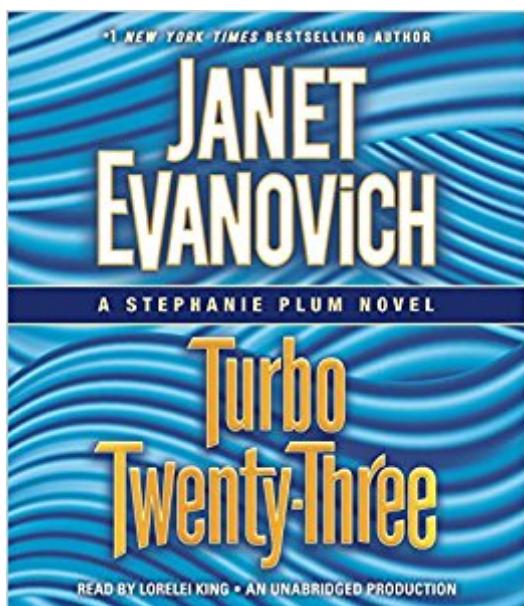


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Turbo Twenty-Three: A Stephanie Plum Novel



Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER  In the heart of Trenton, N.J., a killer is out to make sure someone gets his just desserts.  Larry Virgil skipped out on his latest court date after he was arrested for hijacking an eighteen-wheeler full of premium bourbon. Fortunately for bounty hunter Stephanie Plum, Larry is just stupid enough to attempt almost the exact same crime  again. Only this time he flees the scene, leaving behind a freezer truck loaded with Bogart ice cream and a dead body  frozen solid and covered in chocolate and chopped pecans.  As fate would have it, Stephanie s mentor and occasional employer, Ranger, needs her to go undercover at the Bogart  factory  to find out who s putting their employees on ice and sabotaging the business. It s going to be hard for Stephanie to keep her hands off all that ice cream, and even harder for her to keep her hands off Ranger.  It s also going to be hard to explain to Trenton s hottest cop, Joe Morelli, why she is spending  late nights with Ranger, late nights with Lula and Randy Briggs  who are naked and afraid  and late nights keeping tabs on Grandma Mazur and her new fella. Stephanie Plum has a lot on her plate, but for a girl who claims to have virtually no marketable skills, these are the kinds of sweet assignments she does best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Janet Evanovich  is the #1  New York Times  bestselling author of the Stephanie Plum

series, the Knight and Moon series, the Fox and O'Hare series, the Lizzy and Diesel series, the Alexandra Barnaby novels and Troublemaker graphic novel, and How I Write: Secrets of a Bestselling Author. From the Hardcover edition.

One Monday Larry Virgil is a lanky, grease--stained guy in his forties. He lives alone in the back room of his auto body shop on Baker Street in north Trenton, and he hasn't cut his hair in at least ten years. For all I know that was also the last time he washed it. He has a reputation for drinking too much and abusing women, and he has a hotdog with testicles tattooed on his forehead. I suppose it might be a penis, but it's not a very good tattoo, and I prefer to think it's a hotdog. None of this would be any of my business, but a couple months ago Trenton's finest caught Virgil hijacking an eighteen--wheeler filled with cases of premium bourbon. Virgil was arrested and subsequently bonded out by my bail bondsman cousin and employer, Vincent Plum. Virgil failed to appear for his court appearance a week ago, and Vinnie isn't happy. If Virgil isn't brought back into the system in a timely fashion, Vinnie will lose his bond money. My name is Stephanie Plum. I'm a college graduate with virtually no marketable skills, so for the past several years I've been tracking down Vinnie's skips. What I lack in expertise I make up for with desperation and tenacity, because I only get paid when I catch someone. It was ten o'clock at night in mid--September, and cool enough for me to need a sweatshirt over my T-shirt. I was currently pulling surveillance on Larry Virgil's three--bay garage, hoping to catch him entering or exiting. I was with my wheelman, Lula. We'd been sitting across from the garage for over two hours and my eyes were crossing out of boredom. "This isn't going anywhere," I said to Lula. "He isn't answering his phone, and there aren't any lights on in the building." Lula is a former who Vinnie hired as a file clerk a while back. When files went digital he didn't have the guts to fire her, so now Lula shows up every day for work and pretty much does whatever she wants. Mostly she hangs with me. She's shorter than I am. She packs a lot more bodacious voluptuousness into her clothes than I do. Her hair is currently pink. Her skin is always brown. Her attitude is "Say what?" I'm pale in comparison to Lula. I have shoulder--length mostly unmanageable curly brown hair that's usually pulled into a ponytail, and I've been told I look a little like Julia Roberts when she played a hooker in Pretty Woman. I think this is mostly a compliment, right? "My personal opinion is that this loser skipped town," Lula said. "It's not like he got family here. And we're not lookin' at

