



Taken Over

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Marriage for a merger...

Joel Howard--arrogant, self-assured and all too aware of his sexual magnetism--reminded Cassie of the unlikelihood of anyone ever loving her.

She would rather have sold her soul to the devil than ally herself with him. So she entertained a proposal from his closest competitor, dangerously underestimating Joel's desire to take over her London-based computer-games company.

"There's only one way I can be sure of your loyalty," Joel told her, "and that's by buying it, the same way Peter Williams intended to buy it--by marrying you."

Taken Over Details

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From Reader Review Taken Over for online ebook

Dee says

3 throwback stars

Nostalgia is a scary bitch. It's weird how it makes you enjoy and appreciate the angry misogynystic sexual domination of a male chauvinist. *sigh*

Alongside the early Linda Howard, Jayne Ann Krentz and Diana Palmer stories, Penny Jordan was a frequent read for me as a teenager. They all have fairly typical plots involving overbearing, often angry, excessively desirable yet female disdaining heroes and moderately competent, not-too-timid while somewhat withstanding their awesome charms heroines. In real life I would want to slap the woman some sense and punch the man in the balls. But that early conditioning and large consumption of this type of romance has had a lingering affect in my hindbrain. It results in me quite enjoying this type of old school romance and appreciating the aggressive alpha (*not always the heroine as much, but heigh ho*) male. This book was one of those times but it was slightly detracted by the latter half makeover - I loathe makeovers that result in suddenly showing **everybody** just how attractive the heroine is. Especially when it coincides with the great reconciliation/sex/revelatory scenes. The other issue was how Cassie seemed to morph from super-programmer to not that fussed about it all combined with lady of the manor. Near the end when she's organising a dinner party my thoughts were confused - how has the socially inept and insecure Cassie gained the social nous to accomplish this?

These quibbles aside I remind myself it's Mills & Boon and moreover it's 1980's Mill & Boon (*my how times have changed - mobiles, internet - I thought the mention of computing being a new tech was pretty funny, also being kidnapped is much harder these days with everyone having their own phone!*). So it is what it is. I liked it, but it's not the best of it's kind - I sure enjoy an angry shaking of the helpless female followed by a savage kiss and that was sorely lacking here - but it's not the worst either. (*And there was a forceful kiss that caused a bloody lip - yummy!*)

boogenhagen says

Re Taken Over- PJ and I have a very long standing relationship, she wrote and I generally adored. Sure there were some bumps in the road, but all good relationships have a few rocky points and I was always sure we would weather the storm, - I forgave Island of the Dawn and Rules Of The Game, (well after a lot of shots and half a dozen cookies, anyway). But the most tested moment of our long standing partnership came after reading this book. I truly loathed this story and it took a long, long time for me to pick up a PJ after this one.

The h in this one is a 23 year old geekish game designer, very lonely and convinced by a series of indifferent parenting figures plus the rejection of her classmates, that she is plain, boring and destined to be a crazy cat lady living in a basement flat, forced to cling desperately to soliciting religious cult missionaries just to have a bit of human companionship.

(Real world break here - it seems pretty obvious from the h's occupation and the physical description that PJ did some research and based her character on the real world game designer Roberta Williams of Sierra Entertainment - Ms. Williams is the pioneering designer of the graphic adventure game with her King's

Quest series. It is because of her that those of us who recall rescuing Zelda or beating our brains out to solve the puzzles in Myst can look back on those memories with fondness. She came up with the code to allow visual graphics with player interaction and thus opened up worlds of gaming adventure with interactive pictures, and she succeeded at that for two decades in a very competitive business.)

Our h owns the number one game designing company in the UK and her titles do outstandingly well. Supposedly, according to her somewhat dodgy accountant, she needs to merge with one of the two leading electronics firms to keep her company safe.

Except that she really doesn't - the accountant keeps trying to push her to merge with the womanizing and misogynistic H who has a big industrial electronics firm that makes various robotic devices and has a game division to generate cash revenue. Since her game company is not publicly traded and her cash flow is good, why should she merge with another company?

She doesn't have a big factory, she has a little office and a secretary, where she designs her games, makes a bunch of floppy disks and then most likely licenses them to various game and pc platforms for sales. In short she has a very lucrative cash business with low overhead and inventory and a small staff.

She doesn't have a board of directors and her work is under her own copyright - in other words taking over her company is pretty much impossible unless she wants to sell. Even then the only thing they would be buying is the game licenses-which have a limited shelf life.

