

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# LOVE ON A WING AND A PRAYER

T.A. Webb

## LOVE ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Naval Aviator David Perkins is tall, handsome, athletic and on the fast track to become a Blue Angel. He's successful and has the respect of all his peers and shipmates. He's also gay and in the closet.

When Charles "Chuck" Wilder transfers onboard the USS *Georgetown*, he hits all Davey's hot buttons. He's intelligent, funny, has a great personality... and is totally off limits.

Something's got to give, or Davey's going to go crazy.

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# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

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By T.A. Webb

### 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.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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## Photo Description

Photo 1: In the foreground, a man in a desert-tan digital camo fatigue blouse and a flight deck helmet stands with his back to the camera. He is in sharp focus, while the fighter jet and the man climbing out of it is blurry and soft.

Photo 2: Silhouetted against a deep turquoise sky with sunset-pink clouds, two men stand on an F-18 Hornet, framed by its dual tail section.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*Even with the repeal of DADT, it is not commonly known that I am gay. Living on an aircraft carrier, surrounded by so many men in such close quarters, I worry that if my sexuality is known, most of them will subscribe to the narrow thinking that I am attracted to all of them. But there is one who has caught my eye and driven my senses into overload. The problem is that he is a fellow pilot. I don't want to cause any issues in our working environment, and I don't even know if he is gay, but I am drawn to him and cannot stop thinking about him. What I wouldn't give for a stolen night together, but I long for even more than that because I am attracted to his personality, sense of humor, and strength of character as much as I am attracted to his physicality.*

*And then one day, his co-pilot gets sick, and I am told to fly with him. Will this time together possibly lead to something? I can't help but hope that it does.*

*Dear author, I would love to read a story about these military pilots, and I would love to see the twilight pic in the story - maybe a rendezvous on a jet that leads to an incredibly sexy night. No BDSM please; angst and explicit sexy time encouraged; HFN or HEA please. :)*

*Sincerely,*

*Leigh*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** military, coming out, friends to lovers, HEA, pilots

**Word count:** 10,481



# LOVE ON A WING AND A PRAYER

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Somewhere in the Pacific*

The sky was so blue, I almost always got lost in it. Between the endless carpet of the sea and the way it looked like I could just aim the plane for the horizon and fly and fly and fly. Ever since I was a kid, I'd wanted to be up there, high above the home I never quite fit into.

It wasn't that there was anything wrong with my parents and brother. They loved me and I loved them. But as early as I could remember, there was something different about me, and I instinctively knew not to talk about it. It was just a feeling, but then as I got older and my brother and all my guy friends started noticing girls and wanting to date them, I was able to put a name to it.

Gay. Faggot. Queer.

All the boys used those words to put down other boys, not knowing what they really meant. They didn't know it cut those of us who *were* to the bone, and we learned to deal the best we could. I was blessed with good genes; as a child I had long legs and arms, and a gift for running and endurance for the long distances. When I hit puberty, the rest of my body caught up and I sprouted up, finally stopping a couple of inches over six feet tall.

Since I never had the desire to play team sports—I left that to my brother—I joined the track team. The long distances were my specialty and I especially loved the cross-country events. My mind was free to fly even if my body wasn't. I worked hard as hell, and my goal of being noticed came true when I was appointed to the Naval Academy (oh yeah, I had the brains *and* the brawn). I ran track and was, it turned out, a damned good fit with the mental and physical toughness required to make it in the service. And it didn't hurt that my dream of being a pilot was possible there too.

Now, ten years after high school, I was United States Naval Aviator Lieutenant David Perkins, assigned to the USS *Georgetown*. I fly an F/A-18 Hornet, have my eye on a slot with the Blue Angels, and yeah, I'm damned good at it. I'm respected as an officer, as a pilot, as a compatriot.

And my fellow servicemen don't know all of me. Because despite the repeal of DADT, I haven't come out. Don't get me wrong, I came to terms with my sexuality years ago. The desire to fly, to serve my country and to be a part of something bigger than myself was so great that I was willing to shelve that part of me that didn't fit in. It made for a lonely life, but honestly, there wasn't anything I wouldn't trade or do to be able to climb in the cockpit and touch the sky.

Living on ships for months at a time, mostly with men, might sound like a gay man's hottest fantasy. God knows I'd seen enough porn built around it, but the reality was nothing like what you might imagine. Cramped quarters, regimented life and schedules, straight men with women on their minds... it wasn't nirvana. Far from it. It was just easier to keep my sexuality to myself and not risk the sidelong looks, the subtle snubs and the whispering. I wasn't looking to find a partner, so why advertise that part of myself, right?

