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SILENT KILLER

A LEADERSHIP LESSON IN VIGILANCE



BY: Linda Hannah
LEADERSHIP

Many years ago, when my children were very young, an ordinary morning turned into a defining lesson in vigilance.

My three children were seated at the dining room table while I prepared breakfast a few feet away. One complained of a headache and laid their head down. Minutes later, another felt nauseous. Then my third child stumbled into the wall. As I moved between the stove and the table, I noticed a slight headache forming myself.

At first, I assumed it was the flu. But the symptoms were appearing too quickly — and all at once.

I called their father, who was already on his way to work. The moment he heard the pattern, his tone shifted.

"Get outside. Now."

We moved immediately.

When he returned home, he discovered the flue pipe on our gas water heater had shifted, releasing carbon monoxide into the house. The cold air return beneath the dining room table had been circulating the fume directly toward the children.

Invisible.

Odorless.

Deadly.

And at that time — in the early 90s — carbon monoxide detectors were not yet common household devices.

We survived because the warning signs appeared before the consequences did. That morning became my first encounter with what I now call the Silent Killer.

Praise God — we were spared.

Years later, in a new home equipped with detectors, an alarm sounded on a snowy December night. I called 911. The issue was not carbon monoxide but aging equipment. The alarm confirmed our safety — and reinforced the principle:

Vigilance is not an event. It is a discipline.

"The most dangerous threats inside a team or enterprise are often the ones leaders cannot see — or do not look for."

Carbon monoxide offers no announcement. It operates quietly, systemically, and without regard for who is in its path.

So do many leadership risks.

Complacency.

Unchecked assumptions.

Unspoken concerns.

Cultural drift.

Operational blind spots.

The most dangerous threats inside a team or enterprise are often the ones leaders cannot see — or do not look for.

Effective leadership requires disciplined attention. It asks us to scan for subtle shifts, interpret early signals, and act decisively to protect people, values, and mission. Leaders who excel are not merely responsive; they are anticipatory.

Consider the silent risks in your leadership — the tensions no one names, the processes no one questions, the assumptions that go unchallenged. Where might renewed vigilance protect what you value most?



Linda Hannah is an award-winning speaker, author, and founder of Linda Hannah Speaks. She is the author of *The Hat Chronicles - Scripture Powered Insights to Embrace Every Role You Wear* and co-author of *A Widow's Resilience*. She is a retired Senior Commercial Contract Analyst at ITC Holdings Corp.

