



Overload Flux

Carol Van Natta

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The Central Galactic Concordance has been stable for two centuries, but trouble is brewing. A pandemic is affecting hundreds of civilized planets, and someone is stealing the vaccine...

Brilliant investigator Luka Foxe's hidden mental talent is out of control, making him barely able to function in the aftermath of violence, and the body count is rising. The convoluted trail leads to a corrupt pharma industry and the possibility of an illegal, planet-sized laboratory. In the face of increasing threats, he must rely on an enigmatic, lethal woman he just met, but she has deep secrets of her own.

Mairwen Morganthur hides extraordinary skills under the guise of a dull night-shift guard. The last thing she wants is to provide personal security for a hot-shot investigator, or to be plunged into a murky case involving sabotage, treachery, and the military covert operations division that would love to discover she's still alive.

Two more lives in a rising death count won't bother their enemies one bit. Their only hope for survival lies in revealing their dark secrets and learning to trust one another.

Previous edition found here

Overload Flux Details

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From Reader Review Overload Flux for online ebook

Riley says

There are so many things I liked about *Overload Flux*. Action and intrigue make up most of the story. There are crime scene investigations, treks over a mystery planet, space battles and lots of jogging. Fast-paced, there is not an idle page in this book!

And there is romance. While not a huge part of the book, it is important aspect of the two main characters. Mairwen and Luka are two people with special abilities. Both have cursed their abilities in the past, but when Mairwen and Luka meet and work together, they find the reason and the ability to embrace their talents. I loved these characters. Mairwen is oh, so cool and extremely dangerous. Luka is brilliant, which I always like in a hero!

Part mystery, part science fiction, and part romance, *Overload Flux* is a fascinating imaginative read. 5 stars!

I received a copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Maddy says

Originally posted on my blog, LoveBooksandBlush.

*I received a copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.

I love reading science fiction and fantasy books above all genres. The recent book I've picked up, *Overload Flux*, by Carol Van Natta, is the former. This novel takes place in the far-off future, where interstellar travel between planets and planet colonizations are deemed normal. The main characters of this novel are a crime scene investigator, Luka Foxe, and a seemingly innocuous night-shift guard, Mariwen Morganthur. Mariwen is posted as security for Luka as he investigates the death of two of his friends. To Luka, Mariwen seems to be much more capable than any of his former security. Luka requests for her to be assigned to him while his work progresses. The investigation puts both Luka and Mariwen in danger, while a romance grows between the two and each of their special abilities are confessed to one another.

There are a few good things about this novel and reasons why I suggest you give it a chance. The overall plot of the story is interesting. It is a homicide investigation initially, but things soon spiral out of control. We learn that the deaths have deeper complications, and we also learn a lot more about Luka and Mariwen and what makes them different from other people.

Another component of the novel I liked were the main characters themselves. Luka and Mariwen are well developed characters with their own motivations. Luka is capable, brilliant and caring. Mariwen is tough, distant and skilled. They are great characters that carry the novel. They make the reader want to know more about them and hope for their success.

However, the romance in this book is okay, not incredibly well done or poorly done but somewhere in between. I liked Luka and Mariwen on their own, but I found their relationship to be a bit rushed and unbelievable. They meet each other and seem to immediately tell each other their secrets. I understand that they are both attracted to one another, but I found their relationship to be a bit contrived instead of natural and honest.

While there are a few good things about this novel, there are a number of things I disliked and felt dragged the story down. For instance, I thought there was too much technological jargon that didn't make any sense to me. The author doesn't explain what those phrases mean either. What does overload flux even mean, for instance? Maybe it was in there somewhere and I just missed it, but the random words that were obviously written to depict future slang annoyed me. I want to know what things mean and don't want to just skim by a technological word that I don't understand.

I also felt that the first half of the story was too slow. The investigation is agonizingly sluggish and it takes a while for the story to pick up. Even when the characters are on another planet due to a failure in their plans, there isn't as much action as I'd like.

This story has good points and bad points, and I didn't entirely hate it or completely fall in love with it. I'd suggest you read it if you're a science fiction fan who wants romance, but only if you don't mind slower paced stories. I give this novel a 3/5 because of my lukewarm liking of the novel.

Mei says

A great book and great story!

I loved both Luka and Mairwen! Both flawed but extremely likable!

Luka is functioning better in society, while Mairwen is almost a robot. She's been altered on DNA level to make her a perfect killing machine, but, while she escaped, she's not able to interact with other people except on a most basic level. To make the bad situation worse, she must hide her abilities and if wounded cannot seek medical assistance except, even here, on a most basic level. She goes into hiper-drive, she hears and smells better than any human, but it costs her body and if she exercises her ability for longer periods she can go catatonic.

