

PETTICOATS & PISTOLS PRESENTS

Pink Pistol MAGAZINE



VOLUME 2 - MARCH 2023



FEATURING
AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF
LOVE ON TARGET
BY SHANNA HATFIELD

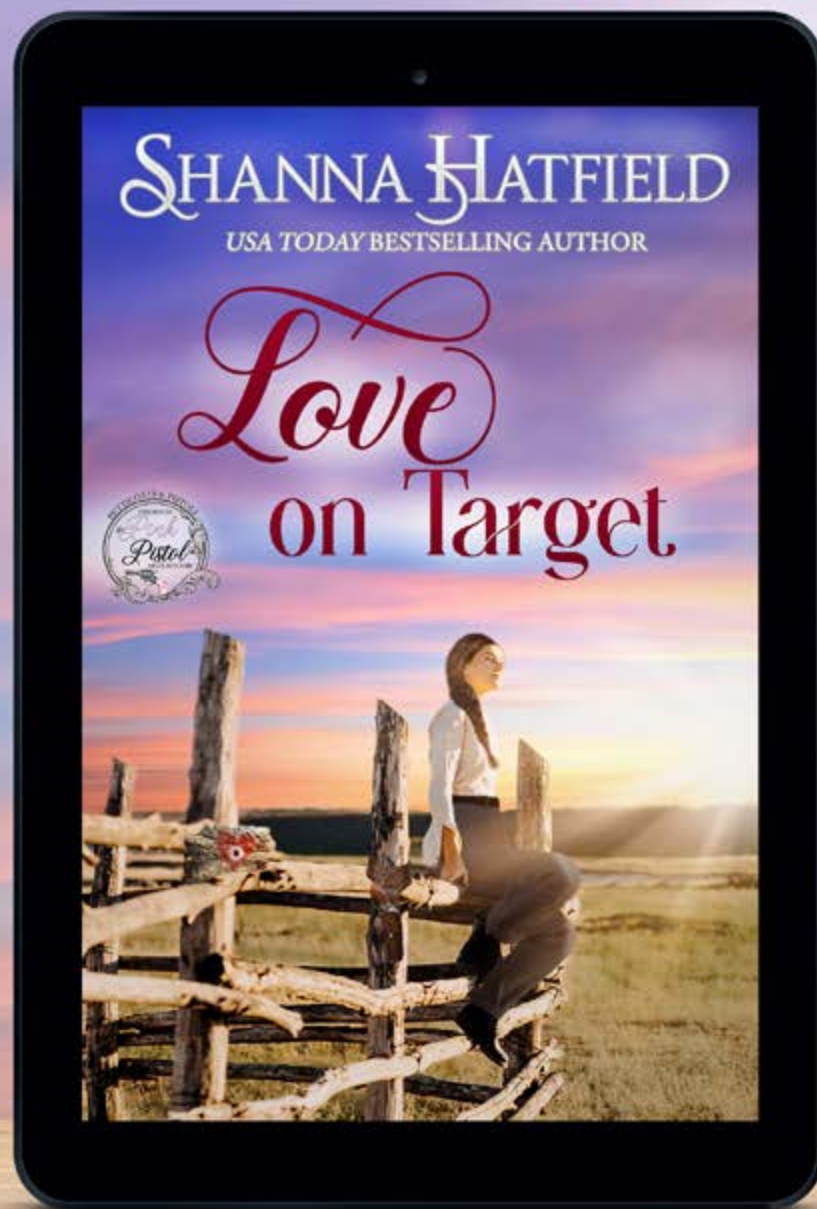
LOVE UNDER FIRE
BY CHERYL PIERSON

BULLET PROOF BRIDE
BY KIT MORGAN

RECIPES, GAMES
AND MORE

WILL ESCAPING HER PAST
LEAD HER TO A FUTURE OF LOVE?

Love on Target



COMING APRIL 10, 2023

A SWEET HISTORICAL ROMANCE BY
SHANNA HATFIELD



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Pink Pistol MAGAZINE



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We can't present the Pink Pistol Magazine without first acknowledging the incredible effort that went into it. Our deepest thanks to:

Pam Crooks, for her tireless work behind the scenes and the time she so graciously gives to make our endeavors a success.

Shanna Hatfield, for the generous sharing of her creative vision and expertise to make this magazine happen.

Jessie Gussman, for providing us with the means to distribute the magazine.

And, of course, the fillies at Petticoats & Pistols, for their books and sisterhood.

Welcome

Welcome to The Pink Pistol Sisterhood Magazine!

In August, 2007, Petticoats & Pistols launched into the new and exciting blog world with a dedicated mission to promote western romance. During the sixteen years since, an impressive line-up of bestselling western authors have come and gone, sharing their newest books with you, our beloved readers, while blogging about all things western . . . and lots more besides.

We call ourselves the fillies, with a waiting list of authors eager to join us. Our place is the fictional town of Wildflower Junction. The charming and sometimes cantankerous Felicia Filly is the voice of the site, and we keep her busy announcing our guests and special features, week after week.

The Pink Pistol Sisterhood [sweet romance series](#) is the culmination of those years. We celebrate all we've accomplished, the legacy that we have earned. These books reflect the sisterhood the fillies enjoy.

We hope you've already downloaded our premier issue featuring Karen Witemeyer's novella, [In Her Sights](#). Within those poignant pages, you'll read how the pistol's journey begins.

If you don't have your copy yet, you can download it [here](#).
In this issue, the quest for love and marriage continues with:

[LOVE ON TARGET](#) by Shanna Hatfield

[LOVE UNDER FIRE](#) by Cheryl Pierson

[BULLET PROOF BRIDE](#) by Kit Morgan

Don't forget! We have two more issues coming on April 10th and May 10th, always free!

She who possesses this pistol, possesses an opportunity that must not be squandered. Cast in the tender dreams of maidens from ages past, the steel of this weapon is steadfast and true and will lead an unmarried woman to a man forged from the same virtuous elements. One need only fit her hand to the grip and open her heart to activate the promise for which this pistol was fashioned—the promise of true love. Patience and courage will illuminate her path. Hope and faith will guide her steps until her heart finds its home.

Once the promise is fulfilled, the bearer must release the pistol and pass it to another or risk losing what she has found.

Accept the gift . . . or not.

Believe its promise . . . or not.

But hoard the pistol for personal gain . . . and lose what you hold most dear.



Excerpt from

Love on Target

by Shanna Hatfield

Eastern Oregon
April 1894

“We’re almost somewhere, Scout.” Rena Burke patted the neck of her faithful mule as she stared between the slats of the stock car where she traveled on a rocking train bound for Portland, Oregon.

She’d argued with the stationmaster back in Colorado until she’d given herself a headache about riding with Scout instead of taking a seat in a passenger car. When she refused to defer to his commands, the man must have realized it was pointless to tell her otherwise. He finally relented and allowed her to stay with her mule. Once he elicited her promise to remain in the stock car, the stationmaster had given her a discounted fare.

If Scout hadn’t been worn past endurance after carrying her from Amarillo to Denver, she wouldn’t have splurged on the expense of boarding the train. However, it wasn’t just Scout’s weary state that had compelled her to pay the fare. Weeks of traveling alone coupled with a handful of frightening encoun-

ters along the way due to beasts with four legs and two had removed any doubt about continuing the trip on a train.

The last thing Rena wanted was to sit among people who gave her curious glances or disapproving glares. Just because she chose to wear trousers and her father’s old brown hat didn’t mean people should automatically judge her. Then again, the stares might be aimed at her because of the limp she couldn’t hide no matter how hard she tried.

Thoughts of life before she acquired the limp made her maudlin, so she returned her attention to watching out the stock car slats as the train entered what appeared to be a prosperous town. She’d fallen asleep last night after dark and had only awakened an hour ago. Dawn was just beginning to stretch across the sky, but it was light enough she could see houses, buildings, and wide streets as the train screeched to a stop.

She heard someone, assumably the conductor, raise his voice above the racket. “Welcome to Baker City, folks. Welcome to the queen city of the Inland Empire!”

At least the man’s loud announcement assured Rena she

had arrived at her destination to disembark the train. She brushed straw from her clothes and hastily braided her hair before settling the hat on her head. She saddled Scout, adjusted the saddlebags, and hung the bag of her personal belongings from the saddle horn. The reins dangled from her left hand as she waited for the door to open.

Part of the trip, she and Scout had shared the stock car with a mare that had no manners and a gelding that appeared half-starved. Rena had fed the gelding a portion of the feed she'd purchased for Scout. Both horses had been led off the train yesterday afternoon and no more were brought to their car.

Thankful for the reprieve from being around other animals and humans, Rena was able to relax last night and get a good night's rest. She figured she'd need all her strength as she continued on her journey.

Finally, the door to the stock car opened. Two men in denim overalls slid a wooden ramp into place, and she walked down it with Scout's breath blowing warmth against her back.

"Come on, boy," she said softly, stepping out into a morning that bore a fresh, pleasant scent, along with the aroma of bacon and coffee. Her stomach rumbled in hunger, but she ignored it as she held her head high, posture stiff, and led Scout away from the depot.

Rena could have boarded another train for the last segment of her trip, but she wanted to take in the surroundings of the place that was to be her new home. She didn't want her first view of Holiday, Oregon, to be from inside the stock car.

Rather than immediately leave Baker City, she wandered through town, stopping outside a mercantile. She would need a few provisions to see her through another night or two on the trail.

Rena looped Scout's reins around a hitching rail, leaned against it, and waited for the store to open. As the sun rose, it carried welcome heat. She tipped her hat and head back until the warm rays of the golden orb caressed her face.

Footsteps behind her drew her from her brief yet peaceful interlude. She opened her eyes and turned around to be greeted by a friendly shopkeeper with kind eyes.

"Morning. You waiting to get in?" the man asked, keys dangling from a leather string held between his fingers as he stood near the door.

"Yes, sir. I just need to pick up a few things before I head out." Rena pushed away from the rail and followed him inside a well-stocked store. She breathed in the scents of leather, spices, and kerosene.

