

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# SAILOR BOYS

## Anthony McDonald

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## SAILOR BOYS

**By Anthony McDonald**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what they do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

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## Photo Description

Two young lads have just met for the first time. Both are in naval uniform, both on national service. They are startled by the coincidence of how much alike they look. Headily conscious of each other's and their own beauty, they are primed and ready to fall in love...

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*They were both on leave for the first time in a strange city when they met. It didn't go well at first, but then later...*

*...and who knew it would last so long and so well, even fifty years on they're still surprised.*

*Sincerely,*

*Geoffrey*

## Story Info

**Genre:** historical/20th century

**Tags:** first time, young adult characters, coming of age, sailors, true love, infidelity, tear-jerker, established couples, outdoor sex.

**Word count:** 8,343

# SAILOR BOYS

By **Anthony McDonald**

We've just written our wills, Harry and I. It's something we should have done long ago. Anyway, it's sorted now. Everything will go to Alfie and Rick. The restaurant, the two pubs. After we're both gone. Though we don't expect to disappear for a long time yet. It seems a good moment to look back. Fifty years. Half a century this year. I can't believe I've just written that.

Sexually, I developed late. Had I known more about myself, I might have hesitated before joining the Royal Navy when the time for my military service came. I'd scarcely seen a grown boy naked before. Certainly I'd never seen one undress for his hammock just inches from my face. Never seen a hard-on stuffed quickly into bell-bottoms and buttoned there, confined like a trapped animal while we all clattered up iron steps to breakfast in the mess.

At sixteen I'd only just started to masturbate—which seems late by the standards of today. But, inspired by the proximity of my fellows, in my hammock I soon caught up. There was a yearning, and some heartache attached to this. I wanted to reach out and touch those other bodies, the naked and the half-clothed. Yet it was quite impossible. They might have been behind a wall of plate glass. And my wanting to touch them led to an appalled realisation about myself. I wanted other lads. Wanted to touch, to hug, to cuddle, to fondle—I couldn't get my head around other physical things just yet. Only queers did any of those things... I wanted to love. Did queers want that?

We put in at Portsmouth. Had some time to run ashore. Sometimes that was in the evenings—though by midnight we had to be back on board ship. It meant that young sailors who wanted to get tanked up and then get laid with a short-time girl needed to know what they were doing, and needed to be quick. It was on our last night in Portsmouth... Isn't it always the last night, by the way, on which the momentous thing happens? And don't we then regret all the previous nights, which seem in retrospect a waste?

Where had the others gone to? My crewmates. I don't remember. Probably because it became a matter of supreme unimportance a moment after they left. Left me alone in one of the Spice Island pubs. Not alone exactly, because there were other customers. But without company at any rate. Then, over by the bar, sitting at the counter, there he was. His uniform was identical to mine; on the counter in front of him he'd laid the familiar cap. The bar counter turned a corner between us, so that he sat half-facing me. He could see me if he wanted to. Apparently he did. Within a second of my catching sight of him he gave me a friendly nod.

The world holds its breath at such moments. The future forks like a lightning bolt. The nod might have been the end of it. That was one possibility. There were two more. I could have walked over, taken my drink with me and joined him at the bar, chatted with him there in full view, and rubbing shoulders with everybody else. If I'd been the bolder one I'd have done just that. We'd have chatted and, again, that would have been that. But I wasn't the bolder one. Thank God. On this occasion at least, he was. I merely nodded back to him from the partitioned-off little alcove in which I sat all by myself. While he got down from his stool, wove his way through a crowd of other drinkers without taking his eyes off me, and was at my table a moment later. "Join me," I said. Did I tell you I wasn't bold? At that moment I was.

He looked rather like me, actually. (He still does.) Straight nose, dark blond hair, nice lips. And eyes... Well, I can't lay claim to anything of the sort myself. His were sky blue, dark lashed. They looked like stars, I thought. "What's your ship?" he asked, as he sat.

"Rother," I said. The third word I ever said to him.

"Sprite," he answered, volunteering the name of his own ship. The sound of that word made Rother go flat. We nodded to each other. It didn't need saying that we'd seen each other's ships at moorings across the big dockyard every day that week. Then we talked sailor talk, comparing notes, exchanging anecdotes... I realised after a moment or two that I didn't want to talk about all that. I wanted instead to climb inside the chambers of his heart. In just a few

short minutes my own inexperienced little heart and cock had both fallen in love.