Luka also has abilities, but they're not because of some DNA alteration - they're natural. He's a Minder, able to "read" and visualize a murder scene. But, after having pushed to hard his ability, he's having trouble controlling it. Every time he risks to overload and skip into a coma.

By chance Mairwen is assigned as a bodyguard to one of Luka's missions and so they notice each other. We do not have here an insta-love/lust, but steady growing awareness to each other and mutual ability to soothe their abilities when they go out of control.

Soon their trust in each other is total and with trust comes also feelings. Luka has an advantage here, but poor Mairwen is bewildered! She doesn't know how to deal with emotions since they have been forcefully (and I mean by torture!) eradicated from her by the evil CPS (who's supposedly supposed to help people, but...).

Luka is patient and supportive and slowly Mairwen comes out from her shell.

During all this they are thrown into several very dangerous situations on and off planet/s where Both their abilities help solving a very intricate murder/conspiracy.

I would have loved to know more about many things that were left unexplained, but I have hope that they'll be explained in the other books of the series!

Laura (Kyahgirl) says

5/5; 5 stars; A+

This was a great example of high quality sci-fi romance. The romantic element wasn't the main focus, even though it was strong. The world building was interesting and believable. I am immediately going to buy the next one on the series because I don't want to leave this world!

Lyndi W. says

This is the kinda sci-fi romance I'm looking for! Space battles, fire fights, secret genetic manipulation, futuristic tech I can just barely comprehend, psychic abilities, alien planets, and all that shit with a slow burn romance on top? You fuckin' kidding me?

Elizabeth says

Originally published at West Coast Book Reviews.

I loved the finesse with which Van Natta handles Mairwen and Luka's individual back-stories. Their motivations and challenges are there, clear and sufficient, without overwhelming. There's just enough to explain and engage with Mairwen and Luka without dumping too much emphasis on previous events. It's handled in such a quiet way that every time there's a little more the plot moves forward, not the other way.

I also really enjoyed the subtle humour I found ever present. As little as a few words or the smallest change in facial expression made the dialogue real and relatable and I found myself connecting more and more with Mairwen and Luka. Too many times I've read SFR with overdone violence or straight to the bedroom smut and the relationship between the H/h is lost to the flash and bang. Luka and Mairwen come across as very genuine and their relationship builds in solid layers.

Van Natta's tech is both simple (in that it's reasonable and makes sense) and powerful (in that it's reasonable and makes sense. Her names both for super gadgets and plain old household items tell us exactly what it is and what it does without losing me in any need for weighty description.

Finally, it was so refreshing to see a H/h pair somewhat close in age to my own. They had a respect and maturity we don't usually see in romances set around twenty-somethings. It was nice to see them being good together without unnecessary drama centered around eye-rolling juvenile behaviour. I'm glad they have a

follow-up novella together as I will miss them. I must admit to a small amount of trepidation getting in to the sequel, *Minder Rising*, since I'm so fond of Mairwen and Luka but I'm also happily in to Van Natta's well built Galactic Concordance world and look forward to experiencing more.

FYI: New favourite space-ish curse word is "cluster bucket"

If you're new to SFR or a hopeless addict I think you'll find *Overload Flux* to be a good find. Definitely recommended.

Eva Millien says

Trouble is brewing, investigator Luka Foxe's hidden mental talent is out of control, Mairwen Morganthur wants to remain an autonomous night shift guard and their only hope for survival lies in revealing their dark secrets and learning to trust one another in this action packed sci-fi romance.

Mairwen has hidden herself away from her enemies by hiding her extraordinary skills under the boring guise of a nightshift guard and the reader can't help but get caught up in the story as this young woman is thrust front and center into the middle of a very dangerous investigation with the sexy Luka. Both have secrets that can make or break them emotionally and literally if others were to find out which makes things quite interesting as they look into the two deaths of Luka's co-workers. Mariwen tries to keep Luka at arm's length but the chemistry between them slowly simmers into a full boil the closer they have to work together. The characters are strong, compelling and grab the reader's attention from the very beginning especially as they are quite different from most giving them a very mysterious air in this fast paced and smooth flowing plot full of action, suspense and romance.