"Feel free to look around. I'm Frank Miller, owner of the mercantile." He held a hand out to her in greeting.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Miller. Rena Burke. I'm heading up to Holiday." She shook his hand, then stepped back. "My cousin lives there."

"It's a pretty little town, up in the mountains like it is. Have you been there before?"

Rena shook her head. "No, sir. What's the best way to get there?"

He quirked a bushy eyebrow. "On Hope."

"Hope?" she asked, while doing her best to swallow her annoyance. Hope was a fine thing to have, but her well of hope had run dry two years ago. It sure wouldn't give her feet wings and fly her and Scout to Holiday. In fact, she was certain the One who gave hope had all but forgotten about her.

Mr. Miller grinned. "Hope is the name of the engine that pulls the Holiday Express train up the mountain. Everyone around these parts refers to the train as Hope."

"I see. I, uh ... won't be riding the train." Or riding hope off into the sunset, for that matter. She'd learned the hard way the only person she could depend on was herself, not some whimsical notion that anyone would help her when she needed it most. "What's the next best way to get to Holiday?"

"There's a wagon road. You'll head east out of town, then northwest a few miles before the trail swings around to the north. There are a few signs posted along the way. You can't miss it if you stay on the road."

"How long would it take to get there, do you reckon?" Rena fingered a book from a shelf filled with interesting titles. It had been ages since she'd had anything new to read, but she wouldn't waste any of her precious pennies on something so frivolous as a book. Her cousin enjoyed books. She was sure she'd find plenty of reading material at his place.

"If you're planning to ride that ol' mule tied out there to the hitching rail, I'd say it will take you a day and a half, maybe two. The elevation gets higher as you go and you don't want to push him too hard. There are a few smaller towns along the way. I'd recommend spending the night in one of them. The church in Aldeen, which also serves as the school, would be a good place for a person to get in out of the dark and cold, if they didn't have other options. There's a little shed out back where the teacher leaves her horse and buggy during school hours. As long as you didn't disturb anything, no one would care if you stayed there."

"That's good to know. Thank you."

While Mr. Miller stoked the pot-bellied stove and made a pot of coffee, Rena browsed around the store. Her gaze lingered on a bolt of brocade peach taffeta. She hadn't worn a dress in two years, and none that she'd owned had been created from such costly, beautiful fabric. A girl like her had no business dreaming about expensive things. It wouldn't matter how she dressed, anyway. Not now. She could look like a queen and it wouldn't do her a bit of good.

No man would ever want her, and she'd arrived at the point she no longer cared. Who needed love with all the anxiety and heartache that went along with it?



LOVE ON TARGET

will be released on April 10, 2023,
but it's available now for preorder!

Author SPOTLIGHT



USA Today bestselling and award-winning author Shanna Hatfield joined Petticoats & Pistols as a regular contributor in 2017. After being a guest author a few times, she was thrilled to receive the invitation to join the P&P corral as a regular Filly. She's so grateful to be part of such a wonderful group, and for the amazing readers of Petticoats & Pistols.

Shanna grew up on a farm where her childhood brimmed with sunshine, hay fever, and an ongoing supply of learning experiences. Today, she draws on her rural roots to create sweet romances filled with hope, humor, quirky small-town characters, realistic heroes, and women of strength. When Shanna leaves her writing cave (also known as her office) she enjoys testing out new recipes, playing with two rascally kittens, and spending time at home in the Pacific Northwest with her beloved husband, better known as Captain Cavedweller.

Preorder [*Love on Target*](#) by Shanna Hatfield on Amazon.
Visit Shanna's Website: shannahatfield.com



Rena's Pie Crust Cookies

Rena Burke may live in 1894, but she is a busy woman without a lot of time to spend on creating elaborate meals. Her cousin, Theo, who took her in when she needed a place to stay, loves pie, so when Rena makes pies, she always turns the scraps of dough into these delightful cinnamon cookies. (Shanna's grandmother and mom used to do the same thing and she loved eating the cookies still warm from the oven!)

- INGREDIENTS
- 3 tablespoons sugar
 - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 - 2 tablespoons butter, melted
 - 1 pie crust (homemade or from the store)

- For Crust
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - 1/3 cup shortening
 - ¼ cup ice water

- DIRECTIONS
- If making crust: combine flour and salt. Using a pastry blender, cut shortening into flour mixture until coarse crumbs form. Add water, 1 tablespoon at a time, tossing with a fork, until dough forms. Shape into a disk, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill for 30 minutes.
 - Mix cinnamon and sugar. Set aside.
 - Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
 - On a floured surface, using a floured rolling pin, roll dough 1/4 inch thick. Use similar sized cookie cutters to cut out shapes (or a drinking glass dipped in flour to cut out circles).
 - Place the cookies onto a baking pan lined with parchment. Brush with butter then sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon mixture.
 - Repeat with any remaining scraps.
 - Bake for 8-10 minutes or until golden on the edges.

Find more recipes at [Petticoats & Pistols](#)
And on [Shanna's Website](#)

Love on Target Word Search

SEARCH FOR THE WORDS BELOW THAT ARE PART OF LOVE ON TARGET



S	C	M	U	L	E	Y	E	T	S	L	D	R	N	G	W	E	C
B	P	Z	E	X	P	L	O	S	I	V	E	S	S	Z	E	S	O
L	E	A	T	H	E	R	B	P	I	S	T	O	L	E	K	B	U
P	I	N	K	S	C	O	U	T	O	X	U	M	Z	P	R	C	S
P	A	I	N	T	B	R	U	S	H	K	D	G	D	P	A	A	I
S	Q	Z	K	C	A	R	T	R	O	U	S	E	R	S	I	B	N
A	L	T	S	H	O	R	T	B	R	E	A	D	Q	P	L	I	C
D	C	H	V	T	A	R	G	E	T	M	I	N	E	L	R	N	R
D	B	L	A	S	T	E	R	E	R	K	V	K	X	Q	O	E	E
L	V	W	D	Y	N	A	M	I	T	E	Q	A	O	L	A	Q	E
E	U	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	R	S	L	L	X	H	D	E	K
X	Y	N	R	O	M	A	N	C	E	S	P	R	I	T	E	A	I

Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden → ↓ and ↘ .

BLASTER	MINE	SCOUT
CABIN	MULE	SHORTBREAD
COUSIN	PAINTBRUSH	SPRITE
CREEK	PINK	TARGET
DYNAMITE	PISTOL	TROUSERS
EXPLOSIVES	RAILROAD	
HOLIDAY	ROMANCE	
LEATHER	SADDLE	

Get to Know the Author

SHANNA HATFIELD

1. Who taught you to drive? How did it go?

My dad taught me how to drive. When I was four, my parents decided to clear the sagebrush off several acres they owned to use it for farm ground. My siblings joined my parents in walking up and down the hilly terrain, tossing rocks into the back of our dump truck. Since I was too little to help, Dad stuck me behind the wheel, put the truck in low gear, and told me not to run over any fences or drive into the canal, then he showed me how to turn the big steering wheel. I sat on my knees and held onto the steering wheel, so proud I had such an important job!

2. Do you have a pet?

We adopted two kittens in October. They make me laugh, so much. Goose and Luna are siblings but look and act nothing alike.

Goose is big, gangly, goofy, and a scaredy cat. Loud noises send him diving for cover. He is so loveable and sweet, though. One of my favorite things is when he puts his paw on my cheek like, “Hey, human! How are you today?”

Luna is a polydactyl cat, also known as a Hemingway cat – or a cat with six toes. She has an extra one on each foot. Luna was the runt of a litter of four and the only girl. So she is out to prove she is the biggest, roughest, toughest kitten there is. She really is small (almost half the size of Goose), but she will best him in a fight, then sit right on top of his face just to rub in the insult. It is hilarious to watch. Luna is not cuddly or sweet, but sometimes she’ll come flop down beside me and look up at me with the cutest little expression on her face. And she loves her brother. He was being a goofball one day, jumping high into the air. His trajectory got off track, and he slammed into the patio door, then sat there looking both dazed and confused for a minute. Luna ran over to him, rubbed her nose to his, then licked his face. I could almost hear her scolding him. “That was a dumb thing to do, you big dolt. What have I told you about launching yourself into space?”

3. Could you live off the grid?

Nope. Nope, and nope! Unless living “off the grid” included an unlimited supply of hot running water, a bathroom, electricity, and Wi-Fi, I couldn’t do it. My idea of roughing it is staying at a 3-star hotel.

4. What food or vegetable do you hate?

I have never, ever been a fan of Brussels sprouts. When I was around eleven, Mom made them for lunch. I refused to eat

them, so she put three on my plate. I ate the rest of my meal but pushed the horrid little green orbs to the edge of my plate.

“You aren’t leaving the table until you eat those,” Mom warned.

I sighed and sank back in my chair, then I looked over and noticed Dad had several nasty little green orbs on his plate he wasn’t eating either. I think the two of us sat at the table for an hour, just talking, until Mom finally relented and lifted my prison sentence. I don’t recall her ever serving them again after that.

5. Do you play any musical instruments?

I play the piano. I started taking lessons when I was five and took them until I was sixteen. Playing the piano was something I greatly enjoyed. Then I went to college, got married, life got busy, and I rarely played. A few years ago, when I redid my living room, we bought a used piano, and I love it. I still don’t play often, but I’m trying to steal a few moments here and there to play more.

The one instrument I’ve always wanted to learn to play is the harp. I absolutely adore the sound of harp music.

6. Name three things that make you happy.

1. Captain Cavedweller. He makes me laugh every single day, and he’s always so incredibly supportive of my dreams and goals, while keeping my feet on the ground.

2. Sunshine. I love to see the sun shining outside my window, or go outside and turn my face up to its warmth. It’s like instant happiness!

