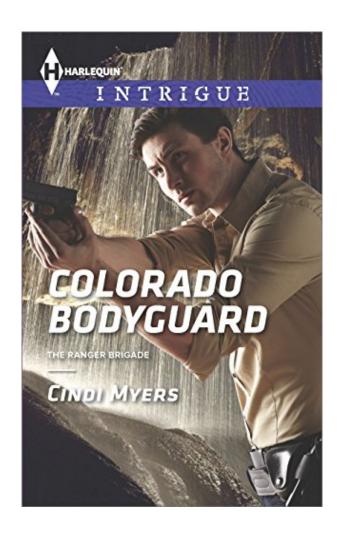
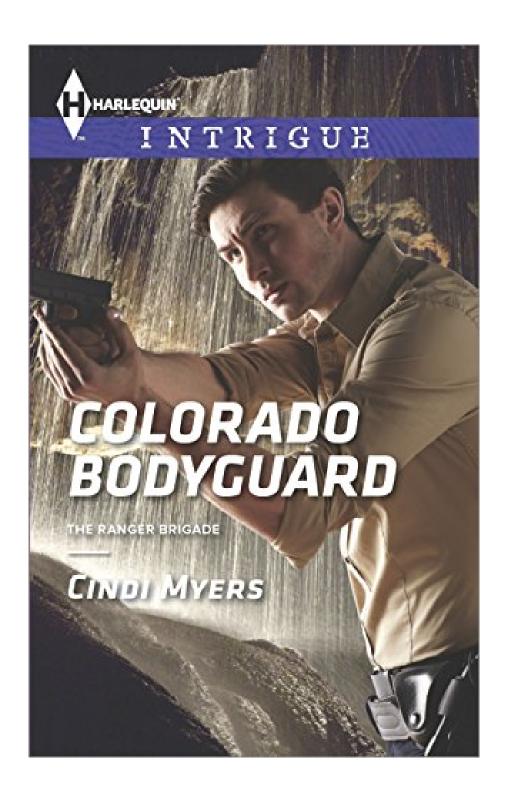
COLORADO BODYGUARD (THE RANGER BRIGADE) BY CINDI MYERS



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"No, not at all." Her lower lip trembled, but she quickly brought it under control. "Thank you."

He resisted the urge to cover her hand with his own; she might take his gesture of comfort the wrong way. He left the conference room, shutting the door behind him, and found Graham in his office. "Lauren Starling's sister is here," he said. "She doesn't think Lauren ran away or killed herself. She thinks she might be in real trouble."

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The rugged terrain of Colorado wouldn't make their mission easy. Nor would the attraction between them.

Sophie Montgomery's sister was missing and her trail stopped dead in the Black Canyon—which was firmly in Rand Knightbridge's jurisdiction. Part of the Ranger Brigade, he could lead Sophie on a search deep into this remote part of Colorado. Although afraid to disappoint the desperate beauty, Rand couldn't ignore her determination. But it was clear she needed protecting after shots rang out and Sophie barely escaped with her life. Now, as the job he'd reluctantly agreed to became a very personal mission, Rand knew he'd do anything to bring Sophie's sister home. Because seeing Sophie happy was the only outcome he'd allow. Or accept.

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Good book

By S. Frank

Good addition to the series. Sophie has come to Colorado to search for her sister, reporter Lauren Starling, who has been missing for more than a month. She goes to the team at the Ranger Brigade to find out what progress has been made with the search and isn't happy with what she finds out. When she states her intention to start investigating on her own, Rand steps in to try to stop her. Instead, he finds himself wanting to help her.

Sophie has found some clues that give the team some more things to look at, including their number one suspect in most of their troubles. After she drags Rand along on an interview with Richard Prentice, the two of them find themselves dodging bullets later that evening. Then Sophie's room at her hotel was broken into and her things destroyed. It's obvious that someone doesn't like what she's doing and Rand is determined to keep her safe.

Rand is attracted to Sophie, her beauty and her love and loyalty to her sister. I loved seeing how protective he became of her and how quickly he started to believe in her conviction that Lauren was still alive. I also liked seeing how sensitive he was to her fears and worked to overcome them. Sophie was also attracted to Rand, but she had a hard time believing that he was really interested in her. Even though she is older than her sister, she feels that she doesn't measure up to her in beauty and appeal. I liked seeing the growth of the feelings between them and how Rand's love gave Sophie the confidence to believe in him.

