



# Stray

*Rachael Craw*

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*It's hard to remember hating anything as much as I hate Affinity; a bone-deep loathing for the faceless unknown and the concrete walls of my own DNA.*

Evie is a Shield: designed to kill in order to protect, and the Affinity Project have finally come for her. But Evie isn't ready for the sinister organisation to take control of her life, her body, her mind. She isn't ready to follow their rules about who may live and who must die – not when it condemns the innocent. She has one option: risk losing everything and everyone – including Jamie – and run.

## Stray Details

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Author : Rachael Craw

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## From Reader Review Stray for online ebook

### Ryan Buckby says

THIS BOOK HAS BLOWN MY FREAKING MIND!! I NEED TO BUY THE LAST BOOK IN THE SERIES!

i literally thought the first book was good but this book took me on an adventure where there was no point of return, everything that i wanted at the end of the first book i got in this book and i loved every single page.

The character development and story progression were on point in this story it was a serious step up from the first book. Evie's character in this book has changed so much from the first book, all of the choices she made will effect not only her but every other character going into the third book. I really thought Evie was going to get what she was working really hard for she came really close i was rooting for her so hard but i do hope she gets it in the last book.

The whole proxy and how it was raised was terrifying, like sacrificing a poor defenseless child in order to get more power over other people mad me so mad. Affinity is absolutely crazy and psychotic that i can't wrap my head around why they are doing it. Jamie did leave me heartbroken in this book but he did make up for it though, but i do love Jamie and Evie together they just work so well

showdown between Evie and Davis in shield please please let this happen because i want Davis to lose and go down!

this trilogy is becoming one of my favourite series, i strongly recommend everyone start this series because it really does live up to every expectation!

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### C.G. Drews says

**WOW THAT WAS INTENSE AND EXCITING.** Stray sure turned the heat up a notch from Spark which just pleases me like 900%. And I'm in love with the cover AND how the spines of this one and the first book are making a tree. Hopefully there will be 9 books, right, so we can have a massive tree? JUST THINKIN' OUT LOUD.

Okay, okay, I'll *shush* and get on with the review.

**So while I DO love these books and I adore the story...I always spend a good portion of the book confused.** Oops. I'm 99% sure this is my fault. I'm a fast reader and sometimes miss details (although I did purposefully slow down for Stray to try and soak it all in) and a lot of questions I had from bk 1 STILL plagued me in bk 2. Maybe I'm not supposed to have answers yet?! MAYBE THIS COMES IN BK 3 AND I MUST JUST BE PATIENT? Who can know. (Me. When I read bk 3. Which I will for 100% certain because these books are terrific.)

Anyhow, I still don't understand:

a) Why the Strays/Sparks/Shields exist? They're a mutation experiment (I think) but who created them and for what purpose? I get why you'd create Shields, because they're like super-humans and could make a nice

little psycho army for a villainous person to take over the world. Sensible. But why the Strays and Sparks? I is confused.

b) Why the *burn* to keep one person alive?? All Evie wants to do is protect Kitty, her Spark. bUT WHY???

Evie would kill *other* people to protect Kitty, right? So. Where is fairness?

c) Even after I finished I wasn't completely sure what the big push to keep Evie's true parentage a secret was for. Either I missed the reason or it hasn't come out yet?

But all these *really* chewed my brain while I was reading and I didn't enjoy Stray as MUCH as I thought I would. **But PUH-LEASE. I STILL LOVED IT.** Like I said, it was mega intense and exciting!! There is more secret-y X-Men style stuff going on here. Yes. I am talking labs and people floating in tanks of goo and telepathy and trackers and *all the insane awesome things*. I want this as a movie. I DO. Hello, Marvel? Please make these into superhero movies kthxbye.

**There's also quite a bit of character development, which is wonderful.** I reread my review of Stray and commented that Evie is a bit of a fainting lily, and...she kind of still is. BUT HECK. SHE KICKS BUTT, OKAY?! When she's nervous, she totally breaks doorknobs like Mr. Incredible. It is so freakishly cool. I love the *details* in these books.

