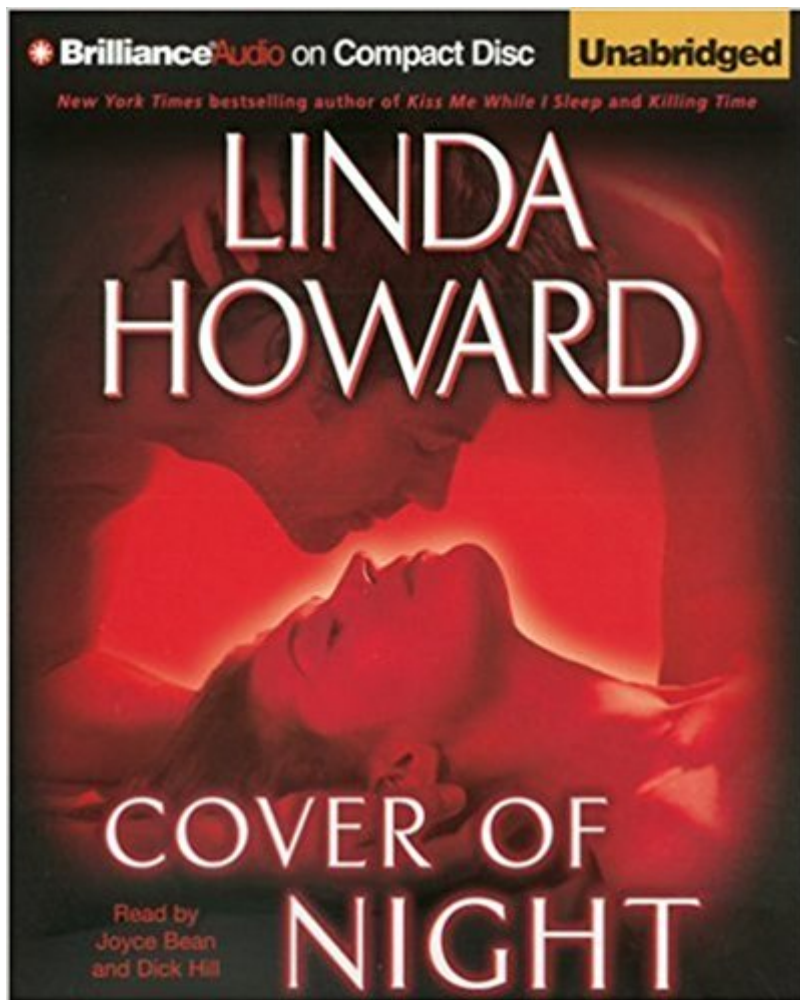




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Cover Of Night



Synopsis

In the charming rural town of Trail Stop, Idaho, accessible to the outside world by only a single road, young widow Cate Nightingale lives peacefully with her four-year-old twin boys, running a bed-and-breakfast. Though the overnight guests are few and far between - occasional hunters and lake fishermen - Cate always manages to make ends meet with the help of the local jack-of-all-trades, Calvin Harris, who can handle everything from carpentry to plumbing. But Calvin is not what he seems, and Cate's luck is about to run out. One morning, the B&B's only guest inexplicably vanishes, leaving behind his personal effects. A few days later Cate is shocked when armed men storm the house, demanding the mystery man's belongings. Fearing for her children's lives, Cate agrees to cooperate - until Calvin saves the day, forcing the intruders to scatter into the surrounding woods. The nightmare, however, is just beginning. Cate, Calvin, and their entire community find themselves cut off and alone with no means to call for help as the threat gathers intensity and first blood is drawn. With their fellow residents trapped and the entire town held hostage, Cate and Calvin have no choice but to take the fight to their enemies under the cover of night. While reticent Cal becomes a fearless protector, Cate makes the most daring move of her life into the very heart of danger.

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Customer Reviews

Linda Howard is the award-winning author of many New York Times bestsellers, including *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, *Cover of Night*, *Killing Time*, *To Die For*, *Kiss Me While I Sleep*, *Cry No More*, *Dying to Please*, *Open Season*, *Mr. Perfect*, *All the Queen's Men*, *Now You See Her*, *Kill*

and Tell, and Son of the Morning. She lives in Alabama with her husband and two golden retrievers.

