



## Stalemate

*Iris Johansen*

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## Stalemate Iris Johansen

Eve Duncan has turned down the job twice already. Her skill and devotion in identifying murder victims and helping bring their killers to justice may be world-renowned. But Eve works exclusively for law enforcement and the families of the innocent, and the man on the other end of the phone is many things—none of them law-abiding or innocent.

One of the world's most wanted men, little is really known about Luis Montalvo except that he is extraordinarily dangerous and that he never takes no for an answer. Now he wants Eve's help in the worst way. For he believes they have something in common—and he's about to prove it with a grisly warning.

Eve will leave everything and everyone behind, even the man she trusts and loves the most, Atlanta detective Joe Quinn, to travel to Montalvo's luxurious armed compound in the Colombian jungle to identify the skull he has recovered. She has agreed to this devil's bargain to save an innocent family, but also for a reason she can't admit to Joe, to the CIA, to anyone. For the man in the jungle has promised to be able to give Eve what she wants most of all—the key to unlocking the darkest and most painful mystery of her past.

But Eve is in more danger than she can imagine. As she gets closer to identifying the skull, she finds herself caught between two ruthless killers with no way out. Now, with everything on the line, Eve Duncan must make the most chilling choice of all. And if she's wrong...she's dead.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## Stalemate Details

Date : Published December 26th 2006 by Bantam (first published 2006)

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Author : Iris Johansen

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## From Reader Review Stalemate for online ebook

### David says

This book tried very hard to impress, but failed totally. The premise was implausible, the dialogue stilted (and repetitive) and the characterization unconvincing to the point of absurdity. I can't believe this was book was even published. If an unpublished author had submitted it, i doubt if it would have made it past the slush pile.

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### Ruby Hollyberry says

If this is the kind of book most people read, I'm not surprised most people don't read more.

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### CJ - It's only a Paper Moon says

This is just the worst Eve Duncan novel. Eve came out looking strong but slightly out of character (especially the way that her character was starting to become written)but Joe seemed like even more of an overprotective over-bearing fool. I couldn't suspend my disbelief of the annoying characters to even bother caring whether Eve and Montalvo got together until about half-way and then I figured it would serve Joe right. Don't get me wrong, I like Joe but he makes a good point when he mentions in the beginning of the novel that his relationship with Eve is getting a bit strained. They need to grow up and I hate to say it, I'm a little tired of the Bonnie motivator. She should never forget her child but even Bonnie has asked to be let go. It's time to start the healing process or at least find the killer. I can't bother to read the next one, so I guess I'll never know either.

Unfortunately, this book just didn't do it for me. I liked Jane in the last two novels though. Very believable and the stories were entertaining. I'd be interested in more about her and Trevor. That is the best thing that I can take from the Eve Duncan series.

Alas, it was a good run while it lasted but I believe this is my last Eve Duncan novel.

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### Heather says

I have loved Iris Johansen since I was a teenager. My only problem that plagued me as I continued to read her Eve Duncan series was how does so much drama and life challenging adventures follow one person around? And in the last several years, I find the phrase shut him out (as in Eve hates to shut Joe out, Eve must shut Joe out, Joe expects Eve to shut her out, Joe gets mad Eve shuts her out, etc) and it just aggravates me because I like the characters, like the series, and hate that everyone is always "shut out". Characters grow and relationships evolve and I feel after longer than a decade, Joe and Eve's relationship should have too, especially by the end of Bonnie.

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## **Jill Bratcher says**

This review is based on an audiobook.

I really enjoyed the early "Eve Duncan" series books. I have to say, the more I read or listen to, the less I enjoy them. At least this one focused on Eve, not Eve's adopted daughter, which has been my complaint with some in the series.

The thing I liked least about this one was the reader. She sounded like a Russian while speaking the dialogue for a Columbian named Gonsalvo. In fact several Colombians. Oh, and the text specifically said (as read) that Galen (recurring secondary character from earlier books), "said in a British accent." - and then the reader proceeded to use an Irish brogue. I didn't remember his nationality from previous books I'd read vs heard. The discontinuity between text identification & brogue was distracting. (I'll grant that parts of Ireland are in UK but "British" means England to me.)

