



## Camino Beach

*Amanda Callendrier*

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**Camino Beach** Amanda Callendrier

**In this poignant debut loaded with humor, heartbreak, and Southern charm, old friends road-trip their way to solving a mystery and righting a long-ago wrong.**

Sarah Martin had every intention of skipping her high school reunion. Once a popular girl and valedictorian, she's now pushing forty, divorced, and running a small bookstore in Nashville—not exactly an impressive life. But Sarah's best friend, Kristen, won't take no for an answer, and she won't let them return to Briley High without Roxanne, the missing third in their senior-high trio.

The beautiful and wild Roxanne—who listened to eighties rocker chicks, let anyone kiss her at parties, and dragged Sarah into plenty of trouble—disappeared just weeks before graduation. But Sarah's not so sure she wants to track her down. She knows Roxanne's departure was likely because of a betrayal—hers.

Along with their pal Jack, Sarah and Kristen embark on a quest in a beat-up old El Camino, once the center of their spring-break dreams, in search of Roxanne. But the road ahead is full of surprises that will force the friends to confront their pasts and consider the paths they've chosen—and the ones still waiting to be explored.

## Camino Beach Details

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## **From Reader Review Camino Beach for online ebook**

### **Debbie says**

Sarah, Kristen & Roxanne were like the Three Muskateers in high school. Then some stuff went down, Roxanne disappears from school and Sarah & Kristen try, half-heartedly because they're high school kids, to find her with no success.

Fast forward twenty years. It's reunion time and Sarah & Kristen's lives have moved on. Sarah has been married and divorced and they share custody of their pug. She owns a bookstore. Kristen is married with kids and lives a pretty affluent life. But reunion time brings back memories, and they decide to search for Roxanne again.

They go on a road trip, with former classmate and Sarah's neighbor, Jack, who coincidentally is now the principal of their former high school, in search of Roxanne. Follow them down their literal (& figurative) road to search for Roxanne.

A great story of growing up, regrets, memories, and enduring friendship!

Thanks to Netgalley & Lake Union Publishing for this great read!

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### **Becky says**

3.5 stars, fun & easy book to read while traveling!

Thank you to Net Galley for a free e copy of this book in exchange for a fair & honest review.

El Camino by Elizabeth Cook played in my head while reading this fun book!

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### **A says**

Good read. Reminds you to remember you don't always know what is happening in other people's lives.

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### **Kaitlin Driver says**

Great book, perfect beach read. Nothing like high school friends reuniting after 20 years apart.

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### **Caitlin Tefft says**

**As advertised.**

They have an El Camino. They want to put sand in the El Camino. So it's like a beach. An El Camino beach. Get it?! GET IT?! Camino! El Camino. Beach.

Did I mention they have an El Camino? Also the protagonist is a grown ass woman still hung up on high school. Even the other characters in the book didn't care about her shit. Also there is an El Camino.

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## **Deb says**

A very quick read. I liked the story but for some reason I just didn't connect with the characters. I think the author was very heavy handed with pop culture mentions and the way the characters talked. I would have liked to have read just the high school part of the story with more insight into each teen.

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## **Michelle Lynn says**

Hey, do you want to read a book full of absolutely repulsive characters who have absolutely no conscience or self-awareness? Well, have I got the book for you.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for a review. This review will contain spoilers.

Also, this isn't a positive review.

**TRIGGER WARNING:** This book contains the sexual assault of a teenager by a teacher. It is treated like said teenager "cheating" on his girlfriend. It never acknowledges that he was sexually abused by a teacher in a position of power.

In 1997, Sarah and Kristen were just two absolutely awful teenage girls in Nashville, TN. They graduated high school, went on to college, graduated, and went onto equally disappointing lives: Sarah is divorced, lives in an apartment above the bookstore she owns, and routinely treats her next door neighbor/former classmate/best friend, Jack, like absolutely crap; on the opposite end of the spectrum, Kristen is a tiny, blonde former gymnast who married a big ol' slob named Chris (**THEY ARE BOTH NAMED KRIS/CHRIS**) and has three anonymous children that she never talks about except to complain about them. She works some kind of job, but otherwise, buys Jimmy Choos, lives in a McMansion, and drives a Rover.

Cool. These women seem fun.

In high school, there was a third friend, Roxanne, the only likeable one in the bunch. Roxanne was impulsive, self-destructive, and, most of all, fun. However, she disappeared before they graduated and while they did call local boarding schools after her mom (their gym teacher, inexplicably) told them she was sent to boarding school, they didn't do much to find her.

Except when their 20 year high school reunion rolls around.