The guest who was staying in room 3 of Nightingale's Bed and Breakfast, which Cate Nightingale privately thought of as the He-Man room because it was almost unrelievedly masculine, stopped in the doorway of the dining room, then almost immediately stepped back out of sight. Most of the patrons who were enjoying Cate's morning offerings didn't even notice the man's brief appearance; those who did probably didn't think anything about his abrupt departure. People here in Trail Stop, Idaho, tended to mind their own business, and if one of her guests wasn't in the mood for company while he ate, that was fine with them. Cate herself noticed him only because she was bringing in a platter of sliced ham from the kitchen at the same time, and the kitchen door was directly opposite the open hall doorway. She made a mental note to go upstairs the first chance she got and see if he—his name was Layton, Jeffrey Layton—wanted her to bring up a breakfast tray. Some guests didn't like eating with strangers, plain and simple. Taking a tray up wasn't anything unusual.

Nightingale's B and B had been open for almost two years. The Bed part of the business was often slow, but Breakfast was booming. Opening her dining room to the public for breakfast had been a happy accident. Instead of having one large dining table where everyone would sit together—assuming all five of her guest rooms were occupied at the same time, which had never happened—she had placed five small tables, each seating four, in the dining room so that her guests could eat in relative privacy if they wanted. Folks in the little community had quickly realized that Nightingale's offered some fine eating, and before she knew it, people were asking if it was okay if they stopped by for coffee in the mornings, and maybe for one of her blueberry muffins as well. As a newcomer she wanted to fit in, so because she had the extra seats, she said yes, even though mentally she had groaned at the thought of the added expense. Then, when they tried to pay her, she had no idea what to charge, because the cost of breakfast was included in the room rental; so she'd been forced to hand-print a menu with prices and post it on the side door, which most of the locals used instead of walking around to the front of the big old house. Within a month she'd squeezed a sixth table into the dining room, bringing her total seating capacity to twenty-four. Sometimes even that wasn't enough, especially if she had guests in residence. It wasn't unusual to see men leaning against a wall while they drank their coffee and munched on muffins, if all the seats were taken. Today, however, was Scone Day. Once a week she baked scones instead of muffins. At first the community folk, mostly from ranch and lumberjack stock, had looked askance at the "fancy biscuits," but the

scones had quickly become a favorite. She had tried different flavors, but the vanilla was a runaway favorite because it went well with whatever jam the customer preferred. Cate set the platter of fried ham down in the middle of a table, exactly halfway between Conrad Moon and his son so that neither could accuse her of playing favorites. She had made that mistake once, putting a platter closer to Conrad, and since then the two had kept up a running commentary about whom she liked best. Gordon, the younger Moon, would be joking, but Cate had an uneasy feeling that Conrad was looking for a third wife and thought she'd fill the position just fine. She thought otherwise, and made certain she never gave him any accidental encouragement with the ham placement.

"Looks good," Gordon drawled, as he did every day, stretching out his fork to capture a slice. "Better than good," Conrad added, unable to let Gordon top him in the compliment department. "Thank you," she said as she hurried away, not giving Conrad a chance to add anything else. He was a nice man, but he was about her father's age, and she wouldn't have picked him even if she weren't too busy to even think about starting to date. As she passed by the Bunn double coffeemaker, she automatically checked the level of coffee in the pots, and paused to start a fresh batch. The dining room was still full, and people were lingering longer this morning. Joshua Creed, a rancher and hunting guide, was there with one of his clients; folks always hung around when Mr. Creed was there, just to talk to him. He had an aura of leadership, of authority, that people naturally responded to. She'd heard he was retired from the military, and she could believe it; he radiated command, from his sharp, narrow gaze to the square set of his jaw and shoulders. He didn't come in very often, but when he did, he was usually the center of respectful attention. The client, a handsome dark-haired man she judged to be in his late thirties, was just the sort of outsider she liked the least. He was obviously well off, if he could afford Joshua Creed, and though he was dressed in jeans and boots like most of the people in the room, he made certain, in some subtle and some not-so-subtle ways, that everyone knew he was Someone Important despite his show of camaraderie. For one thing, he'd rolled up his shirtsleeves and kept flashing the thin, diamond-set watch on his left wrist. He was also just a shade too loud, a shade too hearty, and he kept mentioning his experiences on a game hunt in Africa. He even gave everyone a geography lesson, explaining where Nairobi was. Cate managed to refrain from rolling her eyes at his assumption that local was synonymous with ignorant. Weird, maybe, but not ignorant. He also made a point of explaining that he hunted wild animals mostly to photograph them, and though on an emotional level Cate approved of that, her common sense whispered that he was just saying it to give himself an out in case he didn't kill anything. If he was any kind of photographer,

