



Explosive Eighteen

Janet Evanovich

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Bounty hunter Stephanie Plum's life is set to blow sky high when international murder hits dangerously close to home, in this dynamite novel by Janet Evanovich.

Before Stephanie can even step foot off Flight 127 from Hawaii to Newark, she's knee deep in trouble. Her dream vacation turned into a nightmare, she's flying back to New Jersey solo, and someone who sounds like Sasquatch is snoring in row 22. Worse still, her seatmate never returned to the plane after the L.A. layover. Now he's dead, in a garbage can, waiting for curbside pickup. His killer could be anyone. The FBI, the fake FBI, and guns-for-hire are all looking for a photograph the dead man was supposed to be carrying.

Only one other person has seen the missing photograph—Stephanie Plum. Now she's the target, and she doesn't intend to end up in a garbage can. With the help of an FBI sketch artist Stephanie re-creates the person in the photo. Unfortunately the first sketch turns out to look like Tom Cruise, and the second sketch like Ashton Kutcher. Until Stephanie can improve her descriptive skills, she'll need to watch her back.

Over at the Bail Bonds Agency it's business as usual—until the bonds bus serving as Vinnie's temporary HQ goes up in smoke, Stephanie's wheelman, Lula, falls in love with their "largest" FTA yet, lifetime arch nemesis Joyce Barnhardt moves into Stephanie's apartment, and everyone wants to know *what happened in Hawaii?!*

Morelli, Trenton's hottest cop, isn't talking about Hawaii. Ranger, the man of mystery, isn't talking about Hawaii. And all Stephanie is willing to say about her Hawaiian vacation is . . . It's complicated.

From the Hardcover edition.

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From Reader Review Explosive Eighteen for online ebook

Heather Codename: ?Dutchess? says

Here's the thing. I love Janet. I love the Stephanie world, I really do.

However - after 18 books a lot of things are starting to get very old.

Let's start with:

Lula's eating habits: It's getting really annoying, book after book, listening to her bitch and moan about what she eats, what she doesn't eat etc. etc. Either stick the girl on a complete diet or shut up about her eating habits. I really don't care that she's about to get sick after eating 10 cream filled donuts. She's a pig and it's getting disgusting. Then she gets sick and after a few seconds immediately starts stuffing her face again because she thought she was "over it."

Lula and her over-dramatization of EVERYTHING. She's worse than a soap opera half the time. OMG. A cats ashes fell on me I'M BREAKING OUT IN HIVES. OMG! THE OLD GUY WHO CLAIMS TO BE A VAMPIRE JUST GUMMED ME I CAN FEEL MY TEETH GROWING. Seriously? I've read Bronte novels with less drama than Lula.

Stephanie: Her love life, lack of common sense, and the incapability to do her job are past being cute. Yes, she's torn between two men and the chase is fun. It's even more fun now that her and Ranger are hitting the sack a lot more often. But the whole her mother/grandmother trying to fix her up all the time..it's old. It's done. Apparently they haven't gotten the memo yet that Stephanie isn't going to end up with some other guy they throw her way. She's in love with Morelli, she's in lust with Ranger. Her common sense and incapability to do her job go hand in hand.

Let's take the newest book for example shall we?

Stephanie is chasing after a purse thief. That's right ladies and gents A. Purse. Thief. A whiney, child of a purse thief who believes he can just take anything he wants because mommy didn't tell him no enough as a child. So what does our darling, clueless Stephanie do? She takes her purse with her while she's trying to bring the bad guy. And what happens children? He steals her purse and then steals her car.

And if once wasn't bad enough... SHE DOES IT TWICE. Because clearly, she didn't learn her lesson the first time around. And then he continues stealing her car until she's forced to trade it in for a different one because he has the keys to her RAV4.

Also, the whole "I can't ask Ranger help because he'll see me as weak" thing is past its prime. He sees you as weak and he always will. That's why he protects her as much as he does, because Stephanie cannot hold her own. Not even against a purse thief.

You don't like guns. Well, get a different line of work. You don't charge your stun gun? I have no sympathy for you when you get kidnapped. You don't want to call Morelli or Ranger for help because you can't keep your vagina in check... not my problem.

Stephanie is no longer a novice bounty hunter. I would never call her an expert one, but she's been in the game long enough to know the basics. Even Joyce knows how to handle herself more when she's going after FTAs than Stephanie does and this is what Stephanie does for a living.

I really hope Janet starts progressing the character more in the next book. After 18 books, it should have started already.