Kitty definitely takes a backseat in this one, and there's a LOT of angst between Evie and Miriam. Oh oh and Jamie. OH JAIME. Talk about *agnst*. Evie and his relationship gets absolutely attacked, so it's interesting to see how they react and change to that. And **have I mentioned how much I HATE the "company" (or whatever it is) that owns them??!** Affinity are downright crazy and creepy and invasive. Talk about "no free will". I always get so emotionally caught up in books where free will is taken away and people are manipulated and controlled BECAUSE IT'S SO WRONG AND OMG LET ME FLY MY CAPTAIN AMERICA FLAG OF FREEDOM.

I want fairness! Down with Affinity! Cake and holidays to the Bahamas for the little adorable characters!

ALSO THERE IS A DEVASTATING DEATH THAT I DID NOT SEE COMING. Although, to be honest, I feel a little (view spoiler)

**I foresee so much awesomeness in the finale. I NEED IT.** I have quibbles and I struggled to understand the depth behind WHY the story was happening (although, as I said, I suspect this is just me, not the book) I still quite like this series. Suuuuperhuuuuumans FTW.

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### **Lexi // libraryoflexi says**

I received this wonderful book thanks to a Goodreads Giveaway!

I. Need. The. Next. Book. NOW!

Gimmegimmegimme

Also I cried for Aiden. Cried so much.

Dammit. Why Aiden \*cries for the next 10 years\*

EDIT - the next morning:

Now that I've slept on it I feel like I'm more able to review it apart from just GIMMEGIMMEGIMME.

These books are so refreshing. I have never read anything like it. The whole concept just blew me away. Also as much as the Aiden part made me cry I love how much Rachael Craw was about to step outside her comfort zone. Like you see so many authors avoiding doing something like that. Not that I'm condoning this! I might not live through another one D:

Anyways! If you're here, like I was once, looking at reviews and deciding whether to buy and read it.

DO IT

JUST

DO IT

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Now excuse me while I return to my blanket fort and continue crying

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### **Lulai says**

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I'm kind of a wreck with this ending.

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### **Els (Tragic Romantic) says**

A little disappointed in myself for not giving Spark four stars so that I could top that with five for Stray because let me tell you; Stray tops that. Review below also appears at <http://elspethlamorte.wordpress.com>.

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Sequels are tricky. They are tricky because you're not just trying to impress a new audience, you're trying to keep the one you already have. Intentions have changed because the reader knows the characters, they know the setting, and consequently there is more room for plot.

Personally, I love sequels, or at the very least I love the idea of them. There are a lot of series where the second book just didn't grab me in any way (for example the Scorch Trials caused me to lose interest in the entire series and the Chamber of Secrets is still by far my least favourite Harry Potter book) but then you look at series that just get better and better with each book (Throne of Glass series anyone?...)

This is one of those series. My immediate thought upon finishing Stray was actually to wonder if it would be terrible to go back and change my review of Spark to four stars just so that I could highlight how much better Stray is (Rachael has forbidden me to do this and we all know authors are delicate and prone to hysterics\* so I'd better not distress her). My follow up thoughts were all on the theme of emotional devastation because RACHAEL CRAW IS A SADIST.

Spark introduced us to the newly superpowered Evie who just wants to behave like a teenager and not be responsible for things all the time, it introduced us to Kitty aka the cutest person on the planet and it introduced us to Jamie 'Hot Stuff' Gallagher who is nice to look at but occasionally says or does stupid things because he is A Boy™. In Stray we get to know them all so much better and I was particularly thrilled by the

amount of time spent with Kitty! Besties are important you guys, and as previously mentioned... Kitty is the cutest.

This is an intense book, and I mean that in the sense that the action just keeps coming. Emotionally devastating action at that and honestly if you escape this book without even being just a little bit devastated emotionally I don't think we can be friends. (It's probable that a friend of mine has asked if it's possible to sue an author for such emotional devastation.)