Kristen decides it's time to bite the bullet and find Roxanne. Sarah, our primary narrator, is nervous because she did something "awful" that she is sure is the cause of Roxanne's disappearance. They go on a saga to buy an El Camino (an awful car that Roxanne inexplicably bought and that broke down on a spring break trip). This takes up approximately 1/3 of the book and is exceptionally boring. They buy an El Camino named Elvira and make continual references to the fact that they're sure it will break down. It's like they have no concept of how heart 70s and 80s era cars are--and considering the fact that Elvira was completely redone by a car buff, the car would be in absolute pristine condition. So they're jerks for that because it's exhausting.

Jack decides to join them for the trip to Myrtle Beach, after Kristen's private investigator turns up an address for Roxanne there. We are treated to multiple unpleasant scenes where Sarah is an absolute nightmare of a human to her ex-husband.

Ok, slight diversion from going over the plot: Sarah got divorced because... reasons? It's never fully explained, which is fine, but she treats her ex like ABSOLUTE GARBAGE. Sarah is a garbage person. There, I said it. Take this character and throw her away; she is a self-centered, obnoxious, mean, vile human being. There is NOTHING redeemable about Sarah as a character. I do not understand why she has friends or why she received this characterization. She sucks. She divorced her husband because he was slightly resistant to her taking out a loan to buy a bookstore. Listen, do you know how much of a struggle it is to own an independent bookstore? It is NOT easy. But this book apparently takes place in an alternate reality where people go to bookstores all the time. Whatever. In reality, Sarah's dumb little store would have already failed, which would be karma for treating her husband (who they make fun of for being a professor? despite the fact that Sarah is so romantic about her own undergraduate experience?) like absolute crap.

Anyway.

They head for Myrtle Beach. Apparently, they do zero preparations for this and end up stopping at Sarah's college town, where they go to her favorite place to eat. She orders a sandwich (and the author expects us to know what this sandwich is but never explains it). Then, Kristen goes to an art show and proceeds to completely destroy a student's art project. What pieces of human garbage. Goddamn, I hate both of them so much.

They get to Myrtle Beach and find a hotel that is \$60 a night, but also has a bar beside the pool. Ok, that makes sense. There is an awful scene where Jack's swimsuit gets sucked into the jacuzzi jets. It's really stupid and serves no purpose to the plot. It's actually awful. All of these people are awful. Kristen is the worst, but her and Sarah honestly duke it out to be seen as the absolute worst of all human beings ever.

The next morning, they surprise drop into Roxanne's address. Surprise, it's not Roxanne. It's her mom, Mrs. Wilder, their mean ass gym teacher. She has no idea where Roxanne, but Kristen acts like a big dick the entire time and they judge her medications in the bathroom. Cool! They leave, meet Jack's college roommate Bert for margaritas, get drunk in a Mexican restaurant, and then they all get into a massive fight.

Then, they go home.

This is the part of the novel where I stopped caring. It was so anticlimactic. They go home. Kristen gets a bug in her ass to go check school records; they do and guess what? The school has all their school records. Listen, my husband is a teacher; so is my sister. HIGH SCHOOLS DO NOT KEEP YOUR RECORDS PAST A CERTAIN NUMBER OF YEARS. It's so exhausting to have this scene. As if there is some giant room in every public school where they keep every piece of banal information about every kid that ever stepped in the building. Yawn.

Anyway, they end up finding a sticky note on the back of Roxanne's file with the number of a school that's in, you guessed it, Sarah's college town. They do some research and go. They find Roxanne. She's perfectly normal, living in a nice little house with her daughter, also named Sarah (WHO KNOWS WHY, Sarah sucks so bad). She is pleasant and happy, but she's not the Roxanne they know.

Ok, throughout all these scenes, we get treated to scenes from high school Sarah. HS Sarah is somehow 400x worse than present day Sarah; she is boring, mean, and absolutely obsessed with herself. So, the entire novel I thought the bad thing she did to Roxanne would be huge: she ratted out Roxanne about drugs or she actually murdered her or SOMETHING. No. She signed a statement saying that Roxanne had been cheating on her to avoid getting her scholarship taken away.

I'm sorry, but that's not awful. That's barely even bad. That's literally what every stupid teenager would do if they were caught to be helping their friend cheat. Roxanne had been cheating off Sarah; Sarah admitted it; fucking and...?

Anyway, in their meeting with Roxanne, it turns out that's NOT why Roxanne left school. She left because her mom had been fucking teenagers at the school and had been messing around with Roxanne's boyfriend. So the principal helped her transfer schools and GTFO. Cool for Roxanne. She met her current husband, got pregnant, got married. She chilled. Never once does anyone say, "Holy shit, your mom raped your boyfriend!? Your mom sexually assaulted and abused him?" No, they act like her boyfriend Mark cheated on her. THESE PEOPLE ARE ALL GARBAGE.