We were sitting very close to each other, I realised. The alcove was very small. The table in it screened us, from chests to knees at any rate, from everyone else's sight. In sitting down he'd placed himself, quite by chance I supposed, as close to me as I now wanted to be to him. The feeling that gave me was wonderful. In fact, once we'd relaxed a bit and each was growing confident that the other was enjoying his company and not just being polite, I could feel that relaxation take physical shape: we both minutely moved our legs.

I felt our knees touch. It was like an electric shock. The contact spread, our thighs took part, and it felt as if a warm wave were sliding up my leg, as that first pinpoint of connection expanded out. I had never known anything like this before. Never felt anything so good.

"And then the skipper says..." He stopped in mid-story and smiled; his eyes joined in; the stars twinkled. "You weren't listening," he said.

"Sorry," I gasped.

"Wasn't really listening meself, tell the truth. I'm Harry."

"Will," I said. We shook hands. This must have looked funny to anyone watching, since we were already so close to each other, leaning in towards each other and now touching at the shoulder as well as the knee and a couple of places in between, that we had only to move our hands a couple of inches each in order to exchange the formal greeting. And our hands, having shaken each other, and seeming to have their own agenda now, refused to disengage themselves but stayed clasped for a moment, despite the awkwardness of our positions side by side and slap-bang up close.

Eventually those hands dropped into our laps. Although not quite. Harry was sitting to the left of me; the hand he'd used to shake mine dropped vertically and landed on my left thigh. That couldn't happen so easily with my right hand. I withdrew that. And slipped my heart and all its contents gently onto his right thigh with my left. We sat an age like that. We continued to talk,



but absently. It didn't matter now what either of us said. Then slowly our hands began to move, just an inch or so in any direction, like hands on a Ouija board at a séance. Then after about another minute, Harry's hand stopped. "Wait," he said. "I'll get us another drink."

I watched him go. He was almost exactly my age. Two months older, he'd told me, than my sixteen and a half. He—whose face was so like mine—looked as lovely from the back as from the front. So poised, so confident. I didn't dare imagine I looked like that. He didn't go directly to the bar. He called in at the gents' toilet first. I ached to follow him in there but dared not. I waited till he came out and went to the bar, and then I went to follow his example, prudently, not wanting to have to interrupt our second pint. I placed my cap on the table before I left it, so that no-one else should claim and usurp our charmed spot.

And we went on from there, after we'd sat back down again, resuming from the point at which we'd left off. We were soon stroking each other's thigh quite energetically, and rubbing calf against calf. After a while I dared to look directly at his crotch. I was thrilled, though almost horror-struck, to see the ridge of his erection there. Looking down vertically I beheld myself in the same state. To my relief it seemed that in our relatively modest size we were equally matched.

"Yeah, yeah," said Harry quietly. He sounded very much in control of things. Of himself. Of me. Then his voice changed totally. He sounded like a panicking kid. "I've never been here before. Have you, mate?" He wasn't talking about the pub.

"No," I said, in a broken thread of a voice. His hand was trembling and tentative as it grasped my cock through the fabric of my uniform trousers.

"Oh God," I said. "Oh no, please don't." But I didn't mean that, and he knew it, and he did it anyway. And, coming like a machine gun, unexpectedly, I fired off round after round into my pants.

The feelings that suffused my body, heart and mind were followed, as overhead lightning is followed by its thunderclap, by mortification, shame and

the deepest embarrassment I'd known in my life. The words, "Oh no," escaped, less than a whisper, on my breath.

But Harry put his lips close to my cheek and whispered, hoarsely, urgently, "Do me too."

"What?" I whispered back. "Now? Like that?"

"Yes," he said, and I realised then how close he was. "Go. Now."

I clutched at the ridge in his trousers: it angled up sharply from his groin. Rubbed at it with my fingers a couple of times. Ineffectually, I thought. But apparently effectively enough. For after just two seconds he gave a gasp and his whole frame shook. With startling suddenness I found his trousers and my fingers hot and wet—as if someone had turned on a hot tap.

I know now what I didn't know then. To expect a moment of mutual recoil after sex with a stranger, if the situation between you isn't... how can I word this?... extremely right. But that recoil never came. We stayed, closely snuggled against each other's flank and hip, saying nothing, just happy to be where we were and not wanting to move to anywhere else. With hindsight I know why this was. We were simply... extremely right. Our only source of anxiety was the dark blots on our bell-bottoms—that, and wondering how we were going to hide them when we eventually stood up.