Unfortunately... because this is a sequel and I really don't want to spoil anything for anyone who hasn't read Spark or hasn't made it to Stray yet I can't get too much into detail without my sentences looking like mail from 1941 as I agonise over the part where [redacted] was in the room with [redacted] and as a consequence [redacted] [redacted] and I wanted to scream. So I will say this; Stray might just be a perfect sequel. It finds new ways for us to love the series and the characters and as a story it's just so much stronger than its predecessor.

If you're new to the series now is the perfect time to pick it up, you can yell at me later.

\*What do you mean that's just me?

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### **Renée says**

Okay. **LET ME JUST CALM MY HEART BECAUSE I LITERALLY JUST HAD THE MOST INTENSE ROLLER COASTER OF A READ!!!**

First of all, this took me a long time to read because unfortunately sometimes when you're in your final year of school and it's the most intense time of year with all the homework ever \*sigh\* you have to put some things before books. (Which makes me sad!) BUT! Regardless of how long it took me to read it, I STILL LOVED STRAY SOOOOO MUCH!!!

Stray is the second novel in the Spark Trilogy by Rachael Craw.

*Set in the near future, a government organised human DNA genetic modification experiment has gone wrong, creating what are known as Shields, Sparks and Strays. The effects of these genetically coded humans are being tested and controlled, but new superhuman abilities seem to be developing further as each new generation of genetically modified humans reach the transition age.*

*To the rest of the world, Sparks, Shields and Strays are ordinary humans...but to each other, it's either kill or protect.*

*Continuing from where Spark finished off, Evie Everton and her friends are nervously awaiting a reprimand from The Affinity, the secret organisation in charge of controlling and training Shields, as well as trying to protect Sparks and eliminate Strays who threaten them. After so far escaped the notice of the organisation and participating in unapproved, Affinity-questionable activity, there is only so much time until someone comes to investigate. However, without the watchful gaze of The Affinity, Evie with the help of Kitty, Jamie and Miriam has witnessed something that could change the lives of the genetically modified forever.*

*From Halloween parties with her best friend Kitty and boyfriend Jamie, to breaking and entering into a detention centre, to being on the run, to Kinetic Memory Transfer and Kinetic Memory Harvest, and the desperation of love, lust and loss, Evie's life is about to change forever. But will she get a say in how it changes? Can she control her life when it seems her life is being controlled for her? And if she knows a truth so bone-deep within herself, how can she convince the Affinity without putting those she cares about in danger?*

Rachael Craw, you've done it again! *Stray* was as fabulous as the first one, with the same intense action and twisting mystery and suspense, interjected with HILARIOUS wit and humour, followed by crippling sadness! (No really, I was really VERY sad at some points!) I don't know how, but Rachael Craw has this fascinating way of making you FEEL MANY THINGS!!! There were countless times when I was gripping the book, or giggling manically to myself, or slamming down the book in awe/disbelief/NO WAY! because of a sentence or plot twist!

Craw's writing is fluid and descriptive, yet manages to draw out the right amount of tension and inject the energy into fast-paced (with one very well written slow motion!) action scenes. So many times I could vividly picture the scenes happening and I truly feel like I've been on Evie's journey with her. The inner discourse of Evie is so relatable and realistic, especially during scenes where she is conflicted or in a difficult situation. Her bravery and self talk is witty and confident and her confidence is vital in making the decisions she does and carrying them through. The exploration and dedication to Evie's characterisation and responses was really well done and is really what drove the story. She is a determined, strong-willed and outspoken character who is inspiring in her motives and actions, but who is also sassy and hilarious especially in lighter scenes with Kitty and Jamie! \*cough\* Champagne anyone? \*cough\* I admire her determination to help others, I LOVE her kickass plans and am in awe of her strength and fighting for the truth! Also, she has a pretty cool knack for figuring things out with common sense - YAY! HOORAY FOR EVIE!!!

Meanwhile, The Affinity. I DO NOT LIKE THE AFFINITY!!! Although they aren't explicitly 'the bad guys,' they are the controlling, narrow minded, stuck-to-the-old-ways type of organisation. They are manipulative and prying and don't like to be challenged. As much as I dislike them, they are some well written bad guys. They'll make you squirm. Also they have large needles and tasers.