she couldn't be surprised. As she hurried on to the kitchen, she wondered just when she'd started looking at newcomers as "outsiders." The dividing line between her life before and her life now was so sharply defined that sometimes she felt as if she weren't even the same person. There hadn't been a gradual change, giving her time to analyze and process, to slowly grow into the woman she was now; instead there had been jagged breaks, abrupt upheavals. The period between Derek's death and her decision to move to Idaho was a steep, narrow valley into which sunshine had never reached. Once she and the boys had arrived here, she'd been so busy getting the B and B open and settling in that she hadn't had much time to worry about being an outsider herself. Then, almost before she knew it, she was as much part of the warp and weave of the little community as she ever had been in Seattle; more, even, because Seattle was like all big cities, filled with strangers and everyone moving in individual little bubbles. Here, she literally knew every soul—all seventy-six of them. Just before she reached the kitchen door, it opened, and Sherry Bishop stuck her head out, a quick look of relief crossing her face when she saw Cate approaching.

"What's wrong?" Cate asked as she rushed through the door. She looked first to the kitchen table, where her four-year-old twins, Tucker and Tanner, were industriously digging into their cereal, but the boys were sitting on their booster chairs exactly where she had left them. They chattered and giggled and squirmed, as usual; all was right in their world. Rather, Tucker chattered, and Tanner listened. She couldn't help worrying because Tanner talked so little, but their pediatrician hadn't seemed alarmed. "He's fine," Dr. Hardy had said. "He doesn't need to talk because Tucker is talking for both of them. He'll talk when he has something to say." Since Tanner was completely normal in every other way, including comprehension, she had to assume the pediatrician was right—but she still worried. She couldn't help it; she was a mother.

"A pipe burst under the sink," Sherry said, sounding harassed. "I turned off the valve, but we need the water back on fast. The dishes are piling up." "Oh, no." Other than the obvious difficulty of having no water to cook or wash dishes with, another problem loomed even larger: her mother, Sheila Wells, was en route from Seattle, for a weeklong visit, and was due in that afternoon. Since her mother wasn't happy about Cate and the twins leaving Seattle to begin with, Cate could just imagine her comments about the area's remoteness and lack of modern conveniences should there not be any water. It was always something; this old house seemed to need almost constant maintenance and repair, which she supposed was par for the course with old houses. Still, her finances were stretched to the breaking point; she could use just

one week in which nothing went wrong. Maybe next week, she thought with a sigh. She picked up the kitchen phone and from memory dialed the number of Earl's Hardware Store. Walter Earl himself answered, catching the phone on the first ring as he usually did.

"Hardware." He didn't need further identification, since there was only one hardware store in town, and he was the only one who answered the phone. "Walter, this is Cate. Do you know where Mr. Harris is working today? I have a plumbing emergency." "Mistuh Hawwis!" Tucker crowed, having caught the name of the local handyman. Excited, he banged his spoon against the table, and Cate ... --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

Fiction is...well...fiction. You need to suspend disbelief when you read. I'm really good at suspending disbelief but his book seriously challenged my ability to do that. Some of the characters were ok, but most were completely unbelievable or annoying. I'll just say that the hero and heroine were so unengaging as to make reading about them distasteful. We won't go too deeply into the 'professional' bad guys. Just let's say bad guys who made decisions that stupid would not have been out there running around to act against our idiotic hero and heroine, because they would already have made moronic decisions that landed them in jail. I can't even discuss the incredibly contrived plot. I wouldn't know where to begin. I gave two stars, because, hey, Linda Howard, but I definitely would NOT recommend that a reader start reading her stuff with this book. It could turn you off her for life. Try something else of hers. Maybe Cry No More or Kiss Me While I Sleep, both far better done than this stinker. Or frankly, with a couple of exceptions, almost anything else that she's written would better to start with.