Her real net worth is based on her own talent, and that isn't included in the company's assets, so the accountant's threats that she is in imminent danger of being destroyed is a lie and I can only wonder what kind of commission he is being offered to get the h to merge with the H's company.

The H does try to talk her into a merger but that goes pretty much down hill when he mistakes her for her secretary and is very condescending and rude. She decides that she would rather go with the H's main competitor and duly receives an offer of marriage from the competitor's son. She isn't expecting a love match, but she feels she could have a good relationship and maybe some kids and she can still design her games and run her company.

The H and she get into a few verbal slanging matches where he makes it clear that she is a little worm and then he decides to kidnap her and force her to marry him to prevent her marrying his rival. He bribes her secretary to call in sick and then sticks his own secretary in the h's office to ferret out her schedule.

He abducts her in her office building car park. After the kidnapping and the threat of forced drugging the h reluctantly marries him and then gets dumped in the country while the H leases out her flat and lives in his London apartment. He tells her he plans to take her next game and use the revenue to shore up his R & D lab, he figures the marriage will need to last about six months.

The house he takes her to is his country manor which has been in the family since the 16th century. He inherited it when his father died and made him promise to never sell it. He was the younger son and never expected the house, until his older brother died while drunk and chasing after his mother, - she left the H's dad for her lover of ten years and the H's dad also told him there is a question of the H's paternity and that he is probably illegitimate.

Therefore the H really hates all women and sees them as wanton goldiggers - this doesn't stop him from using their bodies or flaunting some arm candy, and he is a very high profile guy with his business and all the socializing he does. He has a girlfriend when he marries the H and the h overhears him telling her about the marriage, but the H doesn't seem to be planning on ending the relationship either. In fact he makes a point of telling the h that if she won't service him as is his right since she is his wife, thousands will in her

place.

Again, I have some serious doubts about the feasibility here - he says he is going to take her game and use the money to finance his groundbreaking micro-surgery robots, but he doesn't buy her company, he doesn't try to contract her for a game design and he doesn't ask for an exclusive license to share in the royalties of her next game release.

A marriage licence doesn't give him any proprietary rights, and the fact that his dad loved the family home and made him promise to never sell it also sheds doubt on the story that he is illegitimate. Why would his dad make him promise to maintain the residence for the family if there was no biological family left?

So the h is on her own and working on her game, the H is rarely around and when he does spend 15 minutes or so, he insults and verbally abuses the H. The h hits her lowest point when a woman calls and asks for the H and when the h offers to take a message, the lady tells her she will see him later. The implication being that they have a hot date. The h starts crying and then is startled when a strange woman appears in her kitchen.

Turns out it is the H's mum, who desperately wants to be acknowledged by her son. The H doesn't talk to her at all since she divorced his dad and moved to Italy, where she married her long term Italian lover. The H comes home and has a temper tantrum worthy of a two year old, and the mum invites the h to stay in Italy with her until the H comes to get her.

The h accepts and off to Italy we go. The mum takes her under her wing and decides to give her a makeover. The h gets beautified on the outside, never hears from the H, and is flirting with the mum's stepson six weeks later when the H shows up and decides to bring her back to England.

The whole forced marriage scenario gets even more ludicrous when he decides that the news of the marriage alone will enable him to keep his investors happy and pouring money into his R & D. Since the h is beautiful now and has learned some social skills, he will just have a big party and invite the people who have money.

Because he still spends most of his time in London, I would think that his continuing appearances in the gossip columns with his arm candy is causing a whole lot of speculation on the stability of the marriage, and what investor is going to want to buy into that situation? Especially since the H still can't bring himself to say anything that isn't an insult whenever he is around the h.

Then the inevitable happens, the H comes to the house with a migraine and takes some serious drugs. The h is massaging his head and neck and while drugged out, he keeps her in the bed where they wind up consummating the marriage. The next morning the h is mortified, for some reason she thinks she loves this guy and is afraid he knows it, so she runs off to her room. The H goes back to London again, but will return for the big party.

The day of the party arrives and for once Hplandia rule #1 is broken. The h isn't going to have a baby after her loss of chastity. She is sad tho, 'cause she would have been happy to have a child, even if she raised it alone.

During the party her ex fiance corners her in her office and tries to kiss her. The H walks in and kicks him out and starts in on the nasty comments again. The h slaps him and tells him that his brother was a wild driver and drinking to boot, he probably would have had an accident no matter what.

She also tells him that he is legitimate and that his father blackmailed the mum into staying until the H was in his twenties by threatening to tell the H he was born to a lover, but the H only has to go see the physical resemblance in the family portrait gallery to know that his dad was lying.

