed with the decision Cameron made regarding the ending of Cinnamon Rain, keeping the story realistic and true to her characters. It felt like the *right* way to leave Luke,

Casey and Bongo – anything else would have felt like a cop out, to me.

I really hope Cinnamon rain finds its way into the hands of more readers, because it deserves appreciation. If you a fan of contemporary young adult novels, verse novels, or both - do yourself a favour and read it.

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## **Sarah Marie says**

Out of This Place by Emma Cameron

Originally published under Cinnamon Rain

### **3.5 stars**

Luke spends his days going to school, hanging out at the beach, and working at the supermarket. His friend Bongo gets wasted to block out the memories of the little brother he can no longer see and his addict mom and abusive stepdad. Casey is the girl that they both love. She longs to get away from her controlling father and be free. This is a verse novel and it's been forever since I read a novel in verse. I forgot how fragile writing a verse novel can be because either you can accomplish it or it will fail. This novel was in the middle of the plain between crashing and soaring above the sky. I adore poetry and verse always fascinates me, but I don't think some characters should be written in verse. Some stories are meant for it and some are not. This novel alternates between Luke, Casey, and Bongo, but instead of alternating in the usual Ellen Hopkins fashion of one character then another and repeat this book focuses on one character for a few hundred pages and then alternates to the next character.

The main female character is Casey. Casey longs to be free. She is the perfect of example of a caged bird and when she finally breaks free it's refreshing. While Casey is in her house it always felt so trapped, but once she finds her way out no matter the circumstances you can feel Casey's happiness. Casey's story was my favorite and she is my favorite character in *Out of This Place*. I liked seeing Casey grow and become a different person.

### **Kick-Butt Heroine Scale: 8.5**

The main male characters are Luke and Bongo. By the fact that these boys are both in love with Casey you would probably think that there is a love triangle. Rest assured that is not the case. Luke is in love with Casey, but Casey has always kept him as more of friend or brother. He's very over protective of her and questions her personal life a lot. Bongo is also in love with Casey, but would never hurt his best friend. He never acts on his love for her, but Casey had wanted him to several times. Luke is an OK guy, but I personally thought his story was boring. This is where what I mentioned about verse comes in. For me Luke's story in verse was unnecessary and really Luke didn't know what he wanted in life or even who he was. This made him incredibly boring. Bongo was much better to read about in verse, but it still didn't flow



as nicely as Casey's story had. Bongo though stole my heart from the moment Luke talked about how Bongo not able to see his brother destroyed him. I liked Bongo's story, but while he was homeless for that period of time the story dragged for me. He seemed to be to lost and I was worried that the story would stay that way, but it didn't.

**Swoon Worthy Scale: Luke: 7 Bongo: 8**

**Character Scale: 7.5**

I loved the setting of Australia. I also read this at pretty good time since they go to the beach a lot. The writer did a good job of showing how a person's life evolves, but sometimes this evolvment dragged a bit too much. Out of This Place is a novel about finding who you are and I liked how Cameron showed this.

**Cover Thoughts: I love the cover it's so beautiful. The only thing that bothers me is how Casey is holding one of the boy's hands. She should probably be holding both of their hands.**

*Thank you, Candlewick Press and Netgalley for a copy in an exchange for an honest review.*

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**Emily says**

Really enjoyed Emma Cameron's debut novel and looking forward to reading more of her books!

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