The suspense and action of the story was good and kept a good pace through the book. Each new piece of information brought them a little closer to finding out what happened to Lauren. There were also more things that linked to Richard Prentice, but never the proof that they really needed. There were several times when things got really intense, such as when Sophie sneaked into Richard Prentice's house to look for her sister

and again when she and Rand were trapped in the mine. The conclusion was exciting, with one more mystery solved, but one part still hanging fire. I'm looking forward to seeing how it finishes.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Colorado Bodyguard (The Ranger Brigade)

By Denise R. Bryant

Gave five stars---this was the third book in this series & it was an excellent read---I thoroughly enjoyed this book!! Cindi Myers does an outstanding job with her writing & makes her books very exciting read. I highly recommend this book/series to everyone. If you enjoy intrigue & romance in a clean reading you will enjoy these types of books!!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Four Stars

By Amazon Customer

Enjoyed this series. It's not amazing writing, but enjoyable.

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COLORADO BODYGUARD (THE RANGER BRIGADE) BY CINDI MYERS PDF

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About the Author

Cindy Myers became one of the most popular people in eighth grade when she and her best friend wrote a torrid historical romance and passed the manuscript around among friends. Fame was short-lived, alas; the English teacher confiscated the manuscript. Since then, Cindy has written more than 50 published novels. Her historical and contemporary romances and women's fiction have garnered praise from reviewers and readers alike.

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The canyon tore a deep gash in the open landscape. Sheer rock walls plunged to a river that was invisible below, lost in blackness. Darker red and gray rock painted the chasm walls in fanciful shapes that resembled two warring Chinese dragons, engaged in a battle that had been going on for centuries.

Sophie Montgomery stood at the edge of the overlook, fighting waves of vertigo as she tried to peer down into the canyon's depths. She struggled to imagine her sister, Lauren, standing in this same, desolate spot. Lauren had battled plenty of demons in her life; which one had brought her to this lonely, forbidding place?

Lauren, where are you? Sophie sent the silent plea across the canyon, but only wind and the distant hum of traffic answered.

She shivered again, despite the summer heat, and turned away from the overlook and headed back to her car, walking past an RV and a mom and two children posing in front of the canyon while Dad snapped the picture. They all looked thrilled to be here, though Sophie had never understood the attraction of a camping vacation. She and Lauren had always agreed that getaways should involve nice hotels, preferably with swimming pools and room service. One more reason it didn't make sense that Lauren had come to what must be one of the most remote spots in her adopted home state.

Sophie slid back behind the wheel of her rental car and jammed the key into the ignition. She didn't want to be here, but then, she hadn't especially wanted to be any of the other places that looking out for Lauren had taken her over the years. The only difference was that this time felt scarier. More hopeless. Lauren had done some crazy, wild things over the years, but she'd never stayed gone this long before. And she'd never been in a place where Sophie couldn't reach her. Sometimes, when Lauren was going through a really bad spell, Sophie was the only one who could reach her.

She backed out of her parking space and turned the car around, headed toward the park entrance. The police in Denver had been kind—sympathetic, even. But they had found no evidence that Lauren had been abducted, and given her recent history, they suspected she'd run away—or worse. "We understand your sister struggled with depression," the detective who had spoken to her said.

"She was handling it," Sophie had told him. "She was under a doctor's care."

His look was full of sympathy and little hope.

She checked the time on her phone. Five minutes until her appointment with a member of the special task force assigned to deal with crimes in the area. This time, she'd be more assertive. She would make the officer understand that Lauren wouldn't have run away. And she wouldn't have taken her own life. She was in trouble and they had to help.

Lauren had no one else to speak for her; it was up to Sophie to look after her little sister, just as she'd always done

She turned the car into the gravel lot in front of the portable building that served as headquarters for The Ranger Brigade—the interagency task force focused on fighting crime on public lands in western Colorado. A hot wind blasted her as she exited the car, whipping her shoulder-length brown hair into her eyes and sending a tumbleweed bobbing across her path. She stared at the beach-ball-sized sphere of dried weeds as it bounced across the pavement and into the brush across the road. The whole scene was like something out of a Wild West movie, as foreign from her life back in Madison, Wisconsin, as she could imagine.