3. Chocolate. A bite of quality chocolate (dark is my favorite) is a happy, delicious thing!

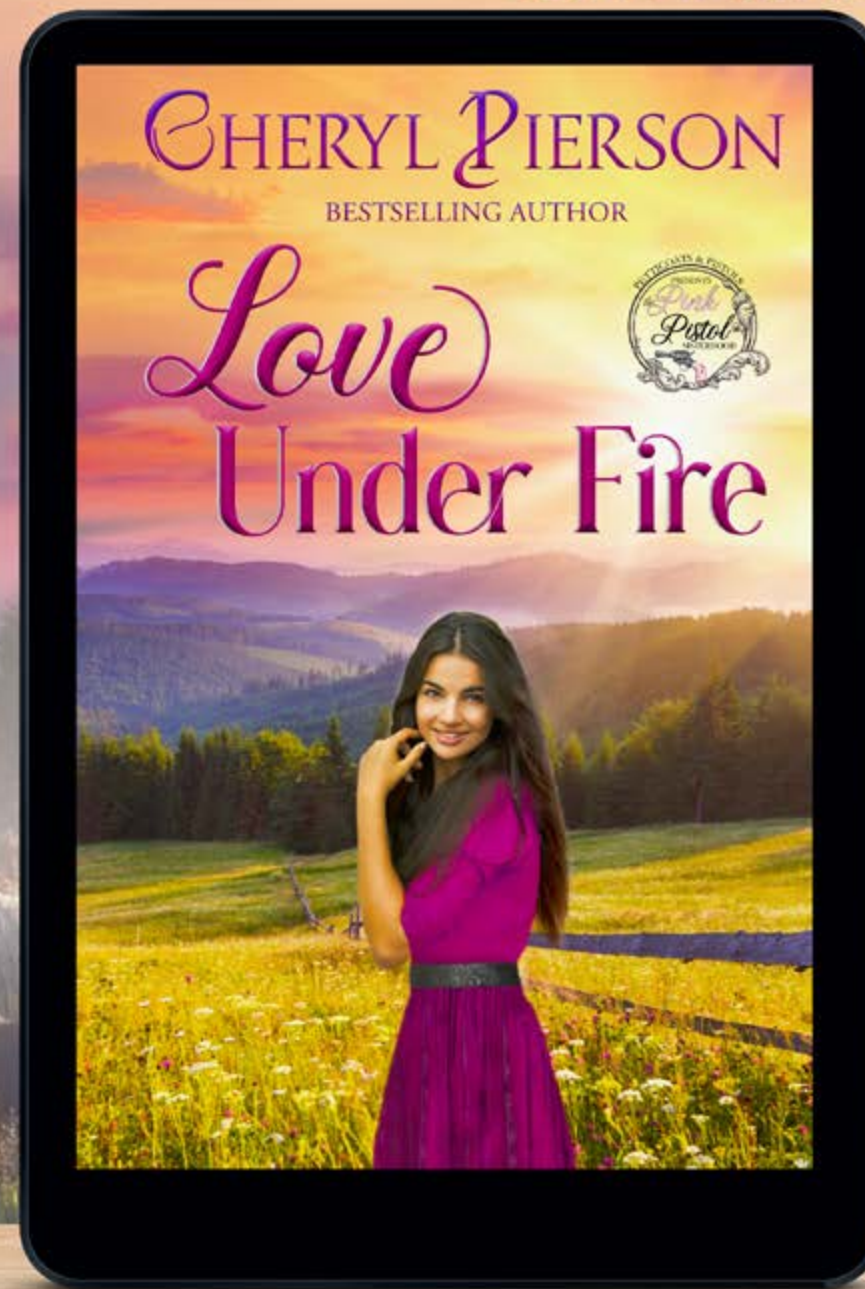
7. Are you an introvert or an extrovert?

I am an introvert who enjoys socializing from time to time. I don’t hide in shadowed corners at social gatherings, but I definitely need quiet time at home to recharge my batteries.



SHE’S AN EASTERN SHARPSHOOTING DEBUTANTE.
HE’S A ROUGH-AROUND-THE-EDGES CAVALRY CAPTAIN.
FINDING LOVE UNDER FIRE WILL BE THEIR TOUGHEST CHALLENGE.

Love Under Fire



COMING APRIL 20, 2023

A SWEET WESTERN ROMANCE BY
CHERYL PIERSON



available at
amazon & **kindleunlimited**



Excerpt from

Love Under Fire

by Cheryl Pierson

Krissy Donovan had agreed to do this charity work Miz Oakley requested for the orphanage, but she did not have to like it. This certainly went above and beyond anything she'd expected her father to ask of her. She reached to adjust the maroon velvet hat she wore and forced her features into a more pleasant expression. She shifted in the plush seat of the Butterfield stage, trying to find even the tiniest bit of comfort, but it eluded her. Maybe because she'd spent so much time on a train, and then a stage, the farther west she'd traveled, she felt she'd left a permanent indentation on every seat she'd sat in so far.

This seemingly endless journey from North Carolina to the faraway barricades of savagery could have been so much more pleasurable if she'd had a good traveling companion—her best friend, Emmie, or her cousin, Tallie, or her younger sister, Brooklyn—but of course, that would never have been

proper. They'd be stuck with the stuffy chaperone, Mrs. Dinwiddie, as well. The elderly woman sat across from Krissy with the perpetual expression of confusion she wore creasing her plump face.

Krissy closed her eyes, replaying the conversation with her father that had set this debacle in motion. She hated even thinking about it for the hundredth time, but maybe Mrs. Dinwiddie would stop staring a hole through her if she pretended to be asleep.

Kristalee, I have something to discuss with you. Please, step into my office.

That was how this fiasco had all begun. When her father spoke those words in that tone, it meant one thing. Krissy had known that whatever it was her father had to “discuss” with her was already decided and was going to interrupt whatever plans she might have been hoping for over the summer.

And she had been right, of course.

Delano Douglas Donovan always got what he wanted—and what he wanted was for his oldest daughter to perform a shooting exhibition for charity, at the request of his old friend, Miss Annie Oakley Butler. It was quite an important favor she had asked of the Donovan family. This shooting exhibition would require Krissy to travel halfway across the country, in the dust and heat, riding in this jostling, bouncing stagecoach for—well, for what seemed like forever. And the arduous journey wasn't at an end yet. Krissy let go a long, low sigh.

Of course, there was no arguing with Papa. He'd been dealing with difficult people—banking clients—all his adult life. Though Krissy considered herself stubborn, she had to admit she was no competition for her father.

As much as anything else, she had wanted to please him. And he'd already promised Miz Annie Krissy would “lend a hand”, as he always put it—a favorite expression of his.

But she had mere months of...freedom...left, before the wedding. Maybe Papa had thought this journey west would be somehow entertaining—an adventure—for her before she settled down. But there were so many other things she would rather have done than travel all this way to put on a shooting exhibition—even if it was for a good cause—and at the request of her father's old friend and Krissy's mentor, Miz Annie Oakley herself.

If Mrs. Dinwiddie wasn't still staring at her, Krissy might have let herself cry. But there were three other occupants in the coach's hot, wind-whipped interior, as well as herself and Mrs. Dinwiddie, so crying—for any reason, especially self-pity, was out of the question.

She cracked her eyes open, her head tilted back against the plush cushioning. If that infernal Mrs. Dinwiddie didn't find something to do besides stare at her—

Just then, a shout sounded from outside and the wagon gave an odd lurch. Krissy felt the surge of power as the horses took off at a gallop, and the driver yelled something else.

Mrs. Dinwiddie met Krissy's eyes, and for a split second, Krissy read the terrible regret and fear in the older woman's face. But there was nothing to be done as they raced along, helplessly watching the tall, dry grass of the plains speed by the open window flaps.

“Indians, do you suppose?” one of the men, Mr. Russell, asked, trying to mask the question as idle curiosity.

Mrs. Dinwiddie gasped in horror, and Krissy shot the man a hot glare. Even though she'd spent most of the trip wishing she could be rid of the older woman, a long-time friend of the family, Krissy suddenly felt a genuine protectiveness toward her at the man's thoughtless comment.

The wife of the other male traveler, Mrs. Streetman, gave a huff. “Of course not. Those days are well over...at least, around here!” But she glanced out the flapping window canvas, as if she wondered if she might see Indians attacking, despite her declaration.

Mr. Streetman remained tight-lipped and silent.

Krissy jumped up from her seat, steadying herself as best she could in the swaying conveyance. She tried to stand upright long enough to see outside, bracing her feet against the bumping of the speeding coach.

She caught a glimpse of the scrub brush and tall grass that had been their monotonous view for the past few days. It was racing past at breakneck speed and Krissy was hard put to keep her footing. The driver...where was the driver? Normally she could look out the window and see a foot resting on the floor of the driver's box, or an arm or hand laid casually on the side...but there was no sign of the driver.

Worse, the horses seemed to have been given their head and were running full speed down the familiar path, headed for the next stage stop.

“Sit down, young woman!” Mrs. Streetman ordered.

Though the imperious command caused Krissy to automatically begin to sit, she caught herself, and remained defiantly standing in her precarious position.

It had been a long time since anyone had ordered her to do something—much less someone she barely knew. She was in a mutinous frame of mind already—hot, uncomfortable in too many ways to count, and feeling put out for having given in to her father's demand to come on this journey in the first place—even for an old friend and a very good cause.

Kristalee Juliana Donovan dug in her heels and made no move to comply with Mrs. Streetman's order.

“I said—” Mrs. Streetman said, leaning toward Krissy as if she believed Krissy hadn't heard her.

Just then, the coach hit something that Krissy couldn't see from her vantage point. There was a screaming of rending wood, and one side of the stagecoach seemed to drop low to the ground. Even as the forward momentum seemed to almost pause, then slow, the coach was listing to the side. In one terrible moment, the stage rolled to the side, then flipped over. Krissy's feet flew over her head, and she was thrown backward, hitting her head, first on the wall of the coach, then the floor.

The stage rolled a second time amid a cacophony of shrieking, cracking wood, and neighing horses. Then, all was silent except for the pounding hooves as the horses broke completely free and ran, the dust settling slowly behind them.



LOVE UNDER FIRE

will be released on April 20, 2023,
but it's available now for Preorder!

[Order on Amazon!](#)

Author SPOTLIGHT



Cheryl Pierson joined Petticoats & Pistols in May of 2010, a relative “newbie” on the writing scene at that time. Becoming part of “the fillies” at P&P was a fantastic experience, and one she is so proud to be a part of almost 13 years later!

