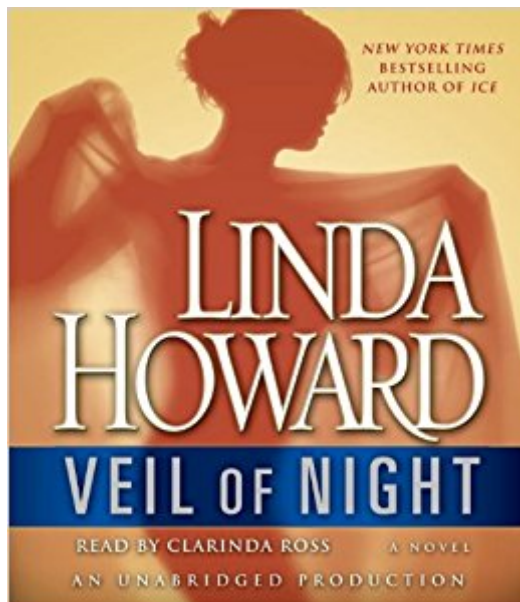


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Veil Of Night: A Novel



Synopsis

~ Jaclyn Wilde is a wedding planner who loves her job~ usually. But helping Carrie Edwards with her Big Day has been an unrelenting nightmare. Carrie is a bridezilla of mythic nastiness, a diva whose tantrums are just about as crazy as her demands. But the unpleasant task at hand turns seriously criminal when Carrie is brutally murdered and everyone involved with the ceremony is accusing one another of doing the deed. The problem is, most everyone~ from the cake maker and the florist to the wedding-gown retailer and the bridesmaids~ dressmaker~ had his or her own reason for wanting the bride dead, including Jaclyn. And while those who felt Carrie~s wrath are now smiling at her demise, Jaclyn refuses to celebrate tragedy, especially since she finds herself in the shadow of suspicion.~ Assigned to the case, Detective Eric Wilder finds that there~s too much evidence pointing toward too many suspects. Compounding his problems is Jaclyn, with whom he shared one deeply passionate night before Carrie~s death. Being a prime suspect means that Jaclyn is hands-off just when Eric would rather be hands-on. As the heat intensifies between Eric and Jaclyn, a cold-blooded murderer moves dangerously close. And this time the target is not a bride but one particularly irresistible wedding planner, unaware of a killer~s vow.~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

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Customer Reviews

Linda Howard is the award-winning author of many New York Times bestsellers, including Ice, Burn, and Death Angel. She lives in Alabama with her husband and a golden retriever.

Chapter One Six weddings in five days. Holy shit. All Jaclyn Wilde could think was that her mother, Madelyn, who was her partner in Premier, the events planning firm to hire in the greater Atlanta area if you wanted your guests to be impressed, must have been sipping a couple or twelve champagne martinis when she'd accepted so many bookings so close together. It wouldn't have been nearly as bad if the bookings had been anything other than weddings: a party was simple in comparison to a wedding, because they were relatively free of emotional turmoil. A wedding, on the other hand, was fraught with every emotion known to man. It wasn't just the brides; it was the bride's mother, the groom's mother, the maid of honor, the bridesmaids, the parents of the flower girl and the ring bearer, the cousins who weren't invited to be in the wedding party, what colors to choose, the date, the location, the damn font on the friggin' invitations . . .

"Jaclyn Wilde," the clerk called, interrupting Jaclyn's increasingly stressed and frantic thoughts. The clerk's voice was too cheerful. Didn't she realize it was inappropriate to sound cheerful when you were collecting payments for traffic violations? Maybe it was asking too much that she sound glum, but she could at least sound bored and noncommittal, instead of all but dancing with glee at taking someone's money. Jaclyn stifled her irritation; it stemmed more from the almost impossible workload facing her during the coming week than it did from paying her speeding ticket. Adding to her stress was the fact that because they'd been working so hard, she'd forgotten to mail in the money for the speeding ticket, and today was the day it was due, so she'd either had to take time off from work—thereby increasing the stress by getting behind—or have a warrant issued for her arrest. Yeah, that would be a real stress-reducer. Being late was her fault. If the city of Hopewell, where she lived and where she'd received the ticket, had been set up to receive online payments, she could have handled it that way, but it wasn't. She got up, silently forked over the cash, and a minute later was striding down the hall, the speeding ticket already forgotten because that particular item had just been checked off her to-do list. She glanced down at her watch. She had just enough time to get to her next appointment—

