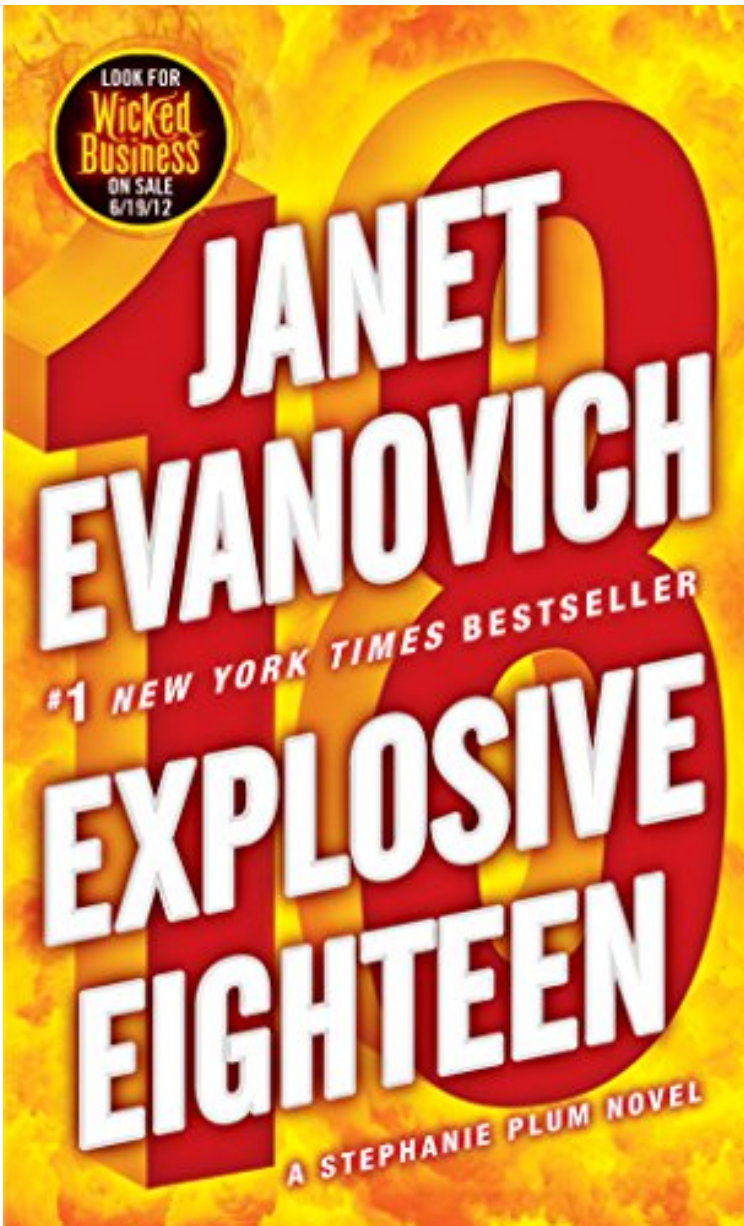


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# Explosive Eighteen: A Stephanie Plum Novel



*Par Janet Evanovich*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Janet Evanovich and Lee Goldberg's The Heist.Bounty hunter Stephanie Plums 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 Hawaii to Newark, shes knee deep in trouble. Her dream vacation turned into a nightmare, and shes flying back to New Jersey solo. Worse still, her seatmate never returned to the plane after the L.A. layover. Now hes dead, in a garbage can, waiting for curbside pickup. His killer could be anyone. And a

ragtag collection of thugs and psychos, not to mention the FBI, are all looking for a photograph the dead man was supposed to be carrying. Only one other person has seen the missing photo Stephanie Plum. Now shes the target, and she doesnt 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, shell need to watch her back. Over at the bail bonds agency things are going from bad to worse. The bonds bus serving as Vinnies temporary HQ goes up in smoke. Stephanies wheelman, Lula, falls in love with their largest skip yet. Lifetime arch nemesis Joyce Barnhardt moves into Stephanies apartment. And everyone wants to know what happened in Hawaii? Morelli, Trentons hottest cop, isnt talking about Hawaii. Ranger, the man of mystery, isnt talking about Hawaii. And all Stephanie is willing to say about her Hawaiian vacation is . . . Its complicated.