Exchanging conspirators' smiles we picked up our pint glasses and resumed our interrupted drinks. "Cheers, mate," Harry said. And then, because we were young and quick, we started after ten minutes or so to fondle each other again. Fingering shoulders, chests and necks as well as hands and legs. We were bolder with each other this time round, more confident. Too confident in fact. Indiscreet. The barman clocked us and came over. He stood against our table, a tall barrel-shaped man with dark curly hair, bald on top. He overflowed our view, seemed to fill the pub. "Now lads," he said. "You can't do that here. And you know that. Either sit here quietly and keep your hands to yourselves or go somewhere else. Understand?" He turned abruptly and went back to his domain behind the bar. He'd spoken like a firm but kindly

schoolmaster. We'd been lucky in that, we thought. It was England, 1963, and he could have—many of his ilk would have—called the police.

“At least he didn't get a proper look over the table top,” I said, thinking about our blotted pants. We both sniggered. But we were too cowed by the barman's intervention to do other than he said. We finished our pints quite quickly, not saying much. Then Harry drained his glass. “Come on, let's go,” he said.

“Go where?” I asked.

“Dunno,” he said “Alleyway? Round the back?” I was thrilled, and my cock stirred again at the daring of that thought.

We had to do quite a bit of exploratory walking around the centre of Old Portsmouth before we found an alley that was quiet and dark enough. Having entered it we turned to face each other, touched each other's forearms, then kissed.

Then kissed. So simple, so ordinary a thing that sounds in later life. But the astonishment, the wonder of it, when it's the first time for both of you! The sweet, sour, complicated, taste of it, the needy thrusting of the strong and bony parts of another boy's head, the soft, soft, wetness of another boy's warm lips.

I felt Harry's hands at my waist, checking I had an erection again. (I did.) I felt him undo the buttons and spring my trapped cock. And I felt my own hands, again as if they had minds of their own, do exactly the same to him. I gasped at the discovery at that moment that I held another person's penis in my hand. That this tough, wiry-muscled teenager—probably well able, as I was, to take care of himself in a fight—was ready to allow his most delicate and fragile adornment to be clutched by my rough strong fist... That seemed to me, and seems so to this day, an expression of the most profound and humble, and humbling, trust. I held Harry's erection as gently, reverently, carefully, as a gun-dog holds a live bird captive in its mouth.

“Pull them further down,” I said—I meant his bell-bottoms—with a kind of desperation in my voice. I wanted more of him to see, to feel, to smell: his balls, his thighs. I loved the boy-man scent of his nakedness and I wanted

more of that. I made the heart-stopping discovery that he wasn't wearing underpants. No wonder he'd earlier made my hand so wet and hot. But Harry had the same desires as I did, evidently, for while we continued to kiss I felt him tugging my own waistband halfway to my knees, then tenderly fingering, exploring, my tight small ball-sac.

Then in a businesslike way we wanked each other off, standing facing each other, feet a little way apart, one hand each around the other's shoulder for physical as well as emotional support. Lacking the experience and the know-how, we hadn't the wit to twist sideways when the moment came, but ended up spraying the inside of each other's thighs... Actually, I was glad of that: for a couple of days afterwards I managed not to wash it off.

We buttoned up and walked back to the dockyard. Some of the way we went arm-round-shoulder, in the manner of sailors everywhere, pretending to be drunker than we were. At last we came to the place where our ways parted; we had opposite directions to walk in, skirting the dock's brink, towards our different ships.

"That was your first time, then?" Harry asked me, for the second time, suddenly diffident and needing to check.

"Like I said."

"Me too," he reiterated, almost whispering the words.

A wave of emotion poured itself over me, drenching me through and through. I said, "Stay with me. Come back to my ship."

"Don't be a child," Harry rebuked me gently. "You know we can't do that."

"Then let's run away together, Harry. Jump ship."

"Oh bloody hell, mate!" His exasperation showed, though he was trying to be gentle about it. "Go where? Do what? Desertion's not exactly without risk." (I don't remember now whether they still shot you for it in 1963.) He laughed a bit bitterly. Then, "Okay," he said, suddenly the senior one. "Time to say goodnight." He ruffled my hair.

“I want you!” I croaked hopelessly, fighting sobs that rose from previously uncharted depths.

“You’ll be okay in the morning,” he said, either cheerful or else feigning it. Then he turned and walked away quickly without looking back.

I wasn’t okay in the morning, of course.