The Proxy, who is another new character, is very interesting, slightly crazy, okay maybe A LOT crazy and sneaky. She ties in really well with the plot and helps to uncover some truths. I have to say she may be one of my favourite and most complex, interesting characters because you don't know whether to trust her or not, whose side she's on, whether she's good or bad, what her intentions are, yet you also get to know her enough to understand her motives. Plus she has cool eyes.

Like Spark, Rachael includes little references with etymology (or maybe I'm reading into things too much again!) which make her work richer and more complex and in some points hint at the plot.

E.g A character called 'Tesla' who is high up in The Affinity, reference to the founder of electricity (and y'know, 'Sparks' of electricity!)

Also, I've discussed this with Rachael, but a character called Helena who appears to be pining over love she can't have, seemed to me like a reference to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and fit in very well with the plot, but she swears she didn't mean it! (I still think it's cool.)

Jamie. \*swoons\* Jamie Gallagher is gorgeous, not going to lie, but in *Stray*, he was a bit of a dumby. It makes me sad when my ships aren't together, or are fighting or are frustrated with each other, but as Jamie points out very wisely: "You know, it is possible to be incredibly disappointed and angry with someone...and hurt and terrified by their choices...and still be in love with them at the same time." Ahh Jamie so smart. If

we weren't from Evie's POV I probably would have agreed with him and his worries more, BUT, we were in Evie's POV so I didn't. I AM SO READY FOR MORE EVIE JAMIE ACTION IN SHIELD!!! It was really heating up in some parts of Stray! (Nothing too serious, don't you worry children.)

Finally, WATCH OUT FOR PLOT TWISTS BECAUSE JUST WHEN YOU THINK IT'S GOING TO BE ALL SUNSHINE AND DAISIES AND LOLLIPOPS- well, you all know what a plot twist is. (But MAN can that Rachael Craw plot twist!)

Overall, YOU SHOULD ALL JUST READ STRAY! NOW! Actually make sure you've read Spark first because otherwise you'll have no clue what is going on, but then YES READ READ READ!!!! 5 OUT OF 5 STARS TO THIS GLORIOUS AMAZING BOOK!!! Hopefully you finish it quicker than I did due to less homework and more time.

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### **Abbey says**

Oh my... Rachael Craw, you wonderful author you, have done it again. Wait until you read this one!!!

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### **Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says**

<http://www.divabooknerd.com/2015/09/s...>

Harder, faster and far more intense than Spark. I fell in love, then I fell apart. Emotional, fierce and I loved every moment.

Stray was **explosive!** Superhero teens with strength, speed and skill beyond the realm of human DNA. They walk among us, belonging to a ruthless organisation simply known as The Infinity Project, abiding by their rules in order to survive. Evie is a Spark, an engineered protector who only recently learnt that her life has been a lie. Her mother isn't who she thought she was and now Evie has a twin brother, locked away after his attempt on Kitty's life, Evie's best friend who she was created to protect. But as Evie's blood helped breathe life back into Aidan, Evie also believes it has deactivated his urge to harm Kitty and knows the only way to keep him safe is to prove he is no longer a threat. Not an easy task while he is currently behind bars.

True to her nature, Evie is selfless and to free Aidan, she must challenge everything she's been taught and betray both Miriam and Jamie, Kitty's brother and the boy who is destined to be with another. In Stray, Evie faces even greater challenges. She is now being tracked by The Affinity Project, so her controversial relationship with Jamie is on the verge of potentially destroying them both. Readers also learn more about Affinity, the secret organisation that treats those with the unique DNA sequence as mere objects, to manipulate, to control and to do their bidding. Evie is now faster, illegally trained and in order to help Aidan escape and his survival, is forced to take Affinity on... And win.

Stray is by far more emotional than it's predecessor. **It was glorious and beautifully written.** This series gathers strength with each installment, setting the scene for Evie and the spic showdown against those who believe they can control her. They're sorely mistaken. It's epic and demands to be read.

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## **Grace says**

GOODBYE EVERYONE I HAVE DECIDED TO LEAVE EARTH BECAUSE THIS BOOK JUST THREW MY SOUL INTO THE DARK ABYSS AND LEFT IT TO DIE

I thought the first book was amazing. This one was even better.

