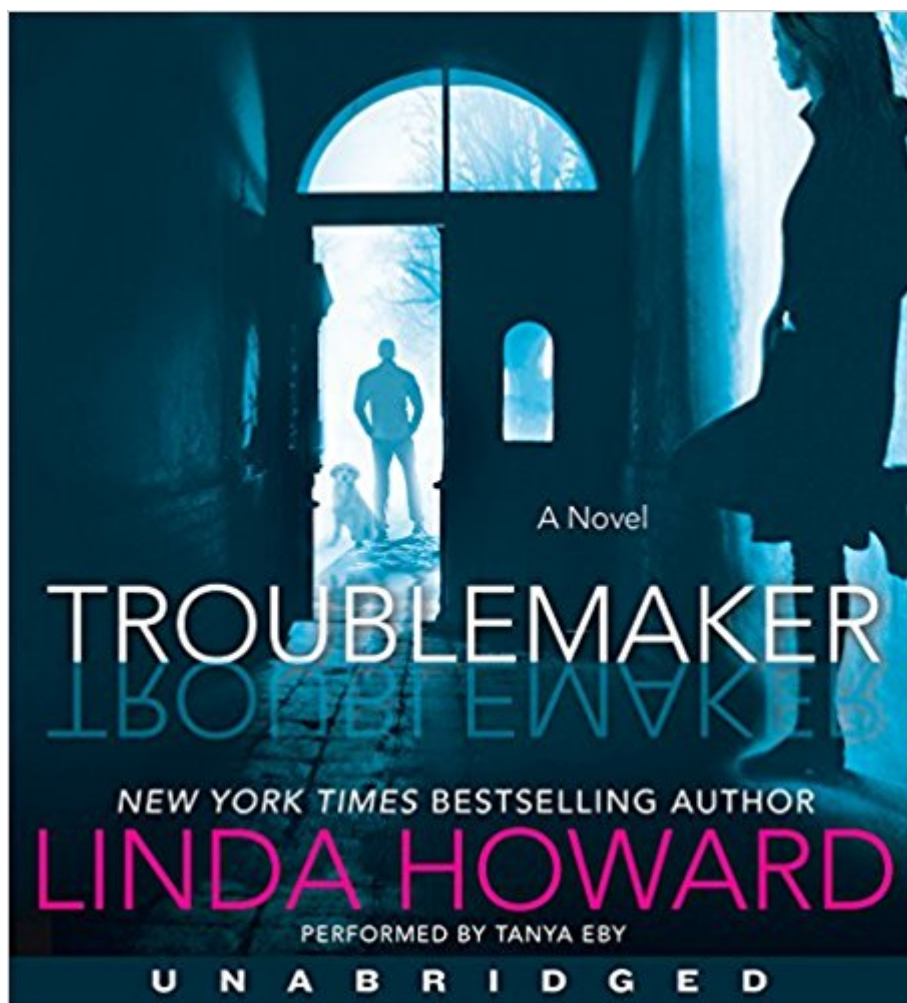




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Troublemaker CD: A Novel



Synopsis

When Morgan Yancy, an operative and team leader in a paramilitary group, is ambushed and almost killed, his supervisor is determined to find out who's after the members of his elite squad. Because of worries that this unknown enemy will strike again, Morgan is sent to a remote location and told to lay low. But between a tempting housemate he's determined to protect and a deadly threat waiting in the shadows, keeping under the radar is proving to be his most dangerous mission. As the part-time police chief of a small West Virginian mountain town, Isabeau "Bo" Moran doesn't need a mysterious man in her life—especially a troublemaker as enticing and secretive as Morgan. She already has her hands full reining in the residents of Hamrickville after a personal dispute goes violently awry. The harder Bo and Morgan fight the intense heat between them, the closer they become, even though she knows he's hiding from something. But discovering the truth could cost Bo more than she's willing to give...for it might just cost her life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At the start of this exceptionally engaging novel of romantic suspense from bestseller Howard (Shadow Woman), a sniper shoots and nearly kills Morgan Yancy, the leader of the deadly top-secret GO-Team (global offensive), outside his condo in the Washington, D.C., area. Axel MacNamara, Morgan's boss, concludes that the Russian mob was behind the attempted hit, but Morgan can't think of any reason why he was targeted. Concerned for Morgan's safety, Axel chooses to hide him in the little town of Hamrickville, W.Va., where Axel's stepsister, Isabeau "Bo"