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We met again on Malta. A year had passed. I walked into a bar alone, out from dizzying sunshine into shadow for a second; then, as my eyes adjusted, at a table with a group of other sailors, again in the familiar uniform, there he was. A lot of water had flowed under my bridge in the year since we’d first met. Other fluids too, if you’ll forgive a moment’s crudeness. I hadn’t exactly kept myself for him. I might have fallen heavily for my first ever jack-off mate, but I wasn’t as silly or self-denying as that. And I could see—my first glance at him told me this, as if his past year’s history had been tattooed all over him—that all the above went for him too. His seventeen-year-old face had acquired a world-used, lived-in look, or so it seemed to me, aged two months younger than he was. Though from where I stand now he’d have looked fresh-faced and innocent enough. My heart missed a beat in any case. He was still Harry. Harry again. On Malta, just when I was. He still looked... Even now I grope for a word... Perfection, I thought.

He saw me at once, got up from the table, left his mates without explanation or excuse and came to greet me. “Will!” he said. I was grateful just that he remembered my name. Then more grateful yet for the smile on his face. “Will! Oh hey!” He shook his head. “Seeing you here.” He sounded almost overcome. And the contrast between this and his brusque rough parting from me in Portsmouth a year ago was almost too wonderful, too painfully wonderful, to take. I didn’t remind him of that parting, or of the bitter taste it had left. The present moment was too precious, too beautiful and exquisitely fragile. I feared that if I pushed at it too hard it would crack and break.

“How long are you on Malta,” I asked, dreading his answer.

He gave me the answer I dreaded most. “We sail tonight.”

“Oh fucking hell!” I said. I touched his fingers for a fleeting, electric nanosecond the way that, on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Adam touches God. “I’ve never forgotten you, Harry,” I said.

“I haven’t forgotten you,” he said. He chewed on the words a bit, as if he’d come across something in a mouthful of pie that he wasn’t quite sure about.

“Is there somewhere we can go?” I asked wildly. “An alleyway? Something?”

His eyes of stars opened expressively wide. “It’s broad daylight out there.” He flicked the stars towards the table he’d just left, scarcely moving his head. “I’m with me mates.”

There was nothing to be done. I joined him and his mates back at the table and, with a beer or two and lots of laughter and false bonhomie, passed the most miserable hour and a half of my entire life.

Luck strikes occasionally like a spark, but we have to have the tinder in place, ready for when it does. It was I who had the forethought to provide the tinder in this case. As we parted—the time had come for him and his mates to return to HMS Sprite—I said on a sudden impulse, “Give me your address. Home address.”

He shook his head defeatedly. “You wouldn’t know it. Capel-le-Ferne. Little place outside Dover. Near Folkestone cliff.”

That was the spark—the lightning bolt—of luck. “I live in Dover,” I said quietly.

We wrote our addresses on a couple of finger-wipes, plucked from the metal dispenser on the table nearest the door. “When are you next there?” I asked.

“September,” he said. He didn’t sound very hopeful as he said it. It was now March.

But September will always come, whether we live to witness it or not. I was young, we were at peace, not war, so there was a good chance I’d make

the next September at least. But, precisely because I was young, the six months passed as slowly as months have ever passed for any teenager in love.

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My stint of national service was behind me when September finally turned up. I was wondering what to do next. And as I wondered, I walked, or took the bus, daily up the long hill that leads south-west out of Dover to Capel-le-Ferne atop the white cliff. Then, from a grassy slope that looked down on a row of terraced cottages, I staked out Harry's parents' house. A dowdy piece of 1950s terrace, it looked like my own parents' home in fact. It took eight days of waiting but then at last I saw him coming out of the shabby front door. He was wearing a one-piece overall, with bib and brace. Plimsolls on his feet. And—presumably because the weather had remained unseasonably warm—apparently nothing else. I ran down the slope to him. So fast that I had to stop myself with flailing arms to avoid knocking him flat. I would have liked to embrace and kiss him, but walls have ears and windows, eyes, and they'd already seen quite enough.

“What are you doing here?” he almost shouted, startled. “We can't be seen to meet!”

I'd had eight days to rehearse this. Calmly I said, “Red Fox. Eight o'clock.” I'd named a pub, halfway between our two houses, which I'd never been inside. Nobody there would know me. I hoped the same would be true for him.

At eight o'clock I sat there. And at ten past eight. With the passing minutes I felt my rapture turning to despond. By half-past I was a whimper away from breaking down in noisy sobs. He wasn't going to turn up. And then he did. My heart rose to meet him like a flock of bright-feathered birds. And for the second time in minutes I wanted to cry so much that it hurt.

“Sorry,” he said. “Tea was late. I won't go into it. I told my folk I was meeting mates an'd be back late.”

“I said the same to mine,” I said.

