



Overwhelming Force

Janie Crouch

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He lost her once. He won't lose her again.

Despite an illustrious career as a top hostage negotiator, Joe Matarazzo is haunted by the past. It was a year ago that three innocent lives were lost under his watch. But Joe isn't the only one who remembers that day. When Joe's exes begin to fall victim to a violent stalker, Joe seeks the help of Laura Birchwood--a lawyer and the woman he once loved. Despite old wounds, Laura agrees to help Joe find out who's framing him. And while they expect to be met with danger, they're unprepared for passion that still burns strong, and their determination to give what was between them a second chance.

Reading Order for the Omega Sector - Critical Response Series:

Special Forces Savior Fully Committed Armored Attraction Man of Action Overwhelming Force Battle Tested

Overwhelming Force Details

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From Reader Review Overwhelming Force for online ebook

Mileena says

Overwhelming Force

4/5 stars

Ok, I think it might be official. I might actually be a sucker for harlequin novels.

The plot:

I picked this one -and a few others like it- one day for 2 reasons. First, I loved the covers with their purple spines, dramatic but not ugly covers, and matte finish. But this one specifically caught my eye because the blurb on the back said that the main character (Joe) was a hostage negotiator. That sounded so fascinating to me, I'd never read about anything like that. So I picked it up and immediately started reading it, which if you know me even if I'm excited for a book I usually never do that.

I was hooked. With the opening literally being Joe going on a mission for a bank hostage situation and seeing that one of the hostages was his ex girlfriend from six years ago that he's still in love with. (Not a spoiler this all happens in like the first chapter)

The estranged relationship aspect, the government profession, a serial killer, things like kidnapping and arson. This book was wild. And again so much more than the stereotypical preconceived notions most have of a harlequin book plot.

And that being said, despite the publisher the sex in this book is almost nonexistent. It only happens twice and its more alluded to like "they spent the night making love." Or something like that not at all raunchy, totally PG-13.

Characters:

Joe-

Oh Joe. Hot, stupid Joe. He's admittedly your average male romance protagonist rich, famous, swoon-worthingly gorgeous, with a heart of gold, badass fighting abilities, and a secret insecure side. Joe's got it all, except an ounce of intelligence when it comes to serious situations in that pretty little head of his. Like his mentality is literally "twice ex girlfriends of mine invite me to their house and it ends horribly? Better still go to the third ones house, it's totally not gonna end badly or be a trap or anything." His reasoning is horrible, he's ridiculously impulsive a "guy trait" or whatever. He also says a few sexist comments here and there that are like supposed to be jokes but it's like dude no, this isn't making you endearing, you just seem a little shitty. Let it be known that although it seems like I'm tearing into his ass, I like Joe. He's just frustrating and flawed which hey I guess makes him more 3 dimensional.

Laura-

I really liked her. She didn't seem fully developed but I loved what we were given. She was overly insecure but who the hell wouldn't be after the reason for their breakup. I liked that she was smart and could match Joe's sass level with one of her own.

The villain was surprising and an interesting choice to move the story along.

The team-

Was just one big family and it was really cute. I worried that one of the characters died at the end but all was good.

Overall:

The ending at first I was like if I was her I'd be pissed but then a concern I had was clarified and it was cute, extremely cheesy, but cute.

Pleasantly surprised, it was super addictive would highly recommend and all that jazz. I'm totally gonna devour all of the Harlequin books I own.

Susan says

Very good second chance romance combined with intense suspense. The story opens with Joe and the Omega team on the way to a hostage crisis. Joe is the target of some teasing because of his playboy reputation. He mostly ignores it because his mind is taken up with another hostage situation that didn't end well. He is haunted by the thoughts of the people who died and blames himself for not being good enough to save them. This situation turns out much better, and I loved seeing how Joe's mind worked as he talked circles around the bad guys. Joe was surprised to see that one of the hostages was a former girlfriend, one he hasn't been able to forget. He has deep regrets about the way he ended that relationship and wants a chance to apologize and maybe try again.

I liked Joe and Laura, though in this book it took a while for Joe to grow on me. He has a well-deserved reputation as a playboy, and it doesn't seem to bother him at all. He is very wealthy, which gains him a lot of attention from paparazzi, which he attempts to ignore. As the history between Joe and Laura came out, I was really disgusted by the way he broke things off with her and didn't blame her at all for not wanting to see him ever again. But as the book went on, I could see the way he changed and matured, which made me somewhat more sympathetic to him. In spite of his wealth, good looks, and charm, Joe also has some insecurities that he keeps well hidden. I ached for him and his feeling that he wasn't a full member of the Omega team. I liked Laura. She's strong and feisty and can hold her own when dealing with Joe. Unfortunately, she also has her own insecurities that were aggravated by Joe's words six years earlier. She has worked hard to get where she is, an attorney with an excellent reputation. I didn't blame her at all for not wanting anything to do with him when she first saw him again.