So, after all that time, the bad thing Sarah did didn't even matter. It's NOT EVEN PART OF THE PLOT because it's so impossibly small and stupid.

Kristen and Sarah leave. (as they leave, Sarah asks about Roxanne's daughter's name and Roxanne basically says that her daughter is named after her grandma. LOL)

Because Sarah is obsessed with her stupid self, she goes to visit the former principal to ask WHY he made her sign that statement (um, because they were busting Roxanne, rightfully, for cheating?). The principal basically says it literally never mattered, he just did it to make a point, and that it's ok because all teenagers do selfish stuff. No kidding, the principal, even though we're supposed to see him as some kind of delusional mean guy, is the only intelligent character in this dumb book; he looks Sarah dead in the face and is like, "people usually grow out of being so selfish, but whatever, you seem like a piece of shit." LMAO, fuck her up, dude!

Sarah feels enlightened and goes to Kristen's house. Kristen had spent tons of time complaining about her husband, who is a piece of crap, very stereotypical man; however, when Sarah brings up this past conversation in relation to her talk with the principal, Kristen acts like Sarah is accusing her of something. Listen, Kristen, I know you're a few slices short of a whole pie, but follow along. Kristen ends up getting a new showerhead and is suddenly in a better mood, proving that she's an absolutely repulsive, stupid character and Sarah isn't much better. Ugh. This dumb book.

So Sarah leaves, feeling pretty low. She calls Bert to ask him to go to the reunion with her (do people... take dates to reunions? That's like not the point? It's not a prom) and he says no, because Jack made it clear he likes Sarah. This is a fact that is SO OBVIOUS through the book I almost wanted to set it on fire. God, Jack is a pushover and while he is pretty obnoxious, he deserves better than Sarah, a woman who literally never thinks of ANYONE but herself.

So Sarah goes to the reunion with Jack and proceeds to get schwasted within, like, 5 minutes? Then Mark, Roxanne's high school boyfriend who was sexually assaulted by a teacher and his girlfriend's mom, comes up and asks about Roxanne. Sarah, who is awful, acts belligerent and causes a scene; then Jack punches a man who was sexually assaulted as a teenager and they act like he's a hero. COOL.

Kristen and Roxanne then bust into prom, dressed to the nines. They all go outside and make the real Camino Beach and get even more schwasted in the back of it, chatting. Roxanne talks about her life and is more honest about it. It turns out, Roxanne did name her daughter after Sarah (WHY) and apparently had watched Sarah a few times while she was at college because she literally lived in the same town. This is proof that Sarah is totally self-absorbed; Roxanne had been in that sandwich place once while Sarah was there and SARAH DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE. This girl you think you've ruined because of some dumb cheating statement and you literally don't recognize her. Sarah, you are awful.

They then proceed to treat Mark, a sexual assault victim, like shit and then go to a bar again. Jack confesses that, actually, he really likes Sarah. And Sarah is like cool. They kiss. It's totally inexplicable why Jack (I just realized maybe his name is John? I honestly do not remember) likes her because, again, Sarah is an absolute garbage can of a human being.

The book ends. It is absolutely obnoxious to read and absolute waste of time. If you want to read a book about the most self-absorbed awful people in the entire universe, go ahead. Read it. I have no idea why it was written. A bunch of boring, mean white women going on an adventure to find the friend they treated like crap 20 years ago. Nothing redeemable. Nothing to learn. Awful people not getting their comeuppance. Sigh.

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## **Jordan Brown says**

### **Letting go of the past**

I love this book. It reminded you that some times you have to let go of the past. The characters were ones you feel in love with and could relate to. Great summer reading.

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## **Erin says**

### **Love these girls**

At some point I need to own up to the fact that I enjoy stories like this one. I started out not sure if I would like another road trip to uncovering secrets kind of story, but I really enjoyed the ride. This is a great summer read.

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## **Kathleen Duffy says**

Camino Beach was well written, but I feel like it would've been better served with a 10-year gap between story lines rather than a 20. I don't know anyone who would still be fixated on a lost friendship from high school that long after the fact. That part was a bit too far fetched for me. I've had close friends from high school and college disappear in the years since, but I don't chase after them. Facebook exists, and even if not,

friendships just fizzle out sometimes -- even the strongest ones. People change and move on. You can't cling onto every friendship forever or you'll just make yourself sick. This novel made me glad that I didn't peak in high school, so I don't feel the need to think about those years all too often!

\* NetGalley review.

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### **Ace says**

Did someone say free book? I got this one as a "read now" book on NetGalley after a friend nominated it for a group read. Not my usual fare (chick lit) and an easy read, I knocked it off in no time.