Writing westerns and western romance is in her blood, having been born and raised in Oklahoma, the product of at least five generations of proud Oklahomans who first came to the state when it was still Indian Territory. Reading and writing her own stories were her favorite pastimes as far back as elementary school, which led to earning a B.A. in English from the University of Oklahoma. She has also served as the President of the Western Fictioneers, a professional organization for western authors. In the past, three of her stories have been nominated in the Best Western Short Fiction category of the Western Fictioneers Peacemaker Awards.

Cheryl and her husband have lived in the Oklahoma City area for the past 39 years.

Cheryl loves to hear from readers! You can e-mail her at: fabkat_edit@yahoo.com

Preorder [*Love Under Fire*](#) on Amazon:

Visit Cheryl's website: <http://prairierosepublications.com/cheryl-pierson/>



Cheryl's Hamburger Stew

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds ground beef
2 medium yellow onions, chopped
2 cans (14-1/2 ounces each) stewed tomatoes
1 can tomato sauce
1 can beef broth
8 medium carrots, thinly sliced
4 celery ribs, thinly sliced
2 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 cups water
3/4 cup Minute Rice
1 can of whole kernel corn, drained
1 to 2 tablespoons salt
1 to 2 teaspoons pepper

DIRECTIONS

Cook beef and onions over medium heat; drain. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce, beef broth, carrots, potatoes, water, rice, drained corn salt and pepper and other spices; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 30 minutes until vegetables and rice are tender.

Stir from time to time to prevent sticking. Uncover; simmer 20-30 minutes longer or until thickened!

Serve with buttered cornbread, biscuits, or crackers.

Find more recipes at [*Petticoats & Pistols*](#)

Get to Know the Author

CHERYL PIERSON

1. Do you have a pet?

I do! I have two sweet darling dogs, Sammy and Max. We got Sammy about 4 ½ years ago when he was about 6 months old from the shelter in my hometown, Seminole, Oklahoma. We went to look at their dogs after our sweet Embry went over the Rainbow Bridge, and Sammy seemed to know that WE were his people—or that my husband Gary was his, at least! He came over and sat on Gary’s foot and would not budge! Of course, we had to bring him home—we’re not sure what kind of “mix” he is, but he’s the sweetest dog ever—we just figure he’s a “love dog” breed.

Max came to us through the same shelter about 7 months later when he was about 10 weeks old. He and his littermates had been dumped at the shelter door on a cold February night when they were just 2-3 weeks old. He loves Sammy and Sammy loves him—they are lost without each other. They said Max was part Pyrenees, but no. He’s probably about 99% white lab.

They are precious boys!

2. If you could make one rule for one day that everyone had to follow, what would it be?

It would be so simple: BE KIND. Just be kind to all living things—people and animals; and also, be kind to yourself.

3. What is your favorite part about working from home?

I love being able to work on my own schedule and not have to get up, get ready, and go somewhere! For so many years, I worked outside the home, and had kids to take to school and so on. It’s just really nice to be able to get up when the dogs wake up and have a relaxed beginning to the day.

4. If you could eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Tomatoes. I love fresh tomatoes like nothing else. I ate so many of them one summer when I was about 9 or 10 that I broke out in a rash from the acidity. But I would not give them up!

5. How did you meet your husband?

My husband, Gary, was in a couple of my college classes at West Virginia State College. He was going to school on his GI bill (Vietnam veteran) and a bit older than I was. In the beginning, we were not too crazy about one another.

er. My Oklahoma accent sounded “fake” to him (it does sound very southern), and he barely gave me a second look—or so I thought. But we had a mutual friend who explained to him that I was from Oklahoma and not “fake” at all. (This made me laugh when he told me later on.)

He invited me to go to the stock car races with him one night with his brother, sister-in-law, and several of their friends. While we were there, a fight broke out and while the stands were clearing, Gary overcame one of the fighters and took a straight razor away from him, and the fight ended. That was our first date!

6. If you could instantly learn any skill, what would it be?

I would say it would be to know all things about medicine—how to treat any illness or injury, even how to perform a surgery. My other choice would be knowing how to speak every language on the planet.

7. What has been your proudest achievement as a writer?

I’ve had several, but I would have to say the two that probably made me the proudest were selling my first short story and selling my first novel. Those were both red-letter days, with many others in between them. My mom and dad had always had faith in me, but they both passed before they could see those accomplishments. Those days were special to me because I knew they would be as proud—or even more so—than I was about those sales.

8. What would you buy first if you won the lottery?

If I won the lottery, I would probably not buy myself much of anything other than to pay off all my bills. What I WOULD do is donate as much of it as I possibly could to fight the dog meat trade and animal cruelty all over the world. I’d rather do that than drive a luxury car!



John Tyler

The Father of our Country – or Darn Near

(Petticoats & Pistols Blog Reprint)

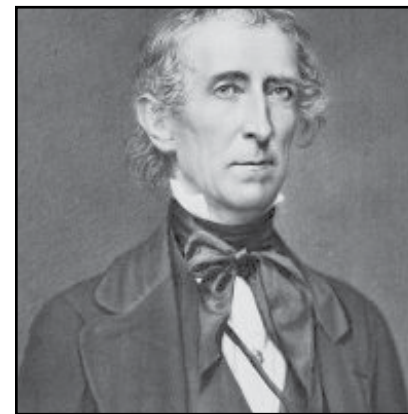
© Mary Connealy

You just never know, when you’re doing research, what little tidbit is going to jump out at you and make you say, “What? Really?”

I read things here on P & P all the time that I’ve never heard of before. Such was my reaction to the fun fact that President John Tyler, who became president after the death of William Henry Harrison, had fifteen children.

Was the White House over crowded or WHAT?

He killed off his first wife having eight kids. (Okay, I admit that’s my spin. . .I’m sure she was thrilled every time she found out she was pregnant. . .I’m sure she’d come to John in her negligee and say, “I want another baby, darling, please.”)



Yeah right. And she didn’t die having a baby, that’s just me being snippy.

President Tyler lived 72 years, was vice president and president, was the son of the governor of Virginia, served in the military during the War of 1812 (though he saw no action), was elected to the House of Representatives and later the

Senate and was the first vice-president to ascend to the presidency through the president’s death, which set a whole lot of precedents we still follow today.

Out of all of that, what interested me was those 15 kids.

How many bedrooms are there in the White House anyway? Yeesh.

They were probably as crowded as I was growing up with seven brothers and sisters in a Nebraska farm house. His first wife—mother of eight—died while he was president.

Here are some quotes about Letitia Tyler:

Letitia was shy, quiet, pious, and by all accounts, utterly selfless and

devoted to her family.

(Mary here—they just don’t make wives like this anymore.)

She met John Tyler, then a law student, in 1808. Their five-year courtship was so restrained that not until three weeks before the wedding did Tyler kiss her — and even then it was on the hand.

(Mary again—the man clearly came uh...uh...let’s call it...un-restrained later...thus the eight children.)

The most entirely unselfish person you can imagine...Notwithstanding her very delicate health, mother attends to and regulates all the household affairs and all so quietly that you can’t tell when she does it.”

(Mary with more to say—they owned slaves—it’s not like the woman was doing any heavy lifting.)

Their 29-year marriage appears to have been a singularly happy one.

(Mary—I’m glad for them—except if the woman was so shy and quiet how SURE are they about her happiness. But fine, whatever, they were ecstatic.)

As First Lady, she remained in the upstairs living quarters of the White House; she came down just once, to attend the wedding of her daughter (Elizabeth) in January 1842.

(Me again—Excuse me? She only came DOWNSTAIRS ONCE????)

Pardon me while I wonder if she was, by chance, hiding from her husband and potential baby #9. Perhaps she was under the floorboards upstairs, waiting quietly, hoping he’d fall asleep for once in his freakin’ life.

After his first wife’s death, Tyler remarried within a year, to Julia Gardiner. You really can’t blame the guy, I mean c’mon, he



had eight kids to take care of. These days, that'll get you your own reality show. Please insert your own Jon & Kate Plus Eight jokes here.

Here are a few words about Julia Tyler. She began seeing Tyler in January 1843, a few months after the death of the First Lady while he was president.

(Mary wonders if she'd heard about the eight kids. Such things could be hushed up back then.)

One of Tyler's daughters, Letitia, never made peace with the new Mrs. Tyler. (Gotta go with Letitia here.)

She was thirty years Tyler's junior and it would be simple to make trophy wife and gold digger comments, but honestly, she had seven children with the man. No doubt she was hiding from him after a while, too. Crowded under those floor boards. In fact, that's probably where the first Mrs. Tyler was. Alive and well and in hiding.



His second wife was YOUNGER than four of his children.

And I found this particularly fascinating. . . two of Tyler's grandchildren are STILL ALIVE.

Doesn't that strike you as weird? Tyler lived at the same time as John Quincy Adams. He served in the War of 1812. Think of that! Tyler was the first president born after the Constitution was ratified. He goes back almost all the way to the beginning, and he's still got LIVING GRAND CHILDREN!!!!???

That makes me feel really strongly connected to the past. It's still a very young country in some ways.

Tyler also brought Texas into the Union, so—as writers and lovers of western romance—we all gotta give him snaps for that.

I wrote a while back about a woman, still alive, whose husband served in the Civil War.

All of this American history seems so distant and yet here we are with people living whose lives were directly touched by people who go way back to the beginning, or very nearly.

I like that.

Not enough to have 15 children, but I like that.