I enjoyed the rekindling of Joe and Laura's relationship. I liked his determination to apologize to Laura for being such an idiot, and how he wasn't going to give up. Laura was determined to protect her heart from being crushed again, but she couldn't deny the pull she felt toward him. I liked the fact that, despite her personal feelings toward him, she knew he was innocent of the charges against him. As they worked together to prove Joe's innocence, Laura got a chance to see the man Joe has become. I loved seeing his protectiveness and how he understood her caution. The last chapter was sweet and romantic, as Joe found the perfect way to show Laura that she could let go of her fears.

The suspense of the story was outstanding. There's the quick realization at the beginning that Joe's problems are connected to the case that haunts him. The look inside the mind of the stalker is truly frightening as their obsession with revenge becomes clearer. I did have some moments when I wanted to smack Joe upside the head and ask what he was thinking. The first murder should have made him cautious. When the second had the same MO, he should have been suspicious about going. When the third happened the same way, I wondered how he could be so stupid. I also ached for him as he tried to go it alone, believing that the Omega people would not support him. I loved his stunned shock as first one, then another, and another of his team members stepped up to help. The intensity increased as it became obvious that Laura was the next target. I

was on the edge of my seat as they raced to find the stalker before they could strike again. The final confrontation was gripping as Joe pitted his skills against the twisted mind of a psychopath. The action was heart-pounding as I wondered how they would get out of it, and my relief was huge as the Omega team pulled it all together.

Monica Cardoza says

This is my first read by Ms. Crouch and I have to say I like her writing style. I was enthralled with the storyline and the characters. This story had everything I love in a good read, it had suspense, action and romance all rolled up in one. I know that I will have to go back to read the first four books in this series and I know that I will love them also.

Joe and Laura had a relationship 6 year before they see each other again. Joe thought that she had moved on and that she had a family and Laura wanted to kill him. She thought that those old feelings that she had for him were gone but they seemed to come out. I couldn't believe when the reason came out on why Joe left Laura it was really dude were you that shallow and dumb. Laura deserved someone so much better but Joe had grown up and I guess he deserved a second chance. But then his ex-girlfriends started to die and he was the prime suspect. Laura was the attorney that he wanted to defend him and she knew he was innocent but now it's time to clear him. There is a psychopath that wants to hurt Joe and he needs to find this person before he/she goes after the person that he loves.

Overwhelming Force was a brilliant read. The chemistry between Joe and Laura is sensual and they deserved to be happy. I loved how the Omega Sector colleagues came to his rescue and he was able to see that he was part of the team.

I can't wait to read the other books in this series.

Received ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an Honest Review

Anita says

Advanced Reader Copy (ARC) provided by the Author and Publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an fair and honest review.

The thing I love most about Janie Crouch books is that she can pack so much into such a short book. It never ceases to amaze me that she can fully develop characters, present a masterful suspense plot and a scorching hot (albeit cozy) romance in under 300 pages. Fantastic.

Joe Matarazzo is a top hostage negotiator for Omega Sector, rich and quite the Casanova. He is the definition of "Love em and Leave em". But there is one he left behind that he wishes he hadn't. When a chance encounter brings them together, Joe is determined to make the most of this second chance.

Laura Birchwood is a lawyer and one of the many of Joe's exes. She thought they had something special, until Joe dumped her, telling her that she wasn't up to his caliber in the looks department. Ouch. Laura is not about to let herself be drawn back in again. Then someone starts killing Joe's exes and he is the primary suspect.

Paula Brandon says

Joe Matarazzo is a hostage negotiator for Omega Sector, and he's being framed for the murders of his ex-girlfriends! It seems someone blames him for not being able to save a hostage in a previous hostage situation, and is out to make him hurt as bad as they do. During his most recent hostage case, he is reunited with Laura Birchwood, the woman he loved and left behind six years previously. Because he's also a rich playboy and the media is interested in him, it becomes clear to his stalker that Laura is his true love, and Laura becomes a target!

This was a good thriller, but the romance let it down. The book tries hard, but it simply can't get past the fact that Joe dumped Laura by telling her she wasn't attractive enough, because he'd been influenced by the gossip rags that were putting her down. It's such a shitty thing to do! To try and make us believe Joe isn't a total douche, he's not only a billionaire playboy, but also a top-notch hostage negotiator who donates all of his salary to charity. I mean, come on! We're being asked to not only suspend disbelief, but throw it right out the window!