• Carrie Edwards, a bitch for all seasons, and one of the reasons why six weddings in five days was looming as Mission Impossible. Carrie's wedding wasn't even one of the six; her wedding wasn't for another month, but Carrie was taking up way too much of their time with her histrionics and constant flip-flopping on decisions. One bridesmaid had already told her—

• Carrie, not Jaclyn—to go fuck herself, which was a first in Jaclyn's experience. Usually, no matter what the bride did, the members of the wedding party would grit their teeth and see it through. Even when they did drop

out, they'd make polite excuses. Not this girl; she'd let Carrie have it with both barrels, and hadn't minced words. When the blow-up happened, Jaclyn had stepped out of sight, allowed herself a wide smile and a fist pump, then schooled her expression and returned to try to forestall a hair-pulling, eye-gouging cat fight. She'd have loved to see Carrie with a black eye, but business was business. If she hadn't been so wrapped up in her thoughts she might have been faster on her feet, but when a door suddenly swung outward she was caught by surprise and slammed into the tall, dark-haired, dark-suited man who stepped into the corridor. She gave a short, sharp "Oomph!" The impact knocked her briefcase from her hand and sent it spinning across the gray-tiled floor. She felt one foot, elegantly shod in three-inch heels, begin to slip, and in panic instinctively grabbed the man's arm to steady herself. Her free arm slipped inside his open jacket and she grabbed a handful of shirt fabric, holding on for dear life. The side of her arm brushed against something very hard, and there was a very brief glimpse of leather before she made the startled identification of holster, followed by gun, then cop. Considering she was in city hall, the conclusion was both logical and inescapable. The arm she grabbed turned to iron as the man immediately tensed it to hold her weight; he half-turned, his other arm sliding around her waist to catch her. For a brief moment, no more than the second needed for her to catch her balance, she was held firmly against a very warm, very solid, indisputably male body. He released her the moment she was sure-footed, but he didn't back away. Not immediately, anyway. She blew out a shaky breath. "Wow. Whew." Her heartbeat, thrown into high gear thanks to the collision and almost falling, was pounding against her rib cage so hard she could feel the thuds. A spill on the floor of city hall would've been par for the course on this perfectly crappy day, but the last thing she needed right now was to break an ankle or something. Even a sprained ankle, at this point, would throw Premier into a time-crunch they simply wouldn't be able to handle. "Are you all right, ma'am?" He bent his head down as he spoke and his breath, scented with spearmint chewing gum, brushed her temple. His voice was a warm baritone, with a slight rasp that roughened it just enough to take the tone from mellow to something . . . more. She didn't know just what that more was, just that it was there. • Wait a minute. Had he just called her ma'am? Did she look that haggard? Jaclyn squashed her initial annoyed reaction. The badge he wore explained the "ma'am." Actually, being almost anywhere in the South explained it. He wasn't commenting on her appearance; he was a cop, a civil servant on his best behavior. She blew out another breath, and realized she hadn't yet released her grip on either his arm or his shirt. He couldn't step back, not as long as she clung to him. She forced her

fingers to unclench from both shirt and arm, and she took the necessary step back to put some distance between them. "I'm fine," she said as she looked up at him.