someone with a active social life. Only time this man goes out is to hijack a truck, and he got a crimp put in that activity. " Lights flashed at the cross street and an eighteen--wheeler chugged toward us and parked in front of the lot attached to the garage. The lot was enclosed by a six--foot--high chain link fence topped with razor wire. A man swung down from the cab of the truck and walked to the gate. He fiddled with the lock and the gate swung open. "It's him," Lula said, sticking her hand into her big bedazzled purse and rooting around in it looking for her gun. "It's that punk--ass Larry Virgil. I told you he'd be back. I got a gun in here somewhere. Hold on while I get my gun." "We don't need guns," I said. "He's not known for being armed. All we have to do is wait for him to get inside and then we'll sneak in and slap the cuffs on him." "I got it," Lula said. "I got my gun. Let's go!" "Not yet," I said. Too late. Lula was out from behind the wheel of her Firebird, running across the road, waving her gun and yelling, "Bond enforcement!" Virgil went deer in the headlights for a moment, then bolted for the corner with Lula in pursuit. Even in the dark of night I could see that Lula was running flat--out in her spike--heeled Via Spigas. Her spandex miniskirt was up around her waist, and one of her basketball--sized boobs had popped out of her tank top. "Stop or I'll shoot you dead," Lula yelled at Virgil. I was running behind Lula, trying to close in on her. "Don't you dare shoot him," I shouted. "No shooting!" Virgil crossed the street and ran back toward the garage. He reached Lula's red Firebird, wrenched the door open, jumped in, and took off. "He got my Firebird!" Lula shrieked. "He got my baby! And my purse is in there too. I personally bedazzled that purse. It was one of a kind. And it got all my makeup in there." "Guess you left the key in the ignition," I said, gasping for air, coming alongside Lula. "And you told me not to shoot him," Lula said. "This is all your fault. If I put some holes in him this would never have happened." "I'll call it in to the police," I said. "I'm not waiting for no police," Lula said. "I'm going after that punk--ass." "You won't catch him on foot." "I'm not going on foot. I'm taking his truck." "Do you know how to drive a truck?" "Sure I know how to drive a truck," Lula said. "What's to know?" She got a foot onto the first step up to the cab but couldn't get any lift. "This here stupid thing is too high," Lula said. "Get your hand under my ass and give me a shove up." "Not for all the tea in China," I said. "Then go around and pull me in."

I climbed into the cab from the passenger side, crawled over, and gave Lula a hand up.

“This is a bad idea,” I said. “You haven’t got a clue where he’s headed. He’s disappeared, and on top of that he probably stole this truck.” I know where he’s going, Lula said. “He’s going to the chop shop on Stark. He’s gonna sell my Firebird off for pieces. That’s what these creeps do. They got no respect for people,” personal vehicles. I took my cellphone out of my pocket. “I’m calling it in.” Lula stared at the dash. “There’s a awful lot of doohickeys here.” I thought you said you knew how to drive one of these. “I’m just sayin’ this here’s a fancy rig. It got a cup holder and everything.” She looked down at the floor. “It got a lot of pedals down there. What the heck is that big one?”

