



# Apollo's Outcasts

*Allen M. Steele*

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In the tradition of Robert A. Heinlein's juvenile classics, crafted with a modern sensibility. Jamey Barlowe has been crippled since childhood, the result of being born on the Moon. He lives his life in a wheelchair, only truly free when he is in the water. But then Jamey's father sends him, along with five other kids, back to the Moon to escape a political coup d'état that has occurred overnight in the United States. Moreover, one of the other five refugees is more than she appears. Soon Jamey is front and center in a political and military struggle stretching from the Earth to the Moon.

## Apollo's Outcasts Details

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Author : Allen M. Steele

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# From Reader Review Apollo's Outcasts for online ebook

## C.O. Bonham says

This book worked on so many levels, Political thriller, Teen romance, science fiction adventure, coming of age story. This was a very well thought out and outstandingly researched novel.

This novel was great because it felt so current, as if the events in this novel could happen tomorrow. The science felt grounded in fact and nothing struck me as impossible. The suspense was perfectly spread out to keep me reading.

So why only four stars?

I wanted to give it five stars. Sadly glaring editorial errors kept jarring me from the story and awakening my inner editor. And I'm not just nit picking over a misplaced comma or a misspelled word. There were multiple sentences that were very poorly constructed. The kind of errors I expect to find after a furious typing session in a fit of inspiration. These errors should have been corrected if not by the author after a reread then certainly by an editor. If this was a debut novel I could overlook this but Mr. Steele already has a large body of work under his belt. Shame on the author for not checking his work. I have never heard of this Prometheus Books but shame on their editorial staff too. Don't make the readers mentally edit your product so that they can keep reading.

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## Dark Matter says

This and more reviews, interviews etc are on Dark Matter Zine, an online magazine.  
<http://www.darkmatterzine.com>. This review was written by Rebecca Muir for Dark Matter Zine.

Apollo's Outcasts is set in 2097, in a future where humanity has begun to colonize space. There is a colony, Apollo, on the moon, built by the International Space Consortium to mine and process rare materials, primarily helium-3. This isotope, present in moon dust, has become the power source of choice on Earth, where it is used to power fusion reactors.

Jamey was born on the moon, but has lived most of his life on Earth after his mother died in an accident at Apollo. Spending his infancy on the moon, however, has left him in a wheelchair – his bones can't cope with Earth's higher gravity. His world is turned upside down early one morning when he is dragged out of bed by his father and put on a rocket with his sister, bound for Apollo. A political coup has occurred in the American government, and Jamey's dad is a political enemy of the new President.

On the moon, Jamey faces many challenges – worry for his father and older sister back on Earth, learning to walk for the first time, dealing with the tricky world of romance, finding his place in the colony and defending it against the new President's ambitions to seize control of the helium-3 supply.

The storyline of this book, while a little predictable at times, was interesting nonetheless. Its real strength, however, lies in the way it makes this future so believable. Allen Steele has relied on ideas from the scientific community – people who have thought about how a colony on the moon could actually work. He

also gives enough detail that you can see how it might work, without it feeling like you are being bombarded with descriptions of strange technology. The result is that the book doesn't feel like science fiction – it feels like a political thriller set in a plausible future. I loved that this book made me believe that my grandchildren or great grandchildren could live and work on the moon.

I enjoy reading science fiction books written with a technological flight of fancy – where the limits of what we now see as possible pose no barriers. Those books are fun, and also have an important role to play – after all, many things we now take for granted were first dreamed up by science fiction. Think mobile phones and hand held communicators on Star Trek. A book like this, however, is great in that it makes what is at the moment just a dream – a lunar colony – seem possible, exploring what that might look like and helping to give it a shape in my imagination.

This book is an easy and engaging read, with well-drawn characters. It is part science fiction, part political thriller and part a coming-of-age story. It is well worth a read.