"Thanks for catching me. I wasn't paying attention to where I was going." A small part of her brain, the part reserved for hormones and irrational decisions, gave a wolf whistle. Abruptly she felt both over-heated and overexcited. Damn, he was fine-looking, in a way that wasn't at all boyish and depended more on strength and an air of competency than it did on regular features. There were boys, and there were men. This was a man. This was a man who had it, that indefinable quality of sex appeal, maturity, and strength all mingled together into a potent whole. He gave a slight smile, a nice and natural, easy curve of his lips.

"Not the best layout here, as far as traffic goes."

"Don't mention traffic to me," Jaclyn said, almost under her breath. He shot a quick glance of comprehension in the direction from which she'd come, and his smile widened a little. She liked that smile more than she should. In her line of business, Jaclyn met a lot of men; unfortunately, they were usually about to get married. Not always, of course, but it took something special to get her attention this way: a certain look, an unexpected chemistry . . . and to be honest, it had been a very long time since she'd had the time to admire any man. She didn't have time now, either. She had to really hurry, or she'd be late.

"Thanks again. Sorry I almost smashed you flat."

She gave the polite cop a quick nod of her head, a friendly but not too friendly good-bye, then looked around for her dropped briefcase. The case had spun all the way across the wide hall, coming to a stop against the far wall. Before she could reach for it, a man in stained jeans and a dingy T-shirt stretched tight over an enormous beer belly laboriously bent down and picked up the case.

"Here ya go, ma'am," he said, holding the slender case out to her in one meaty paw and smiling a ridiculously sweet smile for such a rough face.

"Thank you," Jaclyn said as she gripped the handle, giving the burly guy a warmer smile than she'd given the cop, because she wasn't attracted to him at all, so being nice to him didn't seem as dangerous as being nice to the cop. As she strode away down the hall she mused on how cock-eyed that reasoning was, on a logical basis, but how rock solid it was on some gut-level feminine instinct. She didn't have time for the cop, didn't have time to be attracted to him, so she wasn't about to do anything that might attract him. As she walked away, she was almost certain that he was watching her, but she didn't dare turn around to look. She didn't need to turn around; she could practically feel the bull's-eye his gaze was painting on her back. She hurried out to the parking lot, using her remote to unlock her steel-gray Jaguar just before she reached it. In almost one motion she opened

the door, tossed her briefcase onto the passenger seat, and slid behind the wheel. Her first action then was to hit the door lock, a safety precaution she'd taken so often it was second nature to her now. As she turned the key with one hand, she was pulling the seat belt into place with the other. She didn't need another ticket, so she kept an eye on the speedometer. She especially wasn't going to speed on the way to a meeting with Carrie Edwards; it was all she could do to keep the car hea...

*NYT bestselling Linda Howard never disappoints her readers, especially with this exciting romantic/thriller. It's a must read!.....As she slowly stood on line in the courthouse to pay the deadline on a speeding ticket wedding planner, Jaclyn Wilde was in another world as she abruptly collided into a very handsome sinfully sexy stranger. Terrified of falling, she did the only thing she could do by holding on for dear life clinging on to the man's shirt inside his suit jacket plus a gun? Realizing she was in city hall and the realization that he had to be a cop didn't make Jaclyn's embarrassment feel any less real as she apologized on her way out the door but he took pleasure in watching her leave and the fact that she had "killer legs". Being the owner of "Premiere Events" with her mother Madelyn being her business partner, Jaclyn is overwhelmed when they overbook six weddings in a very short span especially dealing with Bridezilla Carrie Edwards all at the same time. Deciding to stop at a neighborhood bar for a drink to blow off some steam was the very thing she needed but what happened next was surprising even for her. While sitting in his favorite cop bar, detective Eric Wilder couldn't believe his luck when this classy lady with the killer legs strolled right passed him to a faraway table in the back ignoring everyone else. Tempting against fate, he walked over where she recognizes him and he is invited to sit down to join her. With the attraction already brewing, it doesn't take long before the two of them spend the night together only worrying Eric the next day that she among most women would want to do the "talk". When Jaclyn does neither while rushing him out her front door, he becomes even more intrigued with the beautiful Miss Wilde and he wanted to know more about her. When Jaclyn gets into a heated confrontation with Carrie Edwards at a wedding hall, she leaves except soon after Carrie's murdered body is discovered by a fellow vendor bringing in detective Eric Wilder on the scene. The truth with Jaclyn was, she couldn't stop thinking about Eric Wilder so when she heard the knock at her door and saw his face in the peephole, she was thrilled to see him again except she had no idea she had just turned into a suspect. Eric felt the same about her but if he was ever going to see her again, he would have to clear her first as a suspect but he knew just by looking at her, she was having no part of it by the anger in her eyes. As the chemistry mounts between them, so do the clues telling Eric that a cold