The H takes off and the h falls asleep on the sofa, thinking that the H had been drinking and she might have sent him to his death. The H finally turns up and takes the h to bed. He is getting frisky the next morning when his mum shows up. The H had called her for a big family reconciliation the night before. They go off to have lunch together and the h is packing to go. The H comes back, sees her packing and tells her that she loves him. The h falls for the lust and they go back to bed for the HEA.

At this point I usually throw the book against the wall and shout "SHOW ME THE LOVE!". Really, I do - because for a romance story to work it usually has to be able to suspend belief and HPlandia addict that I am, I have a mind broader than the side of a barn and a more open than a 24 hour deli -- but for all the reasons I wrote about above, I just can't believe there is love in this book.

Every single person from the accountant, to the ex fiancé, to the bribed secretary, to the mother who befriended the h to get to her son, to the H himself, who saw the h as little more than a beddable cash cow, used and manipulated this woman. She is very nice and sweet but so, so doormatishly pathetic that it is a good thing she learned to shop, cause the tread marks on her back are very wearing on the clothes.

The H isn't in the story enough for there to srsly BE a romance, and their entire relationship is based on his verbal abuse and put downs until a fourth to last paragraph alien mind transplant. Even then, he is more interested in getting her into bed cause she looks good and has a lot of cash, than actually getting to know and love HER in a marital relationship with shared two-way conversations and communication.

His ladyfriend's are never dismissed or explained and I can't help but think that the living arrangements won't be changing much in the future. He will still be in London doing his thing in multiple beds, the h will be isolated in the country and will probably stupidly just give him her games to the detriment of her own company until the H gets tired of her, she has less revenue generating power or she gets older and he kicks her to the curb.

His last minute sudden acceptance of the female gender is very suspect, there is no indication that he doesn't still hate all women no matter what he sorta implies. I just felt so sad for this woman who only wanted a little love and needed some self-confidence and self-respect.

I usually console myself with cookies at this point, and hope that the lust wears off for the h pretty quickly the next time she sees a gossip column. I also pull out the Captain Morgan to toast to the fact that in my personal story revision, The h gets the marriage annulled for lack of consent and extortion with menaces, goes to the Mediterranean where she meets a former Navy Seal who owns a beach-side bar and adores our lady game designer and they both live happily ever after with a baby, a couple of cats, and a mega fortune from developing the longest running game series of all time.

The H loses his company after his new micro-surgery device goes haywire and he can't afford the loss, which drives him into bankruptcy. Then the house has to go after his second wife claims it as part of her alimony settlement when she dumps him for a new hotshot electronic magnate. He winds up working as sewer cleaner due to his alcoholism destroying his business savvy and living in a damp basement flat with only a family of rats for companionship.

Nicole says

Plain vanilla. Hero looks angry the whole book. Heroine thinks herself too ugly for the hero but is horny anyway. I don't know why this book is in the voting list for the best HPs. I found it a bit boring as there was

no real drama.

Malsha says

Loved it three years back. Read it more than thrice. Will read it more than ten times again. Will still love it. Penny Jordan sure is one of the best'est' Romance writers in the crowd!

Grace Harwood says

It's 1985 and we're right in the thick of the computer games boom which I certainly remember (I pestered and pestered my parents for a Commodore 64, and I think it was probably around Christmas 1985 when I actually got one). As usual, keeping on top of current events, Jordan has created her heroine "Cassie", a games designer who has had considerable success in the field. Despite appearing like a human calculator (and having a name which is slightly reminiscent of a brand of calculator), there are two men from different games company who are anxious to take over her successful small company and gain access to her new ideas for games. However, instead of going about this in the normal business way and making her a cogent offer, both men seem to feel that they should marry her instead, in order to gain access to her gaming secrets (believe me, as the story unfolds, you will see that they're not worth unlocking).

As the story commences, she is engaged to the dull, drab Peter Williams, who is so clearly and openly after her money (even indicating that he needs a new car and she should buy him one for a wedding present) as he drives her out on a date in the car which entirely matches his dull, drab personality. However, enter the much more exciting Joel Howard, who, instead of courting her in the traditional sense, actually kidnaps her in his Ferrari, and then zooms off with her to the Cotswolds, before forcing her to marry him.

Yes, this is one of the more ridiculous of Jordan's offerings for Mills & Boons which I've read, and by this stage in the story, the reader cannot help but question why super-human genius Cassie just goes along with it so complacently. Post-wedding ceremony, Cassie is then left behind in his Cotswold's mansion whilst the odious Joel zips off in his Ferrari again leaving her behind to mull it all over. In fact, Joel hardly makes an appearance in the novel – he spends most of the time roaring off in his Ferrari somewhere (once whilst drunk!), just appearing at opportune moments to save Cassie when Peter Williams arrives in his Datsun Cherry and some Italian chap tries to make a move on her in a garden.