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### **Sarah says**

3.5/5 stars

Apollo's Outcasts somehow manages to be nostalgic and refreshing at the same time. Jamey is a wonderful character to follow, and Steele really should be heralded for his understanding and adept use of science. While this book is billed as young adult, it's easy to see how it could appeal to an audience that spans all ages. It's adventurous, quick moving, and intense. Steele's flowing prose will bring the world and situations to life and the fairly short length of the book makes this a quick read that won't easily be forgotten.

You can read my full review here:

<http://www.bookwormblues.net/2012/11/...>

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### **Alisa Russell says**

When I first heard that Pyr Books would be publishing a book by Allen Steele, I was very excited. A few years back, I had read all of his Coyote books, and he had become one of my favorite authors. I finally was able to get his most recent book a few weeks back and have just finished reading it.

Apollo's Outcasts is another slam dunk for this author. It begins with Jamey Barlowe, the main male character, and his sister being sent to the Moon, along with five other kids, after a political uprising in the United States. One of the other kids has a secret which is revealed once they get to the Moon, and the book follows Jamey's adventures as he becomes adjusted to a new way of life.

I think the author does a good job of getting inside the head of a sixteen year old boy. As I have a sixteen year old boy myself, I know a little bit of what I'm talking about. :) The parts of wanting to appear grown up to the people around him, but still being scared of what is happening back on Earth, make the book engaging for its intended audience. In fact, I have recommended this book to my son for these very reasons.

I also think the science in the book is well researched, but still understandable to the layperson. In fact, if we, as a society, would get serious about funding space exploration, I could easily see a place like Apollo actually being developed.

This book gets five stars from me, and I can recommend it for its intended audience as well as those who are older.

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### **Kathy says**

I really felt like I ought to like this book a lot more than I did. I've had a hard time putting my finger on just what it was that didn't taste right. But I think I've sort of figured it out.

Jamey was born on the moon, so, when he's returned to and raised on Earth, he's basically crippled, and can't get around except in his "mobile". That's reasonably believable, except that since he's been on Earth since babyhood, I would have expected his body would have begun a certain amount of corrective adaptation back. I mean, we ARE originally designed for Earth living. When the ambassadors in *THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS* had to visit Earth, they did a LOT of weight training, etc. in preparation. Maybe I'm wrong here. I've never been on the moon, or studied weightlessness. I know people under those conditions do lose bone mass. I also know that elderly people on Earth who have lost bone mass can regain it through strength training. So, I guess I wasn't convinced by one of the earliest and most basic premises of the story.

And, then, why in the world wouldn't Jamey have EXPECTED to be able to function normally under the moon's gravitational conditions? I expected him to be able to. Emotionally, he might have experienced it as miraculous, but intellectually he should have been expecting it. He wasn't.

The lunar settings were cool, the characters were ok, the plot, while not overwhelmingly believable, was certainly not bad enough to jar me out of my willing-suspension-of-disbelief.

So, anyway, not a great book, but a pretty good read. Probably most people will not get hung up on the weight/bone issue. For all I know, Steele has his facts exactly correct. It's just that he didn't get me to believe him.

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### **Jared Millet says**

Given the overwhelming prevalence of fantasy in YA lit, I'd personally love to see a swing towards some solid, future-looking SF. Having read a novel earlier this year that got it all wrong, it's refreshing to come across a book that gets just about everything right. I can only hope this catches on as a genre again.

I'm not a Heinlein worshiper, but that's clearly where Allen Steele draws his inspiration (as one would expect), even going so far as to almost quote him directly in a spot or two. However, Steele cribs from the good parts of Heinlein and doesn't get bogged down in baby-boomer nostalgia for the way the future used to be. The themes are all there – the hard science, the hard work, the young man learning personal responsibility – but updated for the 21st Century. I can't imagine that any novel in Heinlein's time would have used the U.S. as the antagonist, had a villain in a power-mad Vice President whose name just *happens* to be an anagram of "Sarah Palin," or included a surprise Angry Birds reference for those paying attention. Steele doesn't blatantly leave any loose threads hanging around for a sequel, but he has reopened the door to

a science-based future just waiting to be explored.