Extrait ONE New Jersey was 40,000 feet below me, obscured by cloud cover. Heaven was above me, beyond the thin skin of the plane. And hell was sitting four rows back. Okay, maybe hell was too strong. Maybe it was just purgatory.

My name is Stephanie Plum, and I work as a bail bonds enforcer for Vincent Plum Bail Bonds in Trenton, New Jersey. Id recently inherited airline vouchers from a dead guy and used them to take a once in a lifetime Hawaiian vacation. Unfortunately the vacation didnt go as planned, and Id been forced to leave Hawaii ahead of schedule, like a thief sneaking off in the dead of night. Id abandoned two angry men in Honolulu, called my friend Lula, and asked her to pick me up at Newark Airport. As if my life wasnt enough in the toilet, I was now on the plane home, seated four rows ahead of a guy who looked like Sasquatch and was snoring like a bear in a cave. Good thing I wasnt sitting next to him because I surely would have strangled him in his sleep by now. I was wearing airline-distributed earphones pumped up to maximum volume, but they werent helping. The snoring had started somewhere over Denver and got really ugly over Kansas City. After several loud passenger comments suggesting someone take the initiative and smother the guy, flight attendants confiscated all the pillows and began passing out free alcoholic beverages. Three-quarters of the plane was now desperately drunk, and the remaining quarter was either under age or alternatively medicated. Two of the underage were screaming crying, and I was pretty sure the kid behind me had pooped in his pants. I was among the drunk. I was wondering how I was going to walk off the plane and navigate the terminal with any sort of dignity, and I was hoping my ride was waiting for me. Sasquatch gave an extra loud snork and I ground my teeth together. Just land this friggin plane, I thought. Land it in a cornfield, on a highway, in the ocean. Just get me out of here!

Lula pulled into my apartment building parking lot, and I thanked her for picking me up at the airport and taking me home. No problemo, she said, dropping me at the back door to the lobby. There wasnt nothing on television, and Im between honeys, so it wasnt like I was leaving anything good behind. I waved her off, and trudged into my apartment building. I took the elevator to the second floor, dragged my luggage down the hall and into my apartment, and shuffled into my bedroom. It was after midnight, and I was exhausted. My vacation in Hawaii had been unique, and the flight home had been hellish. Turbulance over the Pacific, a layover in L.A., and the snoring. I closed my eyes and tried to calm myself. I was back to work tomorrow, but for now I had to make a choice. I was completely out of clean clothes. That meant I could be a slut and sleep naked, or I could be a slob and sleep in what I was wearing. Truth is, Im not entirely comfortable sleeping naked. I do it from time to time, but I worry that God might be watching or that my mother might find out, and Im pretty sure they both think nice girls should wear pajamas to bed. In this case, being a slob required less effort and thats where I chose to go. Unfortunately I was in the same wardrobe predicament when I dragged myself out of bed the next morning, so I emptied my suitcase into my laundry basket, grabbed the messenger bag that serves as a purse, and headed for my parents house. I could use my moms washer and dryer, and I thought I had some emergency clothes left in their spare bedroom. Plus theyd been babysitting my hamster Rex while I was away, and I wanted to retrieve him. I live in a one bedroom, one bath apartment on the second floor of an aging three-story brick-faced apartment building located on the edge of Trenton. On a good traffic day, at four in the morning, its a ten-minute drive to my parents house or the bonds office. All other times its a crapshoot. Grandma Mazur was at the front door when I pulled to the curb and parked. Shes lived with my parents since Grandpa Mazur took the big escalator to the heavenly food court in the sky. Sometimes I think my father wouldnt mind seeing Grandma step onto that very same escalator, but I cant see it happening any time soon. Her steel grey hair was cut short and tightly curled on her head. Her nails matched her bright red lipstick. Her lavender and white running suit hung slack on her bony shoulders. What a good surprise, Grandma said, opening the door to me. Welcome home. Were dying to hear all about the vacation with the hottie. My parents home is a modest duplex, sharing a common wall with its mirror image. Mrs. Ciak lives in