“That’s the clutch pedal.” She planted a Via Spiga on the clutch pedal and shifted. “Here goes nothing.” The truck lurched forward and ground through a gear. “That didn’t sound good,” I said. “No problem,” Lula said. “It don’t matter if we lose a gear or two on account of this baby got a lot of them.” We slowly drove down the street. “This here’s a piece of cake,” Lula said. She turned a corner and took out a trash receptacle. “Uh, you might have cut that corner a little tight,” I said. “Yeah, but did you see how smooth this beauty rolled over that garbage can? It’s like driving a tank.” There’s a red light at the cross street, I said. “You know how to stop, right?” I step on the brake. “Yeah, but will the big trailer behind us stop at the same time?” Lula looked down at the floor. “I guess it’s all hooked together being that I only see one brake pedal.” “The light! The road!” I yelled. Lula sailed through the intersection. “You just ran the light!” I said. “Oops,” Lula said. “My bad. Good thing there weren’t any cars there.” I caught flashing strobes in my side mirror. “I think we have a cop behind us,” I said. “You should pull over.” “No way,” Lula said. “It’ll waste my time and I gotta get to the chop shop before they start on my Firebird. I’ll outmaneuver the guy behind me.” “You’re driving a truck! You can’t even turn a corner, much less outmaneuver someone.” “Boy, you’re getting cranky. Anyways, this could be a good thing. What we got here is a police escort. He’ll come in handy when

we get to Stark Street and we confront Larry Virgil. This is our lucky day. The cop car zipped past us and came to a stop just before the next intersection, blocking our way. Two patrolmen got out, guns drawn. "Hit the brakes," I said to Lula. "Hit the brakes!" Lula stomped on the brake pedal, and the rig slowed down but didn't stop. The patrolmen jumped out of the way, and Lula punted the patrol car halfway down the block before bringing the semi to a stop. "It didn't exactly stop on a dime," Lula said. One of the cops approached. I rolled the window down and grimaced. It was Eddie Gazarra. We went to school together, and now he was married to my cousin Shirley the Whiner. "Hey, Eddie," I said. "How's it going?" "Oh crap," Eddie said. Lula leaned over and looked past me to Eddie. "We gotta get going. That moron Larry Virgil stole my car and I gotta get to Stark Street before my baby's nothing but spare parts. So I'd appreciate it if you could get your patrol car out of my way." Eddie and I looked down the street at what was left of the patrol car. It wasn't going anywhere anytime soon. "Sorry about your car," I said to Eddie. "Lula didn't totally have the hang of driving this thing." Eddie's partner, Jimmy, was standing alongside him. Our paths had crossed on a couple occasions, but I didn't actually know him. He was hands on hips looking like he thought this was funny but was trying not to laugh out loud. "You're supposed to ask to see her license and registration," Jimmy said. "My license is in my purse which is in my car which has been stolen," Lula said. "And what you're doing here is impeding the progress of justice." "You know this truck was hijacked, right?" Eddie asked me. "Not exactly," I said. "Lula and I were staking out Virgil's garage, and he pulled up in this truck. One thing led to another and here we are." "Are we going to arrest them?" Jimmy asked, still grinning. "No, we aren't going to arrest them," Eddie said. "Her grandmother would make my life a living hell." "What do you want to do about the car?" Jimmy asked Eddie. "Get a tow truck out here. And report the Firebird to dispatch." "It's red," Lula told Jimmy. "And it's got a one--of--a--kind bedazzled purse in it." I swung down out of the cab. "If it's okay with you I'll call for a ride." "You calling Morelli?" Eddie asked. Joe Morelli is a Trenton cop working crimes against persons. He's also my boyfriend. "No," I said to Eddie. "I'll grab a ride in one of Ranger's patrol cars. And I can get him to check with the chop shop to make sure they don't take Lula's car apart." Ranger