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### **Stefan says**

Jamey Barlowe was born on the Moon, but moved back to Earth as an infant following his mother's tragic death. Because his fragile bones can't handle Earth's gravity, Jamey needs a wheelchair to get around, but he has learned to live with his disability and lead a normal teenage life. Then, on his sixteenth birthday, Jamey's father wakes him up in the middle of the night and sends him back to the Moon to escape a military coup in the United States.

Jamey arrives in the lunar mining colony Apollo with five other refugees, including his kid sister and a young woman who seems to be more than she appears. At first it's a challenge to start a new life in an unfamiliar environment, but thanks to the lower lunar gravity, Jamey can now walk independently for the first time in his life, so despite everything he flourishes and finds himself taking on new challenges. Meanwhile, tensions on Earth continue to rise, and the lunar colony soon becomes the world's focus as the new U.S. President sets her sights on the Moon's crucial He3 reserves...

Read the entire review on my site [Far Beyond Reality!](#)

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### **MB (What she read) says**

A pleasant read but too many illogical plot holes drove me **crazy**. I had a hard time finishing this. For more snarkiness, see my status updates.

But, as always, don't let me talk you out of this, if this book sounds interesting to you.

One of many small quibbles: All these comments about no milk for cheese, coffee, etc. on the moon. What about soybeans? Did they somehow become extinct in the future? As far as I know creamer is made from soy, cheese from soy, there is soy milk....

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### **Wayne says**

Very pleased with this. The premise mostly parallels Steele's Coyote books: the US is taken over by a hard right-wing coup, and the various 'suspect intellectuals' who opposed the now-President are being rounded up and put in camps or simply disappeared. The children of several friends are put on a moon shuttle moments before the gendarmes arrive, and seek political asylum. Our hero was bound to a wheelchair on earth but on the Moon he's free to move, thanks to the lesser gravity.

It's a nice combination of 'coming of age', 'finding your place', exploration of a strange environment' blended with action in the last quarter as the US decides it's not going to let the international Lunar colony hold onto it's energy reserves (Fusion power is a major energy source, and the Moon's HE3 is the best fuel for it).

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## Mike says

I abandoned this one at around 180 pages. I thought I would finish it just for the hell of it, but I was so bored by the lack of plot advancing and the one-note characters that I just decided it wasn't worth the trouble.

The biggest problem is probably the pacing. It takes Jamey almost 100 pages to even get to the moon, and once he's there, not much else happens. This space could be used for all sorts of things, but when nothing happens, it's very, very hard to be engaged in the plot.

Instead of filling up the space with plot, Steele describes things that have no relevance to the story. The reason it takes 100 pages to get to the moon is that Steele feels the need to describe everything - the spaceship that the characters took, how it works, the physical that they had to go through beforehand, every aspect of their lives living in the spaceship - all information that was boring and completely unnecessary to the plot. I mean, it's great that he knows all this, but for the love of God, GET ON WITH IT! In this article, Megan Crewe talks about the research that went into the killer virus in her (incredibly underrated) book *The Way We Fall*. One of the things that stuck out at me was this quote:

Much of my research didn't go into the book—it just there in the background as I wrote.

What this means is basically that Crewe didn't include everything she knew about her disease into her book because she knew that it would interrupt the flow and pacing to include all of it. (And the pace was already pretty slow as it was.) Well, Steele doesn't seem to understand that. All the worldbuilding was done in long, boring infodumps that simply didn't need to be there - they interrupted the pace too much. That's not to say that Steele shouldn't know about all these factors, and it's great that he does, but unless they become necessary to the plot, *we* don't need to know about them.

Other than this, the story was mediocre at best. The writing wasn't bad, but it wasn't great either. There were a couple of very, very obvious and distracting typos in the beginning. It was a very occasional problem, but when it happened, it never failed to take me out of the story. Steele also had a habit of overusing semicolons, probably to give the story a more formal effect. After a while though, the sentences structure started getting really repetitive. I will say that I believed Jamey's voice, which is more than I can say about a lot of writers.

