



***Our Souls at Night*, by Kent Haruf**  
**Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, May 2018**

"Big things," as the saying goes, "come in small packages." Kent Haruf's memorable little novel, *Our Souls at Night*, is a case in point. The book's slim size belies the richness of its characters and the depth of its storyline. Indeed, *Our Souls at Night* has endeared itself to legions of readers and is a popular book-group selection.

Set in small town Holt, Colorado, *Our Souls at Night* centers around Addie Moore and Louis Waters, septuagenarian neighbors, each long widowed. As the story unfolds, Addie knocks on Louis's door one evening with an unusual invitation. She's lonely at night, she explains, and has trouble sleeping by herself. "I wonder," she says, "if you could come and sleep in the night with me. And talk." Nothing physical, she explains, "just getting through the night."

Louis, initially taken aback by Addie's boldness, ponders her audacious request and says he'll think about it. Soon, curiosity and loneliness win Louis over. He agrees to come and spend nights with Addie. Although they have been neighbors for years, they were unaware of each other's inner lives. Through their nighttime talks, Louis and Addie are free to express their deepest feelings.

Louis, a retired schoolteacher, had taught Addie's son Gene years before. Gene, now living in Grand Junction, had a strained relationship with his late father Carl and his mother Addie. Separated from his wife Beverly, Gene brings his six-year-old son Jamie to spend the summer with Addie. Sensing Jamie's isolation, Louis takes the boy under his wing. He teaches Jamie how to play baseball and, together with Addie, they enjoy picnics and outings.

Louis's daughter Holly comes from Colorado Springs to visit her father. She hasn't quite forgiven Louis for her parents' unhappy marriage. When local gossips tell Gene and Holly about Addie and Louis's budding relationship, the two set out to break them up.

Netflix produced a screen version of *Our Souls at Night*. Many fans of the book were surprised by the casting of Jane Fonda and Robert Redford as Addie and Louis. After all, Fonda and Redford are no one's idea of a dowdy couple. (A half a century earlier, the pair had starred together in the film version of Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*.) Fortunately, though, Fonda and Redford pull it off and turn Addie and Louis into vibrant, believable characters. The screenplay enhances the original book and richly rounds out scenes with Gene and Holly. Quite often, "The book is better than the movie." But considering *Our Souls at Night*, each version is equally as good.