Cassie, despite being left alone for most of the time, decides she's in love with Joel (why? why?) and writes a new game in his honour (about the trials and tribulations of falling in love). Now, I'll just pause here to observe, this is one of the real failings of the novel. Jordan clearly knows absolutely nothing about the games industry (unsurprising – she would have been a grown woman at the time of writing this novel and probably not very interested in an industry which was marketed mainly at teenage boys and girls). There is a suspicious lack of detail concerning Cassie's work (indeed, she embraces the opportunity to ditch all her technological work to organise a cocktail party for Joel's clients with a strange amount of enthusiasm for a professional woman who is so engrossed in her programming).

Further, when I read about the concept for the "falling in love" game, it made me laugh out loud. Who is this game going to appeal to? I was busy playing Hunchback at this point in my life and swearing my head off because there were no save points at that time in gaming history. Every time one of those little chaps on the wall with their pointy spears spiked Hunchback in the goolies, he fell off the wall, and I had to start again from the beginning. I don't think I saved Esmerelda once – but I digress. However, when I checked with my

husband (who is a games aficionado), he told me that those sorts of games did exist (Leisure Suit Larry or the more recent Catherine). They are not, as Cassie asserted, however, being aimed at a female market (given what the player's avatar can do with Catherine in the game, I think it's fair to say that it's still being aimed at adolescent boys I'm afraid).

Anyway, that point aside, there are also a whole load of other issues about how stupid the supposedly genius level characters are – hardly any of the actions of the novel are even remotely rational but are all driven by self-loathing and lack of confidence.

This book is almost painful to read – one of the ones that fall into the “so bad it's funny” category in Jordan's oeuvre.

Azet says

"Taken Over" is a classic by PJ many loves..and i am now one of them!
It was so interesting to see how both the hero and heroine had this interest for creating computer games.

Joel Howard was one of a hell determined and stubborn hero...to which lengths to have her..and to how he utterly kept himself from falling in love with her,and how he failed.It was so adorable that he had been attracted to her all the time,but he still behaved like a ass many times after their marriage.His mother truly made our Cassie beautiful and more confident after she took her to Florence,and it was so cute of Joel to get her from there,AWW!

"That what?" he prompted softly."That you love me? Is that it, Cassie?"
The soft mockery in his voice drove her beyond the edge of caution.

"Yes ... yes, damn you," she stormed bitterly at him."Yes I love you.. but you needn't think..."

She gasped as the hard pressure of his mouth stemmed her words, his groaned, "Cassie... Cassie, how can you be so intelligent and such a fool," he muttered against her lips, and then he was kissing her as she had dreamed of him doing..

Destiny says

I did really like this book but it seemed kind of predictable and it was difficult for me to get into.

Janie says

Rating: 4 stars.

Somehow I wasn't into this harlequin as much as I usually am when I read Harles. Probably because I've just read too much in the recent weeks. Regardless, Taken Over by Penny Jordan was an entertaining read, primarily because I liked the heroine.

Cassie is the type of heroine I absolutely adore and can relate to, although I gather that many readers may

find her extremely annoying. She's an awkward nerdy wallflower turtle, with very **VERY** low self esteem (to the point where she literally tries to buy herself a husband because she doesn't think any man would want to marry her). She loves to put herself down (much to the annoyance and disbelief of the hero) and she eventually blossoms into the woman she's always wanted to be. Cassie is also a highly intelligent and successful businesswoman.

What I liked about Cassie is that she's openly jealous of OW's looks (secretary and hero's women), and that isn't really common in a lot of books. I found it to be quite realistic.

Now onto the hero..

Well.. I don't really know how to feel about him. He's been absent for the majority of the book, only appearing 40% throughout it. Sure he was mentioned numerous times due to the hero pining after him, but it would have been great if he had appeared more! I also wished that there was a bit of the hero's POV, even if just a smidge.

What I did like about Joel though was the fact that he had actually noticed the heroine and was attracted to her at the start, even though he continuously makes numerous jabs at her about her plain looks, which I wasn't exactly too happy about. I hate it when heroes do that, it's really hitting below the belt- even for a harlequin, silhouette hero.