But Jamey's voice was the only one I believed. Jamey was the only character that was at all fleshed out - everyone else was drawn in broad stereotypical terms. Jamey got to know plenty of people, but we didn't. In particular, Melissa really, really annoyed me due to the way Steele wrote her. She was such a stereotype - she had over 70,000 friends on some social network, she was a bad student, very lazy, and very whinny. Hell, in the first couple pages, she's described as a slut BY HER OWN BROTHER! This kind of stereotyping came across as sorta sexist, and very annoying.

The character relationships weren't too interesting, either. Jamey's relationship with his sister, Melissa, wasn't particularly tender or honest, and there was a friggin love triangle. A pretty passionless love triangle too, since Jamey never gives a reason that he likes Nicole, one of the sides. We never got to really know her, and neither did Jamey, really, but for some reason, he still had an enormous crush on her.

Other than the pacing, the plot had potential, but it was all crushed due to Steele's choice of narrator. Jamey wasn't particularly involved in the plot - not much really happened to him. On Earth, shit was hitting the fan

with an enormous political scandal, but none of it ever reaches the moon. Jamey tells us about this in lengthy infodumps that carry no sense of urgency because it doesn't directly affect our narrator or his friends. Why not have the story be narrated by Jan, Jamey's sister, who was part of a resistance against the government on Earth? Nothing of interest happened on the moon, making the plot really, really boring.

I also took issue with the political commentary. The story's political aspect focuses on an extreme right-wing vice president who took over after the (moderate) president died. The new president implements some very harsh and blatantly unconstitutional policies against her protesters. The problem with the commentary was that other than saying "Conservatives are evil!", it didn't really say much. It doesn't help that what the new president does holds no resemblance to Republican politicians today. Don't get me wrong, I'm quite liberal, so the book's message might've been one that appealed to me, but with no honesty, what's the point of it?

The only thing I liked about the book (other than Jamey) was the world building. I wasn't too fond of the way it was presented to us, but the world itself was very real and detailed. Moreover, the technology was quite plausible and sometimes, interesting. This was one of the few near-future worlds that felt like a legitimate look at what the real future might be like.

But overall, the book wasn't a success. The plot was boring, the characters were one-note, and the political commentary was unrealistic. This could've been a great book, what with all the potential it had, but due to several huge factors, it fell flat for me.

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## **Ximena says**

### **“THE IMPOSSIBLE”**

Death. Sacrifice. Love. Three words that perfectly describe the breathtaking story held in a near futuristic era. As this story is told by a notably different sixteen year-old, history changing events occur in the Barlowe family. With the U.S. government behind Jamey and his family, near death experiences make a turn into the unbelievable and a war that seem to never end. Jamey Barlowe, his older sister Melissa Barlowe, the President's daughter Hannah Wilford, and other jeopardized children escape the evil hands of Lina Shapar, the Vice President... to the moon. Who would've thought a signature could've cause the 'impossible'? The story is set after the President's death. With the Vice President now in command bad idealistic from her place the Barlowe family in a danger zone. With problems ahead a life changing decision is made and two out of the three Barlowe children aboard a shuttle which destination is the moon. As a war breaks out between the U.S. government and Apollo for lunar resources a race against time makes Jamey, the main character, choose a path which is both filled with hate and love. Two emotions hard to mix, but which form the future of many generations.

This science-fiction novel revolves around three main characters: Jamey Barlowe, a sixteen year-old, shy boy that is unable to walk on Earth due to his birth in Apollo, but never gives up in order to save his family and the one he loves. Hannah Wilford, the late President's daughter, a sympathetic sixteen year-old who is madly in love with Jamey. Finally, the antagonist, Lina Shapar is the appointed President after Wilford's death who immediately takes actions, and targets the Barlowe family after Jamey's father, Dr.Barlowe, signs a NASA's plan which she does not agree with.