Spine tingling anticipation builds throughout the story the closer they get to the answers they need and to spice things up even more as the danger escalates from quite a few different players, betrayals and some twists that keeps the reader guessing. There is never a dull moment amongst the stars as the well written scenes and details capture the imagination and the well orchestrated suspense and action draw the reader deeper into the story and refuses to let go. I must admit I pleasantly surprised just how fascinating the author's world has turned out to be and the interesting epilogue certainly has me waiting impatiently to see what adventure this promising new series will boldly take me

Pippa DaCosta says

LOVE this cover... and it's only 99p. *One-click*

Wyrdness says

I really quite enjoyed this. Considering everything that takes place in this book happens in the span of a

month at the most, it's a pretty wild ride. I found that the writing was pleasantly error free for the most part and had a smooth flow that kept me bobbing along nicely, though there were a few times when there was a bit of senseless "future speak" thrown in to complicate matters. Sometimes a rope is just a rope, it doesn't need to be a synth-flex bindcord to get the message across. However most of the time this wasn't an issue.

I also liked that the romance more often than not took a backseat to the plot and everything else going on and never felt forced in order to promote improbably abrupt sexy times (in fact there are no "on page" sexy times, this is definitely not an erotica masking as sci-fi romance). It was a nice change of pace to find that it took time for the main couple to build up to their eventual intimacy and that the author didn't resort to the rather overused and disappointing "hormonal meltdown at first sight" that seems to plague so many other stories. Usually I think that a month would be too short a time to create a believable relationship, but I think it works here because of the personalities involved *and* because of the unique circumstances they rapidly find themselves in, with the need to quickly learn to trust and depend on each other being key to survival.

I found the snippets we were fed about the larger world/ universe interesting and want to know more about how it all fits together. CPS (which seems to be this universes evil Psy-corp), how and why "psychic powers" seem to be pretty common, the Government possibly being corrupt and ineffectual, corporations having way too much power, how many worlds seem to have been colonised by just one nation but the "universal" languages are English and Mandarin Chinese. What that New Years Eve revelation *really* means. Etc..

All in all I'd say this is one of the better modern sci-fi romance novels I've personally read. It manages to find a nice balance between softer sentimental moments and rather dangerous action without getting bogged down in anything in particular. I'm a little bit sad the second novel involves a different set of characters purely because I liked Luka and Mairwen so much and could happily follow them solving crimes and getting a sort of HEA, but I'm sure I'll adjust (after I read their novella). I'd say give this a go if you like a little bit of love mixed in to a dangerous situation and don't need a lot of hard science explanations and techno-babble to sell you on the future setting.

Lexie says

Rule #1 when dealing with Mairwen? If she's quiet you're likely to get hurt. Badly. Absolute love for this book.

++++

Firstly, not as in love with that cover as I could be. I like Mairwen...but Luka looks too...not something. Not like he's been through enough maybe (Mairwen is, I think, in her mid-30's based on contextual data and Luka is in his late 30's/early 40's?). That's a minor gripe since I read this on my Tablet and only had a fleeting glance at the cover before I went to make this post.

Secondly, oh my shiny stars am I happy to read another scifi romance that pleases me. And let me emphasize the romance part of that category classification because Van Natta has both her characters spend time understanding what getting into a relationship--short term or otherwise--would mean for them both. Individually they operate fairly well considering they both harbor some pretty hefty emotional/psychological issues. Together...well those issues could be a bigger problem.

I appreciated the fact that Van Natta didn't have them jump into anything. They acknowledged their attraction, acknowledged they wanted something to happen, but also acknowledged that slow would be better. Mairwen is damaged - the training they put her through to make her what she is as well as what she had to do to escape, stunted her completely.

Thanks to some trick of fate Mairwen finds herself guarding Luka instead of her normal night shift security detail. Luka, to no one's surprise except perhaps Mairwen, delights in her company (and her competence, I can't stress that enough) and keeps requesting her as his partner (to Mairwen's obnoxious boss' anger). Fairly quickly they both realize the other is not quite what they seem, but whereas Luka wants to explore things and come to some sort of togetherness, Mairwen keeps warding him off. For good reason.

Dispassionately she recounts to Luka the various atrocities they committed upon herself and other children who met the criteria. Intellectually she knows these things were heinous, that she should feel something more, but at the same time part of their regime was to convince the children that emotion of any kind would lead to their death. In the five years since she..."graduated" (when around others or not in private places they refer to those days as "school", a small thing that one suggests and the other picks up on and remembers) Mairwen hasn't tried to reclaim those lost emotions, preferring to live an unnoticed, unremarkable, but entirely her own life.

A life that as her and Luka work to figure out who killed his friends and who seemed to have a much larger target they were aiming for, she wants to share with Luka. There was no big revelation moment or some grand gesture that he did. It would be easy to say he "wore her down" with his charm, his flirting, his almost insistence that they belonged together...but it was not really any of those things. It boiled down to one thing: he accepted her. He accepted her wry sense of humor. Understood that as delicate as she may have appeared she wasn't someone who asked for protection, but appreciated when he offered it as an equal.