3 friends in high school that are inseparable are torn apart when one member of the team just disappears overnight, not to be heard from again. The other two maintain a great relationship (I have not had this kind of consistency with anyone from high school myself) and when it comes time to celebrate their 20th high school reunion they go off in search of their lost friend to see if she will come to the reunion so that they can re-live old times.

People change though, but deep down, there is a "you" that is inflexible and resistant to change and I think that this is what that author is trying to dig deeper into. Essentially, I am who I was in high school, no matter how I deny it LOL, my core self is unchanged.

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### **Amanda says**

I received a copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

I'm torn between two trains of thought about this book. On one hand, I'm disappointed that the big secret turned out to be something unimportant. On the other, I'm impressed that the author managed to capture that feeling of realizing as an adult that all your big problems in high school really weren't such a big deal after all. I definitely enjoyed it more toward the beginning when it felt like there was some big mystery reveal they were building up to, but even when that pretty much unraveled, it was a fun summer read and left me feeling just a little nostalgic for some of my own high school experiences. It was a little more "chick lit" than I usually prefer, but if that's what you're into, I would definitely recommend it.

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### **Allison says**

*Camino Beach* is about Sarah and her long-time friend Kristen who are fast approaching their 20th high school reunion and their journey to find a long-lost high school friend, Roxanne. It's peppered with high school flashbacks that describe their high school experiences and drama with Roxanne. I enjoyed the friendship between Sarah and Kristen and how real their relationship feels, although I feel like a 10-year reunion would have been more believable. Honestly, considering how many people I have lost contact with through the years, I have a hard time believing that two adults 20 years out of high school, one of whom has a family and another who runs a small business, would make such a trip. What bothered me was their immature behavior during the actual reunion. I lost a some love for them in the end due to that, actually. I did like their fiesty friend Roxanne and their side-kick classmate Jack though. This was a fun read overall, and



great for summer.

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## **Pouting Always says**

When their high school reunion, for twenty years, is coming up Sarah and Kristen decide to search for their missing best friend Roxanne. A month before they were set to graduate Roxanne disappeared and at the time they couldn't get her mother to tell them where. All they were told was that she went to a boarding school but when they looked and called up the one nearby they came up empty handed. Kristen feels guilty for not trying harder and hires a PI to find her, getting an address and convinces Sarah to go on a road trip with her there. Sarah meanwhile feels guilty for what happened years ago and feels responsible for Roxanne's disappearance. The two decide to buy an El Camino like Roxanne drove in high school and set out to drive down and find her. Jack, Sarah's best friend and neighbor who also went to high school with them accompanies them in their, mostly supervising to make sure they don't get in to much trouble.

I did enjoy the book a lot, I was kind of at 3.5 and somewhat wanted to round up to four but not there completely for some reason. The plot line was cute but I guess I just felt underwhelmed by their whole search for her and the whole idea of an El Camino filled with sand. Also it just seemed a little ridiculous that it's been twenty years and they're still hung up on their friend, especially Sarah. I don't think she had a lot of choices in the position she was in and in the end it didn't matter anyway did it, so it was just kind of a let down. I enjoyed the writing though and the characters, it would have been so easy to hate Sarah but I think the author did a good job of making her likable and sympathetic even with her faults. It was a fun read with a happy ending, definitely a good summer beach book.

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## **Lindsay?SingerOfStories? says**

3.5 really strong stars that I am tempted to round up to 4??? But not quite.

Sarah, Kristin, and Jack are a week away from their twentieth high school reunion and the reunion just won't be complete without their long lost friend Roxanne. Roxanne hasn't been seen nor heard from since the final weeks of their senior year of high school and the gang has no idea where she is. They set off on an adventure in a classic El Camino named Elvira in the hopes of finding answers...and forgiveness. The story flip-flops between the "now" and the "then" so we hear and see why Roxanne left and how sometimes friendships can get complicated, but ultimately work out in beautiful ways.

Here's one thing that I really enjoyed about this book: *the nostalgia*. I loved the description of Sarah and Kristen buying and road tripping in the El Camino. "I had forgotten what cars were like in the 70's and 80's, wide stretches of bench-like seats that felt like couches....Didn't even use seat belts, and you could slide back and forth on the leather whenever you made a hard turn." Yeah!!! It was just so fun to me! On the not-my-favorite-part-side, the MC Sarah could be SO dense and self-absorbed and just about every other character in the book brought it up to her face. She was fine in the beginning--great even!--and then two-thirds of the way through she went off her rocker and everything was her fault and in her world and her drama and her blindness and her, her, her! Blah!! Another plus: this was definitely a warm and fuzzy, feel good, easy to read book. If you need a good summer read, pick this up. Plus, I was very impressed that this was a debut for Amanda Callendrier, so hats off!