Although, this story is held in the future many teenagers, and even adults, can relate to problems in this novel like I did. This is a story in which two opposite things can create a solution, and what we might see as a fact, or a “must-happen” doesn't really occur. I find this story hard to leave behind and would highly recommend readers to add this to their bookshelf. I was drawn by the way this story was told, and the plot explained. Never had I ever experienced a book that connected so well with me in day-to-day activities. That said, a



book with so much passion put into it needs more recognition and who knows maybe a sequel or two. Now you can read and find out if the 'impossible' is done by a teenage sixteen year-old in the moon.

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## David says

Ah, this is more like it. For those of you who miss those Heinlein juveniles, *Apollo's Outcasts* is perfectly billed as a successor to books like *Starman Jones* and *Have Space Suit -- Will Travel*. And look, is it too much to ask for some boy-centered YA now and then? This was a great juvenile hard SF novel, updated for the times.

Jamey Barlowe was born on the moon, but brought back to Earth after his mother died. Thanks to Lunar Birth Deficiency Syndrome, his bones aren't strong enough to hold his weight in Earth's gravity, so he's spent his life in a mobil, a kind of high-tech wheelchair. His father is a scientist for the International Space Consortium, a multinational space agency that has replaced NASA in this world of the late 21st century. When the President of the United States dies under suspicious circumstances, his Vice President, a right-wing fanatic named Lina Shapar who has what one might suspect to be more than a passing resemblance to certain real-life politicians

seizes control in what is effectively a coup d'etat. She starts throwing her political enemies — including Jamey's father, who had not long before, along with many other scientists, signed a letter opposing her — in jail.

Having seen this coming, Jamey's father packs him and his sisters into a transport to the Moon, where they can (he hopes) hide on Apollo, the ISC moon colony that mines helium-3 for Earth's fusion power plants.

This is a very traditional YA SF story. "Heinleinesque" cannot be said too often. If you liked those old Heinlein juveniles, you will like this book. If they do nothing for you, then you probably will find *Apollo's Outcasts* falls flat for you too, because it's a boy's adventure on the moon, with plenty of science and just enough politics and economics to make it vaguely plausible.

**Advantage Heinlein:** He was Heinlein, and a damn good writer when he wasn't writing batshit crazy wankery in a state of terminal fever. Allen Steele is a good writer, but he's no Heinlein.

**Advantage Steele:** This book was written in 2012, not 1952, and Allen Steele does not, so far as I know, have a spanking fetish, nor a "feisty-girls-who-inevitably-bite-their-lips-submissively-and-cast-demure-glances-downward" fetish, so the girls in this book are feisty and do shit and they don't stop being feisty and doing shit just because they've got boyfriends.

Jamey meets a cast of fairly stock YA characters: besides his whiny brat of an older sister, there is the precocious little kid and her mentally handicapped older brother, there's Jamey's best friend, there's the girl who's got a crush on Jamey and the girl Jamey has a crush on, there's the bully who's on his case from day one, and so on. Jamey and his pals have to learn the ropes, they become contributing members of the lunar colony, and when President Shapar launches an invasion to capture the base, Jamey winds up fighting to defend it. There are some deaths, obviously meant to be tearjerkers, but this is a YA novel so things get resolved relatively neatly.

So it may not quite achieve the status of science fiction classic, but *Apollo's Outcasts* is just the kind of book I loved when I was in the target audience age range, and who am I kidding, I still am the target audience. Recommended for all SF fans if you can stand YA.

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## Michelle says

*Apollo's Outcasts* by Allen Steele is a near-future YA following Jamey, a 'looney' who is crippled on Earth because of his lunar birth, as he and five other political refugees flee to the moon to escape a suddenly hostile US government. As Jamey and the other teenagers struggle to control their new trajectories, they learn that even the moon is not far enough away to escape Earth politics.