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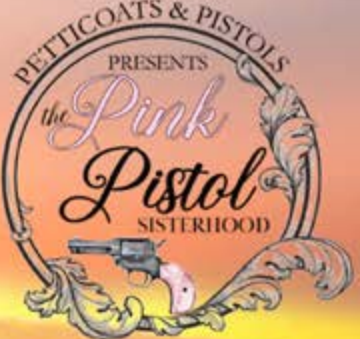
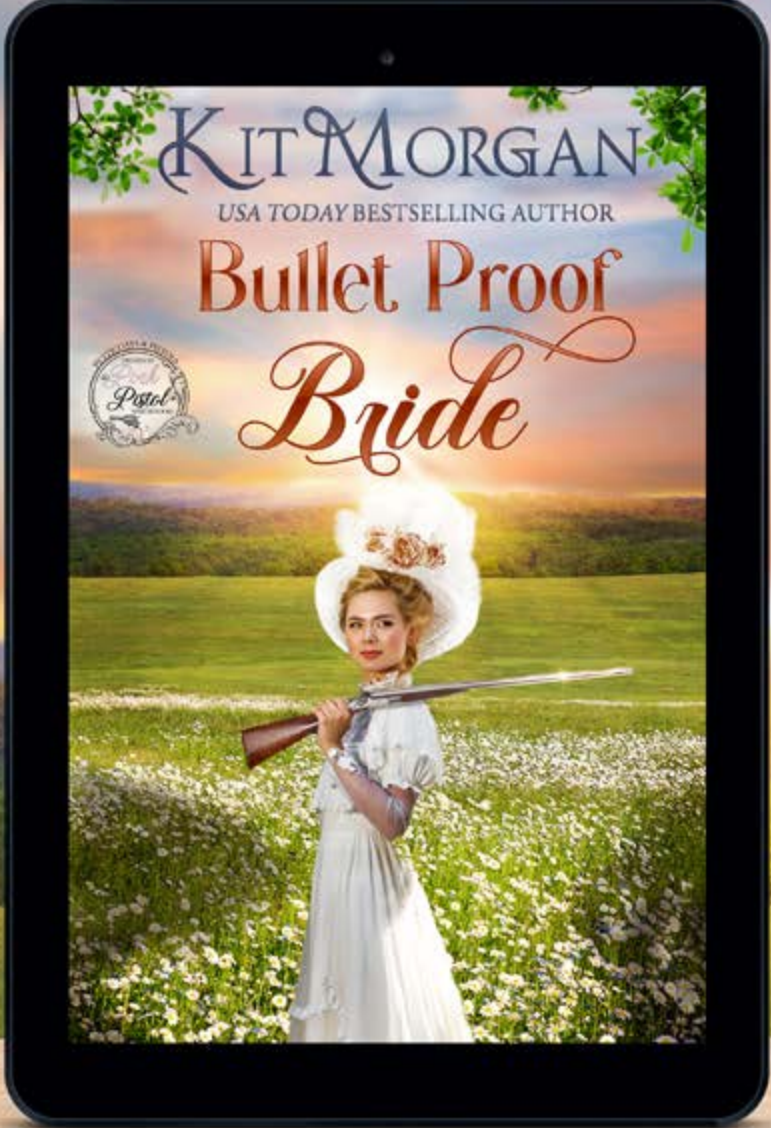
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Excerpt from

BULLET PROOF *Bride* by Kit Morgan

Goldie Colson stared at the apple orchards as the train took on water. They’d been here a while. Her destination was Nowhere, a nothing of a town in Washington that was as far from her old life as she could get. On the one hand, that was a good thing. Her life in Kansas City was horrible. She lost her parents in a bank robbery less than a year ago and now her betrothed to a bunch of train robbers.

“Miss Colson?”

She looked at the elderly conductor with eyes red from crying. “Yes?”

“Are you sure you don’t need anything? Something to eat? The folks that live here are bringing food for everyone.”

Before she could speak, she noticed a giant of a man

coming down the aisle. He was middle-aged with chestnut brown hair mixed with gray and had blue eyes. He stopped when he reached them. “Howdy ma’am. Name’s Arlan Weaver. We heard what happened. Are ya all right?”

A tiny laugh escaped, then another. “I just lost my intended and his father. No, I am not all right.” She looked out the window again. True, the men she lost she’d just met at a train station in Boise. She was a mail-order bride, and her betrothed, one Theodore Ferguson and his father, Ben Ferguson, were off to visit Ben’s sister in Nowhere. The ride out of Boise was uneventful for a long time and she’d spent it trying to get to know her future husband. It was the same after they left Baker City in Oregon. She was beginning to like the man

she was about to marry when they entered the state of Washington. Then the train was robbed but hours ago, and not all the outlaws escaped. “What is this place?”

“The Weaver farm, ma’am,” Mr. Weaver said. “Maybe I ought to have my wife take a look at ya.” He excused himself and hurried from the car.

Goldie watched him go then went back to staring out the window. She didn’t know how many passengers were in the other car. They were spread between two, her car carrying her little party of three and a few others. Theodore and his father had been shot while the rest of the passengers fled into the second car seeking refuge. She had no idea if anyone in the second car had been wounded or killed. She only knew what happened in this one. Four lay dead. Two of them outlaws.

Two more men entered the car, took one look at what lay in the rear seats, then headed that way. A woman followed. She was middle aged, pretty, and had brown hair and kind brown eyes.

“Hello,” she greeted. “I’m Samijo Weaver. Why don’t you come with me?”

Goldie nodded, too numb to do anything else. How did she survive? She should have been shot too. But fate intervened when her future father in-law slumped in the seat in front of her, and she grabbed the gun out of his hand. The rest was a blur. She didn’t remember firing the weapon, but obviously did.

“Come along, now,” Mrs. Weaver said gently. “Let’s get you taken care of.”

Goldie’s lower lip trembled, and she bit it. She let the woman guide her from the seat and steer her off the train. With no home and no place to go anymore, Goldie had no idea what to do. But she was alive, and for now, that was enough.

There was a bench on the tiny platform, and she sat as the conductor joined them. “I want you to ride in the second car with the others, Miss Colson,” he said. “You were getting off in Nowhere. Do you have relatives there?”

She shook her head. “I don’t. But the Fergusons did.”

“Ferguson?” Mrs. Weaver said. “Were they coming to see Connie Ferguson?”

She nodded. “Yes. She’s Ben Ferguson’s sister in-law.”

“I see,” Mrs. Weaver said. “She runs the hotel in Nowhere. She’s re-married and known as Mrs. Hoskins now. Perhaps I should accompany you there.”

Goldie stared at her a moment. “I ... don’t know.”

Mrs. Weaver gave her a sympathetic look. “Were they close, Mr. Ferguson and Connie?”

She shrugged. “To be honest, I have no idea. He said he hadn’t seen her in years. They were going to sur-

prise her. I was ... his son’s mail-order bride. We were to be married in Nowhere then move on to Portland.”

Mrs. Weaver sat beside her as another woman came onto the tiny platform, a basket in her hand. She stood off to one side and waited.

Goldie glanced her way. She was beautiful with her dark hair and streaks of gray at the temples.

“Bella, bring the basket,” Mrs. Weaver said. “Arlan?”

The big man came out of a tiny ticket office. “Yeah?”

“I think we should accompany Miss Colson to Nowhere.”

“I’m sending a telegraph to Sheriff Riley now.” He ducked back inside.

Mrs. Weaver smiled at her. “Are you hungry? Bella brought food. She’s married to my husband’s brother, Calvin.”

Goldie forced a smile and nodded. She wasn’t hungry, but also knew she had to eat something. Who knew when she’d get another meal? She had no money of her own and had been at the complete mercy of her future husband and his father. They were going to Portland to work in a lumber mill. It was her one chance to start a new life and dare she hope, find love? Now that chance was gone.

Mr. Weaver came out of the little train office. “I’ve sent word to the sheriff in Nowhere about what happened. He’ll want to speak to you of course. And I agree with my wife. We’ll accompany you and help you tell Connie.” He glanced at his wife and back. “Um, do you have any money?”

Goldie shook her head.

“Well, considerin’ yer betrothed ain’t gonna need his, yer entitled to it. I’ll see that ya get it and the rest of their belongings.”

She looked at him. “Shouldn’t Mrs. Ferguson get them?”

“Connie has herself a hotel to make money with,” he said. “What have you got?”

She swallowed hard and looked at the platform. “Nothing.”

“Well, then, there ya have it.” He kissed his wife on the cheek. “Best get what ya need, darlin’.” He headed for the train.

“I can’t thank you enough,” Goldie said softly.

Mrs. Weaver gave her a gentle smile. “You don’t need to. Not after what you’ve been through.” She nodded at the woman called Bella. “The train will be ready to leave soon. Give her the food.”

Goldie rose, a bit unsteady, and took the basket offered. She followed them to the second passenger car as a tiny flicker of hope ignited in her heart. Perhaps



there was still a future for her. But she wouldn't know until she got to Nowhere.

Once she was settled on the train, she placed the basket in her lap and clutched the handle. There was enough food in it to last a few days, and she noticed the other passengers had sandwiches and apples. No one said a word as they ate. Goldie looked at the basket and figured since she lost folks, she got more food.

It wasn't long before Mr. Weaver came with several satchels that held her betrothed's and his father's clothing and effects, plus some money and a note from the conductor. It brought tears to her eyes when she unfolded the note and read it.

*Miss Colson,
Use these twenty dollars as you see fit. Good luck.
Mr. Schwab*

Taking a deep breath, Goldie looked at Mr. Weaver. "I don't know what to say."
He smiled. "Ya don't have to say anything. Just accept the kindness and use it to get a fresh start. I'm sure

Connie will help ya, too."
She bit her lower lip again, jaw trembling, and nodded.
He put the satchels and a pair of saddle bags in the basket overhead, then left the train. No one spoke to her and that was fine. She didn't want to talk to anyone right now. Her every nerve was raw from the experience, and she wondered what would become of her now. Would her life stop then start in Nowhere? She had no idea. Goldie only knew she lost a chance at love. And she had a lot of love to give.



[Bullet Proof Bride](#)
will be released on April 30, 2023,
but it's available now for Preorder!
[Order on Amazon!](#)

Author SPOTLIGHT



Kit Morgan has been writing for fun all her life. A lover of western romance, she discovered Petticoats & Pistols years before she wrote her first western. She always thought of how much fun it would be to belong to such a wonderful group of authors, and in August of 2018, she was invited to find out! She joined the fillies and has been having fun ever since.