If the last time we'd spent in a bar together, on Malta, had been hell, then this was already a taste of heaven. We talked, we caught up, we opened ourselves up; our hearts became like molluscs without shells. "Do you...?" our youthful questions all began. And, "Yeah, so do I," or "Me too," all our answers came. But remembering our experience on Spice Island eighteen months ago we dared not touch. We sat on opposite sides of a table, our legs drumming involuntarily up and down in that engine-running reflex that is the giveaway indicator of excitement, anticipation and—in this case certainly—longed-for sex. The expression *body language* hadn't been invented back then, I don't think, but the language existed all the same. And it gave us away again, just as it had done in Portsmouth. But rather wonderfully, we found we'd given ourselves away to the right person this time round. To the very person who, that night, could help us most and who—though we couldn't guess it then—would change our lives. But our hearts sank as the landlord strolled over to us and joined us at the table. We feared a repetition of the Portsmouth incident.

"Well, boys," he said gravely. "Haven't seen you in here before. You're very welcome. In a minute I'll buy you a welcome drink. But I wanted to say something to you first." He said this in such a serious yet nice way, that we looked carefully at him. He was a slim, curly-haired man in his late thirties. (We worked that detail out later, when we knew him better. Had we been older we would have realised that he was a very handsome man, but we were young and in love and so didn't notice that.) "I'm Charlie. I run this place with a friend of mine called Pete. You'll meet him later, I expect." He was looking very carefully into our eyes for signs that he and we were all on the right track. "We're partners, if you know what I mean." We saw what he meant. It came as a blinding flash of revelation: a Saul on the road to Damascus moment. And he could see in our eyes that we'd got there, and that we were indeed all on the right track. "I just wanted to say to you, we know how difficult it is at first. You may not have anywhere to go, for instance. I can well imagine that." We didn't answer him, but he read our response in our faces as we looked at him, and he carried on, "We've got rooms aplenty upstairs, going empty. Beds in them even..." He gave a saucy grin as he said this. "If ever you need a place



to... well, just be together, or stay the night.” He paused. “Just making the offer, you understand. Just in case. No charge, obviously. And it’d be just between us, of course. Tick the No Publicity box. Okay?”

Harry astonished me then. He was wonderful. He said, “How about tonight?”

Undressing for the first time together we had the deep, lovely, but also rather difficult, feeling that we were stripping bare not just our bodies but our souls. We watched each other the whole time this was going on, so that we kept tripping in our clothing as we pulled it all off. I loved the look of him. He loved the look of me. How do I know that? He told me, and has done many times since. Both recently returned from operations in the tropical seas, we sported golden tans; taut, well-exercised muscles clothed our slender frames; we showed off pretty swirls of light brown hair in all the places where hair grows on seventeen-year-old boys. We played with our newly naked other halves awhile as we stayed standing up, enjoying—a bit naughtily perhaps—the fact that we looked, and were built, a bit like twins.

But the room was not warm, hadn’t been used for some time. We were soon in bed. Exploring with our hands and tongues—with our hearts too—all those parts of each other we hadn’t touched before, and laying claim to them, while not forgetting those other bits, the hard and jutting bits, the furry musky bits, we’d claimed eighteen months before. “Have you ever been fucked?” Harry asked me in a tremulous voice after a little while. “Fucked another boy?”

“Not yet,” I said, a bit nervously.

“Nor me.” He was nervous too.

“Look,” I said. I caressed his cock very softly. “Do we need to do everything all at once? Shouldn’t we take it slowly to begin with? Step by step?”

“Good idea,” he said. He sounded relieved. He kissed me then, again. Placed his hand, again, delicately on my cock. We stroked each other’s till we came. And then we repeated that. And in the morning yet again. We had our

first go at sixty-nine the second night. And fucked each other for the first time—face to face on both occasions—on the third. We managed not to hurt each other as we each poked experimentally into the other’s backside that third night, and smiled cautiously into each other’s eyes. That was partly because we trusted each other implicitly and were perfectly relaxed. And partly because, physically, in terms of size as well as other things, we were a perfect fit. I still think that in proceeding in that softly-softly way those first three nights we exhibited wisdom beyond our years.

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Pete was as handsome as Charlie was and, like his partner, a lovely friend to have. It was Pete, even more than Charlie, who put us on the road to our first jobs in civilian life. Car ferries, and in those days train ferries too, sailed almost every hour from Dover to ports on the French and Belgian coasts. Each ferry carried a complement of sailors, of course, and we might have thought, off our own bat, of applying for a job of that kind. It was Pete who had the better idea. “Apply for jobs as stewards,” he told us as the four of us sat in the bar of the Red Fox discussing this one night. “You know. Bar work, kitchen, restaurant... Fact is, it might make more sense. The man who hires the stewards for...” (he named the biggest operator on the Cross-Channel routes) “... is a mate of mine. He comes in here. You’ve met him. That can’t do any harm...” We spoke to the man Pete knew. We wrote to him. He interviewed us. We got the jobs.