Even if I'd read it myself in print or ebook, I'm already tired of the premise of people for whom Eve does not want to do reconstructions convincing Eve to do them by threat or promise. This was the second or third of those - always a slightly different scenario but still.

Also, the discord between Eve and lover - former Navy Seal, former FBI, now Atlanta PD detective - bothered me a lot. They've been through so much since her Bonnie was kidnapped... It just was hard to swallow.

It has been about a year since I'd read any of Eve's stories, but I didn't remember her saying "Jesus" all the time before. Maybe I glossed over it in print, but as a Christian - this may not bother people of other faiths - it's jarring. "Bitch" gets used an awful lot by the Columbians re: Eve.

If I had never read an "Eve Duncan" book before, some of those things might not have bothered me, but I doubt seriously I would have gone back to read more. And I would have missed out on some good books (the first few especially). It makes me doubt whether I want to read any more. I picked up another, non-Eve-Duncan book on CD at the library and have started it, and I'm not sure I'm going to stick with it. Same reader, I think.

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## **Lara says**

The more I've thought about it...the more I've realized I really didn't like this book. While it was classic Iris Johansen with a high paced suspenseful style the story left me flat. I've read a couple of the other Eve Duncan books...but it had been a while so I didn't remember back story much. So, coming into this book I was missing a lot. While those things could be the reasons a person wouldn't like a book...they weren't the

reasons I didn't like this one. Eve constantly shuts out Joe...the man she says she loves more than anything and wants in her life forever. She says she loves him but leaves him out of the most basic aspects of her life. I found this very off putting. Then she starts to develop feelings for a Columbian Drug Lord...who basically blackmailed her into helping him. WHAT THE.....? Even though she doesn't act on her feelings and goes back to the states with Joe...she still leaves her heart closed to Joe. It didn't sit well with me. I don't know that I will read the next installment of the Eve Duncan series because she left it open that she will leave Joe and go to the Drug Lord. Oh for heavens sake!

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### **Cathy Hurt says**

I didn't bother finishing this one- the characters were annoying & the plot was ridiculous.

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### **Christina T says**

I found this book to be overall a decent read. Listening to it rather than physically reading it myself made for some enjoyable housework and drive time.

The Good Stuff: It was nice to get an Eve Duncan book that actually featured Eve Duncan. I do like her adopted daughter, Jane, but this series is not the Jane series and I was getting tired of having Jane be front and center. The suspense was really good as was the setting. For the most part the plot was solid...too bad the characters were not.

The Bad Stuff: At this juncture I'm over and done with Eve's obsession with her long dead Bonnie. I know one doesn't just get over the loss of a child but by this point Eve is making terrible judgement calls and putting herself in danger constantly in order to find that closure. This is not the Eve Duncan that I remember. Also Joe, an ex-FBI agent, makes some TSTL decisions and almost dies...twice. WTH?!? The combo of Eve and Joe was disastrous also. After this many years together why is Eve constantly shutting Joe out? Even the most independent and strong willed person, after being with someone for a decade or more, learns to lean on someone to make important life altering decisions. Not Eve. She pretty much lies and manipulates her way then sneaks off into the night like a thief. I almost hate her. Oh and the introduction of a potential "love interest" in the form of a Colombian drug lord for Eve...Give me a Break! So frustrating.

On the Audio: While I think Jennifer Van Dyck did an ok job narrating the book, her accents, in my opinion, were off. The Colombians almost sounded European. In addition a reoccurring character named Galen had an Irish brogue yet at one point I could have sworn the book said that he spoke in a British accent.

In a Nutshell: I'll probably continue with the series but only because I really want to read the whole Bonnie closure but honestly, I feel this series has just about run its course.

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### **Mic says**

Inept. Overblown. apallingly written.

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## **David says**

This was an appalling book and quite inept, especially in its characterization and character motivation. Every few pages in the first half of the book we read something on the lines of:

- How can I trust you? You are a criminal.
- I know I am a criminal. But you must believe me, this time I am sincere.
- But how can i be sure?
- You can't be but you must trust me nevertheless.