Vanessa says

Joel forces Cassie to marry him because he needs her company in order to ensure his company can get some funding that he needs. Joel saved the plain Jane from a MOC w/ a manipulative OM. However, Cassie agrees to marry Joel and he quickly whisks her away to his other home in the country. Joel believed that if Cassie had married the OM she would destroy all that he worked for. This bothered me because it's not her fault that his company needs funding or that hers is doing so well. She is just that good!

They will have a MOC for 6 months and he teases and taunts her throughout their time together. Perhaps he is fighting his attraction to her? He informs Cassie that his OW is not prepared to share his bed as long as he is married and Cassie overhears him telling OW that his marriage stands and he doesn't need to explain his reasons for marrying. Given that his mother left his father for OM, I don't see Joel cheating on Cassie. I'm thinking he put his company first and figures he can stay celibate for the duration of the marriage. However, he didn't know how much Cassie would tempt him. Although Cassie doesn't knowingly tempt Joel as she believes she is so plain and ordinary, but Joel's estranged mother soon acts as her fairy godmother and swirls up the mixture of Joel and Cassie to add some more drama.

Jealousy of other parties and them being w/ them ensues. Joel allows Cassie to believe he may be tangling up w/ OW too. Cassie needed to see that she really was an attractive woman and she needed some building up of her self-esteem in order to really go toe to toe w/ Joel and she gets that.

It appeared that Joel really cares for Cassie and developed deeper feelings for her as well. She still has fear of him truly caring about her though. He had thought of her as something different than what he later discovers her to be.

Overall it wasn't a bad read, just okay. There wasn't a lot of passion/angst for me. I had some moments that needed clarification though. It would appear that Joel doesn't listen. She tells him that she loves him and then on the very next page he asks her if she loves him. Weren't you listening? I would have liked more of a

clear cut answer as to whether or not he still had something on the side as well. Also he catches Cassie w/ 2 different men on several occasions, but it's not until later after her transformation that he accuses her of being like his mother. Why didn't he say something before? Maybe because he is now more involved emotionally than before? Which says what about him then?

Jamie Kitwaroo says

Very romantic

Love how the author can have a thought or idea and then take that simple thing and bring it to life

Sandra IsAMoodyCowWhenSheCan'tRead says

With Penny J, I usually know what to expect but this one just didn't live up to my expectations.

It starts of interestingly enough in that she creates video games and has made a great success of her company. Not bad for a male-oriented arena. She is focused on work having accepted her unattractiveness and is practical in her choice of her future husband, knowing he's marrying her to acquire her company. Penny J's strength comes through here in that she makes this sound poignant not pathetic.

Enter alpha male Jake, who mistakes her for a secretarty, doesn't hide his contempt for her choice of clothes or fiancée, and is furious that she has turned away his far superior proposal for acquisition and settling for someone clearly unworthy of her. He needs the merger of their company desperately and somehow manages to coerce her into marrying him. Yeah, I don't get how he did that so easily either.

They marry and she stays in his mansion and starts to discover the reason for his cynicism towards women. His mother cheated on his father. In the meantime our h quite content to give up her apartment become lady of the house and work from his manor. And she made that switch without a lot of fuss...hmmm...

Penny J is a good author but I just couldn't connect with this one. There were some nice touches like how Jake sees past her plainness and is obviously attracted to her as how she is and wasn't bowled over by her makeover. As was her quality time with his mother but unfortunately that just dragged on for far too long and I found it weird that she had a real attraction for another man. I guess I like my heroines and heros to stay committed to each other.

It was a so-so read but still adore dear Penny J.

Jenny says

Heroine having erotic thoughts about OM and even kissing him ruined the romance for me. It felt like she was cheating on her husband.

Sunshine says

Spoiler:

Incredibly annoyed with the heroine and her self-esteem issues along with the lack of proper communication between the couple!!

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

This is a favorite of mine. I like the poignancy of the story. Cassie is a plain jane who doesn't think she's worth more than buying a husband with her successful video game business. Joel is desperate and infuriated that this business rival might get an edge over him by marrying Cassie and gaining control of her business, so he beats him to the punch by kidnapping Cassie and forcing her to marry him. Of course, he doesn't plan to have a real marriage, since Cassie is no beauty. You can guess that he sees her inner beauty, but fights falling in love with her because he doesn't trust women after his mother runs off with her lover. I've read this book several times. I like how Joel's mother takes Cassie back to Italy with her, and she gets a makeover, but Joel was already attracted to her anyway. He comes to fetch her because he misses her. Anyway, I don't want to give the whole plot away. I'm really glad I have a copy of this one.

Ginette says

Blackmailed into marriage but her heart already loves him. Good read that me rooting for her to get her man