Sue says

You know what, I was actually real hopeful that there would be some development in this book. For the whole series Stephanie and Lula have bungled along.

For a moment I thought there would be some sort of character development. Especially over the whole Hawaii ordeal. I was flipping pages like mad to find out what happened. It was kind of a let down.

We do have some introspection by Stephanie, but she said she's not the introspection type. She remarked about how she knows it's not good of her to be with two men, and she should come to a realisation. There's nothing glaringly obvious but it sure looks like we're pushing to (view spoiler).

This round I could honestly couldn't care about the crime and mystery, and I was really interested on the character relationship front with Ranger and Morelli. It seemed like it was going somewhere but it didn't. It seemed like Morelli and Stephanie would finally have a TALK--where they might actually sit down and be open and confront the serious issue of their relationship, where it's going and what happened in Hawaii--but none of that happened and Morelli just forgave her. Grrrrr!!! Seriously, I don't think he would be happy to know that Stephanie is (view spoiler)

Huge let down.

At least there's some small improvement with Stephanie. She's still a disaster, but it seems like she's better able of looking after herself. (view spoiler). She did mention the need for kickboxing or some sort of classes to improve, but alas once again nothing came to fruition. Looks like there seems to be no real plans for improvement on Stephanie's front either.

Can't begin to say disappointed I was. I thought for a moment the author was really listening.

Jilly says

I was beginning to not like ,myself so much. The honest confusion of loving two men was giving way to something that felt a little like unhealthy self-indulgence.

Not liking herself too much? Well, Stephanie, join the club! According to the reviews, *nobody* is liking you too much anymore. And, the triangle thing has gone on way too long. At this point, they are basically a menage.

Me? I'm kind of apathetic towards her at this stage. I still like the books, but they aren't magical or anything. More like an old rerun of Friends. It will make me smile, but it's not going to stick with me later or make me think deep thoughts. I'm definitely not going to be blown away. It's just mindless entertainment. I'm okay with that.

Terri says

Stephanie Plum is back with "capers" (read the book - you'll get it) aplenty - each of them more hilarious and scandalous than the next, in Janet Evanovich's latest, "Explosive Eighteen." I give it four stars just because it made me laugh out loud and shout "oh no" and "ewwww" several times. Evanovich, though not known for her literary merits, is certainly a master entertainer! All of my friends are back - Lula (who was in rare form for #18), Morelli and Ranger (they took a backseat here, as Stephanie was "off men" for the time being), Grandma Mazur, and the rest. A couple of new characters, particularly "Buggy," add to the craziness.

Bail bond enforcer, Stephanie, returns from a disastrous Hawaiian trip, and swears off men as a result. This allows her to focus on her bail skips and the menagerie of individuals after her because of a photo that was inadvertently put in her bag on the return plane trip. Plenty of disastrous escapades ensue, cars disappear, the romantic tension mounts as Stephanie tries to say "no," dumb bad guys pull crazy stunts, lots of junk food is consumed, and the hamster continues to hide in his soup can - it's all there and, once again, entertained me immensely for a few hours!

Nothing new here, but loads of fun!

Elizabeth (Book_Attict) says

Okay, I admit it -- I'm a Stephanie Plum sucker! I read Smokin' 17, and until the last chapter of the book, SWORE that I'd no longer be running out to get the hardcover edition of another Stephanie Plum book as soon as it was released, Instead,I'd be looking for the paperback at one of the used bookstores I frequent...

I love Janet Evanovich's writing style, her dialogue is hilarious, the characters are great, and reading the latest installment is like going home to visit with old friends -- well, old friends that NEVER change-- but still a fun read.

I've voiced my complaints in reviews for past Plum novels about the marked lack of forward progress and character development. Well, at the end of Smokin' 17 Evanovich presented herself with the perfect opportunity to go a little outside the box and move the story forward -- Stephanie gets a trip for 2 to Hawaii - - the cliff hanger at the end of the book is -- who's she gonna bring? Ranger or Morelli?? I know, I know, pretty lame for a cliff hanger, (but when it comes to Ranger & Morelli, I'm a cheap date).

So I, (still firmly in "sucker mode"), preorder the book, blurb unread, and anxiously wait for it to arrive only to find (drum roll please)

.....Stephanie coming home from Hawaii & getting off the plane in New Jersey...