As for Laura, the way she keeps banging on and on about it to anyone who will listen, including *the police*, was just irritating. Did she really need to go into that much detail about their break-up *six years ago* to convince them that she wasn't hiding Joe in her apartment? Girl has some major issues!

Although this is part of a series, it can be easily read as a standalone. There are no plot threads from previous books at play here, and none are left dangling for future books. However, the entire team at Omega Sector get introduced here, and it's just way too many characters! I had trouble keeping all of them apart. It detracted from the flow of the story.

There was also a lot of ableism here. Usually, I let most of this sort of thing pass, but there was too much crazy = dangerous than was really necessary. It's no use having "R U OK?" day if authors keep trotting damaging attitudes like this out!

But it was still a fast-paced story, with a couple of unexpected moments, and an exciting climax.

Book Him Danno says

I can honestly say I never expect much from Harlequin Romance books. Just a quick easy read with every little substance.

This book not only had substance but a message too. The characters are well developed with a back story that gives readers hope for second chance romances in the real world along with humorous moments.

This is the first book in this series as well as by the author Janie Crouch and I plan to go back to read more by this author.

There is no surprise why the killer is killing and the readers will be given pcies why it is happening but if you pay attention it doesn't take long to figure out why. The story has a great build taking its time making sure you understand each of the characters without making it boring or slowing down the story.

The message is all about how people normal person are treated in the media when the spot light hits them. We tear about their lives, their body types and education. Women are the worst. We tear each other apart treating each other less than equals just to make ourselves feel better.

We demand to be treated as equals in the world but we can't treat each other as equals. How can we expect

men to treat us as equals when we can't treat another woman as an equal.

The only problem I had was in the final as my son would call it boss battle. I had to read it several times to understand what was happening. That is why it is a 4 1/2 instead of a 5. I think it could have been explained better to keep the reader from getting confused.

Advance Copy from Netgalley

Jen says

I liked that Joe was so willing to sacrifice for Laura, and I liked his vulnerability. But, I really really hated how he treated Laura in the past, and I'm not totally convinced he made up for it. He also never did explain his true motivations for his past behaviors, which I thought Laura needed to know. Plus, too much of the set up just didn't make sense. Why would a trained agent rush into a crime scene not once, not twice, but THREE times, especially after it's clear he's being framed? It was so contrived and stupid. Overall this one was just meh.

Jo-Ann Fitzgerald says

This is the 5th full read of the series.

This hero is used to being in the spot light as he grew up with money but wanted to do something useful with his life. However, history with the ladies is one full of either one night stands or very short romances. However, in his past he had one woman he couldn't get off of his mind as their relationship was going great until it scared him and he said some stupid stuff according to the hero. Then he walked away and regretted it. He's been looking for a relationship since but hasn't been able to move on.

Our heroine only wanted some paperwork to be signed at the bank but ended up as a hostage. The person who came to everyone's rescue was the one man she fell in love with years back before he said something's and ended the relationship. Both our hero and heroine's stunned to find themselves connected again. Immediately our hero settles in on winning back the heroine.

The problem arises when the hero's ex girlfriend's start to turn up dead. He gets suspended and there's a warrant out for his arrest. He asks the heroine and together they start to solve the mystery. Along the way our hero also finds himself with the people at his work becoming more of his family than his blood family. Will everyone be able to solve this mystery before another person dies?

The main characters are likable and we've met the hero before in the other books. The ending was unexpected and welcome. This is one of the better books in the series.

Julie says

This book had great humor, suspense, second chance romance, and a seriously unhinged villain to keep things moving along!

Fran says

SPOILER ALERT!

When you have a Hero who basically tells the heroine that she is not attractive enough or within his caliber, it is hard coming back from that. For me, the author lost me after that. Even his reason for saying it was weak. There was no redeeming qualities for this Hero. Yes, he is suppose to be some hot & badass guy and a womanizer (another quality which I absolutely loath in my fictional romances), but also the whole romance story and the plot was so weak. There were so many clues for who the bad guy was but he couldn't figure it out? As for his regret & redemption? Umm...no, did not work for me! He was suppose to be in love with the heroine all the time they were separated yet he went from woman to woman and only dated exceptionally beautiful women? Yeah, he was a stand up guy for sure. Received free copy from NetGalley for honest review.

Debra Guyette says

Joe Matarazzo is considered a top hostage negotiator, but it is his failures that haunt him. One year ago, three innocents died and Joe is not the only one who cannot forget that. When his exes are targeted by a violent murderer, Joe finds himself a suspect. He turns to Laura Birchwood for help. Laura is one ex he never forgot and he hopes that despite the pain he caused her, she will help him. They were not prepared for the passion they both still felt.

