



Cold-Hearted Concept

Whitley Gray

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Detective Beck Stryker has a lot to juggle: his long-distance relationship with FBI profiler Zach Littman, the family issues of cop widow Marybeth Halliday and her two boys, and the ups and downs of being out and proud. To top it off, Beck must work with his closeted ex-lover Van on the case of a skeleton discovered in the woods.

FBI profiler Dr. Zach Littman has been working on an exit strategy for months. Every time he's on the brink of resigning, Minneapolis Unit Director Sands comes up with "one more case," one that only Zach can manage. It's a situation that frustrates Beck. Zach has promised he'll leave the FBI and profiling behind—as soon as his Colorado medical license comes through. It may be easier said than done. Zach has reservations about uprooting his life and moving to Denver.

A killer leaves a grisly invitation insisting Zach participate in a deadly game, the rules of which are known only to the psychopath. It's clear taking out Zach is on the killer's to-do list, and he won't stop until it's done. Beck and Zach must capture the killer before the psychopath finds Zach and declares Game Over.

Cold-Hearted Concept Details

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From Reader Review Cold-Hearted Concept for online ebook

Lisa Foulke says

Book #2 in the Concepts series. And I sincerely hope there's a book #3. I really like the main characters a lot: They're smart, they have great chemistry, and they actually talk to one another.

The bad guy in this one was vile. I don't know if this is a spoiler, but the blood stuff that he does for a living and how he tortures his victims hit my needle phobia. Toward the end of the book, I noticed I was curled into myself because of what was happening. I can't remember the last time that happened.

And finally, good lord Van is a jackass. But I still feel sorry for him.

Natalie says

Yeah, it was a long story.

I found this quite riveting. It was incredibly suspenseful, with a lot of tedious police work thrown in. Woven into it was the building of a relationship between two driven, dedicated professionals. They were also two men deeply in love. There was a side plot with Dan's family, the family of Beck's deceased partner. The author gave us views into the killers mind and motivations. It all came together as a chilling slow-motion chase, with Zach and Beck painstakingly following clues. We kind of know who the killer is but not WHO the killer is.

I couldn't give this less than five stars, since I enjoyed it so much. It was frustrating in many ways, as they came so close to answers but couldn't get it quite right. It seemed implausible that certain information wouldn't have been followed up on, when it seemed so obvious. I was rather disappointed at the ending. I wanted a little more to the closure after the climactic events. It felt too abrupt and wrapped up quickly for all the issues that were raised throughout the book. It was a bit like book one that way, so perhaps there is more to come. I could see some of the secondary characters having their own stories.

Tania says

Well written, creepy and thrilling as hell! Great read.

Portia says

Since I'm guessing that OMFG is not enough of a review, I'll try to briefly state why I loved this book, without sounding too fan girl.

For those of you who follow my reviews, you know that Romantic Suspense is my absolute favorite genre. In my humble opinion, there is nothing better than a tight mystery wrapped around a steamy love affair. Whitley Grey has done just that...in spades.

Now, the worst way to mess up a good mystery is to let me figure out the bad guys too early. Unfortunately, now that I do most of my reading on a Kindle, I can't just skip to the end of the book.

The plotting of Cold-Hearted Concept is absolutely perfect. I was guessing until the end. There are plenty of clues, but just as many red herrings.

And of course, every good romantic suspense, need a great leading couple. Zach and Beck are soooo it. Both men are strong and good at their jobs. Both question if being together is worth all the changes and sacrifices that each must make.

In the end, both the romance and the suspense left me satisfied.

Highly recommending.

Mari Cardenas ~ Bayou Book Junkie says

*** Copy provided to Bayou Book Junkie in exchange for a fair and honest review. ***

While this book is part of a series, it can be read as a standalone, but after reading it like that, I have to say I think you'll connect better with the characters if you read them in order.

Beck and Zach have been trying to have a long-distance relationship for a few months, but so far, it's not going great. In the last month, Zach has cancelled his plans to visit Beck in Denver several times and that is taking a toll on both of them. Zach has decided to give up his work as an FBI profiler, but his boss keeps asking for one last favor until he finds just the one that will keep him at his job for a little while longer. That the job is in Denver, is just a bonus. However, things are not perfect between Beck and Zach, with the added pressure of trying to catch the Follower before he catches them.