Kit is a USA Today bestselling author of over 140 books of historical and contemporary western romance. She lives in the Pacific Northwest in a little cabin in the woods on Clear Creek, a name she used for her most beloved fictional town.

When not writing she can be found taking long walks in the woods, reading, or spending time with her adult children and family.

Preorder [Bullet Proof Bride](#) on Amazon:
Visit Kit's website: <http://www.authorkitmorgan.com/>



Lemon Cookies

INGREDIENTS
1 box Lemon Cake Mix
2 eggs
1/3 cup butter melted or 1/3 cup vegetable oil
1-2 cups powdered sugar
Zest from 1 lemon
Juice from 1 lemon

DIRECTIONS
Melt butter.
Add butter, cake mix, eggs, zest, and lemon juice in a bowl and mix until combined.
Roll each cookie in powdered sugar then place on parchment-lined baking sheet.
Bake for 9-11 minutes.

Find more recipes at [Petticoats & Pistols](#)

Get to Know the Author KIT MORGAN

- 1. What don't you feel guilty spending money on?**
Handbags and sunglasses. A girl's got to have her accessories!
- 2. Do you enjoy the outdoors? Camping? Hiking?**
Our entire family goes camping at Diamond Lake, Oregon, every year since 2000.
- 3. Could you live off the grid?**
I practically do now. I live in a little log cabin in the woods!
- 4. What gets you excited or gives you energy?**
Creating something out of nothing. Guess that's why I love writing!
- 5. Which season is your favorite and why?**
Fall! I love the transition between summer and fall and all the fall leaves.
- 6. Do you prefer scary movies or happy endings?**
I love "feel good movies" so gotta have my happy endings!
- 7. Can you cook? If so, what's your specialty? If you don't cook, why not?**
Yep, I can cook. I make a mean taco casserole, lasagna, and Spanish rice!

- 8. If you had unlimited storage for one thing, what would it be?**
Is this a trick question? Books, of course!
- 9. Do you collect anything?**
Tea pots and tea-cups and saucers.
- 10. What don't you spend enough time doing?**
I'm embarrassed to say, taking time for myself.
- 11. What is your favorite part about working from home?**
Not having to dress up and not having to drive anywhere!
- 12. If you could learn one skill today, what would it be?**
How to draw and do photoshop for book covers! I'll get around to it one of these days.



If you missed the first issue of
Pink Pistol Magazine,
[get it here!](#)



The Telegraph Tree

© Linda Broday

West Texas Prairie
1880

“Come on, Belle, get on out of there. You’re a dumb cow, you know that? How on God’s green earth did you find what is surely the only mud hole left in all of Texas?”

Maura Killion blew a strand of chestnut hair from her face and stared at the brown and white Jersey that was bogged down up to her hocks. The heifer’s frightened bellows and eyes rolling back in her head struck a blow to Maura’s heart.

Tears clogged in Maura’s throat. She sagged against the milk cow, cursing this godforsaken land that had stolen her husband before he’d even known he was to be a father and left her all alone with a broken spirit.

If not for her baby girl, Allie Rose, she’d give up completely. At three months old, the babe depended on her for survival so she had no choice but to keep going.

When Maura’s milk dried up four days ago, fear paralyzed her. Allie would die without nourishment from the heifer.

She glanced at the infant lying in a basket at the edge of the bog. How the child could sleep with all the racket was a mystery. Even when awake, Allie seldom ever cried. It was

as if she, too, had lost the will to live.

Sudden anger swept through Maura. Giving up was not an option. God help her, she’d fight to give her baby girl the right to thrive and grow up strong.

Though thick mud of the buffalo wallow sucked at her legs, gripping them like bands of iron, Maura made her way to Belle’s wide rump. With loud shouts and a mighty shove, she applied the last of her waning strength.

The cow must’ve sensed her desperation because somehow, someway, Belle managed to pull herself out. Maura collapsed into a sobbing heap under the mid-morning sun.

This was too hard.

She raised her head and stared at the vast blue sky that seemed to swallow everything, leaving nothing but empty dreams, loneliness and sorrow. She’d scream if she had energy left.

This land took and took, giving nothing back except endless days and hopeless nights.

Maura wearily pushed aside the drowning sensation. Gathering the wicker basket cradling Allie, she yelled to the cow, “Come along, Belle, you ornery critter. If you happen to find yourself in another mess today you’re on your own. I’m done for.”

The heifer’s last bellow of indignation seemed to say she took exception; nonetheless she followed along docile as a lamb.

With the mud in Maura’s shoes creating sucking sounds, she trudged through waves of tall brown grass toward the little soddy that sheltered them.

No matter how big a toll this land took on her she knew she’d continue to keep putting one foot in front of the other. For Baby Girl and for the slim hope that someday her struggle would all be worth it.

She had no other choice.

* * *

An angry howling wind battered at the door all night, insisting she let it in. Feeling as though she’d only crawled into bed, Maura rose and started her day.

Allie stared silently from a crib fashioned from a crate that Maura had lined with part of an old frayed quilt. Apparently, Baby Girl hadn’t slept either.

When Maura’s time had come three months ago, she gathered her fortitude and delivered the baby herself. Mrs. Fletcher on a farm eight miles away, promised to help with the birthing, but the wind and emptiness drove her mad. She’d taken her own life two months before Allie arrived.

Now, with Mrs. Fletcher gone no one remained within twenty-five miles.

Maura changed Allie’s diaper then, putting the babe in a sling contraption tied around her neck, went out to milk Belle.

Thirty minutes later, she patiently spooned milk into Allie’s mouth. She returned the babe to the sling and trudged out to hitch the plow to her mule. Time to plant a garden if they expected to eat.

Halfway through the plowing, she stopped and leaned against the mule to catch her breath. A spindly tree no more than five feet high that stood at the edge of the homestead snagged her attention. It might be the only tree as far as the eye could see, but the branches spread wide as though challenging the wind to rip it out by the roots. She’d often wondered who’d planted it. Other nesters? Had they been dreamers who yearned for a bit of green?

She’d noticed the tree before but had never heard it whisper in the wind. Never heard it call to her. Until now.

Speak your heart it seemed to say.

As though in a trance, she dropped the mule’s reins and went into the soddy. Finding a scrap of paper, she dipped a goose quill into a small bottle of ink.

I fear I’m going mad like Mrs. Fletcher. This blessed silence is a curse. Dead dreams and solitude fill the unending days. I yearn for a touch, a smile, and the sound of another human voice. I long to be loved, cherished, kissed. To know I matter.

After punching a hole in the paper, she found a piece of

yarn. Marching across the partially plowed furrows, she tied the paper onto a tree limb.

No one would ever read her scribbles. No one would ever hear her heart’s hope, but she felt a calm wash over her for having voiced her thoughts. Feeling somewhat renewed, she tried to spoon more milk into Allie’s rosebud mouth before returning to her plow.

* * *



During the night, a snarling pack of coyotes awakened Maura. They were very close to the soddy. She rose and lit the lamp. Snatching up a loaded Winchester that had belonged to her husband, she opened the door about six inches. At least half a dozen pairs or more of glittering yellow eyes stared back at her. The way they bared their razor sharp teeth and lunged at each other’s throats they had to be from rival packs.

She stilled her trembles. Opening the door a little wider, she aimed at the predators and pulled the trigger. One went down. Three of the pack pounced on their brother, feasting and snarling. Orange flame shot from the barrel of her rifle again, then again. At last, pulling the dead coyote, they retreated into the safety of darkness.

Fear crawled up her spine. They were still out there whether she could see them or not. And they sensed her terror. They’d kill her without hesitation.

Holding the lantern up high, she inched toward a large dark form lying several yards away. Her cow? Relief made her knees weak when she found it was a dead antelope the coyote pack had brought down.

A quick glance at the barn assured her she’d remembered to bar the door earlier to keep Belle safe for the night. She couldn’t take any chances with Allie’s only milk supply.

Allie! She had to get back to Baby Girl.

But she had herself to think about also. This meat would feed her for weeks. Her clothes hung on her because she'd had so little to eat.

Did she dare to fight the vicious coyotes for what she could salvage?

Without hesitation, she grabbed the antelope's hind leg and yanked. Halfway to the soddy, the coyotes started closing in. They would risk death to get the fresh carcass.

She put the rifle to her shoulder and fired. One lunged at her and she shot it. Bone-chilling snarls echoed in the night air.

Unable to remember how many shots she'd fired, panic gripped her. If she ran out, they'd swoop in for the kill.

Maybe she should abandon the antelope and let them have it. Allie's life and hers depended on this food. She'd not quit. She couldn't.

Tightening her grip and using her remaining strength, she managed to drag the antelope up next to the wall of the soddy.

No time to rest her aching muscles. She hurried inside for a sharp knife and began cutting off chunks of the meat while keeping one eye out for the desperate, hungry predators.

By the time rosy ribbons of light finally spread over the land, she'd washed off the blood and went in to feed Allie. The babe had become even more listless and that struck fear so deep into Maura's soul she couldn't breathe. Over the course of an hour, she managed to trickle some nourishment at least into the child's open mouth without strangling her. But she needed more.

Sobbing with frustration, Maura had to find a better way of getting milk into Baby Girl or her daughter would surely die.

Gathering her sharp knife, Maura again tempted fate, going out to harvest the antelope's stomach. She'd heard tales of such things serving as a feeding implement for babies. Willing to try anything, she gently removed the stomach and formed a makeshift pouch by sewing it tight with some of the animal's sinew. Several washings with hot water made it ready for use. She quickly filled it with milk.

Minutes later, Allie sucked greedily from a pinhole left unbound. Once full, the babe gave her a weak smile. This was going to work. Maura said a quick prayer of thanks and knew just how to share her joy.

* * *

That morning Maura got out her paper and wrote:

Thanks be to God from whom all blessings flow. I have food and I've pushed death away from my door yet again. I won't let it have my baby. I won't let it silence my hope.

Then trudging across the furrowed garden to the little tree, she tied it to a branch. Now two notes fluttered in

the breeze like little doves carrying messages. She desperately wanted one to return with a green leaf, an olive branch, some hope of better times like the bird once had to Noah.

