



High Concept

Whitley Gray

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Denver homicide cop and shooting survivor Beck Stryker lives to solve the case that left him with PTSD, chronic pain, and killed his co-investigator four months previous. Now his career hinges on his ability to work with the man who shut down his advances two years ago.

After last parting ways with Beck, psychiatrist-turned-FBI profiler Zach Littman never anticipated seeing the detective again. Being sent to Denver to work on a series of killings that have continued after the only suspect died is bad enough. Discovering the detective in charge is Beck leaves Zach gritting his teeth and girding his loins.

The last thing either of them needs is romantic entanglement with a fellow investigator, but danger is a powerful aphrodisiac. The case heats up, and friction between them ignites a fire neither can ignore, first at work and then in the bedroom. As they zero in on the plot behind the murders, the crosshairs zero in on Beck and Zach.

High Concept Details

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From Reader Review High Concept for online ebook

Bev says

Another winner, thanks to Gigi's review for the heads up on this one. 5 stars and from me.

I love all of those CSI TV programmes, love working out mysteries and who-dunits, so for a book to combine my faves m/m **and** murder mystery, well it was a win-win for me. The MC's...Denver cop Beck (I'm in the closet so don't tell anyone) Stryker and FBI Profiler Zach (yes, I may have a few issues) Littman were hot together, once they got it on. Yes, I know that we all had a fairly easy time finding out who the bad guy was, but it was getting to that final piece of evidence in time to save a certain person's life that I loved. Will be keeping an eye out for more books from this author.

Heller says

I really found the thriller aspect of this one pretty transparent so I didn't quite enjoy this as much as I was hoping I would. For me, the most disturbing aspect of this story was the Valentine killer and not the home invasions. I did enjoy the relationship build between Beck and Zack and liked that the men had a history. The chemistry was intense but not flash in the pan so I could see it working long term and I'd love to read more about these men as well as the secondary characters who I think have stories that need to be told.

Eric Westfall says

Hmmm. I normally don't read other reviews before writing my own, but when I came to the book page to do this, my eye was caught by a review that ultimately liked the book (with 3 stars) but found a lot of problems with it, from grammar issues to (if memory serves) a cardboard character.

Wow. Just shows to go ya, as the saying goes. How differently we all react to the same things. That's probably why, if four people see some event, there are usually 37 versions of what happened.

For what it's worth, I have the weird kind of mind that normally notices grammar things and typos even when I'm reading for enjoyment (like a current in progress book where the two main characters are having dinner, and the shifter is eating his "stake"), but I certainly noticed no such issues with High Concept.

In fact, I got hooked right from the start and kept on reading with minimal interruptions until I was done. I found it to be extraordinary and worth my five stars. I believed in Zach and Beck and their personal and psychological difficulties. I thoroughly enjoyed the fact that not too far into the book you know who the villain is, and you get to see things from his viewpoint, and you go along for the ride, watching Zach and Beck try to figure it out.

I liked the fact that the point of the book was to tell a story (a murder mystery that was well-thought-out, in my never-humble opinion) with a healthy heaping of romance thrown in. One of the other reviewers commented on the difference between books where the focus is the M/M romance, and ones where the romance is secondary to the story. I'd like to thank Gigi for making that comment.

It got me to thinking (danger, Eric Alan, danger). I'd never considered that difference but now that it has been brought to my attention...you know how to get the attention of a Missouri mule? Whap him between the eyes with a 2 x 4 >s<...she makes an excellent point.

And what she made me realize is that while I certainly enjoy the books where the focus of the story is the romance itself (watching it happen, seeing the obstacles in their path, the ultimate victory of love), I actually prefer this kind of book. Which will not deter me from giving a "just love" book 5 stars should I review one.

Anyway, as you've noticed I have a tendency to explain what I think and why I think it. So y'all will have to get used to that and hopefully enjoy going along for the ride, or "Oops! There's another one of Eric's reviews...click elsewhere!"

The point of all this? A superb book well worth your time and money. I look forward to reading more from this author.

Eric

MostlyDelores says

Editor Wanted. Desperately.

This book needed to be either shorter or longer. A lot of little blobby pieces of plot are stuck onto the story without adding anything--they needed to be either fleshed out into part of the action or removed entirely.

Think about your characters for a second. Does it make sense that your gay MCs would sneer at a "twink" receptionist? And don't hire your villains from a 1940s melodrama--or a cartoon.

The editor should have reined in some of the author's purple prose too, we were told a dozen times that October smells like wood smoke and I'm sure most readers had absorbed that after the first eleven.

Gigi says

First off, a word of caution: This was a murder mystery/FBI profiler case *first*, M/M romance *second*. I warn you because I usually shy away from those type of M/M books myself because they usually fail to hold my interest. It's all about the M/M romance for me. But High Concept had a fantastic plot and a very satisfying romance to go along with it.