Okay this is a parody. But that's the way it comes over. And the whole theme of: "I need you to prove it so that so-and-so will trust me and help me," is so implausible and ridiculous. I just didn't buy it - **couldn't** buy it. It was rubbish. The author also held out the unfulfilled promise of solving a mystery concerning one of the characters as a sort of rather pathetic "come-on" to keep the reader interested in what I think she knew would otherwise be an intensely boring and implausible book.

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## **Vickie T says**

Eve is a forensic sculptor who is offered job to reconstruct a face for a criminal in exchange for information about her daughter who was murdered. I didn't really care for the book, I kept waiting for it to get better. I didn't like Eve that much, the premise of the story and to me it lacked the romance that her books usually have along with suspense. Not one of her best.

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## **Sean Nichols says**

Stalemate by Iris Johansen is not the book I originally expected it to be. When I first picked it up, I had no idea that it was a mystery novel full of dark and disturbing figures. I especially didn't expect it to take place mainly in the Jungles of South America. Stalemate is about a woman named Eve Duncan, who is a forensic sculptor( a person who works with the police department to identify long dead murder victims), who lost her only child named Bonnie. The murderer was never found, but she receives a tiny bit of hope when a big time arms dealer named Montalvo offers her a job. In exchange for her services he will at least figure out who murdered her child. Of course her husband Joe does not approve causing conflict between them when she slips into South America without his permission. The main antagonist is revealed to be a Drug Lord named Diaz, who is basically the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a drug lord.

The book is very interesting. Due to its simple title, none would suspect that it was about a dark subject such as drug cartels and arms dealers. It goes very in-depth on some of the practices a forensic sculptor puts into place, though it does make the job go over the top and is not as impressive. Truth be told, I'm being nice by giving it a 3 star rating. The more I think of the book the more I realize that it is a terrible book with an over the top plot that is not at all realistic or gripping. The characters tend to be annoying and altogether Blah. The husband is a Navy Special Forces operative for goodness sake, and she is friends with a former assassin. Not to mention the CIA is turned into the nerdiest and most easily corrupted organization on the planet. Also, if the person you are trying to monitor already knows that you are a CIA agent, then you have failed as a spy and are lucky that you weren't executed. I know that some people might actually like this book, but my

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personal preference is Blah.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

I've been a long-time fan of Iris Johansen, especially the Eve Duncan series. Although STALEMATE is decidedly different from the other stories starring Eve Duncan from the past, I have to admit that I thoroughly enjoyed it--so much so that I stayed up until 3am to finish the book.

Yes, the Eve in this story isn't the saintly, never-do-anything-wrong Eve that many readers have come to know and love. She becomes attracted to a bad guy who, at least in the beginning of the story, is the mother of all bad guys. Montalvo, however, isn't what he appears to be--just, as it would turn out, the same way that solid, ever-steady Eve isn't just the pushover we've always thought her to be.

The action in this story is non-stop, with a great appearance by Galen (one of my favorite characters of all-time) and with a great new character, 19-year-old Miguel. Montalvo, I'll admit, is a very, very appealing character; whether he's being a bad guy who seems to kill without compunction or a sensitive man who lost his wife to a drug lord, you can't help but find yourself drawn to him.

I, for one, am hoping that Ms. Johansen brings Montalvo back for more stories. Whether or not Eve and Joe (who, by the way, acted like a giant, ego-bruised baby throughout most of this story) can get their relationship back on track, or whether Eve will allow her attraction to Montalvo to grow, we'll have to wait and see.

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But STALEMATE is definitely not a disappointing read. Kudos to Ms. Johansen for bringing back an Eve Duncan who actually started to act like a real, fallible human being, instead of a perfect, wounded princess.

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### **Taylor Gilbert says**

This was a miserable read. I have a few family members who really love Johansen so I decided to give her a try. The main characters in the book are so obnoxious that I wanted to tear my hair out. It felt like the plot went round and round in the same hackneyed circle. I think the only reason I was able to finish this novel is I am slightly OCD and was hoping to see one of them die.

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### **Karen says**

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Preposterous. Plot, character's actions, everything. Yuck.