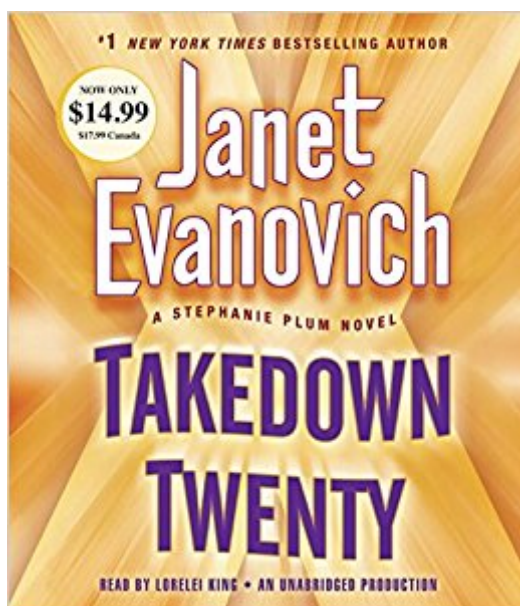


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Takedown Twenty: A Stephanie Plum Novel



Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Powerhouse author Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum novels are "as entertaining as ever" (Entertainment Weekly), "brilliantly evocative" (The Denver Post), and "making trouble and winning hearts" (USA Today). Stephanie Plum has her sights set on catching a notorious mob boss. If she doesn't take him down, he may take her out. New Jersey bounty hunter Stephanie Plum knows better than to mess with family. But when powerful mobster Salvatore "Uncle Sunny" Sunucchi goes on the lam in Trenton, it's up to Stephanie to find him. Uncle Sunny is charged with murder for running over a guy (twice), and nobody wants to turn him in "not his poker buddies, not his bimbo girlfriend, not his two right-hand men, Shorty and Moe. Even Trenton's hottest cop, Joe Morelli, has skin in the game, because "just Stephanie's luck" the godfather is his actual godfather. And while Morelli understands that the law is the law, his old-world grandmother, Bella, is doing everything she can to throw Stephanie off the trail. It's not just Uncle Sunny giving Stephanie the run-around. Security specialist Ranger needs her help to solve the bizarre death of a top client's mother, a woman who happened to play bingo with Stephanie's Grandma Mazur. Before Stephanie knows it, she's working side by side with Ranger and Grandma at the senior center, trying to catch a killer on the loose "and the bingo balls are not rolling in their favor." With bullet holes in her car, henchmen on her tail, and a giraffe named Kevin running wild in the streets of Trenton, Stephanie will have to up her game for the ultimate takedown. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Janet Evanovich is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of the Stephanie Plum novels, twelve romance novels, the Alexandra Barnaby novels, the Lizzy and Diesel series, How I Write: Secrets of a Bestselling Author, and The Heist, the first book in the Fox and Oâ™Hare series with co-author Lee Goldberg. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

ONEIt was late at night and Lula and I had been staking out Salvatore Sunucchi, better known as Uncle Sunny, when Lula spotted Jimmy Spit. Spit had his prehistoric Cadillac Eldorado parked on the fringe of the Trenton public housing projects, half a block from Sunucchiâ™s apartment, and he had the trunk lid up.âœHold on here,â•Lula said. âœJimmyâ™s open for business, and it looks to me like he got a trunk full of handbags. I might need one of them. A girl can never have too many handbags.â•Minutes later, Lula was examining a purple Brahmin bag studded with what Spit claimed were Swarovski crystals. âœAre you sure this is a authentic Brahmin bag?â•Lula asked Spit. âœI donâ™t want no cheap-Â-ass imitation.â•âœI have it on good authority these are the real deal,â•Spit said. âœAnd just for you Iâ™m only charging ten bucks. How could you go wrong?â•Lula slung the bag over her shoulder to take it for a test drive, and a giraffe loped past us. It continued on down the road, turning at Sixteenth Street and disappearing into the darkness.âœI didnâ™t see that,â•Lula said.âœI didnâ™t see that neither,â•Spit said. âœYou want to buy this handbag or what?â•âœThat was a giraffe,â•I said. âœIt turned the corner at Sixteenth Street.â•âœProbably goinâ™ the 7-Â-Eleven,â•Spit said. âœGet a Slurpee.â•A black Cadillac Escalade with tinted windows and a satellite dish attached to the roof sped past us and hooked a left at Sixteenth. There was the sound of tires screeching to a stop, then gunfire and an ungodly shriek.âœNot only didnâ™t I see that giraffe,â•Spit said, âœbut I also didnâ™t see that car or hear that shit happening.â•He grabbed the ten dollars from Lula, slammed the trunk lid shut, and took off.âœThey better not have hurt that giraffe,â•Lula said. âœI donâ™t go with that stuff.â•I looked over at her. âœI thought you didnâ™t see the giraffe.â•âœI was afraid it might have been the â™shrooms on my pizza last night what was making me see things. I mean itâ™s not every day you see a giraffe running down the street.â•My name is Stephanie Plum, and I work as a bond enforcement officer for Vincent Plum Bail Bonds. Lula is the office file clerk, but more often than not sheâ™s my wheelman. Lula is a couple inches shorter than I am, a bunch of pounds bigger, and her skin is a lot darker. Sheâ™s a former streetwalker who gave up her corner but kept her wardrobe. She favors neon colors and animal prints, and she fearlessly tests the limits of spandex. Today her brown hair was streaked with shocking pink to match a tank top that barely contained the

