



Libra: Outlined In Ink

Vivien Dean

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Someone wants what sketch artist Eli Locke has, even if it means killing him...

Six years earlier, Jarrett Kessel helped his best friend's little brother, Eli, deal with his family's rejection when he came out. Jarrett saw potential in the tempestuous teenager. And talent. Then, they both moved on with their lives.

Now, the FBI needs Jarrett's help. Eli Locke is their only lead in solving a murder, but he's nowhere to be found. Though the Feds are convinced Jarrett is the best way to locate Eli, he's not so sure. Until they show him the webcomic Eli has created, with a superhero who bears a striking resemblance to Jarrett.

When Eli gets an email out of the blue from the man who changed his life, he doesn't even consider declining a meeting. Jarrett is even more amazing than Eli remembers, and the fact that he's all right being the role model for the one thing that means the most to Eli is just icing on the cake.

But when the truth about the murder investigation comes out, Eli wants to run, even though he had nothing to do with the crime. Now it's up to Jarrett to keep Eli from ruining his life for good, before the killer finds them both and does it first...

Libra: Outlined In Ink Details

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Brett says

This has to be one of the best m/m books I've read in a long while. I know that's a pretty strong statement, and some people might be skeptical of the truthfulness of it, but it's true.

A lot of things combine to make this story amazing. The characters are well thought out, and brilliantly executed. The two protagonists are compelling, both individually and as a couple, and even the supporting characters are interesting...they have motivations, make mistakes, and are pretty 3D, which is something that I find lacking in most modern fiction.

But where this story really shines is the plot. A good story has great characters AND great plot, and the plot here is exciting and well-paced. I never felt like the story was dragging or rushed; the tense moments were well-balanced with the romance and the mystery involved, moving nearly seamlessly from scene to scene, and from one conflict to the next. The mystery of what is going on and who is behind the attacks...and more importantly, who to trust...made for a suspenseful read, one that kept me guessing until the end, which is rarely the case.

The sex is pretty hot, and in no way overpowers the plot. In fact, for me, it was another factor to balance...just when I felt the mystery getting too intense, or starting to bore me, the romance and sex heated up, and vice versa. I had a really good sense of the history of these two characters, and how the situation they're catapulted into helps to cement a bond that started years before.

That aspect, though, is one of my few niggles about the story. The fact that these two characters were very attracted to each other in the past didn't quite jive with the intervening years. I understand why Jarrett didn't pursue the young Eli...he wasn't quite or barely legal, and their age difference was much more sharply felt at that time. My problem lies with the fact that neither of them kept in touch with the other, either through direct communication or checking up on them through internet searches, etc. If the attraction was really that strong, particularly in Eli's case, it would be a little more believable that he would have at least known what Jarrett did for a living, or that he lived in the same city. This is alleviated somewhat by the fact that Eli is writing his comic starring a Jarrett lookalike...but as Eli says, the character Sovereign is based on his perception of Jarrett idealized, but has his own history and background separate from reality.

Another small niggle was the ending; the turmoil they're embroiled seemed to end a little abruptly, and while it's implied that their involvement in the investigation isn't over, we still don't get much of a resolution to what was going on, and how exactly Eli played into the greater scheme other than his comics and site were involved in criminal activity. I would love to see a follow-up story, even a short, that gives us more of a resolution to the case, as well as a glimpse at how Eli and Jarrett are coming along with a relationship not influenced by the tension and fast pace of being chased and shot at by both criminals and law enforcement.

An excellent story, and one I highly recommend to pretty much anyone.

Mandi says

Interesting murder/mystery, but you're left with a few questions at the end. Though I did fall in love with

Jarrett and Eli! I enjoyed their interactions, and the attraction between them was smokin'. :)

I do wish it was a bit longer to clear up a few things, but other than that, a some very solid story-telling.

jules0623 says

3.5 stars.

Eva says

Apparently I suck at reading blurbs and for some reason I thought Jarrett worked for the FBI. Despite that misunderstanding, and the fact that Eli's way of thinking was a bit strange I did end up liking this story.

But it bothered me that there was no final answer to who was behind the theft. So while we get a happy ending for our MCs, there is no final solution for the crime that was being investigated.

Clover says

a very interesting book with a good mystery plot and strong characters.

ElaineY says

Loved Eli and Jarrett. 5 stars for them. 3 stars for the overall story because so many loose ends were left dangling. When the book ended, we are still not told who Sandora is, who he's working for, how Baptiste got caught up in it, what did Fong do, exactly, ie what really was the crime? I only got suppositions and guesses from the Feebs but nothing concrete even up to the last page. I can only assume that there's going to be a sequel where these questions will be answered but I'm not sure I will be reading it.

Buy this for the MC, not the suspense plot because this installment (again, am assuming there's a sequel) is clearly about Eli and Jarret meeting up again several years later when Eli is all grown up. The FBI stuff is horrid mess.