This was such an engaging, thrilling read! I was completely engrossed in the action, in the suspense as Beck and Zach worked side by side to catch a killer before he murdered again and navigating through their relationship while trying to reach some kind of compromise. Never mind that there were so many things happening at the same time, not just the killer angle. Yes, the book is long, but it's so good, I didn't want to put it down until I finished!

Definitely recommendable!

Rating: 5 Stars!!!

Bev says

I loved High Concept, there just don't seem to be a lot of whodunit/mystery/suspense type stories in the M/M genre, and Whitley did a wonderful job in the first book and made me root for the two MC's, Beck and Zach. I'm happy to say they both feature front and centre this time around too. 5 stars from me.

Beck Stryker is a cop in the Denver PD, and a murder task force leader. Dr Zach Littman is a profiler for the FBI but based in Minneapolis. Since the end of the last story, they've been having a long distance relationship but neither is happy about it, and Beck hopes that Zach will tell the FBI where to go, and take a

job nearer Denver. When yet another serial killer strikes, has victims in both Omaha and Denver **and** seems to mimic what the killer Xavier Darling did in High Concept, they are flummoxed, as Xav-D is in a maximum security jail on the outskirts of Denver and is not allowed visitors unless it's under strict conditions. Worst of all, the Follower as he becomes known, has Zach in his sights and has warned everyone that Zach **will** be victim number 5. We then have a race against time, trying to identify other victims of the mass murderer AND the murderer himself, AND prevent him killing anyone else before his prophecy comes true.

I will warn you, there is some pretty gory stuff in this story. It was fascinating, breathtaking at times, and the ending was particularly nasty...but do my two guys make it at the end?? Enjoy the story, I certainly did!! Great job Whitley!!

ConM says

A very, very good suspense, with a mm romance.

This book was much better written than Book 1, it sucked me in from page 1.

I want to read more about these guys and their co-workers/friends/ex-lovers.

Linda says

Intense page Turner.

Both books in this Concepts series are riveting page turners. Whitley Gray has captured and put into written word the absolute insanity and horror of the serial killer mindset. The up hill battle all branches of law enforcement face in trying to piece together what clues they do have and try to find and stop these killers is often times stymied by jurisdiction, uncooperative statements by people with ties to the victims and our own laws, which at times seems to give more protection to convicted killers. I realize there are valid reasons for these types of road blocks to investigations but how many times have known killers gotten off because of the letter of the law and procedural protocol?

What a minefield law enforcement must navigate while trying to capture this type of criminal and still be expected to protect us from being the next victim.

Ms Gray has embodied this series with insight into what these steps encompass and how these horrific crimes affect those who are embroiled in the aftermath.

The two main characters, Beck and Zach come together with a shared desire to solve these murders and find a love for one another that survives against all odds.

I don't know if there will be another book in this amazing series but if so, it will be on my Buy Now list.

Kudos Msg Gray on writing such captivating series.

Christy says

I apologize profusely to the author for taking so long to read this second installment in the 'Concepts' series. Considering how much I loved the first book and that, at the time, Whitley Gray was a new-to-me author, I have been waiting for this next story with Beck and Zach. I couldn't wait to dig in to more homicide, hot sex,

and fabulous characters! So if I forget to say it when I'm done, thank you, Whitley.

"There was no longer any reason not to leave the behavioral unit. Other than Zach's reluctance. If it weren't for that niggling feeling that no one else could manage Zach's cases as well as he had, it would be easy to leave the unit. Maybe his ego was the main roadblock here. Maybe loss of control was."

It was tough to see Zach struggling with leaving the FBI. Even though Beck understands it's not him who is giving up his cases, stuff that he worked hard on, and that are still not resolved. Now it seems a second killer is taunting Zach and he gets dragged back into profiling for the FBI even though he is on leave before resigning. The new killer has tied it into Denver and Beck is so not happy about this turn of events. Beck's insecurities are riding him, afraid that Zach is going to go back to the FBI and he'll lose him completely.