is a former Special Forces operative turned businessman and security expert. He's six feet of perfectly toned muscle. He's my age, but he's ages beyond me in life experience and street smarts. His coloring and heritage are Latino. He's single and intends to stay that way. He owns Rangeman, an exclusive security firm housed in a stealth building in downtown Trenton. "Sounds like a plan," Eddie said. He hitched a thumb in Lula's direction. "You're taking her with you?" Eddie said. "I guess." "She's going to have to come in and file an accident report tomorrow. I imagine by then you'll have come up with an explanation." "Yeah. I owe you." "Good," Eddie said, "because I need a babysitter next Saturday." I squelched a grimace. Eddie's kids were monsters. "I'll be there," I told him. I made a short call to Ranger and joined Lula and Eddie at the side of the truck. "This is a freezer truck," Lula said. "What do you suppose Larry Virgil was gonna do with it? You think he has a big-ass freezer in his garage? How was he gonna store all the frozen stuff until he could turn it around?" "Maybe it's empty," I said. "Maybe he already offloaded the ice cream somewhere." "This was reported stolen by Bogart Ice Cream," Eddie said. "The compressor is running, so it's probably still full of ice cream." He walked to the back door. "No security seal. It's just padlocked." "I could shoot the padlock off," Lula said, "and then we could see what we got in here." Eddie cut his eyes to Lula. "That would be if I had a gun," Lula said, thinking twice about her offer since she didn't have a permit to carry concealed. "Hey, Jimmy," Eddie yelled. "Look in the cab and see if you can find the key to the padlock for the back door." Jimmy climbed into the cab and swung down with the key. Eddie took the key, opened the door to the freezer truck, and a body fell out. We all jumped back. "What the hell?" Jimmy said. It was a chocolate-covered man, sprinkled with chopped pecans, totally frozen. Hard to tell if it was a real corpse or a solid chocolate novelty item. We all looked down at it. "That better not be a dead person," Lula said. "On account of you know how I feel about dead people. I'm not in favor of them." "Could just be a big popsicle," Jimmy said, toeing the chocolate guy. "I don't think so," Lula said. "It don't got no stick up its hoo-hoo." "Call it in," Eddie said to Jimmy. "And tell them to get CSI out here before he melts." "Maybe we should put him back in the freezer truck," I said to Eddie. "Yeah," Eddie said. "I guess we could do

Ã¢ ¸ Ranger drove away, leaving his man grinning at Lula. Ã¢ ¸“SheÃ¢ ¸â„¢ll take him apart and wonÃ¢ ¸â„¢t put him back together again,Ã¢ ¸ Ranger said to me. Ã¢ ¸“Is your car at the office?Ã¢ ¸ ¸ No. Lula picked me up at home.Ã¢ ¸ ¸ Babe,Ã¢ ¸ Ranger said. Ã¢ ¸“BabeÃ¢ ¸ ¸ covers a lot of ground for Ranger, depending upon the inflection. Tonight it was said softly with an undertone of desire, as if he might take me home and stay awhile. It gave me an instant rush, and heat curled through a bunch of my internal organs. I did my best to squash the heat and ignore the rush, but in the process of ignoring the rush I inadvertently gave up a sigh. Ã¢ ¸“What?Ã¢ ¸ Ranger asked. Ã¢ ¸“Morelli.Ã¢ ¸ Morelli and I have had an on again, off again relationship since I was five years old. Lately when weÃ¢ ¸â„¢re off again, Ranger swoops in. At first glance it might appear that IÃ¢ ¸â„¢m lacking in moral character to be bouncing around between men like this, but itÃ¢ ¸â„¢s only two men. I mean, itÃ¢ ¸â„¢s not like IÃ¢ ¸â„¢m dating a football team. And letÃ¢ ¸â„¢s be honest about this. These guys are both twelve on a scale of one to ten. And I might only be a six. So how lucky am I? A couple weeks ago, in a moment of euphoria, Morelli and I agreed to become engaged to be engaged. It was a good moment, but I think itÃ¢ ¸â„¢s a little like planning on winning the lottery or contemplating losing five pounds. I mean, what are the chances of it actually happening?