For Luka he was attracted to her from the start, but was cautious. Both because of his abilities and because of his fragile state of mind. Any time he let himself get drawn into the crime scene it had the potential to consume him so completely he'd be left as little more than a vegetable. Mairwen helps push him through that, as first his anchor to reality and then as his sort of...toughening up trainer.

This review is a lot about them, but I also found a lot to enjoy about the world. I mentioned in some of my status updates (on Goodreads) how the lingo threw me for a loop. It took a little while for my head to get around it, but once I did it flowed seamlessly.

I look forward to there being more books in this universe - while things wrap up nicely for Luka and Mairwen, making this a nice stand alone in many ways, the author all but taunts the reader with "More Adventures to Come!" which I for one am waiting for most eagerly.

Melanie says

I was give a copy of this book by the Author for an honest review always dangerous with me, but here I go honesty is what you'll get!!

I'm not going into all the blurb you can read it above :) Here goes

My interest was captured from the first page and didn't wane throughout it's a fast paced Sci-Fi romantic adventure of about 300 pages and I really enjoyed it. Thankfully it was well edited and I didn't find myself tripping over mistakes throughout - this is a pet peeve of mine.

The two main characters Luka and Mairwen are very likeable. He's a brilliant, sexy, sensitive guy but no pushover and She's a kick ass and take names kind of girl. There is no insta-love *thank goodness* but a gradual build up from a spark of attraction, to friendship and finally love - Aww!! *le sigh*

Both characters are emotionally damaged but manage to find their way whilst dealing with treachery, betrayal and general chaos lol!! There is no overwhelming passion but something of a more innate, believable nature, quite refreshing really.

I enjoyed the action, suspense and world building and although it had credible details of a glimpse into a possible future, it was not bogged down with too much complex, incomprehensible science and technology ... this is always a bonus for me.

This is the first book of a series and the epilogue has left me with a craving to find out what comes next!! There is no cliff hanger and this book can be read as a standalone - but me I want more!! I have a feeling the books will only get better.

Verdict - If you like intrigue, action and love with your Intergalactic Travel ... then this is the book for you!! Even non Sci-Fi lovers could easily read and enjoy this book a good entrance for anyone wanting to dip into the Sci-Fi pool.

Thanks Carol for this and my only other comment is I want book 2 yesterday :)

Shari Kay says

3.5★

I enjoyed this mostly. Can't decide whether or not to round up or down for GR rating...err. Why can't we have a larger scale, say, 1-10 or the option for half-stars. Anyhow, 3 1/2 stars meant I quite liked it and she's a new to me author...so I'll round up!

Mairwen is an escaped Death Hunter. She was taken as a child and genetically altered, reprogrammed and subjected to horrendous treatment in the guise of training...until she finally escaped 4 years ago. She's gone dark--off the map, living alone, keeping her head down. She's a night security guard, hiding her considerable skills in a mundane job....and that's how she likes it. Keeps her off the CPS' (the big bad) radar.

Luka is an investigator and a Minder who's...burned out? Or maybe the opposite of that. He can't shut his talent forintuition off anymore. He sees how a murder happened in technicolor, his abilities give him the scene as if on a movie screen and he's having trouble dealing. Mairwen is randomly assigned to be his guard on his latest assignment, his driver for one night...she ends up...calming his mind and being a big help to him when a robbery turns into something else. He requests her as his security again....and things evolve from there.

Luka 'awakens' something in Mairwen that she knows is better left dead...he makes her feel. He makes her care. And that tempts her to expose her considerable skills to protect him, which if found out, could get her back on the CPS' radar and...dead, or worse. The future does not sound all that grand in Van Natta's world....worlds. (Humans have colonized far and wide.) Certain 'powers' have evolved throughout the population, and not all of them are safe to reveal.

Overload Flux is a good old space opera. There is technobabble (it wasn't too complex for my nonscientific mind), murder, spaceships, space travel, a crash landing on a hostile planet, fancy guns, betrayal and battles...no aliens though. There is a sweet romance between Luka and Mairwen (low steam for those who want to know). Mairwen is an Alpha with a beta heart...Luka is a beta with a warrior's heart. I liked them both.

For conflict's sake...Mairwen's talent wasn't always utilized to its full potential and Luka's genius and ability went completely unused one time...for reasons...leading our team to the brink of disaster. Of course, without their failures, there wouldn't have been much drama, I just wished it would have been written in a way that I could buy into their *oversight* a bit more.