There's also an error which, in this day and age of Google and Wiki, is inexcusable: Fong, an unmistakably Chinese name, is described as "an attractive Japanese man". Chinese names are single syllable - Fong, Chong, Yuen, Kwan etc, whereas Japanese names have several syllables - Matsushita, Kawasaki, Yamamoto, Watanabe et al.

Zuyuan says

Good story if you pretend to see not many many holes in it.

Andrea says

Readable but memorable only in that it got more and more outrageous as it went on. The main characters were very well written but all the others were over the top and not at all believable. Could have been fantastic but passed from suspense to some sort of slapstick comedy. Unfortunately, I don't think it was supposed to be funny.

Meggie says

The story is fun, full of mystery and main couple, that's Eli and Jarrett, are comical, you feel the attraction between them.

Good written.

Recommended !

Ami says

In this latest of the "Boys of the Zodiac" series: Jarrett Kassel's life turns inside out when he receives a visit by the FBI. They need Jarrett's help to find Elias Locke, for information regarding a murder. Eli, is the younger brother of Jarrett's friend. It seems that Eli has been using Jarrett as a model for his webcomic for years and FBI thinks that the website has something to do with the murder victim. When Jarrett meets Eli again, he realizes that he doesn't want to give up Eli to the FBI just yet, as he is sure the young man doesn't have anything to do with the crime -- and now they're on the run from a cold-blooded killer who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

Vivien Dean is one of my favorite authors because she writes the way I want m/m stories to be like. Characters that I can sympathize with, an actual story/plot going on, relationship building, and just enough sex scenes that fit the story. Because for me personally, NOTHING is worse than pages and pages of sex. Most of the time, I'm looking for story not porn.

This story starts with Jarrett finding out about Eli's webcomic and they get reacquainted. But that is the only "calm" scenes you get. Because after that, it jumps into action and it doesn't stop. An FBI agent gets killed, Jarrett and Eli must go to protective custody, then they're on the run. It's like watching a movie!! Although there are still sweet moments in between as Jarrett discovers how Eli is now that he turns into a young man *sigh*. Jarrett is so cute when he is jealous!

I think the only niggle I find is that I still don't know what the webcomic's role in the crime. In the end Eli says that he still needs to help the FBI to decode it, so it doesn't feel like it's completely solved :(. But overall, I enjoy this story very much. Hey, it helps my slump in reading for the past few days. So it must be good, right?

Warning: for those who actually looking for sex scenes, it's pretty much only happens in the end, okay. So you've been warned

Ana says

I wrote a review for this book. Goodreads decided to crash when I was publishing it and didn't save anything and I'm too lazy to write another, so I'm just going to give you the basics.

The main characters weren't bad but I couldn't connect with them or their decisions.

I really don't get when people witness crimes and run from the police straight into the bad guy's arms. Only the action kept me entertained but it wasn't enough for my enjoyment.

Honestly, I could've gone with not reading this book.

Whitney says

I really struggled to finish this. Normally, I'd finish this kind of book in a day or two, but it's taken over a week. I partially blame the fact that I've been sick, but the novel itself left a lot to be desired.

There were a lot of plot points that were vague or alluded to, but never really said plain. What actually happened between....Eli (just that quickly, I forgot his name) and his parents? I know they had a falling out and Eli hadn't lived at home for five years, but his parents still pay his bills and tuition? He obviously was not supporting himself throughout that time other than crashing at a friend's place from time to time. I'm sure he could've gone home at any point to talk to his parents and I hardly believe they wouldn't have gotten over Eli being gay. He just didn't give them a chance because he constantly kept running. I was just really annoyed with his character throughout the whole book.

I feel like I didn't get to know Jarrett well. We know that he has a his life together more than Eli, but I still feel like we didn't get the whole picture of Jarrett's life before Eli came back into it other than what we're told. He works at the mayor's office and had a couple of failed relationships since the last time he saw Eli. By the end, I still couldn't see what Jarrett saw in Eli that would make him want to try a relationship with him, but I'm glad that they decided to see where their relationship could go instead and getting to know each other again.

The whole mystery was a bit of a let down. I wasn't compelled at all to care about what was going on and who was who and why they were after Eli's comic. Something about a code being embedded in it? That wasn't necessarily clear. And then it stopped abruptly with a lot of questions still unanswered.

I liked the other Boys of the Zodiac series books I've read, save for this one. I also usually like Vivien Dean's writing. I'd like to think it was more bad timing on my part to read this book. I had other books I wanted to read on the brain on top of being under the weather. I think if I went back to it at another time, I might like it better.

2 Stars.

Susu says

Great action through out the book. Really enjoyed the characters and story. Fun read!

Lillian Francis says

I was genuinely anxious for the guys at times. The author does a good job of rachetting up the tension and moving the relationship on in a believable way at the same time.