Why do I keep writing *we*? *We* did, *we* thought. Off *our* own *bat*—not bats. How could that be? What right have I to say that it was so? Because it was. We never said, we are a couple, we’ll stay together forever, in those early weeks and months in Dover, or in those years when we worked aboard the ferries—always wangling to be on the same watch, in the same cabin, on the same boat. It just was so, and it never crossed our minds that there was any other way that things could be. We simply accepted it, starting that first night in the cold bedroom at the Red Fox. Because, I guess when I think about it now, the long time that elapsed between our first meeting and our second, and the time that passed between that meeting on Malta and our coming together

the third time at Dover, and the way we responded to each other every time... Those things taken together told the unconscious bits of ourselves all that they—we—needed to know. We hadn't been celibate during those times apart, yet now it was somehow understood by both of us—we didn't say it, we didn't formulate it in our heads—that *we*, Harry and I, and that *I-love-Us* thing, were... extremely right.

We worked hard on the ferries for three years. Heads down, buried in our work. Sometimes we were so caught up, so busy, so cream-crackered after hours of relentless toil, that we didn't know if we were headed south or north or if we were due to disembark in ten minutes onto a quayside where we would hear English spoken or French. There were moments of beauty all the same. Not only in our shared cabin at night, cuddling, our two hard bodies tough as dogs, having sex together in whichever way occurred to us that day, enjoying the scratch of each other's body hair, wallowing in each other's musky scent. Occasionally we would find ourselves out on deck at sunset, coming out of Calais, turning north at the limit of the dredged channel along the shore, when Dover cliffs presented a white crescent on the horizon ahead of us, and the sun, going down, seemed to raise the other ships in view a metre or two above the calm blue, so that they floated like white castles in the air. We'd taste the cold, salt, sexy sharpness of the breeze; hear the excited mewling of the gulls above the regular whoosh of the bow-wave. We'd want to kiss at those and other moments. Never possible, of course. At least we always knew we'd be making up for that in a few hours' time.

When ashore we'd stay at the Red Fox. We'd tell our parents we were staying over with friends, just as we had done, from the call-box outside the pub, on our very first night. Our room there was our own now, decorated and furnished—albeit simply—by us. Never cold now, not even on a winter's night.

In the summer of '67 the British parliament made it legal for men over twenty-one to have sex together. So whatever Pete and Charlie did in bed at night (we never got too involved there) was suddenly no longer punishable, if discovered and reported, by a prison stay. Over the next few months first

Harry, then I, turned twenty-one. And became legal too. Charlie and Pete took the opportunity soon after that to lure us away from our ferry jobs. They were buying a second pub. We'd helped out in the Red Fox from time to time, for three years. It was our way of saying thank you for a safe haven on shore. Now they asked us if we'd like to manage their new acquisition for them. Joint managers of the new pub. In Dover. Centre of town. At twenty-one, a place of our own. We accepted. For two gay men in '68, an opportunity like that was pretty rare.

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Years passed. A restaurant was mooted, near the port. Cuisine was to be French-inspired. Harry and I were asked to set it up. We did so with some trepidation. Yet our experience of on-board catering, and of spending time ashore in France, pulled us through. "You were thinking of this all along!" we challenged Pete. "When you sent us off to work on the ferries, this was what you had in mind." Pete protested he'd never had any such idea.

A never-ending honeymoon it sounds. Fifty years from '63 to the present day without a hitch, maybe. Well, of course not quite. Life—or love: they're two words for the same thing really—never is an on-going honeymoon, and we all know that. Some things did go wrong between Harry and me. Surprise, surprise. When would that have started, then? In 1970, to be exact. Seven years after we first met. (Seven years. Ring any bells, does that?)

