



Alexis Harrington talks about her latest book, Home by Morning...

Alexis, welcome!

Readers are excited to hear that Home by Morning will be available as a reissue from Montlake Romance on Christmas Eve. How did that come about?

Modesty aside, editors from Amazon's newly created Montlake Romance imprint got in touch with me and were very excited about the book, which I had self-published as an ebook, as well as my plans for Home by Nightfall. That book continues the story of several characters from Home by Morning. I'm excited to be part of the imprint's start up year and to be among the first wave of writers and readers exploring their debut publishing program.

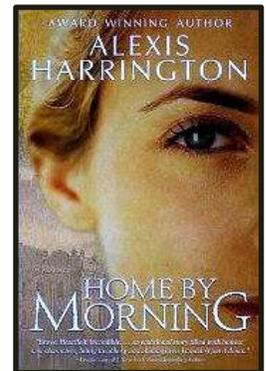
You've already had some terrific response from readers, especially in their comments posted on different book sites. One reader ("adventurat" on Smashwords) praised "the historical context, the sensory descriptions...the realities of medical practice and challenges in the period...really worked for me. Harrington does her research, and it shows." Why this setting and that time period?

Setting and time period are always very important to me. The town, Powell Springs, Oregon, is fictional and it's loosely based on a few towns around me, though I changed some of the geography. I tend to write about Oregon. It's my home state and the place I know best. Plus, I can compare old photos to the streets as they look today, which helps me place much of the action in a book.

For Home by Morning, the time period loomed even larger than for other books.

Why was that?

This is a topic of ongoing debate. It was part of why I chose to self-publish Home by Morning. In presenting the book to editors, it seemed that, at least within the romance genre, after 1900 was "recent," not historical. More so, perhaps, to anyone over the age of 35 or 40. An editor once told me, "no cars." That was the guideline. Since we don't remember men fighting duels or using swords in battle, or women strapped into corsets or washing their hair with plain soap because shampoo didn't exist, there's no question that a book is historical. But 1900 was 111 years ago. It just seemed to me that was enough time to be considered "historical."



Would your plot have worked set farther back in time?

Not for me. Stories are so much more than plot. And I really wanted the challenge of setting the strength of human nature and the power of emotion against that unique background of more than four years of anxiety, mourning and hope on the home front. I also wanted to find out if I was right—that Jess and Colt's love story could be set amid the extremes of good and bad brought out in people in these extraordinary circumstances and still grab and hold readers' attention.

For me, writing Home by Morning was intensely connected to my desire to write about characters facing the Great War, the challenges on the home front and the ravages of the flu epidemic. I have very strong opinions on the subject of World War I, having devoted 10 years of research to it. So much has been made of WWII—The Greatest Generation—yet I learned very little about "the war to end war" in high school. There were so many lives lost to that meat grinder war of attrition—over fifteen million deaths and twenty million wounded. It was a very complicated affair and its resolution led the way into WWII and the rise of Adolf Hitler. During the same time period, the world was gripped by the "Spanish flu," which in 1918 and 1919 killed more people than the Great War.

Did you ever worry that the events of the time would overshadow the relationship between Jess and Colt in Home by Morning?

I didn't worry about it, but as I mentioned, I considered it a major challenge for me as a writer to stay true to the genre, especially with how emotional I can be when talking or thinking about those horrible years. Fortunately, at its heart, the book always stayed a love story, a romance with a happy ending. The story may be shaped by the

affects of events but it's ruled by personalities, something I see as the hallmark of character driven contemporary and historical romance novels.

Please tell us more about Jess and Cole's backgrounds.

Jess is a burn-out case. As a woman of her time, she had to fight for her medical education. She wanted to follow in her father's footsteps, helping people, but her time working with New York City's poor left her hopeless, believing that no matter how much she tried she'd never overcome the squalor, ignorance and poverty surrounding her patients. She lost heart, found a research position with Seattle General and headed back west. She stopped to visit her sister in Powell Springs even though it meant facing Cole, the man who she expected to marry and who broke her heart instead.

Cole and his brother Riley were very competitive in their young years, a situation fostered by their father who pitted them against each other, believing it would make them both excel. When the US entered the war Riley was the first brother to enlist—a fact that rankled Cole. Riley had a wife and the family business to run. Cole felt very keenly the stigma of the times: a man not in uniform and overseas was considered a slacker. But the horses raised on the family ranch are desperately needed for the Army. He knows he can't leave. Riley had beat him to it.

Jess's return simply means more pain for him, as he once again comes face to face with the only woman he has ever loved.

Can you tell us more about the book you're working on now, Home by Nightfall?

Yes, but not too much or I'll have to include a "this answer contains spoilers" warning. This book has been difficult. The execution is giving me fits. It has a love triangle and though I've written them before, this has been the most challenging. Let's see...it's two years after the end of the war and the flu epidemic. Cole and Jess will be back, so will Susannah, Cole's father, and several of the townspeople. There are some surprises and I think I'd better stop right here.

How can readers reach you and find out more about your writing and what else you've been up to?

People should please visit my website www.alexisharrington.com to find out what's next and when. Also, I'm available via email at Alexis@alexisharrington.com and by mail at PO Box 1229, Fairview, Oregon, 97024.

Lastly, *War Horse*, the Steven Spielberg directed film based on Michael Morpurgo's children's novel and Nick Stafford's stage adaptation of the book opens in theaters on Christmas Day, 24-hours after Home by Morning debuts as a Montlake Romance. Considering your interest in the era, will you be among the first in line to see it?

You know, I've seen the trailer for War Horse and as much as I would like to discover how the story and the times are handled, I probably won't see it at all. It's got nothing to do with Steven Spielberg (he's a brilliant storyteller) or the cast or anything of that sort. In fact, I'm delighted that the film will make many more people aware of this time in our history. It's quite simply that I don't think I'll be able to watch it. Movies about animals in danger or otherwise injured or abused are too much for me to handle, even if there's a happy ending. Not so surprising since I share my home and yard with two dogs, a cat, a finch and three chickens. So far.

Thank you, Alexis for joining us and best of luck with the new publication of Home by Morning and this summer's Home by Nightfall!

HOME BY MORNING

Alexis Harrington

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