I can't even begin to describe what I am feeling right now.

This book filled me with so much hope, and then grief, and THEN utter disbelief + more grief. It was the perfect book to start the year off with and I am so glad that I had the amazing opportunity to read and escape into this phenomenal world yet again. It's books like this that make reading and endless hours of sleeplessness totally worthwhile, and I just can't express how happy I am that this book exists! This trilogy is definitely a favourite in the making and I'm sure that the final instalment will be just as fantastic.

The characters were all still so intriguing and original, and the plot was just as mind blowing and SCARY as the one in 'Spark'. Rachael definitely has her own groove and distinct style in the book world and it will never cease to amaze me. I cannot wait, literally, CANNOT WAIT, for 'Shield', because I need to know EVERYTHING else that accompanies this story and the characters within, as it has built and now holds a permanent threshold to the place that is my heart.

The countdown begins.

If you have not yet read these books, I advise that you drop everything that you are currently doing and go and buy or borrow a copy and allow yourself the gift of Rachel Caw's writing. You will not be disappointed. Rachael, you have done it again. Please never stop!!!!

**\*\*HIGHLY RECOMMEND\*\***

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## **Bethany says**

I have no idea where to begin. First off, it was really good. I just loved it! Probably the best sequel I have read in a long time. It's a shame that I still technically went it blind as I forgot what exactly happened in Spark. Oops. But oh well. I still enjoyed. I started remembering what happened in Spark because as I continued, I remembered Evie's determination to protect Kitty from her brother, Aiden. And her loooooooooove with Jamie~

Oh yeah, Aiden. Tears were spilt. Why did HE have to die?? WHY???

This is becoming a mess of a review. Let's go back to square one. Stray starts off where Spark ended, I think. Hard to remember. Probably did if it's a sequel. Okay maybe not, as it opens up with Evie getting drunk (Thank you Kitty) when she shouldn't have, and doing an awesome jump over a refreshments tables because some cheerleader was clinging to Jamie. A+ right there! Thank you Kitty. Thank you. And then after that is when things get messy. In a good way. Poor Evie gets checked out/examined by the I Don't Know, the ones behind it all. Yay. Pretty interesting actually. And if I remember correctly, it was after that, Evie just pretty much takes Kitty with her to get her brother out of custody (my brain...I'm forgetting already! So sorry!). Wow, Kitty doesn't exactly join her in the break in. Even though that would have been really interesting. Kitty doing awesome stunts would have been fun to read. Knocking out some guards while she's at it. Evie gets Aiden out of there (made me laugh in several parts too), things happen, Kitty and Evie literally cuddle up to Aiden to warm him up. That is a every man's dream, I think. Is it? Kitty cuts Evie's tracker out, they drop Aiden off at the train station, and Kitty and Evie go to a, what's it called...service station...only to bump

into Benjamin and Davis. Okay, I'm not gonna summarise the whole book otherwise...you're gonna be seeing me slowly forget minor details.

Let's get to Aiden's death. When he died, I actually had no idea what was going on. I thought it was all a dream sequence so I was like, "he's not dead" until I reached the next chapter and realised, he was dead. I was so sad. Like, no! Aiden. Why him of all people? Why not...Benjamin??? I really hated Benjamin. I knew something was up...Never liked him. Surprisingly i really liked Davis. But Aiden. I will forever be crying inside for him. He was an angel. Screw you Proxy! And Benjamin!

Alright, as usual, there is always something that annoys me in a book. Jamie and Evie's relationship. I know everything was going by really fast but I really thought the whole Jamie being upset with Evie part because Kitty decided to help her with Aiden was a little forced. It happens in almost every young adult book. Where the main couple don't sit down and explain to each other about their actions. Like, I thought those two could have figured it out three quarters of the way through the book. Well, that's just me though. Maybe I'm getting sick of the couples fight and don't work it out till the end trope.