Overall, it was a grand space romp; the whole book taking place over the span of a month. So love and danger comes in fast and furious. The beginning can be a little confusing...but if you hang in there in you're in for a fun sci-fi ride.

Will I read the next one? I'm not sure. It doesn't center on Mairwen and Luka and I'm not really interested in the heroine it does highlight. But, there's a novella with M & L and I'll definitely be checking that one out.

Carolyn F. says

I usually start a book that an author has requested me to read and review with a sigh because I usually just find the book okay and have to come up with something nice to say.

BUT NOT WITH THIS BOOK! It was fantastic from beginning to end. I loved how the two main characters are both damaged in different ways and find a safe haven with each other. I'm crazy about the ending of the book and can't wait to read the next book in the series. I would recommend this to any sci-fi, sci-fi romance or just plain romance readers.

Kickarse Reviews says

Mairwen Morganthur lives undercover as a night watch guard, trying to hide from Citizen Protection Service (CPS) the organisation that bought her, modified her and made her the galaxy's most deadliest assassin. For four years she has been assumed dead to the CPS and she wants to keep it that way.

Then one night, she's called to work personal security for crime scene investigator Luka Foxe, who isn't all he seems and in that one chance encounter both their worlds get turned upside down.

No longer able to hide what she is from the intriguing and incredibly intelligent man, Mairwen decides that she needs to move on, find another place to hide, until she realises that Luka is awakening things in her that

she never knew she was capable of, and being human again might just be achievable with Luka in her life.

So Luka's cause – finding the killers who murdered his friends – becomes her cause as she takes on the duty to guard Luka and keep him safe, from deadly merc crews, psychic kidnappers and deadly pharma companies intend on silencing him, and she also has to help keep him safe from himself when his own unique gifts threaten to put him in a coma.

This is a love story in space where two broken, talented and intelligent people get thrown together in a race to discover who is killing and stealing vaccine material from the transport company they both work for.

I enjoyed reading it, and might be interested in reading the rest, but the other books in the series focus on different characters in the Central Galactic Concordance universe.

4 stars out of 5 for Overload Flux.

Sophia says

Audiobook Review

After being utterly riveted to the prequel, I was revved to dive into Overload Flux for more of the CGC world of suspense and intrigue in the future among the stars along with the sensational narration work of Nicole Poole.

Overload Flux introduced its main characters over a grisly murder scene. Neither are exactly what they seem with their psychic abilities that must be hidden particularly Mairwen Morganthur's. She can't be discovered, but the longer she acts as the clever and tenacious Luka Foxe's security, she is in danger of him figuring out her secrets long before he figures out who is behind the killing of his friends and what they knew that got them killed.

Luka's minder talent is a wild thing that he can barely control, but he has to if he is to function and figure out the truth. With Mairwen at his back and helping him control his psychic talent, even the dangers of a deadly conspiracy, won't get him off the trail.

Slowly, the pair make discoveries about the case and about each other even as someone races to stop them from discovering the truth.

This couldn't have been any more up my alley than it was. Psychic gifts, a futuristic setting, murder mysteries, actions and a slow burn romance. I was so into the story that I barely shut it off to go about my needed business.

Luka and Mairwen were amazing characters. He is vulnerable because his minder gift is messed up, but he is dedicated and intelligent. He's focused, but also kind. He is struck by Mairwen from the beginning when others overlook her. Once he knows the truth, he is not intimidated and completely respects her along with desperately hoping he can find a way to keep her with him. On the other side, Mairwen is keeping a dreadful secret. She is an augmented human with lethal abilities that are off the charts. She was taken and forced to become a secret government trained killer (or hunter as they are called). She got herself out of that by faking her death and taking on a new personal. She's hidden in the background terrified to draw attention to herself. Luka is like a colorful and bright star in her life and she can't resist him even though she fears he'll find out

about her. Protecting him as he does his work tracking down the truth becomes more than a duty to her. He's showing her how to live and she never wants to lose him.

There were some wonderful action scenes and I loved those tight spots moments. There were some good twists. The futuristic setting and world were well drawn. All the elements of the book really worked for me and I love how it ended and the way the rest of the series seems to be laid out for the future stories.

As I said, Nicole Poole did the narration work and I loved her fabulous talent bringing not just the main characters to life, but giving the secondary characters their own sparkle so that I felt no disengagement from the story. Pacing, tone, emotions, accents, genders- all were amazing.

All in all, this was a sci-fi romance winner that I can whole-heartedly push at anyone who loves the genre particularly if you like a mystery and intrigue tossed in for good measure.

My thanks to Tantor Audio for the opportunity to listen to this book in exchange for an honest review.