Maura stared across the unending waves of brown grass that stretched as far as the eye could see.

She needed to believe. She needed something besides toil and exhaustion.

Most of all she needed to feel alive again.

This couldn't be all there was.

There had to be more.

* * *

Though exhausted by the long previous night, she kept busy. When dusk came she thought back over her day and all she'd accomplished. The dead carcasses lay well out of range of the soddy for the wild animals to finish devouring. Her food stores were replenished.

The antelope stew with its thick juice simmering on the stove filled the dwelling with a delicious aroma. She moved over to stir it, remembering the joy she took from serving this dish to her dear husband. Of course, they'd had cornbread to go with it then. She'd had plenty of flour and meal in those days.

He'd come in after a full day's work, sniff the air and a smile would spread over his face. Then he'd put his arms around her and nuzzle her neck. Tell her how much he loved her.

Oh God, how she missed that man.

She brushed away a tear and glanced over at Allie. Maura had fed her every two hours. Color had begun to come back into the babe's wan little face, a testament the makeshift bottle would do its job.

Before complete darkness descended, Maura got out her paper and tore off another piece.

Is there anyone out there? Am I and my baby the only ones left on this earth? I desperately need to know, to hope.

When she closed her eyes in sleep, she dreamed of a man with laughing gray eyes and strong callused hands.

* * *

The image stayed with her when she awakened. Who was this man of her dreams? Her husband's eyes had been dark brown and he'd had a withered hand.

A strange sound met her ears.

A baby's coos.

Maura peered into the wooden cradle. Allie was staring at her hand and cooing.

"Hey there, little darlin'. How's my girl? I hope you're hungry because I'll have some warm milk as soon as I get Belle in the mood of giving." Tears stung her eyes. She laid back on



the pillow, contemplating this wonderful gift she'd been given.

And so began her day. After feeding Allie, she put the child in the sling around her chest and went to work. She had to get seed into the ground. More spring rain would hopefully come and she wanted to have her plot of land ready.

But before she got started, she tied her late night note onto the little scraggly tree. In a way, it was like talking to God. No one would ever read them, but they helped relieve her frustration and voice the deep loneliness that seeped into her soul.

With the notes rustling in the wind murmuring words of hope, she went about the job of living.

* * *

The next morning after feeding Allie and herself, she got out her writing implements.

I dreamed of strong arms around me, holding me with love. Am I destined to never know that again? I yearn to hear another's heart beating softly next to me, feel his touch on my body. I cannot bear the thought of living the rest of my days all alone.

Once more, she tied it to the tree. Then she jerked back. One note did not belong to her. It had a bright red string. She always used a length of gray yarn.

Who could've put this strange one there?

Maura quickly glanced around, scanning the flat land. Nothing. No evidence of another human within sight.

Nothing but this note to say another had walked near.

Her trembling fingers fumbled with the red string. At last she got it untied it and read:

You are not alone. I am here. I care. You matter to someone. You matter to me.

A tear trickled silently down her cheek. Someone felt her pain and took the time to let her know. She carefully retied it to the branch and again surveyed the area. Still no movement anywhere.

Over the next three weeks, Maura and this mysterious person conversed back and forth. She learned his name was Sam and that he worked for Western Union Telegraph Company as a lineman in charge of repairing broken telegraph poles and downed lines. She savored each of the lonely widower's messages.

One of Sam's notes read:

If wishes were dreams I would hold you in my arms, darling Maura, and never let you go. Each time the sun goes down I kiss you goodnight and dream of your beautiful face. What do you wish for, pretty lady?

She quickly penned a reply.

Sam, you don't know how much you've come to mean to me. My wish would be for your strong arms around me, your lips on mine, our hearts beating as one. I dream of meeting you beneath the stars and walking hand in hand across the heavens.

Their conversations through the notes brought Maura much comfort and strength. Though they never met, she developed a deep abiding love for this man.

Each morning she couldn't wait to visit the tree and see the new notes waving gaily in the breeze. He was the green leaf, the olive branch she'd desperately wanted to find.

Her heart skipped several beats when she received this one:

What is the face of love to you, dearest Maura?

To which she immediately replied:

It's what's inside a person's heart, deep down past the scars of hurt and grief. You wear the face of love, darling Sam.

Maura floated through the days, feeling loved and cherished. Sam was the answer to her heart's yearning. He'd given her strength and hope and courage. No task was too difficult or impossible. His words of love made her feel like a woman again. She'd almost forgotten what that felt like.

Then one day this message came that shocked her to her core:

My job in this part of Kansas is over. They're sending me to Julesberg, Colorado Territory. I'm so sorry. Knowing you has meant the world to me. I wish you well, dearest Maura. Think of me from time to time with fondness as I will you. When the wind blows from the west and gently touches your face it'll be my fingers caressing you.

Pain doubled her over. He was gone. Maura fell into the cushion of tall grass weeping. Once again she had no one to talk to, to share the lonely day's struggles with.

No one to care.

Sam had surely died also even though she had no grave to visit.

* * *

One month went by then two more with each day crawling straight into the next.

Nothing to break the monotony.

Nothing to ease the isolation.

Nothing to bring solace when the rigors of life beat her down.

After carefully removing each note, Maura tucked them safely away and avoided the place that had brought her much happiness.

Yet, when the morning sun's golden rays caressed the outstretched branches of the sad little tree, she paused for just a moment remembering the man named Sam who had taught her to dream again. She'd felt his touch, his kisses even though they'd existed solely in words.

Because of Sam and the strength he'd given her she was able to go about the business of living and caring for her darling daughter. He'd given Maura much more than he knew. And when the wind blew from the west, she felt him watching over her.

Allie grew and continued to thrive. The child babbled continuously. Maura taught her to say "Mama" and made a point to laugh at her silly antics.

On a sweltering summer morning in August, she casually glanced out the window while she prepared breakfast.

Something waved from the little tree. Her imagination played a cruel joke on her for sure. Still, Maura ran outside to get a better look.

Shielding her eyes against the sun, she could barely see a glimpse of red, but it was there. Trembling, she grabbed Allie and raced across the small field from which rows of corn, squash, turnips and other vegetables grew.

When she drew closer, she saw a man sitting beneath the branches, propped up against the trunk. He grinned wide.

She slowed to a walk. What if this stranger had evil on his mind? Her rifle still rested on the wall of the soddy.

Something inside told her to keep going.

His laughing gray eyes held kindness like the man in her dream. A voice whispered she had nothing to fear. Five yards away from him, he pushed to his feet. He stood over six feet tall.

"Sam? Sam, is it you?"

"It's me. I've wanted to meet you for a long time, Maura." He held out his hand. "Come here."

In a daze, Maura lowered Allie to the grass then went into his welcoming arms. "I thought I lost you," she whispered.

"I found that no matter how hard I tried, you're impossible to forget. I had to get back here. So I quit my job and rode night and day to get here. I was afraid my ugly mug would frighten you. That's why I didn't come to the house and knock on the door either today or all those times when we tied our messages to the Telegraph Tree here."

The Telegraph Tree. What an apt name.

She stepped one foot back to drink in the sight of him. A long scar ran from his cheek to his square jaw, but she'd never felt safer. He was beautiful. She took his hands and noticed they bore big calluses.

"Sam, this may sound odd, but I dreamt of you before we ever started corresponding. At the time, though, it made



no sense to me."

"It must've been Heaven's way of an introduction. The Good Lord appears to be an architect in these matters." Sam knelt to say hello to Allie and brush her soft golden curls. "I used to hide in the tall grass and watch you both. I saw how hard you worked and wished for the courage to knock on your door. You're the kind of woman I always wanted, nothing like my wife who could barely stomach the sight of me after I came back from war."

Maura's heart broke for him. "Let's forget the past. We've had too much sorrow."

Sam rose and gently caressed Maura's cheek. "Do you mind if I kiss you?"

"I thought you'd never ask," she whispered.

Tenderly, he put his large hands on both sides of her face and pressed his lips to hers. At that instant, Maura knew she didn't want to be anywhere but in his arms.

It was like a beautiful dream. If that's all it was, she didn't want to wake up.

She got out all of their notes she'd kept. With his help, she tied them all back on along with new ones each of them penned. The tree was awash with glorious color and hopeful dreams.

They discussed marriage and the fact it would take a long

time to be wed. Neither wanted to wait six months or a year.

An old symbolic custom came to mind for just such a situation. Maura turned to him. "Let's jump the broom, Sam."

That evening as the sun floated low on the horizon, Maura and Sam pledged their love for all eternity beneath the limbs of their tree. Then laying the broom on the ground, they held hands and, taking a big leap, jumped over it.