As she made her way up a gravel walkway toward the building, a large dog—blond with a black muzzle and tail, like a German shepherd, but smaller—loped from around the side of the building. Sophie froze, heart pounding, struggling to breathe. The dog kept running toward her, tongue lolling, teeth glinting in the bright sun. She closed her eyes, fighting wave after wave of paralyzing fear.

"Lotte! Down!"

Sophie opened her eyes to see the dog immediately stop and lie down. A young man trotted around the side of the building. Tall and muscular, with closely cropped brown hair, he wore tan trousers and a tan long-sleeved shirt. "Don't worry, she's harmless," he called.

Sophie shifted her attention back to the dog, reminding herself to breathe. The dog grinned up at her, tongue hanging out. To most people she probably did look harmless. But Sophie wasn't most people.

"Can I help you?" the man asked as he drew closer.

Green eyes studied her, fine lines fanning from the corners, though she had a sense that he wasn't much older than her own thirty. The buffeting wind and too-bright sun didn't seem to bother him. In fact, he looked right at home against the backdrop of cactus and stunted pinion. He could have been an old-west lawman, with a silver star pinned to his chest, or a cowboy, ready to ride the range—any of those strong, romantic archetypes with the power to make a woman swoon.

Except she hadn't come here to ogle the local stud lawman, she reminded herself. Even if guys like him paid any attention to quiet bookworms like her. "I'm Sophie Montgomery. I have an appointment with the Rangers," she said.

"Right. Officer Rand Knightbridge." He offered his hand. "Come on in and we'll get started."

She took his hand, but released it quickly, focused on the dog who sat quietly at his side. It was a powerful animal, its eyes alert, as if at any moment it might lunge. "I'm afraid of dogs," she said, and took a step back.

He stopped and looked from her to the dog. "Lotte is very well trained," he said. "She won't hurt you, I promise."

"I didn't say it was a rational fear, I said I was afraid." Why did people always want to argue with her about this? No one ever tried to understand.

"Sure. I'll put her inside, in another room."

"All right. I'll wait out here."

He glanced at her again, then turned and snapped his fingers. "Lotte! Come!"

The dog fell into step beside him, gazing up at him adoringly.

She crossed her arms over her chest and tried not to feel self-conscious. The windows on the Rangers' headquarters were covered by blinds, but she had a feeling she was being watched. She fought the urge to stick her tongue out at whoever was looking, but that compulsion died when she reminded herself why she was here. She needed for these people to take her concerns seriously.

After a moment, during which she gave up trying to keep the wind from whipping her hair into her eyes, the front door to the trailer opened and Officer Knight-bridge waved to her. "The coast is clear," he said. "It's safe to come in."

She made her way up the walkway and through the door he held open for her. The office itself was Spartan and utilitarian, with industrial carpet and simple furnishings. "Let's use the conference room, back here," Knightbridge said, leading her to another open doorway.

A woman at a computer looked up and smiled at her as they passed and two other uniformed officers glanced her way but didn't acknowledge her. In the conference room, Officer Knightbridge pulled out a folding chair at the scarred table, then took a similar chair across from her. "How can I help you, Ms. Montgomery?" he asked.

"My sister, Lauren Starling, has been missing since May twenty-eighth. That's when she left for a week's vacation, but no one's seen or heard from her since. The Denver Police Department suggested I contact you to see how the investigation into her disappearance is progressing."

There was a flicker of confusion in his green eyes. He shifted in his seat. "The Denver Police Department told you we were investigating your sister's disappearance."

"I understand her car was found abandoned very near here."

"Yes, I believe it was."

"And your organization deals with crime in the park?"

"The park and surrounding public lands."

"So, naturally, I assumed you're investigating my sister's disappearance."

As she'd talked, the lines on his forehead had deepened. The metal folding chair squeaked as he shifted position again. "Ms. Montgomery..."

"Please, call me Sophie." She wanted him to trust her, to confide in her, even.

"Ms. Montgomery, a car registered to your sister was found at the Dragon Point overlook in the park. There were no signs of violence, no notes and nothing else that pointed to violence. Park rangers conducted a search for your sister and found nothing. They had the car towed to an impound lot and contacted Denver police, and they also notified us to be on the lookout for her."

"I know all that," she said, trying to quell her impatience. "That's why I'm here. I want to know what you've discovered since then."

His expression grew even more pained. "After you called, I reviewed what little information we have. No one has seen or heard from your sister. The Denver police led us to believe your sister had come here of her own free will."