Ã¢ ¸“Unfortunate,Ã¢ ¸ Ranger said, Ã¢ ¸“but the night wasnÃ¢ ¸â„¢t a complete loss. I got to see a dead guy dressed up like a Bogart Bar. What were you doing with the freezer truck?Ã¢ ¸ ¸ Lula and I were staking out Larry Virgil, and he drove up in the semi. One thing led to another. Blah blah blah. And Lula crashed the truck into Eddie GazarraÃ¢ ¸â„¢s squad car.Ã¢ ¸ ¸ And the deceased?Ã¢ ¸ ¸“We opened the door to look inside and the guy fell out.Ã¢ ¸ ¸“As it turns out,Ã¢ ¸ Ranger said,Ã¢ ¸“IÃ¢ ¸â„¢ve been hired by Harry Bogart. He wants increased security in his factory. For years heÃ¢ ¸â„¢s been engaged in an ice cream war with Mo Morris. In the past itÃ¢ ¸â„¢s been confined to competitive pricing, ripping off recipes, ads that pushed the boundaries of libel, and occasionally a shouting match at a family function.Ã¢ ¸ ¸“TheyÃ¢ ¸â„¢re related?Ã¢ ¸ ¸“Cousins.Ã¢ ¸ ¸“And I guess they donÃ¢ ¸â„¢t like each other.Ã¢ ¸ ¸“Not even a little. Lately bad things have been happening to Harry Bogart. Salmonella in the double chocolate. A bomb hoax that shut down production for an entire day. One of the freezers was down for the night and literally a ton of ice cream melted. Bogart is sure itÃ¢ ¸â„¢s Mo Morris out to ruin him, but he canÃ¢ ¸â„¢t prove anything.Ã¢ ¸ ¸“So heÃ¢ ¸â„¢s hired you.Ã¢ ¸ ¸“His factory is old--school. No security cameras. No instant alerts when equipment goes down. Locks that can be opened with a nail file. I guess heÃ¢ ¸â„¢s

never needed more. It's not like he's doing nuclear research. • You're fixing all that. • Yes, but it takes time. It's a big job. He needs new wiring. He has to approve the system design. I'd like to give him a couple men on foot patrol until we get everything up and running, but he refuses. He says ice cream is happiness and comfort and his customers would turn to birthday cake and mac and cheese if they thought his ice cream was under siege. • He sounds like a nice man. • He's ruthless and miserly. So far I haven't seen evidence of nice. • He makes good ice cream. • Ranger nodded. • So I've been told. • Do you think the dead guy could be Harry Bogart? • • No. Wrong body type. Bogart is a big man. • • Eats a lot of ice cream? • • Eats a lot of everything. • Ranger turned in to my parking lot. • I need someone to go inside the two ice cream factories and look around. Do you have time to moonlight for me? • • What would I do? • • Most of the line workers are women, so you would blend in. I'd put you on the line to start. All you'd have to do is keep your ears open and look around. I'm told that everyone gets to take a pint of ice cream home with them at the end of the shift in Mo Morris's plant. • • Hard to pass that up. • Ranger stopped in front of my apartment building's back door. I made a move to get out of the car, and he pulled me to him and kissed me. The kiss was light but lingering, sending a clear message of checked passion. He released me and relaxed back into his seat. • I'll make the arrangements for you to start work at Bogart's plant and be back in touch, • Ranger said. It took me a couple beats to get myself together. • Okay then, • I said. • Be careful driving home. • Babe, • Ranger said. • Morelli was on my couch watching television as I walked in. His big mostly golden retriever, Bob, was on the couch with him. There was a takeout pizza box on the coffee table. Morelli looked up at me and grinned. • Have a good night? • Eddie Gazarra called you, didn't he? • • Cupcake, everyone called me, including your mother and the Trenton Times. • • News travels fast. • • Not every day someone gets dipped in chocolate and sprinkled with nuts. Usually people in Trenton just get stabbed and shot. • I squeezed between Morelli and Bob, flipped the lid up on the pizza box, and took a piece. • I thought you might have gotten the call on this one. • • I just came off a double shift so I was low in the rotation. Butch Zajak pulled it. • • I can't stop thinking about the dead man. • • Yeah, me too. Eddie said he was