the other half. Her husband has passed on, and she spends her days baking coffee cake and watching television. The outside of her half is painted pale green, and the exterior of my parents house is mustard yellow and brown. Its not an attractive combination, but it feels comfortable to me since its been that way for as long as I can remember. Each half of the house has a postage stamp front yard, a small covered front porch, a back stoop leading to a long narrow back yard, and a detached single car garage. I lugged the laundry basket through the living room, and the dining room, to the kitchen where my mother was chopping vegetables. Soup? I asked her. Minestrone. Are you coming for dinner? Cant. Got plans. My mother glanced at the laundry basket. I just put a load of sheets into the washer. If you leave that here Ill do it later for you. How was Hawaii? We didnt expect you home until tomorrow. Hawaii was good, but the plane ride was long. Fortunately I sat next to a guy who got off when we stopped in LA, so I had more room. Yeah, but you were also next to Mr. Tall, Dark, and Mysterious, Grandma said. Not exactly. This got both their attention. How so? Grandma asked. Its complicated. He didnt fly back with me. Grandma stared at my left hand. You got a tan, except on your ring finger. It looks like you was wearing a ring when you got a tan, but youre not wearing it no more. I looked at my hand. Bummer. When I took the ring off, I hadnt noticed a tan line. Now I know why you went to Hawaii, Grandma said. I bet you eloped! Of course being that you dont got the ring on any more would put a damper on the celebration. I blew out a sigh and poured myself a cup of coffee. I took a sip, and my phone rang. I dug around in my bag, unable to find my phone in the jumble of stuff Id crammed in for the plane trip. I dumped it all out onto the little kitchen table and pawed through it. Granola bars, hairbrush, lip balm, hair scrunchies, note pad, wallet, socks, two magazines, a large yellow envelope, floss, mini flashlight, travel pack of tissues, three pens, and my phone. The caller was Connie Rosolli, the bail bonds office manager. I hope youre on your way to the office, she said, because we have a situation here. What sort of situation? A bad one. How bad? Can it wait twenty minutes? Twenty minutes sounds like a long time. I disconnected and stood. Gotta go, I said to my mother and grandmother. But you just got here, Grandma said. We didnt get to hear about the eloping. I didnt elope. I returned everything to my messenger bag with the exception of the phone and the yellow envelope. I put the phone in an outside pocket, and I looked at the envelope. No writing on it. Sealed. I had no clue how it had gotten into my bag. I ripped it open and pulled a photograph out. It was an 8X10 glossy of a man. He was standing on a street corner, looking just past the photographer. He looked like he didnt know he was being photographed, like someone had happened along with their cell phone camera and snapped his picture. He was possibly mid-thirties to early forties, and nice looking in a button-down kind of way. Short brown hair. Fair-skinned. Wearing a dark suit. I didnt recognize the street corner or the man. Somehow on the trip home I must have picked the envelope up by mistake maybe when I stopped at the newsstand in the airport. *Revue de presse* 'Evanovich's series of New Jersey comedy thrillers are among the great joys of contemporary crime fiction...' ( GQ Magazine ) 'Packed with her familiar wicked ear for dialogue... Plum is not just a smart private eye but a heroine with a sense of humour' ( Daily Mail ) 'The mere fact that Evanovich has stuck at this formula for 18 books is extraordinary. All feature the hair-brained adventures of the inept but charming NY bounty hunter Stephanie Plum; a New Jersey gal with lots of pluck' ( Manly Daily )