"She may have come here voluntarily, but she didn't just walk away from her car, her home, her job, her friends and her family." Sophie fought to keep the agitation from her voice. "Something has happened to her."

"The report I read said that your sister has a history of depression."

Here it was, the excuse they all gave for not taking Lauren's disappearance more seriously. "She's recently been diagnosed with bipolar disorder—what people used to call manic depression. She was in treatment, on medication and doing well."

"The report we received said she was recently divorced."

"Yes." Lauren had adored Phil; she'd been crushed when he announced he'd fallen in love with a woman he worked with. She'd had to cope not only with the end of her marriage, but also with the humiliation of his very public infidelity. But she was rallying. "My sister is much stronger than people give her credit for," Sophie said. "I talked to her only two days before she disappeared and she was very upbeat, excited about a new project at work."

"The police report also said she'd been put on probation at the TV station—that she was in danger of losing her job."

"She told me she wasn't worried about that—that this new project would prove how valuable she was."

This seemed to spark some interest in him. "Did she say what the project was?"

"No. She didn't like to talk about things like that until after they were complete. She was superstitious that way."

The frown returned. "Ms. Montgomery... Sophie." He leaned toward her, elbows on the table, hands loosely clasped. "Do you know the number one reason automobiles are abandoned within the park?"

"No." But clearly he was going to tell her. And the expression in his eyes told her she wouldn't like what she heard.

"For whatever reason, national parks are popular places for people to take their own lives. The canyon seems to offer what some perceive as an easy way out. If they don't drive right off the cliff, they park the car and jump. When a Ranger sees a car parked in the same place for days, he knows he may be looking at a possible suicide. And when the missing person is known to have been depressed." He spread his hands wide, allowing her to fill in the rest of the thought.

But she refused to go there. "So you're telling me you haven't even investigated my sister's disappearance? She's been missing a month and no one is looking for her?"

"You need to prepare yourself." He sat back in his chair, his face calm, eyes still locked to hers. "There's a good chance your sister is no longer alive."

Rand had put his assessment of her sister's situation as delicately as he knew how, but he could see by the pain and anger in Sophie Montgomery's brown eyes that he'd been too blunt. Despite all the evidence pointing to this conclusion, she didn't believe her sister had committed suicide. Without a body she'd never believe, and unfortunately, the vastness and remoteness of the parklands made finding a body difficult—sometimes impossible. "I'm sorry," he said. "I wish I had better news for you."

And he wished he had more time for her. So much of his job involved dealing with the dregs of society—drug dealers and killers and people who preyed on the innocent. It was nice to sit with a pretty woman who dressed well and had a soft voice and manicured hands, and just talk.

If only their topic of conversation had been more pleasant. And if only he had more time to listen to her soft, educated voice. But everyone on the task force was under pressure to root out the criminals who'd turned a sleepy corner of Colorado into a center for drug dealing, human trafficking and all manner of violent crime. They'd made some arrests and succeeded in slowing the flow of drugs and illegal aliens, but they'd yet to find the person or persons overseeing the whole operation. They were certain someone was in charge, and had ideas about who that might be, but still lacked the evidence they needed.

Meanwhile, perpetual thorn in their side Richard Prentice, a billionaire who'd made a name for himself causing trouble for local, state and federal authorities, continued to harangue about the need to disband the task force altogether. He filed lawsuits claiming the officers harassed him, held press conferences to point out how much taxpayers spent to fund the Rangers and how little they received in return. And all the while, he sat in his mansion on private land adjacent to the park, protected by his money and a team of lawyers. As far as Rand was concerned, Richard Prentice was suspect number one when it came to crime in the area, but as his boss, Captain Graham Ellison, so often reminded him, being a jerk didn't make a man guilty.

And being a jerk wasn't winning Rand any points with Sophie Montgomery. "My sister did not commit suicide," she said. "I don't care how many times you or the police in Denver or anyone else tell me so. I know her better than anyone, and she wouldn't have done that." She opened her purse and took out a small spiral notebook. "I came here today to convince you that Lauren is worth looking for. The least you can do is hear me out."

Her eyes, full of so much determination...and not a little fear, met his. In that moment, he saw all it had taken for her to come here, knowing that pursuing her quest might only lead to the end of all hope for her sister. Her courage moved him, and fueled his growing attraction to this quiet, determined woman. "Of course," he said. "I'll be happy to listen to what you have to say. Would you mind if I brought in my commander and some other officers, as well?"

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