As the killer intensifies, the stress and tension between Zach and Beck escalates. I could have told Beck that keeping information from Zach, even if Beck feels he's protecting him, is not a good start to a living-together relationship that's already a wee bit precarious. Communication guys, that's what you need to be doing. Well, that and compromising... at least from Beck since it appears that Zach has given everything up, so far. When Zach's boss at the FBI calls him back onboard for this case (oh yeah, Zach forgot to tell Beck he hadn't resigned, he's on paid leave) the tension ratchets up higher than ever. Luckily for them they figure out how to communicate and work together again to solve the case.

I did not enjoy 'Cold-Hearted Concept' as much as I did the first book in the series. The mystery, suspense, and thrill ride were definitely there, but that portion of the storyline was a little too convoluted for me. There were several plots occurring at the same time and, in my opinion, the book wasn't as streamlined with the plot or with the characters and some of my enjoyment was lost because of this.

Definitely bone-chilling looking into the minds of these serial killers and I think the author did a great job with the psychological aspects. I definitely got a little frustrated a few times at the back and forth between Zach and Beck in regards to their relationship. However, I'm definitely willing to give the author the benefit of the doubt because she didn't wrap this case up quickly like it's done on TV in an hour. 'Cold-Hearted Concept' certainly showed the time, the manpower, and the frustration that must occur for law enforcement on these cases that last months or even years.

If you enjoy a detailed murder mystery with a lot of psychological aspects, a homicide detective and a profiler who can't seem to communicate worth a darn (except in bed), and a grisly unsub then this is definitely the read for you and I can highly recommend it.

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

Dianne says

A resounding five stars for this page turning thriller - Cold-Hearted Concept has made it on to my top ten list for 2015.

This is a sequel I've been highly anticipating, and wow, did the author ever deliver. Big time! FBI profiler Zach Littman and Denver homicide detective Beck Stryker are back several months following the hair raising events of 'High Concept'. These are two wonderfully portrayed characters. Both men are intelligent, intuitive, respected, compassionate, cool under pressure and very much in love with one another. There are only a few things keeping them from building a happy new life together. Things like: a serial killer who has Zach in their sights, the needy family of Beck's killed in the line of duty partner, an ex-lover, the allure of an FBI promotion, and the weight of past abandonment.

In deftly weaving together all of these elements, the author has created a nail biting page turner. I relish how long this story is. It's meaty, it's meaningful, it's mesmerizing - not a single word is superfluous. I found the investigative angles of the detailed day by day, hour by hour, step by step, multi-jurisdictional murder investigation entirely fascinating. The case is also fairly creepy. If you stay up late reading this like I did - and I bet you will - be sure to leave some lights on! The building of the romance dynamic between Zach and Beck while they are up to their eyeballs in a major - and personal - investigation is one of the most extremely genuine I've ever read. I love these two strong, yet vulnerable men for their individual merits. Together they rock not only the sheets, but their badges as well. Spellbinding, suspenseful, surprising, sexy. This story is all that and more. Such an extremely satisfying read. I'm already geared up for more Zach and Beck!

Birte says

I had to wait a long time for book 2 to be published, but it was totally worth it. :)

Claudia says

This was a great second book in this series and I really, really enjoyed it. the mystery is nearly perfectly done and kept me on my toes.

the relationship was well done as well, although there were some parts that did not nearly fit as well as in the first book.

nevertheless, Beck and Zach are a great couple and I really, really hope there will be another book with these two.

Julie says

Excellent. I thought this was even better than the first book, and I loved the first book. There was a lot of attention to detail, and the story was taut and suspenseful. I had a hard time putting this down, and when I was away from the book, would ruminate over the crime. I really enjoy this type of crime thriller, especially when it is done well. Beck and Zach are terrific characters. Highly recommended.

Lisa The Novel Approach says

I was highly looking forward to this sequel. I totally enjoyed book one, High Concept, and getting to know the main characters, Beck and Zach. I really wanted to know more about them. Just a heads up – these books read like an episode of Criminal Minds; they are a crime drama procedural first, and a romance second—even though the relationship between the two main characters is truly brought forward in this second book. There is violence and graphic imagery contained within the storyline, so if that is a trigger for you, then be aware.