sadistic killer had only one target in mind and she is not only a gorgeous Wedding Planner but the one woman he cannot live without and he will have to be one step ahead under the veil of night to beat a killer at his own game before he loses everything he has ever wanted in his life which was a gamble he wasn't willing to take not now, not ever!...thank you

Wow! Talk about an AWESOME fast read! I couldn't put it down! I have been a Linda Howard's fan for a long time, and I think this is one of her best! I thought maybe her plot lines were really starting to fall apart, but WHAM! Here she comes with this great plot line about an events planner with a lot of trust issues, thanks to her jerk of a father who was more interested on meeting his own needs than the needs of his ex-wife and daughter, and a smart-ass cop with a wicked sense of humor. Throw in a bridezilla from hell, who gets herself killed off (couldn't have happened to a better canadienne) and a list of characters that you just wish you knew in person, and you have a great story. Thank you Linda for a really great book!

You have to love Linda Howard. If you don't, you're in the wrong genre. Turn around. Go back. Linda Howard's books, and this is no exception, are the epitome of what romance should be. I do have one observation, and I won't call it a problem. The Eric in this book reminds me mightily of Wyatt in Howard's Blair Mallory books. But hey, I loved the Blair Mallory books, so no harm, no foul. I love this book. It's one I download again and again. Marita <http://www..com/Marita-Baxter/e/B00L1CZOS4>

The heroine's wedding planner job created some amusing background and situations. The protagonists were likable and created some fun repartee. Always enjoy this author.

It had me at the first page. I have done nothing today except finish this book. I highly recommend it and its author.

I have never read any other of Linda Howard's novels, but after finishing Veil of Night on Kindle and seeing that some of her other work includes romance novels, I can see that in her writing of this particular book. I am not a romance novel fan, and having said that, it does color my impression of this book. The premise sounded exciting-- wedding planner with bridezilla who has been murdered. Who did it? Apparently everyone she has ever come in contact with wants to kill her, with perhaps one of the least likely Jaclyn, the wedding planner. The book started off well, with Detective Eric

Wilde and even the one night stand and both of their reactions the next morning. However, the detail was more in the description of sex, and the thinking about sex, and phone sex, and on and on. If the author had put as much creativity into the actual murder and mystery as she did the sex and thoughts of sex between Jaclyn and Eric, then it would have been a much better book. I picked this book because it reminded me of the novels by Sue Grafton and Janet Evanovich. They are simple reads, but very entertaining. This was just a simple read and slightly entertaining.

OK, to be fair, I hadn't read Linda Howard before and didn't know what to expect or what her regular readers look for. I bought the book because I read a sample on my Kindle and loved the Bridezilla character Carrie Edwards. I would have liked a lot more of her and her manipulations and motivations and a lot less relationship agonizing between Jaclyn and Eric. (I will say Ms. Howard has a way with a sex scene.) In short, my problems with this book had more to do with my hoping for a good juicy mystery and getting a relationship analysis instead. The murder seemed to be thrown in merely as an excuse for the two characters to have to deal with each other. I take responsibility for my misguided expectations, but I still didn't really like the book.

Item was as described. Happy with it.

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