Jamey finds new freedom in lunar gravity, where he can finally walk unassisted, and where he is already old enough to vote. Yet with these rights come the responsibility of formalized Colony Service, as well as an advanced school curriculum in a no-nonsense school. The constant demands of a harsh environment plus the cost of importing items from Earth mean that living on the moon is no cake walk. (It's, you guessed it... a moon walk). This lends a seriousness to the tone of the novel and tests the characters' courage. Add in the explosive politics surrounding the characters, and you have a rare book that actually makes you fear for the good guys. Allen Steele's moon is a harsh place made habitable only through extraordinary cooperative efforts of the human race, and even a magnificent space dome can be decimated by the proverbial thrown rock. In *Apollo's Outcasts*, there is a politician somewhere out there willing to throw that rock with fanatical glee.

The believable political and military developments in *Apollo's Outcasts* solidifies my respect for and enjoyment of the book. Allan Steele brings us to a near future where the US President has just died, leaving in charge a Vice President who is morally corrupt. Earth soon finds itself in turmoil when the former Vice President starts putting out false press reports and Apollo sets up an embargo against the US. The duplicity of the US government reminds the reader of government's power to deceive while also spelling out the limits of such efforts. Meanwhile, the lunar colony ups its defenses by militarizing the Rangers, an elite search and rescue team. By that time, the reader knows that Alan Steele means to put those laser guns to work. When Jamey joins the Rangers, where his life is in danger even during training, it feels less like watching an escapist fantasy where you know the hero is going to survive, and more like watching a soldier write a letter home, knowing that it might be his last.

Not surprisingly, *Apollo's Outcasts* is serious on politics and light on romance. Character development has a strong presence in the book as the teens must redefine what is important in their lives. Existential angst, such as wondering what kind of clothes to wear, rapidly fades from their concerns as they come up against bigger problems. Jamey's older sister, in particular, begins the book as a whiny teen reluctant to listen to good advice, but by the end of the book her perspective is realistically matured. Jamey starts out as comparatively more mature, yet he too must reevaluate his priorities when he finds himself attracted to his best friend's almost-girlfriend. Because of the teens' packed school and community service days, there is very little time for dating and the characters find themselves preoccupied by the imminent danger to the lunar colony.

All in all it's easy for me to say to whom I would recommend this book: *Apollo's Outcasts* is perfect for any reader who has ever dreamed of going to the moon, because Allen Steele takes you there with detailed, accurate science and believable military and political developments. Every little detail, from the refugee's first low-G experience to Jamey's luckless paragliding adventure, conveys the wonder of science and human ingenuity.

## **Elie Harriett says**

My first exposure to this book was the author's reading of the first chapter at the 2012 World Sci-Fi & Fantasy Convention in Chicago. After that reading, I knew I had to purchase this book. I'm mostly a newcomer to Allen Steele's work, but I've thoroughly enjoyed the works of his I've read thus far and this one is no different.

If you've never read a young adult novel before, don't let it discourage you. They're usually the same as a "full" adult novel, except the main protagonist is still a teenager. Apollo's Outcasts is no different. This is as good, as tense, as thrilling to read, and as well thought out as any other Allen Steele novel. The characters flaws and strengths are placed out for everyone to read. I found the story to be very believable and captivating.

There's nothing more to say about the book description that hasn't been said above. Accurate and easy to understand.

If you are a fan of sci-fi thrillers, life on the moon, or political intrigue, this is a book worth reading.

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## **Zuri Minor says**

Apollo's Outcasts is the story about Jamie, a boy who has been handicapped since birth due to being born on the moon. His family (one father, two sisters) are currently living in outer space due to struggles on earth(which I won't spoil) and are trying to find ways to help it.

One thing I liked about this book was the atmosphere of being in outer space and plans to help the earth. It makes you want to know if the characters will succeed in their objective. One thing I didn't like was the pacing of the book sometimes it takes a little while to get a point across, but it's worth while to see how the family interacts and what their next move is.

Overall I thought it was a very enjoyable book with very good atmosphere of being in a crisis like setting. It makes you identify with the characters feelings of what they could do to help. I say give it a read you'll probably like it.

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