A French lad called Olivier came to work for us that year, as sous-chef in the restaurant. He was three years younger than the two of us. A handsome boy of medium height, he had dark brown curls which—because this was 1970—he allowed to grow down over his collar. He had nice full lips, chestnut brown eyes that were lustrous and laughed and, as far as we could tell through his clothes, a beautiful physique. Quite early on he developed the habit of turning up (by coincidence?) in the restaurant's gents' toilet from time to time if I happened to be having a pee there, and having a pee himself. He did this quite flamboyantly, happily showing off his cock and, when he caught sight of me giving it a glance, smiling quite brazenly in my face. He had something to smile about: although he was of about the same height and build as Harry and

I were, his cock was on a larger scale than either of ours. That was a matter of interest but of no great importance. Similarly, he was circumcised, which Harry and I are not. I found that cute, but again hardly eyebrow-raising. Just one of those things. Okay, that's two of those things—but life's like that. Inevitably... you know what's coming next, I think... those moments of glancing across at each other's equipment grew ever so slightly longer as the weeks passed, and so, I have to admit, did our cocks. Eventually things reached a point at which we had difficulty stowing them away each time, since they would both be almost fully erect. Neither of us commented on this, but we'd mug a grin or a grimace at each other as we tried to stuff them back where they belonged. I had no intention of taking this any further, for all Olivier's physical and personal charms. First, I was committed to being faithful to Harry, and hadn't found that difficult up to that time, and secondly, Olivier was our employee, so that was that.

One night that summer I sensed a difference in Harry when we got to bed. He'd come back from a meeting with suppliers in London and had spent the evening being nervy and irritable and tense. In bed he felt different somehow, like a car that has been driven by someone else. And he had a different smell. I spent some time that night mulling over all this as I lay awake. By the next morning I'd come to the conclusion, though I said nothing at all about it, that he actually had been driven by somebody else.

I bided my time. And then there came another day when Harry was out somewhere, doing business on behalf of both of us. I had some time off in the afternoon and so did Olivier. We coincided in the toilet as we finished work. I looked at his handsome, full-grown penis as he rather slowly tucked it away, and said to him baldly, boldly, "Nice afternoon, don't you think? Wonder if you'd fancy driving up to the Warren for a walk?" Despite all his previous signals in the course of the preceding months, I knew there was still the chance he'd say no to that, but he did not.

Folkestone Warren was a bit of a paradise for lovers. It probably still is. An undulating criss-cross of chalk paths and grassy clearings among bushes and small dense trees atop the white cliffs. There was a good view of the sea too in

places and, when the day was clear, of France. France wasn't visible that afternoon as it happened, but we hadn't gone up there for that. The sun shone hotly, brightly on us at least.

Olivier was more than beautiful once he'd stripped. Tanned and cutely muscled. Almost without body hair, except for one dark arrow of it, pointing down from a little above his navel, and merging eventually with the soft fur collar that encircled his little balls and big wagging dick. Not that I'd expected less. He paid me the compliment of saying I looked good too, and that he liked my cock. That though it was a size smaller, he thought it more beautiful than his. More elegant, he said, more stylish and more shapely. He was simply charmed by the idea of a foreskin, I now think, looking back. He lay down on the grass on his back, smiling up at me, and wordlessly, though with eloquently raised knees and parted thighs, invited me to enter him. And without any difficulty—he must have been used to this—I did.

He did something I never saw anyone do before or since. As I rode him most enjoyably, propped on my hands as if doing push-ups, enjoying the sight of his rigid dick beneath me bouncing a little in time to my thrusts, and almost ready to come inside him, he came suddenly himself, without any help from his or my hand, raining milk-white threads of semen all up his tummy and onto his chest. It looked, since his spurts seemed to coincide exactly with my thrusts, as though my own sperm were pumping through him, the outpourings of my own cock channelled mysteriously out through his. It goes without saying that I came immediately after that. Then I lay forward and we kissed each other happily for half a minute. "Are you okay?" I asked him tenderly, and he said he was. For a minute or two I believed myself to be in love.

That was a feeling that dissipated on the car journey down the hill. By the time we were back in Dover my heart was as heavy as lead. I hadn't gone off with a random stranger by way of paying Harry out for whatever he'd done in London a few days back. I'd fucked our chef, with whom Harry and I would have to go on working now, day in, day out. Only we didn't. Olivier gave in his notice within a week, then left. Which made me feel ten times worse.

Of course it all came out. It nearly always does. Harry and I experienced a week or two of awfulness and separate beds, during which it seemed the floor had opened up and swallowed us, and taken us to hell. Yes, he'd met someone in London. Yes, I'd fucked the chef. We picked over every squalid detail endlessly, even though it was like rummaging in a box of drawing-pins: there was nothing to be encountered there that didn't hurt. We went to hell, yet we came back. Somehow we forgave each other, and discovered once again as the weeks passed how much we were in love. Love does that. And, because we were both human, not creatures from some angelic mould, similar falls from grace occurred a few more times during those early years. More often, if I'm honest, on my part, not his. We suffered the pain of discovery anew each time, the shaming humiliation of it, no less horribly than before. Yet again, and yet again, love healed us every time, and has kept us together since.