Thus missing a fantastic opportunity for Evanovich to get Stephanie outside of her comfort zone, maybe get a little more in-depth with the hottie she brought with her -- no such luck

I. Am. Beyond. Pissed.

This seemed to be the "travel season" for several of my favorite series, most notably Eve & Roarke/In Death series by J.D. Robb (N.Y. to Dallas) & the Mercy Thompson series by Patricia Briggs (River Marked) .

While missing the supporting cast of characters in these series, we got much more in depth with the main characters and there was some definite personal growth going on.....

Not so with Explosive 18....

Never (it seems) with Stephanie Plum. I guess the same jokes/situations /scenarios/car "mishaps"/Grandma Mazur/Lulu eating jokes are going to stay firmly place...and getting a little less funny with each subsequent incarnation.

I was in love with this series. It was one of my favorites. Then, somewhere around Fearless 14, I started getting the feeling that Janet Evanovich was phoning these books in.

Okay, reality check here. Stephanie Plum's a bounty hunter. A really inept bounty hunter. A really inept bounty hunter that someone's always trying to kill, maim, run over or blow up. She has a really close "friendship" with Ranger -- a totally bad-ass bounty hunter with his own security company, who would be MORE than happy to provide weapons & self-defense training (I'm sure).

What does Stephanie do???

Absolutely nothing.

She still keeps her gun in the cookiejar, her stun gun is never charged when she needs it, and her pepper spray is usually empty. She stumbles into situations becomes a "damsel in distress" and then Ranger pulls her ass out of the fire -- yet again. I swear, Rex the Hamster has better honed survival instincts than Stephanie. Her mother has every right to be worried about her; she SHOULD get a job at the button factory.

As for the man issues...just for the record, I'm definitely Team Ranger. Morelli & Stephanie have history, they know everything about each other and they're comfortable. BUT who's always there for her when she needs him with cars, assistance and saving her life? Ranger. (Plus, as an added bonus, he's got that whole dark, hot, mysterious bad boy thing going on). Actions speak louder than words, after all.....

Will I read 19, 20, 21, etc? Probably -- I'm hooked.

Will I run out and buy it retail (hardcover or paperback)? No way.

I hate to say it, but the Stephanie Plum series has been downgraded to my "Used Bookstore Shopping List"

Cyndi says

Hilarious! Stephanie Plum is getting more and more bad-ass. Love her! If you really want to enjoy it, try the audio version. Lorelei King is a genius. She gets the voices perfectly.

Reread June 2016. Never tire of these books! When Steph loses it in the garage? Never underestimate a woman who feels threatened.

Reread June 2018 — when this story begins its not one of my favs, but it quickly picks up. Now that the stories are becoming more and more involved with the Morelli/Ranger dynamic I have to put in a few instances that makes me like Ranger better. (At least for this book) Every time Steph needs him he is there to rescue her or help without placing judgement. As for Morelli—he just wants her to stay home and wait for

him to have time for her. Plus, we all know he's dating other women. 'Dog play dates?' Yeah, right!

Duchess Nicole says

EDIT:

Still frustrated. Still love Lula and Grandma Mazur. Problem is, I love both Morelli and Ranger. I used to lean more toward Morelli, but lately he seems sort of apathetic towards any relationship with Stephanie. It's Ranger that tries to help her out and take care of her, and he seems genuinely worried that she'll get hurt. Morelli just complains that she gives him heartburn.

This one was still definitely worth reading, though if your looking for closure, it still ain't happening. I just want some resolution! PLEASE! Pick a man! Then do another series to find the other guy a freaking awesome woman.

I'm really hoping for some man resolution in this one. I loved this series with a passion until a few books ago. I used to wait anxiously for the next book in the series. I've now had Smokin Seventeen for a couple of months, and still haven't read it. I heard that the Morelli/Ranger issue is still up in the air, and that Stephanie is still the same old Stephanie. I've lost my Plum love! How many years does this series cover? It would be interesting to know, as Stephanie never seems to change. And why did I love her years ago and now roll my eyes? Hmm...maybe it's time to have an HEA, end the series, and move on to a new idea. Or just choose Morelli and give us a couple of juicy books in which he teaches her to shoot and gives her babies.

Kristi says

I like Stephanie Plum, I really do, but this series has failed to make any forward progress for at least ten books now. It's the same story over and over (and over) again. It's getting kind of pathetic that Stephanie can't pick a man. And we know that Lula's fat, and wears tacky clothes, and eats more than most circus animals... We don't need constant reminders. Please, please, please add something fresh to this series to keep the reader interested!