Joe was an amazing hero. Rich and often in the gossip columns, Joe tried to keep his distance and never engage his emotions. He was never sure if people wanted him or his money. Good thing for Joe that he did have some true friends. When he needed them, they came through for him and for Laura. Laura was truly the only woman he loved. Now if only he can fix that. Laura was deeply hurt when Joe broke off their relationship, but for some reason she could not tell him no when he needs help.

Overwhelming Force is incredible. There is action that never stops and two main characters that are realistic and loveable as well as enough danger and suspense to keep us on our toes. Joe and Laura will work their way into your heart and you are amazed and delighted to be counted among one of his friends as you route for a happy ending. This is one book that will keep you reading until the last word. And then leave you wanting more of this amazing couple and their fantastic story. It was one of my all time favorites.

Lynn Brooks says

4 1/2 STARS!

With the continuation of her exciting Omega Sector: Critical Response series, Janie Crouch takes us into the mind of a psychopath who is weaving a plot of revenge against one of the Omega teammates. We're taken along for the ride as the drama builds and lives become more endangered as several familiar faces step up to help clear the name of one of their own.

Sexy playboy Joe Matarazzo might have given up his carefree life to becoming one of Omega's top hostage negotiators a few years ago, but he didn't do it without leaving a past behind him. He's never forgotten "the

one that got away" due to his own youthful mistakes, so when happenstance puts her back in his sights again, he's happy to capitalize on it!

Attorney Laura Birchwood would have been happy to never see Joe's face again, but his quick thinking helps her out of a jam, so when he finds himself needing legal counsel, she decides it's only right to return the favor. It turns out Joe is haunted by a failed case from a year ago, and he's not the only one that has it on their mind. When a stalker sets out to victimize some of Joe's exes and makes sure he's set up to take the fall, the team races against the clock to figure out who is doing it and why!

Elizabeth Neal says

Joe, a hostage negotiator with the Omega Sector, has had some maturity issues in the past and has worked toward leaving all of that behind. Unfortunately, also left behind is the one woman he can't quite forget. He knows he made a mistake in letting her go, and the reason for it, but when he needs help due to a previous case that still haunts him, he turns to her for help and maybe a second chance to win her heart.

Laura, a lawyer, would've been happy never having Joe enter her life again due to the emotional pain he caused her, yet after he helps her with a situation she returns the favor when he requires legal help. It seems someone else is unhappy with Joe, but they're willing to use his exes to get their revenge, and frame Joe in the process.

Will Joe and Laura be able to figure out who is behind everything? Can Laura keep Joe out of jail? Is Laura a target? Can Joe keep her safe? Will Laura be able to forgive Joe for ending things between them and see that he's not the same person he once was? Will Joe and Laura get the second chance they both crave? Is their a HEA in their future?

One-click now and follow along as these two struggle with someone determined to exact revenge on Joe, while working through the memories of what they once shared, and still could again if they're willing to take that risk. Please keep in mind that while this is part of a series and I do recommend reading the books in order, I feel it could be read as a standalone as the author gives enough background information so you don't feel lost while reading.

On a personal note, and this in no way detracts from the author's talent, I really do not like when the "heroes" are playboys/former playboys. As this is in no way the actions of a person one should look up to, the main male character already starts out with a deficit in my eyes and needs to work hard to redeem himself just to be on any sort of equal footing with the female character. It's a huge pet peeve of mine and I feel for the heroine as this is a past she will need to live with. Then add in the fact that Joe's exes are essentially shoved in her face as they're working to prove his innocence, I can't help but hurt for her. Now with that being said, as I love all of this author's work, I do feel she did a good job in portraying the change in Joe and showing that he knows Laura is it for him and even though he can't change his past behavior, he does in fact regret his actions regarding the ending of their previous relationship. I do also feel that maybe they both needed those years apart to truly appreciate what they would eventually have in each other.

****I voluntarily reviewed an Advanced Reader Copy of this book.****

Ellen Parker says

The Playboy Matured

Laura gave her heart once, only to have it shattered. She's not going to give it to Joe again. He made it plain he carries the attitudes of the rich, semi-celebrity he was raised. Ignore the fact that his natural charm is now channeled into hostage negotiation.

Even while working for the elite Omega team, Joe feels as much observer as member. When the local police suspect him of murdering his ex-girlfriends, he needs a lawyer. He calls Laura because she's one of the few people he trusts.

Suspense and danger stalk Joe as he and Laura collect clues to the real killer. Events open his eyes to his value as a team member. The attraction between Joe and Laura is real, but will it withstand the final test?

The Romance Book Disciple (Samantha) says

meh. This was my least favorite Crouch story. Joe is a terrible hero. The plot was a bit ludicrous even if you suspend belief (it just was too obtuse).
