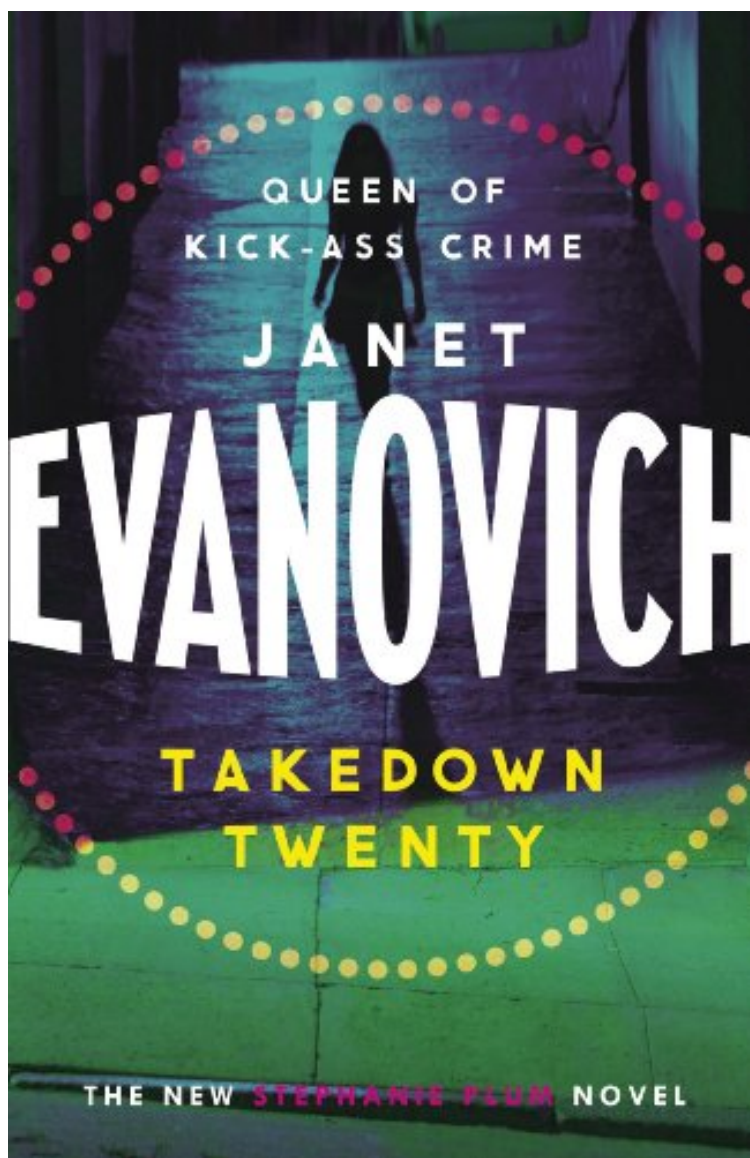


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Takedown Twenty



Par Janet Evanovich
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurRaves for Janet Evanovich's novels: 'Stephanie Plum in ass-kicking form...utterly delightful' (Cosmopolitan); 'A laugh-out-loud page turner' (Heat); 'Plum is not just a smart private eye but a heroine with a sense of humour' (Daily Mail). Don't miss TAKEDOWN TWENTY! Stephanie is angry. Someone is killing old women and leaving them in dumpsters, and she's risking the wrath of the local police by investigating behind their backs. And to top that, her latest bounty is the town's much-beloved vicious mobster, 'Uncle Sunny' Sunucchi. Stephanie doesn't mind (that much) that the local Godfather is her boyfriend Morelli's actual godfather - but since they are almost her in-laws, she could do with the Family not trying to kill her for a while...ExtraitONEIt 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 Sunucchi's apartment, and he had the trunk lid up. Hold on here, Lula said. Jimmys 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. Minutes later, Lula was examining a purple Brahmin bag studded with what Spit claimed were Swarovski crystals. Are you sure this is an authentic Brahmin bag? Lula asked Spit. I dont want no cheap-ass imitation. I have it on good authority these are the real deal, Spit said. And just for you Im only charging ten bucks. How could you go wrong? 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. I didnt see that, Lula said. I didnt see that neither, Spit said. You want to buy this handbag or what? That was a giraffe, I said. It turned the corner at Sixteenth Street. Probably goin the 7-Eleven, Spit said. Get a Slurpee. 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. Not only didnt I see that giraffe, Spit said, but I also didnt see that car or hear that shit happening. He grabbed the ten dollars from Lula, slammed the trunk lid shut, and took off. They better not have hurt that giraffe, Lula said. I dont go with that stuff. I looked over at her. I thought you didnt see the giraffe. I was afraid it might have been the shrooms on my pizza last night what was making me see things. I mean its not every day you see a giraffe running down the street. 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 shes my wheelman. Lula is a couple inches shorter than I am, a bunch of pounds bigger, and her skin is a lot darker. Shes 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. Id 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 giraffes 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 dont think its 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 wasnt moving. That dont look good, Lula said, but at least its not the giraffe. Lula stopped just short of the guy in the road, and we got out and took a look. I dont see no blood, Lula said. Maybe hes just takin a nap. Yeah, or maybe that thing implanted in his butt is a tranquilizer dart. I didnt see that at first, but youre right. That things big enough to take down an elephant. Lula toed the guy, but he still didnt 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 didnt get run over, adding that theyd send someone out to scoop him up. While we waited for the EMS to show, I rifled the guys 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. Thats 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 hes 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. Its 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 Pinos? Im done. Im going home. Well pick up Sunnys 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 Id 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 didnt totally compensate for the fact that the last time Id been Rangers date Id been poisoned. Id 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 doesnt bother with trivial matters like knocking, and he isnt 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. *Revue de presse* Praise for Janet Evanovich: Pithy, witty and fast-paced (Sunday Times) Making trouble and winning hearts (USA Today) A laugh-out-loud page-turner (Heat) Will delight [Evanovich's] legion of fans - and with good reason (Daily Mail) Romantic and gripping, this novel is an absolute tonic (Good Housekeeping) Among the great joys of contemporary crime fiction (GQ)