Maran, is the police chief. Fiercely independent Bo, who lives with her golden retriever, Tricks, resents the imposition of caring for Morgan, who's slowly recovering from his chest wound. But Bo and curious townspeople adjust to his presence as the uneasy relationship between the stepsiblings deepens. Eventually, Morgan and Bo rehash his shooting and uncover a vital clue that allows Morgan to set a trap with himself as bait. Howard's strong characters, including Tricks and a number of Hamrickville locals, keep the pages turning until the climactic confrontation. Agent: Robin Rue, Writers House. (May)\n --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Queen of romantic suspense.” (Booklist) “Howard meshes hot sex, emotional impact, and gripping tension.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) “Linda Howard is a superbly original writer. Linda Howard writes with power, stunning sensuality and a storytelling ability unmatched in romance drama. Every book is a treasure for the reader to savor again and again (New York Times bestselling author Iris Johansen)” “[An] exceptionally engaging novel of romantic suspense [...] Howard’s strong characters, including Tricks and a number of Hamrickville locals, keep the pages turning until the climactic confrontation.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) There is nothing quite like a sexy and suspenseful story by the amazing Linda Howard! (Romantic Times BOOKclub) “Award-winning writer Linda Howard is an expert at mixing danger and romance to create a page-turning hit ... Passion and peril in one heady mix (COVENTRY EVENING TELEGRAPH)” “Romantic suspense queen Howard makes a welcome return with her marvelous new book, Troublemaker. This is vintage Howard, with all the wonderful characterization [...] slow-burn passion and dangerous action a reader could ask for! There is a reason Howard remains such a superstar - she always delivers!” (RT Book Reviews (top pick)) “[She] can write one heck of a white-knuckle romantic thriller, [...] seamlessly combining top-notch suspense with a super-sexy love story. Graced with a cast of compelling characters [...] and seasoned with a deliciously dry sense of humor, this is Howard at the top of her literary game.” (Booklist (starred review)) “Linda Howard writes such beautiful love stories. Her characters are always so compelling... she never disappoints.” (Julie Garwood) “Great book, read it in one sitting! Really enjoyed the relationship between Morgan and Isabeau” “Bo...and of course Tricks. Loved that dog!” (Lynsay Sands, New York Times bestselling author) “[An] amazing read. It’s hot, addictive, and suspenseful with a powerfully written storyline that swept me off my feet and kept me hooked on every word. [...] Linda Howard’s writing is superb. [...] I highly recommend

Troublemaker to readers everywhere. (San Francisco Book Review) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I don't think I've ever been this confounded when reviewing a book. I am an ardent Linda Howard fan; I believe I have read everything she's written, including the novellas and lesser-known stories from her earliest writing days. After reading TROUBLEMAKER, I peeked at a number of sites to determine if my surprise in the story was shared by others. I found an overwhelming amount of support for the impressions that were also my own. This story is promoted as Ms. Howard's standard romantic suspense. Although her novels have varying ratios of page time spent on character development, relationship, suspense, romantic tension, sex, mystery, etc., despite my preferences for more of less of each area of focus, I have enjoyed each of her books tremendously. TROUBLEMAKER loses all of the magic found in telling a balanced story, which Ms. Howard provided effortlessly in her other novels. This is not a romantic suspense story; its tone is radically and irrevocably affected by the author's blatantly overemphasized depictions of every action, reaction, and imagined thought process of the female protagonist Bo's dog, Tricks. I honestly do not know how to explain the depth of imbalance and narrative harm caused by this unchecked inclination in which the author indulged. It was as if the author could not control her need, which often read as obsessive, to not just include Tricks in every scene, but to literally write every scene around the dog. Tricks actually becomes the relationship surrogate for Bo and Morgan, the male lead, as we read uncomfortable scenes in which the protagonists seem to be able to express feelings and desires only when they express themselves through the dog. Bo could not even admit her initial interest in Morgan in any way other than her reactions to his interactions with Tricks. When there is eventually sexual intimacy between Bo and Morgan (about two-thirds into the book), we think that there is finally a major action which does not center around the dog, only to learn as Morgan, not yet disengaged from Bo, turns his head to see that Tricks has somehow snuck back into the bedroom, is standing with her muzzle lying on the bed, watching them with her brows beaded above her eyes. The accusation in her eyes as she stared () was plain. This is the dog! Tricks does the same thing the next morning, muzzle on bed, staring accusingly at them. Conversation on the morning after begins not about their relationship, but about getting caught by the kid(s). At other times, the feelings assigned to the dog and Bo are so entwined that the reader struggles to identify if the pronoun