I have to say I could not put this book down. I read it straight through from beginning to end. To read that way is exceptionally rare for me and a testament to how well this book is written. Cold-Hearted Concept has a few tricks up its proverbial sleeve, and the only one who knows what's going on is the serial killer. Why does he kill? How does he pick his victims? What does it all mean to him? Is he just crazy or brilliantly

crazy? Just how many killers are we talking about here, and how is it possible that they all fit together? And why do they always have to make it so personal? Zach and Ben are working desperately to find the killer(s), and navigate a new relationship, and their struggles are woven into the storyline seamlessly. Whitley Gray does a fantastic job of creating authentic characters—some you love, some you hate, and some who just creep you out—but they are all riveting.

The first one has been a novelty, back before he'd known what he was doing. It took time to adjust to the feel of the knife going into a sentient being – so different from carving cold, dead skin. The utter control and domination he'd exerted over the live girl had generated a much more gratifying response.

Beck Stryker is a detective on the Denver Police Force. He recently came out for his new boyfriend, Zach, and untangled himself from a relationship with his coworker, Van, that was unhealthy and closeted. He's desperately trying to hold it all together at work, and balance his personal life at the same time. The love that he and Zach share is never in doubt, but is love enough when your new boyfriend is a highly skilled FBI profiler? Beck desperately wants to be "enough" for Zach. Beck is a mountain of steadfastness for the people in his life, and he wants to be that for Zach if the man will let him.

Zach Littman is young, an FBI profiler and a good one. He flies all over the country making profiles of murderers so that local law enforcement agencies know the nature of the killers they are after. Zach gets a thrill from matching wits with serial killers. He loves his job, but he loves Beck more... right? There are so many demands on Zach, from his boss at the FBI to the fascination from a serial killer; how can he keep Beck happy and alive and not become the next victim? I have to say I loved/hated Zach. He tends to have an inflated sense of himself, and it takes a lot for him to learn the lesson that the people in your life should mean more than your job does. Zach's choices have hurt the ones he loves before, so why does he keep making the same choices?

Shivers. This book gave me shivers and goosebumps. I had to keep reading because I just had to KNOW what came next in the story, and I had to finish it well before bedtime because there was no way I would be able to sleep with this imagery in my head. The inside of a serial killer's mind is scary place to be, and Whitley Gray does an excellent job of taking you there. I would love to have a story for Van next. If you had told me from book one I would feel sorry for his character, I wouldn't have believed you. But I can see redemption there... maybe. This is book two in the Concepts Series and a standalone—you do not have to read book one to understand what is going on in this story—but it would help, as there are crossover characters as well as plot lines, but not absolutely necessary. The writing in this book is spot on, the storyline believable and well thought out. All in all, Cold-Hearted Concept is a truly great, shiver inducing read.

Reviewed by Carrie for The Novel Approach
<http://www.thenovelapproachreviews.co...>

Simone says

Wow... just wow!

Normally, I don't write reviews, especially not in English, but this book definitely deserves one. It's absolutely brilliant. Cold-Hearted Concept sucks you right into the story and leaves you biting your nails and sitting at the edge of your seat. I love it, when a book makes me feel as if a movie happens in my head and the author managed it with her excellent style of writing, the creating of suspense und the absolute authentic and great characters.

I loved Homicide-Detective Beck Stryker and FBI Profiler Zach Littman right from the start in the first book

of this series (High Concept) and even more so in Cold-Hearted Concept. You feel their deep love for each other, even if there are still a lot of insecurities about their long-distance relationship and the decisions they have to make to change that.

The tension is palpable - the EVIL is palpable - and the villain gave me the creeps! So much so, that I had a sleepless night...

I can't recommend Cold-Hearted Concept highly enough, because it's a book you can't put down, but at the same it's a ride you don't want to end. Since it's part of a series, it's important to read High Concept first!

I'd love to read more of this series and I hope, that Ruskin (Zach's friend and fellow FBI Agent) gets his own book.