Ah, all in all, I liked the book! I'm glad we found out who Evie and Aiden's father was. Ethan...gosh I loved him. And oh my god! Evie's fainting thing was cured! Yay, for Proxy! YAY! No more fainting spells for Evie! No, for Aiden! I hope he comes back from the dead in Shield.

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### **Cassie says**

Time taken: 8 hours. (with some interruptions)

*Full review coming soon...with many gifs*

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### **Sophia Fregona says**

I loved it

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### **Jeann (Happy Indulgence) says**

What a fast paced and exciting adventure!! I just love Evie and Kitty's supportive friendship and the snarky lines and humour! AND JAMIE WHAT A HOTTIE. This one is filled with twists and turns and pure awesomeness and I can't wait to let you guys know how much I loved it in my full review!

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This review appears on Happy Indulgence! Check it out for more reviews.

If you're looking for a YA sci-fi read with a unique concept and lots of action, then the Spark series is perfect! The first book introduced us to the concept of Sparks, Strays and Shields who are genetically engineered to activate, protect and hunt each other down with enhanced abilities. Stray really hits the ground running by amping everything up – from the nonstop action, to the fast paced plot, twists and fun banter and

relationships between Evie, her family and friends.

Stray is filled with competing scientific agendas at the hands of the Affinity Project – those who have genetically modified Evie and her friends, and it's terrifying how she's at the Mercy of them. Evie is poked, prodded, and even neutered here which serves for a horrifying experience. She's told what she can and can't do, who she has to stay away from and how she can't even have sex with the guy she loves. Despite all of this, Evie's focused on the things that are important to her- proving her brother Aiden's innocence, and protecting her best friend Kitty. Evie is kick ass, impulsive, loyal and fiercely protective of her friends and family and I just loved that about her.

While the sci-fi elements were info dumpy in the first book, they are weaved elegantly into the plot of Stray. Although a refresher on the concepts in Spark definitely helped, I loved how the chemical reactions, DNA manipulation and abilities were explained and integrated as part of the story. I did find I had to re-read a few passages to really understand what was going on, but managed to pick things up as the story went on.

But at the heart of Stray, are it's close knit relationships with friends, family and lovers. I loved the relationship Evie had with her family – Aiden and Miriam, as complicated as their circumstances were. You could sense that the overwhelming feeling between them all was love, and they wanted the best for each other and to protect one another. Evie's friendship with Kitty was built upon love and support, and I loved their witty banter, their trust for one another and how they would do anything to help each other.

And Jamie was completely HOT. You could just feel the pure chemistry between him and Evie and I just wanted them to truly be together. I loved their banter and how Jamie is such a complete gentlemen with her. Their romance is a forbidden one which is a bit cliche however, but there was so much more happening here for this to be a sore point.

My only criticism with Stray, is that there seems to be so much happening in the novel that leads to a lot of loose threads. I wanted to know more about Proxy and how she came to be, about why there wasn't really a focus on Miriam and Tesla's circumstances, more about Strikers, and of course, more development with Jamie. Some of these may be answered in the next book, however. Some of the characters being introduced didn't really get developed for me, such as Felicity or Benjamin.

With it's fast pace filled with twists, non-stop action and danger, Stray was an excellent follow up to the sci-fi world of genetically mutated teens. The plot is exciting, intense and constantly moving, with excellent character relationships and a kick ass heroine at its center. I loved all of the scientific twists and can't wait for the next book!

*I received a review copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.*

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### **Emily Mead says**

Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy. My poor heart.

GAH, I'll save some of my thoughts for the actual review, but guys, you're going to LOVE this. It's so much darker and more intense and there's the PROXY who is such a cool character and Kitty (LOVE KITTY) is sassy as ever and I just aslkjdlkdslkdf.

I loved it so much <3

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### **Sam Whitehouse says**

So apparently I forgot how this book ended because this is my second read and I'm a mess? Like, the tears everywhere, sore eyes kind of mess. Uh Rachael, how dare you? Also, I'm hopelessly attached to this series. I am so scared and excited to read Shield!! I love Stray, mostly for its complex relationships...you learn so much about every character. Oh man. The book hangover right now is in full swing!

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