dressed up like a Bogart Bar. I don't suppose you have any." "No, but the freezer truck was filled with cartons of them. It was like the man in the truck was part of the Bogart Bar run." "All this talk about Bogart Bars is making me feel romantic," Morelli said. Here's the deal with Morelli. Everything makes him feel romantic. Morelli wrapped an arm around me and nibbled at my neck. "I'm thinking after the pizza what I need is dessert. Like a Bogart Bar." "I don't have good feelings about Bogart Bars right now." "Okay, how about a hot fudge sundae?" "I guess that would be okay." "Do you have ice cream? Chocolate sauce?" Morelli asked. "No." "Some of that whipped cream in a can?" "No." "No problem. I can use my imagination." "I was warming to the idea. "And then you know what comes next," Morelli said. "What?" "I get to be the sundae." "Damn! I knew there'd be a catch." From the Hardcover edition.

This will likely be my last purchase in the series. Whole chunks of text are direct from earlier books. The writing quality has continually depreciated over the last several books in the series, and I suspect they are largely being written by someone else. Not worth the time or the money. Re-read an older Plum instead, you will enjoy it more.

Save your money and reread one of the earlier Plum books - this is just a redo of the last 10 + books in the series. Sorry but only the scenery changes, same plot line, same men story line etc. The idea is she is a college grad with no usable skills, does the bounty job half way & hops back & forth between 2 men. She doesn't get ahead, she doesn't change, she is definitely NOT a good example to younger girls. Sorry, this has been my last Evanovich book.

I was a bit disappointed with this one. I have read all the Stephanie Plum series and loved them all. My favorite character is Grandma Mazur, she is not a huge part of this story and I was more than disappointed, the wasn't a lot of Stephanie's bumbling and accidental captures as in the other books. This book fell short of what had been delivered in the previous books.

This is so sad for me. I LOVE this series. But after 23 books of THE SAME THING I am done. I will not purchase the next book. Stephanie has turned into a slut. She keeps going after Ranger when she's supposed to be with joe. Lula is getting redundant. It's the same book for the last 23 years. A decades long fan sadly is stopping here. I've learned my lesson reading the end of Charlaine Harris'

Sookie Stackhouse. At the end, the authors have made their money and don't care about the FANS.

After years and years of planning the next 48 hours after a book was released I just don't care. I am confident I have read the same text over and over. Don't waste your \$. In a day or two your local goodwill will have it for \$1.00.00. Also can I ask, how long are we to believe that Rex the miracle hamster has been alive for?

You just can't do it anymore. If it were a T.V. show it would have been canceled long ago. Not once did I laugh or remember why I have read all 23 books. It was garbage. You had something so special in the beginning, and now the flame has burned out. Put it to rest. Give the true fans the respect to not continue this series any longer.

So disappointed. Same old thing. Same Lula. Same Stephanie. Not sure if Evanovich even wrote it. Stephanie needs to be brought to an end. Get her pregnant and marry her off or something. (BTW, I have purchased them from the beginning and enjoyed them until the last several.)

I love the Stephanie Plum series. However this was a letdown. It felt more like a college essay or that the author was going through the motions to meet a deadline. After 23 books, I'd like to see a little more substance, more of Joe and Ranger, and maybe even a third love interest to kick Joe and or Ranger into gear. And it's ok to make the story line a little more complex; your readers are smart and can follow along.

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