bounty God had bestowed on her. The tank top stopped a couple inches above her skintight, stretchy black skirt, and the skirt ended a couple inches below her ass. I'd look like an idiot if I dressed like Lula, but the whole neon pink and spandex thing worked for her. I gotta go see if the giraffe's okay," Lula said. "Those guys in the Escalade might have been big game poachers." "This is Trenton, New Jersey!" Lula was hands on hips. "So was that a giraffe, or what? You don't think it's big game?" Since Lula was driving we pretty much went where Lula wanted to go, so we jumped into her red Firebird and followed the giraffe. There was no Escalade or giraffe in sight when we turned the corner at Sixteenth, but a guy was lying facedown in the middle of the road, and he wasn't moving. "That don't look good," Lula said, "but at least it's not the giraffe." Lula stopped just short of the guy in the road, and we got out and took a look. "I don't see no blood," Lula said. "Maybe he's just taking a nap." "Yeah, or maybe that thing implanted in his butt is a tranquilizer dart." "I didn't see that at first, but you're right. That thing's big enough to take down a elephant." Lula toed the guy, but he still didn't move. "What do you suppose we should do with him?" I punched 911 into my phone and told them about the guy in the road. They suggested I drag him to the curb so he didn't get run over, adding that they'd send someone out to scoop him up. While we waited for the EMS to show, I rifled the guy's pockets and learned that his name was Ralph Rogers. He had a Hamilton Township address, and he was fifty-four years old. He had a MasterCard and seven dollars. The EMS truck slid in without a lot of fanfare. Two guys got out and looked at Ralph, who was still on his stomach with the dart stuck in him. "That's not something you see every day," the taller of the two guys said. "The dart might have been meant for the giraffe," Lula told them. "Or maybe he's one of them shape-shifters, and he used to be the giraffe." The two men went silent for a beat, probably trying to decide if they should get the butterfly net out for Lula. "It's a full moon," the shorter one finally said. The other guy nodded, and they loaded Ralph into the truck and drove off. "Now what?" Lula asked me. "We going to look some more for Uncle Sunny, or we going to have a different activity, like getting a pizza at Pino's?" "I'm done. I'm going home. We'll pick up Sunny's trail tomorrow." Truth is, I was going home to a bottle of champagne I had chilling in my fridge. It had been left on my kitchen counter a couple days before as partial payment for a job I'd done for my friend and sometime employer Ranger. The champagne had come with a note suggesting that Ranger needed a date. Okay, so Ranger is hot, and luscious, and magic in bed, but that didn't totally compensate for the fact that the last time I'd been Ranger's date I'd been poisoned. I'd been saving the champagne for a special occasion, and it seemed like seeing a

giraffe running down the street qualified. Lula drove me back to the bonds office, I picked up my car, and twenty minutes later I was in my apartment, leaning against the kitchen counter, guzzling champagne. I was watching my hamster, Rex, run on his wheel when Ranger walked in. Ranger doesn't bother with trivial matters like knocking, and he isn't slowed down by a locked door. He owns an elite security firm that operates out of a seven-story stealth office building located in the center of Trenton. His body is perfect, his moral code is unique, his thoughts aren't usually shared. He's in his early thirties, like me, but his life experience adds up to way beyond his years. He's of Latino heritage. He's former Special Forces. He's sexy, smart, sometimes scary, and frequently overprotective of me. He was currently armed and wearing black fatigues with the Rangeman logo on his sleeve. That meant he was on patrol duty, most likely filling in for one of his men. "Working tonight?" I asked him. "Taking the night shift for Hal." He looked at my glass. "Are you drinking champagne out of a beer mug?" "I don't have any champagne glasses." "Babe." "Babe" covers a lot of ground for Ranger. It can be the prelude to getting naked. It can be total exasperation. It can be a simple greeting. Or, as in this case, it can just mean I've amused him. Ranger smiled ever so slightly and took a step closer to me. "Stop," I said. "Don't come any closer. The answer is no." His brown eyes locked onto me. "I didn't ask a question." "You were going to." "True." "Well, don't even think about it, because I'm not going to do it." "I could change your mind," he said. "I don't think so." "Okay, truth is Ranger could change my mind. Ranger can be very persuasive. Ranger's cellphone buzzed, he checked the text message and moved to the door. "I have to go. Give me a call if you change your mind." "About what?" "About anything." "Okay, wait a minute. I want to know the question." "No time to explain it," Ranger said. "I'll pick you up tomorrow at seven o'clock. A little black dress would be good. Something moderately sexy." And he was gone. From the Hardcover edition.