“she” is referring to the dog or to Bo. As much as I did like the characters, the author did not let us get to know them; the reader drowns in the “dogology” on every page. Because the dog is part of every interaction, even when the protags are thinking about their feelings for each other, the reader is left with a confused and only partial understanding of the relationship between Bo and Morgan. Often we are told what Tricks must be thinking or feeling, and examples are provided time and again of Tricks’ ability to interpret English at the level of a 4-year old child, inferring that she is actually fluent in English as a receiver, hence deserving explanations, apologies for perceived insults (such as Morgan occupying her seat), and exhibiting reciprocal behaviors such as taking away the seat of a human on a couch in retaliation for the human occupying her usual seat in a car. The descriptions of every motion and position of the dog, every feeding described in mundane detail, repetitive depictions of Tricks’ ball play—basically every single thing the dog does, and every observation of each of those things by Bo—I just don’t know how on earth an editor allowed this to go unchecked. We are missing huge portions of what should be rising action in this story, because it has so much Tricks filler; the narrative suffers horribly from this imbalance. All this while, as we are taken on a bizarre hybrid of dog and people story, we lose all of the character development, tension, and relationship drama between Bo and Morgan. The most interesting segments of the book, few and far between, happen far away from Bo and Tricks, such as the opening scenes when we get to know Morgan and witness his attack, and at the end of the story when we again hear from Morgan’s perspective, in which the absence of the dog in Morgan’s activities is a relief to the reader. Morgan was by far the most interesting character in the story, and the other, highly likeable characters, were unfortunately under-developed and one-dimensional. Many reviewers called this story a tale of small-town life rather than romantic suspense, but I don’t believe we got enough development there either, just snapshots of stereotypical small-town caricatures—although all of the characters were interesting and I would have greatly enjoyed true development of their personalities and actions. For me, the book blurb publicizing TROUBLEMAKER as “a thrilling, fast-paced novel of romantic suspense” was an inaccurate depiction of this story. Perhaps Ms. Howard felt the desire to write a dog tale; if so, that’s a noble endeavor and there is much readership for that subject, but this book is not that. Since the days of *Marley and Me*, there have been dozens of bestselling novels detailing the lives of beloved animals and the humans who love them. Unfortunately TROUBLEMAKER is a chimera of two very different story structures, with its

two human protagonists fighting for their identity on every page, while Tricks did her best to completely (and successfully) dominate the story. I can live with the ratio of dozens : one for Linda Howard books which I've enjoyed, and I'll happily await her next novel, hoping that it will be the balanced story I've come to expect and appreciate from her, and that publicity will describe it accurately as it is written whether it be with human or animal protagonists.

The story starts out well, introducing us to Morgan Yancy, a paramilitary operative. He's injured in a surprise attack but can't figure out why he was targeted. He's sent to recover in the home of Isabeau "Bo" Maran, the police chief in a small town. A relationship develops very slowly between them, with Bo's dog Tricks as the third protagonist. Tricks made me smile whenever she was mentioned in the book. At this point, the suspenseful part of the book pretty much disappears until the end. We are instead involved in a story of small town life. There's nothing wrong with that, unless you are expecting a real thriller. To give you an idea, there are 27 chapters in the book - the first 2 concern Morgan and the attack and the last 3 wind up that part of the story. The other 22 chapters are about the town of Hamrickville, the residents and goofy occurrences police chief Bo has to deal with. The 3 stars are really because the blurb on the back of the book had me expecting a different story. The visit to Hamrickville was pleasant as was the romance between Morgan and Bo. Just be aware that this is a visit to a small town in West Virginia with a little suspense thrown in - not a real suspense story.

I am a huge Linda Howard fan. Have read all of her books. This one would not rank anywhere near the top. Not much suspense. If you are not a dog lover, you would not like Tricks (who plays center stage). I will never give up on Linda Howard nonetheless.

Appears to be an expanded update of Diamond Bay. It reads nearly identical and would have been better received as a Harlequin. I found it to be a complete waste of money.

Linda Howard is one of my favorite authors; however, this book missed the mark by quite a bit. I think the primary problem with this one is the ridiculous amount of focus on the dog, Tricks. When I read fiction, I do it to escape from reality for a little while, so I like an engaging, suspenseful story with well-developed characters (particularly regarding the main characters). For me, the day to day drudgery of dealing with dogs or kids isn't appealing in fiction because it's too much like the reality

that most of us deal with all the time. Dogs are pets that require a great deal of time, attention, and work (if they are treated properly). I have one, so I know whereof I speak. I like dogs, and Linda Howard obviously does too, which is great. I don't want to read a book about someone's devotion to a dog, though. This book could have been great if the focus had totally been on Morgan and Bo. Tricks didn't add anything to the story, and in fact, detracted from it because pretty much everything was about the dog in some way. Just not my idea of escapism entertainment.

I expect a great deal more from this author whom I've been reading for years. Where was the suspense? The action? Although some of the dialog and characters were great as usual. It was long on very descriptive pages of sex and short on plot. I'm no prude, but really! Who is her target audience now? Maybe I've outgrown her? Or her or this genre. A couple of her older books are some of my "go-to" books when I want pure entertainment and enjoyment and always will be, such as, Veil of Night and Mr. Perfect. Please, will the former Linda Howard come back! And ditto for some of my other romantic suspense writers.

This book is 3/4 about throwing a ball to a dog and the dogs eating schedule! Maybe 25 pages of suspense?! Don't waste your \$. If you have to read it go to the library and check it out for free.

Disappointed. Linda Howard has written better books. The plot is weak. Bo's (female character) relationship with her step brother is totally unbelievable. Much of the book is focused on Tricks, the dog genius. I like dogs, but I don't want to know what the dog eats, when the dog eats, how the dog reacts to everything, etc. I was looking for a relationship story between a man and woman. I suggest you pass on this one unless you want a story about a dog.

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