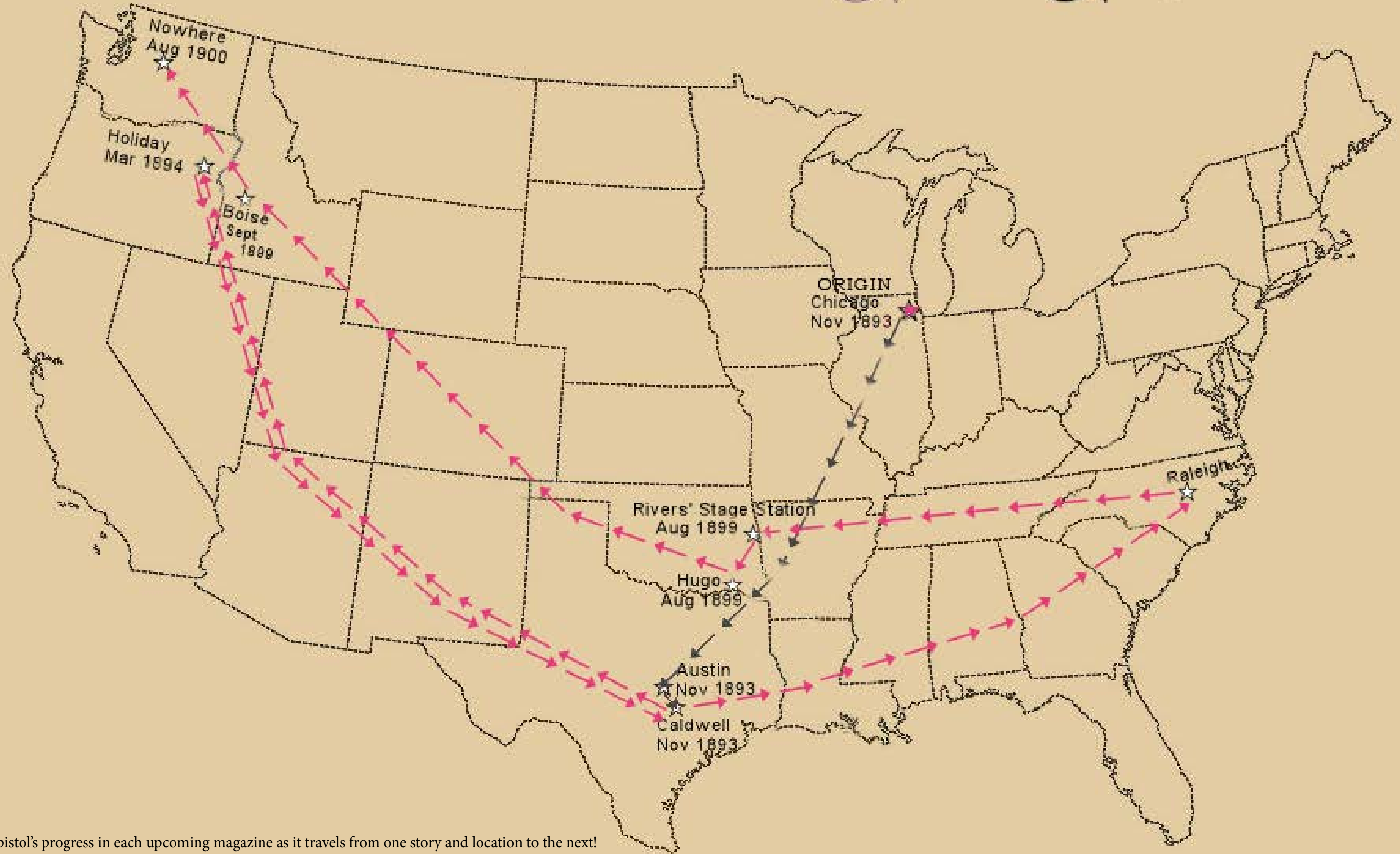
Allie Rose, who refused to budge from Sam's arms, laughed and clapped as though she understood everything.

* * *

Read more stories by Linda Broday on her [website](#).

Don't miss the next issue of
Pink Pistol Magazine,
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Winnie Griggs, and Linda Broday!

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the Pink Pistol SISTERHOOD



In Her Sights

1893 - Caldwell, Texas

Tessa James secretly loves Jackson Spivey, but trying to gain his favor only pushes him away. Since Jackson's life revolves around guns, Tessa decides to take up shooting. Seeking lessons from famed markswoman Annie Oakley provides more than technique instruction, however. Tessa comes away with a pistol that will change the course of her life forever.

[Available March 30, 2023](#)

Love on Target

1894 - Holiday, Oregon

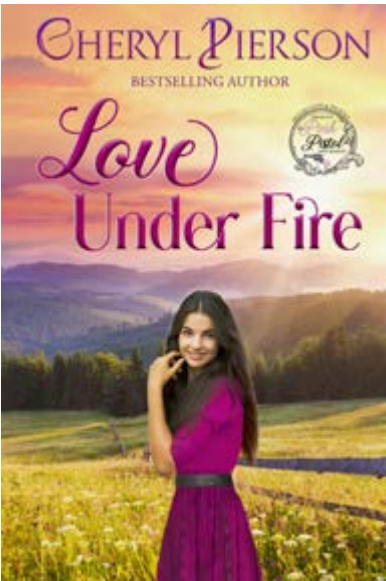
A pistol, a mule, and a promised mining job lure Rena Burke to Oregon. She might wear trousers and work with men, but Rena secretly longs to be appreciated as a woman. Too bad the man she admires believes her to be a dangerous influence on his young daughter.

[Available April 10, 2023](#)



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Love Under Fire

1899 – Indian Territory

Drawn to Indian Territory because of her father’s reckless promise, eastern sharpshooter Krissy Donovan is forced to accept the protection of a cynical cavalry captain. With a killer stalking them, Johnny Houston can’t afford any distractions, especially an attraction to his stubborn charge that could end up compromising his heart.

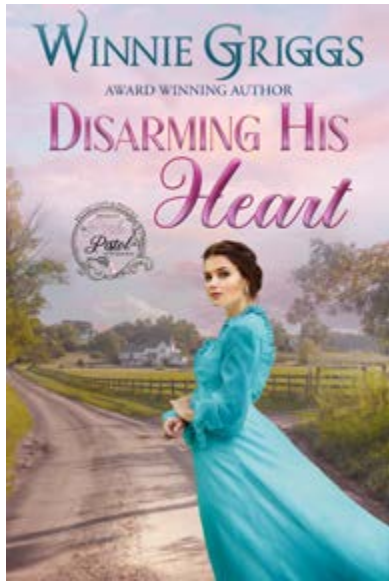
[Available April 20, 2023](#)

Disarming His Heart

1911 – Larkin, Missouri

To protect her livelihood after an accident, Violet swaps places with her twin, assuming Lily’s role as children’s church program director. Struggling to hide her deception, Violet fights her attraction to the local preacher, knowing he’s the object of Lily’s affection. But Carson is harboring secrets of his own.

[Available May 20, 2023](#)

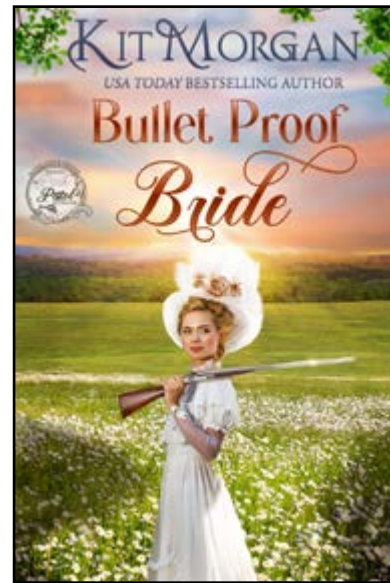


Bullet Proof Bride

1900 – Nowhere, Washington

When mail-order bride Goldie Colson gets stuck in Nowhere, Washington, she has no idea danger lurks nearby. All she cares about is finding a job and the love she so desperately needs. Will she find it with Rhys Miller, a local banker, or will danger find her first? When tragedy takes away her one chance at love, will another help her find it?

[Available April 30, 2023](#)

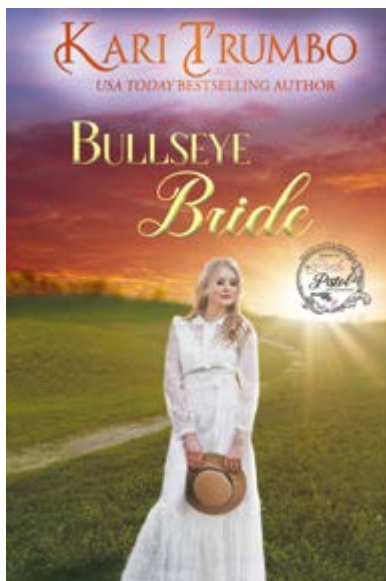


ONE SHOT AT Love

1939 – Panther Creek, Colorado

The struggle to raise her siblings is one Mariah willingly bears. She’ll keep them together at all costs. But when a handsome stranger appears on the mountain asking for her help, the stakes are raised. Can she trust him with her life? Her heart is definitely off limits.

[Available May 30, 2023](#)



BULLSEYE Bride

1910 – Deadwood, South Dakota

Kitty has one goal--to save her family by winning a shooting contest. Thad can’t allow women to compete. He’d be a laughingstock. She must choose between her growing love for Thad and saving her family. Can a special pistol help her choose?

[Available May 10, 2023](#)

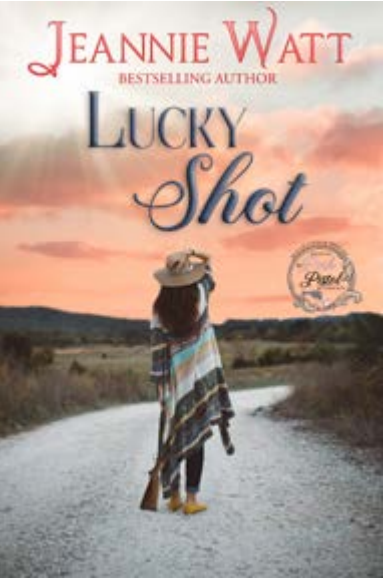
ARMED & Marvelous

1955 – Wallace, Kansas

After a terrible tragedy, wild game hunter, Rexanna Brennan, returns to her family’s ranch to heal, only to learn a Hollywood cowboy has taken her place, and he has a few troubles of his own.

[Available June 10, 2023](#)





LUCKY Shot

1970 - Moscow, Idaho

After returning from Vietnam, Scott Garrison retreats to his Idaho farm, only to discover a trespasser. Jenny Willow was scammed into renting the place and she's not leaving. Jenny uses the farm to rescue abandoned animals, and soon realizes that she may have to rescue the stubborn owner as well.

Available June 20, 2023

AIMING FOR HIS Heart

Modern Day - Loksi, Oklahoma

When Jade Buchanan returns to Oklahoma, she reconnects with her first love, Dalton Kelley. Needing money thanks to cattle rustlers, Dalton hires on to renovate Jade's recently inherited house. Will working together drive this city girl and country boy crazy or into each other's arms?

Available June 30, 2023



PISTOL Perfect

Modern Day - Sweet Water, North Dakota

When three young girls need a home, Mabel Lefrak finds the perfect farmhouse - owned by the man she rejected years ago. James isn't looking for houseguests, but he can't refuse Mabel's offer, regardless of their history. Can love create a family, despite kids, chaos and the broken heart between them?

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