Heather M. Gardner says

I enjoyed this book just like I have enjoyed all the others. I find them entertaining and laugh out loud funny. It doesn't seem to bother me, as it does others, that the character Stephanie Plum is sleeping with more than one man at a time. She's young, not in a permanent relationship and FICTIONAL.

Karla says

Heavy Sigh Just okay...this needs to be over soon, it's gone on way too long. Pick Joe already Stephanie, although after all you've put him through I don't know why he still wants you. A few laughs, but a lot of the same old same old, and unless Janet Evanovich comes up with a new plot line, this series will be dying a slow, painful death. I will see it through to the end, mostly to see what happens to Joe than any other character, and hopefully I won't be bored to tears in the process.

Tori says

I liken this series to an original document that you print out all new, and fresh, and perfect. And then the copy get's copied, and that copy gets copied and so on until you end up with a faded, scarred, crooked, ghost of that perfect original. It's old and it's tired and as much as you used to love it, it's time to let it go and start a new, original, document.

When I first discovered this series a few years ago, I absolutely loved it! I'm talking fan girl, crazed, running to the bookstore on my way to work to buy the hardback on the day it came out loved it. But now, I'm ready to see more growth from Stephanie. I'm ready for the love triangle to be laid to rest. And while we're on that subject I'm going to go on record and say that I adore Morelli, consider myself a Babecake, but I feel that although I thought differently at the beginning of the series, at this point Joe is not the right man for Stephanie anymore.

Stephanie... Oh Stephanie. Your ineptitude isn't all that funny anymore. It's mostly just pathetic. You should be a lot better bounty hunter by now. And thankfully Ranger is always nearby to take up your slack. Sigh. Ranger. You're a lucky girl.

But, even though I don't love the series like I used to, I still love these characters. I still laugh, and I will probably still read this series. I'll just get my books from the library instead of the bookstore.

Mrs. Badass says

If you like my review, go like it on Amazon would you ? Maybe JE's publishers will see it...

So, here I am again. I swore I wouldn't read another Evanovich Plum Novel--after my last review of 17, I swore tooth and nail to my husband, my mom, and my blog readers that I wouldn't read it! So...I went to the library. I really just had to know if it was as bad as the previous one. After being teased that she might make a decision in 18, I let my small curiosity overshadow my intellect.

Remember back in the day of the early awesome plum books, where Stephanie felt BAD for kissing Ranger when she was dating Morelli? Remember back in the day where she swore she would never be like Joyce the whore? Remember? Well, it seems Stephanie has inhaled too many donuts, smoke fumes--from her cars always catching fire, and hair spray, because after she slept with Ranger and Morelli on back to back nights in 17, cementing her in my hoochie hall of fame; She is now sleeping with both men regularly in 18. How many times was it? 3 or so with Ranger? 2 or 3 with Morelli and then I'm sure her and Ranger had more sex in Hawaii than we were told. I mean, dudes--it's Ranger...and Hawaii. I would! Well, I would if I wasn't conflicted or dating another man, but hey, that's me. I have morals and scruples and a code of non-whorism.

I wish Joe had caught Steph having sex with Ranger in Hawaii. That would have been good. I also wish we got to see Joe and Ranger fight. That would have been panty melting too. But No.

Picturing Lula in all black with painted on pants and boob squish, does make me laugh. I did laugh a little. But it doesn't make up for the complete 180 degree turns every character in the Plum series has taken. Her mom is a lush, Steph is a whore, Ranger has no sack, Joe lost his possessive balls too, Lula still thinks too much about food, but she at least strives to be better...sometimes. When it's easier ;)

It seems that after 18 books, Ranger and Morelli have lost their balls. Huh. Who would have seen that one coming. Heh, I said coming. Did Stephanie here that? She probably is one of them right now, and while in the throes with whomever it is, is secretly wondering how long she has to wait to sleep with the other one so she doesn't seem tacky. Should she take a shower first? Nah. Why bother? She is just going to get sweaty again.

I jest. Sort of. I know, If I get so angry about the direction, why do I keep reading? I keep hoping things will change and they have! Finally, they have! Only for the worse. I remember thinking, why does she keep getting back with Joe? She should give Ranger a turn. Only, not this way. Why can't she have a relationship again? For a whole book, let her be with Ranger! Then at the end, have Joe tell Ranger to meet him at midnight, in the dark park, alone. with no guns. Only fists. YAY!

Pulease.

Janet Evanovich? What on earth are you doing to your characters? They have completely morphed into pod-people. They have been replaced with robots!

Lula got on my nerves. She reminded me of Boomer from ESPN with his "Whoops!" with her "Bams!"