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Charlie and Pete died ten years ago, just six months apart. They left the whole business to us, the restaurant, the two pubs, as they'd told us they intended to in advance. We'd started penniless, Harry and I, two poor kids from two poor streets four miles apart. Now we had a thriving business, or three to be precise, to run and to build up. Something that would cushion us, when the time came, in later life. We were determined to manage things carefully, make a go of the business just as Pete and Charlie had done before us, and so far we've done all right.

Five years after Pete and Charlie died—five years ago in other words—two lads came into the Red Fox one evening, then again the next night. I happened to be working behind the bar there on both nights. I couldn't help noticing them, then taking a particular interest in them, for reasons which will become obvious as I set the details out. They were two blond fellows of about eighteen, I guessed. Both rather shorter than average height, but showing enough muscle through their clothing to suggest they were both fit and would be able to take care of themselves, if things came to it, in a fight. They looked rather alike, though not so much alike that they might be actual twins: there was no question in my mind about that. The resemblance was heightened by

the identical uniforms they both wore. They were junior ratings—as Harry and I had been long before—in Her Majesty’s Navy. They were also—their body language gave it away—very much in love. I could see their frustration with their situation: it was expressed through their engine-running, drumming legs.

I went over to them, smiling inside, though with quite a serious expression on my face, I think. “Listen, you two,” I said to them. “I’m Will, and I run this place with Harry, my mate. Just thought I’d tell you this and—just in case you ever need a place to stay the night...”

They moved into one of the spare rooms that very evening, Alfie and Rick, and have lived with us when on leave ever since. A year ago they quit the navy, and started to work with us, helping to manage the pubs and restaurant, full time.

Today, after Harry and I made our wills in favour of our two young friends, our boys, the four of us had a celebration meal—at a restaurant that wasn’t ours, for once. We lingered at table after we’d finished eating, over another bottle of wine. Alfie was a little pink in the face by now, and ready to be mildly indiscreet. He’s still only twenty-three. He said, addressing Harry and me, “Do you remember the moment at which the scales tipped?”

“In what way exactly?” Harry asked, frowning a little across the table.

“I mean,” said Alfie earnestly, “the moment when it all clicked into place, The moment when the new person in your life, the one you talk about excitedly to your friends, is suddenly off-limits to everyone else. He’s become un-talkable-about. D’you understand what I mean? The moment when he’s suddenly become a very private space. You talk to him, but not about him anymore. It’s like you’re one person now, not two, and that God, or whatever there may be, has drawn a veil of privacy over the two of you that nobody else can lift.”

“That’s rather beautifully put, Alfie,” I said. But I didn’t answer his question straight away. Instead I asked him very gently, “When did that happen to you and Rick?”



Alfie didn't hesitate before answering but plunged straight in. "It was the moment that second evening in the Red Fox, when you came over and talked to us. It happened then, didn't it, Rick?" Rick nodded energetically. Alfie wanted to get back to his original question, though. "But what about you and Harry? When did you first know you were a couple? Your first night in the Red Fox with Charlie and Pete, all those years ago? Or not till after that?"

"I think it was earlier," I said, after a second's thought. I glanced across the table. "Don't you?" Now it was Harry's turn to nod. Encouraged, I went on. "I think we sort of knew on our first evening on Spice Island, in Portsmouth." I looked across to Harry again, suddenly feeling diffident and needing his support. Again he nodded, smiling. In that second nod of Harry's I saw suddenly his very first nod to me, a nod from one lonely boy at a bar counter to another one at an alcove table on his own. And at that moment I saw Harry as his sixteen-year-old self again, fresh-faced and starry-eyed, with dark blond hair. I turned back to Alfie. "I think God, or whatever may be, had earmarked us for a couple even before we met." I found I was struggling suddenly with my voice.

**THE END**

## Author Bio

*Anthony McDonald is the author of five gay-themed novels. Adam is an acknowledged coming-of-age classic. Blue Sky Adam takes that story six years further on. Getting Orlando combines thriller with love story in a novel of adventure and travel. Orange Bitter, Orange Sweet opens a Spanish trilogy: six young people who meet in Seville in 1977 grow to maturity in Along The Stars. He is currently working on the final part of the trilogy: Woodcock Flight. His erotic gay fiction is published on Kindle under the name **Tony Pike**.*

*Anthony has worked in the theatre in every capacity except electrician, and taught English in Paris and provincial France. He now lives in rural East Sussex, UK, among friends and with Pippin the Cat.*

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