* NYT bestselling author Linda Howard doesn't disappoint her readers in this thrilling romantic suspense including excitement and murder. It's a must read!.....Young widow and single parent Cate Nightingale had one purpose in life as she worked hard at Nightingale's Bed n' Breakfast she purchased soon after her husband's death. She needed stability for her four-year old twin boys and this was the only way if she ever expected to send them to college someday. Of course, it helped her immensely that the local handyman Calvin "Cal" Harris, was always there to help saving her money every step of the way with every mishap or something breaking down around the place. What Cate didn't know however, was her life, as she knew it was about to change drastically when one of her patrons takes off outside the window of the room that he's been staying in only to bring havoc down on Cate, her boys and the entire town for doing so. Former Marine Cal Harris was only

planning to stay in Trail Stop, Idaho for only a few days to visit an old Marine buddy, but three years ago when he strolled into town something caught his eye and changed his mind. It was the beautiful face of Cate Nightingale being the only reason why he never left except Cate never knew how he felt about her and he hoped in time he might find the nerve to tell her how he truly feels. When two contract killers show up at Cate's front door looking for a certain CPA that once worked for a notorious crime boss, Cal not only tries to protect Cate and her boys as well, but Cate, being the person she was, sends her boys off to Seattle along with her mother and tries to help Cal as the town is being held hostage. With the tension rising, the killers begin shooting the residents closing off the only entrance to and from the town and Cal and Cate try to escape a horrid terrain to bring back help for the town. As Cal and Cate continue their flight, the walls come tumbling down causing sparks of electricity and they share a loving tryst in each other's arms forcing themselves to think about past, present and future. With everything in the balance, they both devise a plan to take out the killers, win back the town, help the residents and most of all, help themselves because Cate soon realized that she was never living at all when her heart just started beating for the first time in three years.....great thriller by Miss Howard!....thank you

I've reread this book probably 3 times. Linda Howard is one of my favorite authors and there is something about this story that keeps bringing me back. Cate, widowed at an early age, has been so wrapped up in handling the responsibilities of her bed and breakfast plus raising twin boys, that she hasn't taken any time for herself. Cal, Trail Stop's all around handyman, is biding his time waiting for Cate to notice him. There's danger as Cate becomes the target of the bad guys and the whole town ends up in jeopardy. I couldn't put the book down even though I knew how it was going to end. I laughed. I cried. And then I cheered.

I absolutely love this one. I read it originally years ago then a few years past got the urge to read it again. I googled and found the title and author (I had forgotten that info) I got a copy for my kindle so I wouldn't lose the book again. This most recent retread was my 3rd or 4th time. It has become an old friend I love to revisit. This is not just a good read, to me it is a great read.

This is just not authentic Linda Howard. It has a lot of direct telling that lacks Linda Howard's talent at story-telling, little romance built up between hero and heroine, and a fairly implausible plot. I am willing to suspend my disbelief quite a bit, but the reason for putting the whole town of Trail Stop Idaho under siege was way not valid enough. Very disappointing.

Another great Linda Howard book - yes, a little different from her others, but this one was none-stop suspense with terrorists holding a whole town hostage. I loved the slowly awakening Cate to Calvin's long-time love and the secondary love affair with the ex-military leader and the ex-nun was very satisfying. I bought this one in hardback and re-read it every couple of years. Linda Howard has done a great job in making Cate a strong heroine who holds her own when it comes to building a new life as a widow and getting out into the wilderness to help save her town.

I actually read this story first in paperback but wanted to have an e-copy of the book. I feel like the book starts a bit slow but soon you are enthralled with the characters and what is happening to both the hero and heroine and their small town. It is wonderful to see how the hero and heroine finally come together and realize they are stronger as a couple than as single people. The story is exciting and moves quickly once the action really begins. It's also nice to fall a little bit in love with the secondary characters. I have a great fondness for Linda Howard and have many of her books kept in my keeper file and shelf!

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