So, once again we are left on a 'cliff' only this time? I am not falling! I am going to back away, gracefully from the edge, and bow down to the awesomeness that Stephanie used to be, and keep her alive in my memories.

I am getting off the crazy train. If I want to read cars getting blown up, her sneaky snarkness, and some hot glimpses of two actual men...I'll read the early plum books.

James says

After 18 books in this series, I can't always give out a 4 just because I laugh so hard I nearly pee myself. Evanovich has to work harder and harder to keep the high mark stars... but in all honesty, this was a hysterical edition in the series.

I read it about 5 years ago but still have vivid memories of many character escapades. And when it's a trip to Hawaii (partly), who wouldn't love it. I'm going back to add small review and thoughts on any book I never actually wrote up a review for. And this is one of them.

Reading about Stephanie Plum's inability to accurately describe someone in a picture she saw briefly is pure gold. She is so goofy sometimes... I can't believe she hasn't gotten herself wasted at this point by some of the criminals she's dealt with over the years.

And Lula is my favorite character, at least whenever she appears more prominently in a book. Watching her training, and eating, is laugh-out-loud funny. I always picture Gabourey Sidibe playing her... not sure why, but that's who's in my head.

I'm not a huge fan of Joyce but we all need a Moriarty of sorts, right? For those who haven't read the series, Joyce is a fellow PI and former girlfriend of Stephanie's on/off again relationship with Joe Morelli.

I think I stopped here with this book and still have the last 4 or 5 to catch up on. The series stalls every so often, but within each book, there's a treasure of fun somewhere hidden if not the entire thing. They can be read in 3 to 4 hours... I would like to listen to one if they actually make an audio book. I wonder what accents everyone has, given it takes place in Newark, NJ.

Basically, you've got a woman everyone finds something they love about, but also a few annoying habits. You may want to date her, but then you'd want to kill her. She's a good bestie, but even then, too many favors just to keep up with her antics.

Nonetheless, it makes for a fantastic read. So if you've never read the series, don't start with this one. Go back to #1 and give it a shot. And then tell me if you're a Ranger or a Morelli fan. (I'd pick Ranger, btw... isn't it always better when the object of your affection also scares the hell out of you????)

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

[polldaddy poll=9719251]

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

I can always count on this series to lighten my mood. put a smile on my face and laugh out loud multiple times. I love this rag tag group of friends and family, they never let me down. Guaranteed to have a good time just when I need one. :)

Carol. says

Hi. My name is Carol and I'm a bookoholic.

I've been reading ever since I can remember, but Goodreads seems to be contributing to my disease. I can't control myself. I'm always adding books to my "to-read" list, which is so long that if I stopped adding books today, I'd still have three years of books on it. Then there is the library, where a drive-by is part of my routine. It's on the way home from work, so it is really unavoidable. If I only make a quick stop to pick up a monthly read, that isn't a problem, is it? However, last time I was there I found this little number by Evanovich. I swore off the Stephanie Plum books a few numbers ago, but this one... it was on the New 14-Day Shelf. Why, that's free, not even a rental. How could I pass that up?

After I finished, I felt a little dirty and rather regretful. This was a cheap drink bolted down, perfectly serviceable but lacking any soul. There are so many better books to be spending time with--why do I do this to myself?

If you read any book between 8 and 17, you've read this book. No drag queens, but there is Joyce Barnhardt on the run, various oddball bondees getting the best of Steph and Lulu, Steph and Lulu ineptly breaking into a house, a bus blowing up, mom drinking, dad grunting, discussion of Lulu's clothes and eating habits, Grandma Mzur at a funeral, Connie running the business, Vinnie, car escapades, a '53 Buick, Ranger in black, Morelli in boxers, Rex and periodic attempts at kidnapping.

However, it did make me laugh out loud twice. Granted, I was likely delirious after swimming two miles, but I did laugh at a henchman's frustrating interactions with Steph and Lulu (specifically, his inept English cursing (view spoiler)), and an incident with rats (which kind of echoed her incident with a spider and various geese). There was also a semi-interesting plot device of referring to a significant incident that took place in Hawaii, where Steph was headed at the end of book #17. Naturally, everyone's curious what happened, but it takes a few days to find out.

Of course, the usual complaints apply to this book: no forward character motion. Stereotypes that border on the ludicrous. I knew that going in, but with the two or three year break, they were less annoying than they would have been.

Rounding up to two inept stars.

Cross posted at <http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2013/0...>