MC Detective Beck Stryker is recently back to work after suffering the loss of his police officer partner,

Dan, and a debilitating gunshot wound to his shoulder. He is carrying around some *major* survivor's guilt and is constantly checking up on his partner's wife and her 2 young sons.

MC FBI Profiler Dr. Zach Littman has healed physically from an interview-gone-bad with a prison inmate 18 months earlier but still carries deep psychological scars from the incident. He has recently broken up with a long term boyfriend and feels incredible guilt over the disillusion of that relationship, even though he has no desire to get back together with him.

So, two seriously fucked up MCs, paired together to solve a crime. One thing leads to another, and they wind up in bed together. *grin* It's a delicious roller coaster ride of mystery, suspense, lust, sex, and emotion from there.

I can **absolutely recommend** High Concept to any and all lovers of police/FBI drama, mystery/suspense, hot, damaged boys finding each other and lovers of great M/M romance.

I'm so glad I didn't wait for more reviews and trusted my gut on this one because it was *totally* worth the \$8 sticker price. *dreamy sigh*

Debra says

3.5 stars

This is more a mystery/crime book with an underlying romance. I liked both MC's, Beck is a Denver cop recovering from a shooting that left him with a shoulder injury and PTSD and also resulted in the death of his partner and Zach, an FBI profiler who is also dealing with the aftermath of an attack he suffered while working a case, and thought they had good chemistry. Each is working through their own trauma while under intense job pressure and trying to work out their feelings towards each other. There are POVs from both main characters as well as the over the top bad guy.

I enjoyed the story overall, but felt there was a little too much going on, with a couple of plot points that felt unfinished and that the ending seemed more HFN on its way to HEA with a lot still left to work out between the two.

?♥? Michaeelle & ♥? says

4 Stars

I liked this one a whole lot better than the ratings suggested I would. Yes, it took a while for me to get into the groove of the story, but I liked the detective/profiling work and the characterization. And while I liked this couple, I honestly would read a prequel with Zach and his ex that covered the bit where Zach was injured working on that previous serial killer case...or at least a prequel novella that covers the whole of that case from him helping deal with the ex's drug abuse to Zach's recovery in the hospital and all...

Trisha Harrington says

I really, really liked the book. For a long time I did love the book. But there was a little niggle for me, and I wasn't able to get past it, so I decided to give the book 4.5 stars rounded down.

Beck and Zach both have issues. Both have had issues with a past relationship. And the two of them are dealing with their demons. Zach's are with his ex, Dean. Beck's are with his dead partner. He has a lot of guilt about his partner's death. And he's trying to support his widow and kids. On top of that, he has issues with a sort-of-ex. One who he has to see at work.

I loved the chemistry between the two MC's. The men were hot. I enjoyed the way they seemed almost shy to the idea of a real relationship. It wasn't really a romance, though. At least romance wasn't the main aspect of the book. For those who want a crime solving plot with romance thrown in, this would be the book for them. If you want a romance with a sprinkling of crime-solving, find another book.

My main issue with this book was the ending. I got the three words I wanted to read. But I felt like things resolved themselves too soon. I wanted the ending to drag out just the smallest amount. I could see a sequel working really well for this. We have things that could be dragged into another book. Apart from that, this was the perfect book for me. Just wish it had been a bit longer at the end.

Highly recommended for fans of cops.

jules0623 says

So just about everything I've read from Loose Id of late has been... not good. I admit that I opened this book expecting it to be yet another addition to my DNF shelf. So I was pleasantly surprised when I was caught up in the story from almost the first page. Good romance with flawed but still likable characters, a mystery that remained interesting and intriguing right up until the end, and secondary characters that weren't just cardboard cut outs.

Would read again. :)

JustJen "Miss Conduct" says

Review written for Hearts on Fire Reviews.

Detective Beck has been working on a case that has been nothing but dead ends. FBI profiler, Agent Zach, has been called in to assist on the case. These two met previously on a case where Beck tried to make a move on Zach, but, at the time, Zach was in a relationship and thwarted Beck's attempts.

Now, they are back together, working side by side, trying to solve the original murder and subsequent home break ins. Beck is dealing with PTSD issues obtained when his partner was killed at the original murder, at which he also sustained a major shoulder injury. He often suffers from flashbacks and anxiety and has bit of guilt about his surviving. He is attempting to fulfill a promise to his partner by taking care of his wife and

two kids.

Zach has his own similar issues which stem from an attack he suffered while interviewing an incarcerated murderer. This side story about the Valentine Killer, who randomly sends bloody valentine's cards to Zach, really felt like it might have been told in its own book. We get enough information to understand what's going on, but it felt like it was just thrown in there to support Zach's own PTSD issue.