Maybe that's it with Stephanie Plum now? Evanovich does Business as usual again, and does so at least since book 16. There is always this little hope that she finally gets around to being brilliant again, but maybe she is just tired of Plum herself? Never mind, there are other funny female detectives out there, but newer and fresher, like in *Heads Off* (A Lisa Becker Mystery). The book feels like copy and pasted from the other 19 books, but this time a giraffe on the loose is in it. That's almost worth it, ridiculous and stupid, yes, but not predictable as the rest of the novel. Stephanie still can't decide between Ranger and Morelli - this has gone on so long it's just tedious. Even Grandma Mazur is more creepy than funny, Lula delivers her lines, the guys come in and leave again,

absolutely nothing happens. The bounty hunting is nothing special and follows the beaten track. Stephanie says in the book we've done this before". Indeed we have. If you treat this series like a sitcom with its repetitive humor, it's still enjoyable. But if there is going to be more, I would like to see some development. By which I mean: Dump Joe. Or Ranger. As long as I still care.

I was not impressed at all by this installment. Not only was nothing resolved whatsoever in the Morelli-Ranger-Stephanie triangle, Ranger and Morelli had zero depth. They essentially show up, spout tired, cookie-cutter lines and exit their scenes. Same old, same old. I could have been reading any one of the last six or seven installments. Stephanie's visit to Morelli on game day is a weak excuse for her to back off from commitment, and that's the last nod we get to the triangle. Morelli even hands Stephanie off to Ranger a few times so that he can get back to his cop work. Sure, that's realistic. I understand it's fiction, but it would be nice if the characters actually showed believable traits. The giraffe was mildly amusing, but once again, completely unbelievable. There is no way that a giraffe is going to go unnoticed or unreported in suburbia for that long in this day and age. I like a good story with a funny twist, but when it's that far out of the realm of reason, I can't even manage to hang onto the storyline. Stephanie just seems to be going through the motions at this point. It's really too bad, because I loved the earlier installments of this series.

Not thrilled with this book. I have read all twenty Stephanie Plum books and have recommended the series to many people but I most likely will not do it again. The story was lacking and the characters have just become too ridiculous. The love triangle between Stephanie, Joe, and Ranger just needs to get resolved because it has become completely unbelievable. I was really hopeful that this book would rekindle my love for the series but sadly it has not.

I purposely did not read any reviews before I read this book. I wanted to decide on my own. Numbers 17 and 18 were really bad. Number 19 was getting close to being the old good books, so I had high hopes for this one. It started out well, I even laughed at page 4, so I thought it had hope. I was wrong. Joe is hardly in the book at all. Ranger said maybe 50 words in the whole book, most of them the same one "Babe". No mention of Tank or other Rangemen. No macho posturing between Joe and Ranger at all. I think Janet Evanovich doesn't have a clue what to do between the three of them, so it's basically a non-issue in this book. No wacky family dinners, no sister and horse riding niece, even grandmas hijinks were flat. Lula was the only comic relief in this book, and it wasn't any new stuff, just recycled from previous books. We're used to unrealistic stuff like the

giraffe, so that didn't bother me, but it's existence seemed like something just thrown in as an afterthought. I really kept hoping that this installment would pick the series up and bring back the enjoyment of reading these books. I think it's time for the end. The author needs to figure out a great ending for all the characters and say goodbye to Stephanie Plum. This series has jumped the shark.

I am SO over Evanovich and Stephanie Plum. J E's unique characters used to make me laugh (Sally, Grandma, even her father). Now I find her a colossal bore (which she must have become in terms of her characters and plots). A giraffe in Trenton???? No spark among any of the characters--the most interesting one in this book is Bob the dog. I should go back and count the # of times Steph "swiped her lashes with mascara" because it's a recurring theme. At the rate Evanovich is going, she could spit one of these books out every month and nobody would notice. The last one I can name that made me jiggle was #10--or was it #8 (now that one I DO remember!) Why isn't each one memorable because so many of us love the series and have been so disappointed in the last couple of years?

I've been eagerly awaiting the release of this 20th story but it fell short in length and plot. Stephanie and Morelli didn't really have any good story line in this book nor did Stephanie and Ranger. Grandma had a funny, active part throughout and as always she's hilarious. Lula also did her partner in crime thing and kept the humor there but in all the story was too short and felt like it was lacking.

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