This story centers around the mystery and crimes first, with the guys' attraction and subsequent relationship second. They eventually give in to their attraction, now that Zach is not attached, having broken up with his boyfriend two years prior. This was another aspect that made me feel like I missed a previous book. Zach and Dean. Zach broke up with Dean citing his inability to deal with Dean's drug addiction. But they remain friends (although Dean thinks they are more), mostly due to Zach's lasting guilt over their breakup.

Anyhoo, Zach and Beck are a great couple, both while investigating and between the sheets. Beck is trying to overcome his PTSD issues, deal with his shoulder injury and basically come out, which puts a bit of a strain on their relationship, while Zach is dealing with a few issues of his own. They eventually figure things out and what they each mean to the other, as well as where they want their futures to be, all while solving and taking on the criminals.

The thriller/mystery aspect of this was slightly predictable, but was enjoyable nonetheless. It moves along at a nice pace, and I had no issue with the writing style. I'll definitely be looking to read more from this author.

Otila says

DNF @ 51%

I started reading this in July of 2014. I couldn't really get into it so I put it aside. I picked it up again thinking that maybe, since I was already almost 1/2 way through, the book might somehow get interesting--it didn't.

Beck is a homicide detective looking into a case that left 5 people dead, including his partner. He's not at all happy when the FBI gets involved. Especially when he finds out the agent he'll be working with is Zach, the guy that turned him down 2 years before. Zach had been in a relationship back then but was always attracted to Beck. Even though he's single now, he's still not sure being with Beck is a good idea mainly because they're working on a case together but also because they both have lots of baggage.

I didn't feel any chemistry between Beck and Zach. There's supposed to be all kinds of sexual tension between them at the beginning, at least that's what the author keeps telling me, but I didn't see it. Once they do have sex it lacked any heat. It just left me feeling meh. There's lots of issues they're going to have to deal with like Zach's needy and clingy ex, Beck's PTSD, the fact that Beck is in the closet and I'm sure they come up later on in the book to provide some angst but I don't care enough to find out.

This isn't a mystery. The reader knows who the bad guy very early on. The MCs suspect him too so it's just a matter of proving it. Now I understand the police work in RL is probably not as interesting as they make it seem on TV. When I'm watching *Law & Order* they tend to skip or skim over the boring stuff like paperwork and going over every detail multiple times in a conference room. There's no skipping or

skimming over the boring stuff here. Nope. It's all there. Not only are there mundane details of the case but also of the characters everyday lives. I really don't need so much detail when someone brushes their teeth. Then there was the scene that showed the bad guy coming home to reheat his dinner. I'm sure that it was meant to show the reader how bad the bad guy is, since he's thinking about the murders as a way to advance his political career but it went into too much detail about everything else. He reads a note the maid left him that details *everything* that she left for dinner, what temperature to set the oven to and for how long to heat it. Why is it necessary for me to know all that? Then he scoffs at the note and just uses the microwave.. because bad guys don't use the oven? *shrugs*

Which brings me to my final complaint. There are too many POVs. The bad guy is very one dimensional so I don't understand why there were so many scenes from his perspective. Every scene drives home the point that he's evil but there's no other layer to him. He's a douche to everyone, he sits around making plans to kill anyone who gets in his way, yada, yada, yada.

There's another bad guy who also gets his own POV which seemed completely pointless to me. I think his scenes were there to show how it was possible for him to steal a phone and make a call to Beck from prison. The problem is they really didn't and it just felt like more unnecessary details bogging this book down.

Buda says

Well this one is tough to rate. There were parts I liked, parts I hated, and parts that just seemed desperate. Let's start with what I liked.

Zach and Beck were nice enough guys, both of them dealing with traumatic pasts, both of them showing their heroic hearts of gold through their dealings with loved ones (Zach's recovering addict ex and Beck's partner's widow). The plot was nice and convoluted, as you'd expect for a crime caper.

What I hated were some of the grammatical issues. The author continually contracts the word "had" onto names. "Zach'd" "Beck'd". In one paragraph around the 70-78% mark, she contracts "had" three times in a row. Those instances yanked me out of the story like a bad dog on a leash. Oh, right, that's the other thing. Similes abound in the book. Description is good, inane description is bad. Also, the guys just up and leave the precinct when the janitor they suspected of being not on the up and up is nowhere to be found. Really? REALLY??

The desperation came with the villain. It's no secret who he is, which irritated me because I like to try to figure it out with the guys. I understand the villain's scenes were probably inserted to break up the monotony of the story (there is *a lot* of paper chasing). However, the villain's scenes reminded me very much of the cartoons I watched growing up. My basic image of him is Skeletor. I kept waiting for the rubbing of hands and the evil laugh. Perhaps this was the goal; I have no idea. If so, well played; if not, cut it the hell out.

Also, it feels like the author simply ran out of steam. After the manufactured disagreement between Zach and, well, Zach, because Beck barely got a word in edgewise, it all went to hell. Oh right, that's where the climax starts, but it's poorly designed. (view spoiler) Moving on, the last scene? It felt truncated. I was left dissatisfied.

The stereotypes in the book bothered me, too. Zach's boss, Sands, communicates in a staccato fashion, brooking no argument, taking no bullshit. Beck's grumpy boss, nicknamed "The Man," but whose name I

can't even remember, chews antacids like they're chocolates, has an off-screen dying wife, and only has one redeeming scene (think Beck getting to the elevator). The female warden? Well, of course she's built like an East German gymnast with the personality to match. Xav-D, the flesh-eating serial killer, is, of course, black as night and ginormous. The old woman neighbor at Zach's temporary digs? Of course she's a flirty old thing. What, June Cleaver couldn't have fallen on hard times? It had to be Flo from Alice? Lazy characterization.

All this leads me to the central question: Where the hell was the editor? Loose Id, I'm talking to you. Step it up.

Okay, so now that I've ripped it to shreds, I have to say, it's not a bad book. I can't see reading it again and I am somewhat perturbed I paid \$8 for it, but, meh, lesson learned. The author shows promise. I look forward to *paying far less* for her next effort.

~◊~Doxni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says

4.5 stars

This was a gripping read with two slightly damaged (but still alpha) MCs. The mystery here worked and was interesting, an actual plot vs. just filler. And there was some smokin hot lovin. The ending did me in, though. I wanted a little more closure, a stronger HEA; an epilogue, damn it, I wanted an epilogue.

Pjm12 says

I found it intriguing how we were given Beck's damaged backstory (loss of partner, then rejected by closeted lover after being shot), right from the get-go, and yet we were kept in the dark about Zach's, which was revealed much slower and much later.

The secondary characters (Marybeth, Dean & Van) were brought in and taken out of the story as it suited the narrative but I didn't feel that was very organic. It seemed contrived to me.

But the mystery built in suspense extremely well, and although we were privy to the workings of the villain fairly early, it didn't hinder the effectiveness of the thrilling climax.

The boys worked and played together really well. I was glad they had time to fit in some lovin'.

Glad I read this one.

Christy says

This is my first book by this author, and if 'High Concept' is indicative of her writing style, then I will be reading more. I am fascinated by the psychology of why criminals, and particularly, serial killers, do what they do. The whys of it hold me in complete thrall. Don't get me wrong, I think it's horrific and ugly, but why people do something is the part that interests me. The whole nature versus nurture debate. So, the thought of reading a story with a homicide detective, an FBI profiler, and a killer, pushed all of my buttons.

Beck is a homicide detective who lost his partner in the line of fire four months ago. Beck was shot in the shoulder and had to have the bones all pinned together to give him something of a functioning appendage. He suffers from PTSD, nightmares, cold sweats, flashbacks, and guilt over Danny's death. He has not been cleared for active duty yet by his psychologist, mainly because he refuses to be partnered with anyone again, or his physical therapist. So, when his captain informs him he will be working with an FBI profiler on the home invasions, which coincidentally, Beck and Danny were working on, Beck is less than thrilled to have to babysit the feeb.

Zach is a forensic psychiatrist who has been with the Bureau for seven months, and returning to private practice is looking better and better. It's easy to become burnt out looking at the horrors people do to one another. He ended his last relationship but is trying to remain friends at the behest and insistence of his ex-lover. Heading off to Denver when he just finished a case in Omaha is not Zach's idea of fun. Especially when he finds out he'll be working with Beck. Two years prior, when Zach was in private practice, he spent two weeks consulting with Beck and Danny on a case. Beck made a pretty serious pass and Zach shut him down, due to being in a relationship. Zach can't wait to see how working with him is going to go over.

The mystery portion of this book was done fantastically well, with very little predictability. In fact, the way the author wove the different characters, plot lines, subterfuge, and overall crime performed, seemed almost more in tune with a murder mystery writer. I was thrilled! There's a prisoner with information whose new cell mate has ties to Zach's past. A high profile businessman with a bid for politics, a pretty nasty temper, and people in his pockets all around. Gave me shivers!

The romance between Zach and Beck was sizzling. They were so good together, not just sexually, but really compatible in so many ways that they simply meshed. It was so sweet to watch them fall in love with each other. It was way more than sweet to watch them sizzle together! Each brought baggage into this new relationship, but I really liked the way they dealt with any conflict. I especially enjoyed how they dealt with the huge miscommunication that almost ended them by not letting the other off the hook for mistakes and misperceptions.

I so enjoyed my first foray into a Whitley Gray novel. The writing was beautifully descriptive, the characters were solid, and the story line kept me entertained. I look forward to more books by this talented author.

NOTE: This book was provided by Loose Id for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.