Oh yeah. And it worked until I met Chuck Wilder.

Fellow aviator, same squadron, Chuck transferred onboard two months before, and from the moment I saw him I knew I was in trouble. He stepped off the transport and my eyes were drawn to him immediately. About my height, jet-black hair a tad longer than it should be, and a wicked smile that, I was to find out, very seldom left his face. Aviator glasses hid his eyes, but I knew they had to be chocolaty brown. His fatigues hid a lot, but the T-shirt stretched across his pecs didn't hide a goddamned thing.

I must have looked like an idiot, standing across the flight deck, frozen to the spot. A loud whoop beside me snapped me out of my haze, and I quickly turned back to the group of men hunched over a laptop, *ohhing* and *ahhing* and making comments about the Miss America webcast.

"Georgia. And Texas. You can't go wrong betting on a southern gal." My wingman, Giordi Monroe was predicting. He glanced over at me, looking for

my agreement and must have seen something on my face. “Hey, Davey-boy, you okay? You look a little... glazed over or something. What’s goin’ on?”

Forcing a smile to my face, I shrugged. “Nothing. Just thinking. Can’t remember if I finished that checklist for the exercise or not. Think I want to go over it one more time before chow.”

Gio slowly nodded, his gaze never leaving me. It was a puny excuse—I never *ever* screwed up a checklist or forgot anything—but he gave it a pass. I broke eye contact and leaned in so only he heard me. “Not feeling great, buddy, and don’t want to make a big deal out of it. Let me go hit the head and maybe wash my face off and I’ll be fine.”

That got me a quick nod, and he turned back to the laptop and was making his bet on the winner even before I turned and headed for our quarters. The new men, and that one man, were gone when I looked back, and I heaved a sigh of relief and headed below deck to my bunk. When I got to the common area, I ducked into the head and avoided looking at myself in the mirror as I turned on the faucet and caught cold water into my hands, then bent and splashed it on my face. The shock seemed to reset whatever fucked-up part of my brain was frozen on the memory of that man, that smile and teeth and arms and...

The door banged open and in he stepped. I caught his eye in the glass and his smile was open and friendly. “Afternoon. How’s it hangin’?” He nodded and moved to the row of urinals, and I thought God must really hate me today. Because in about twenty seconds, it wasn’t going to be hanging at all, and I needed to get the hell out of there.

“Good, man. Welcome aboard,” I managed to croak out. I dried my face and hands with a paper towel and got the hell out.

Only to run into Mr. Handsome again about five minutes later, when he passed by my open door with his duffel and opened the stateroom directly across from me. I watched as he tossed his bags onto his bunk and put his hands on his hips, appearing to survey the small room, and I jumped up to close my door before he saw me looking.

And almost made it. My hand on the knob, I was ready to close it between us when he turned and that damned smile rooted me in place. “We gotta stop meeting like this or people will talk, man.” Now my blood ran cold, and I knew, just knew, he’d read me like a book and could see every dirty little thought I’d had about him. He stepped across the hallway and stuck out a hand. “Charles Wilder. Chuck to my friends. Saw you on deck—you fly too?”

I looked down at the offered hand, then back up and mechanically reached out to shake. “David Perkins. Lieutenant. Naval Aviator. Uh... Davey to my friends. Welcome aboard.” The words made it out, and I was thankful I wasn’t blabbering. Or drooling. His hand met mine, and I swear sparks flew at the contact. Some kind of direct line went from his firm grip to my cock, and all I could think of through the haze of my stupidity—fear he’d figured out what I was, arousal at how fucking good-looking he was, dread that I’d given something away and excitement that maybe I had—was how good those big fingers would feel wrapped around my shaft.

“Looks like we’re gonna be part of the same squadron then. Just got transferred to this billet, and damn, I know the name. They already are talking about you being in line for Blue Angels before long.” Chuck stepped back and looked me up and down, sizing me up. I swore my skin felt on fire where that gaze lingered, and a slow red flush went up my neck. Fuck, but I hadn’t blushed since Gary Graves checked me out after a track meet when I was fifteen, shy and a virgin.

I stepped back into my stateroom and regrouped. “Well, that’s a little premature. But yeah, it’s good to have goals. And a five-year plan.” I smiled and felt some of my normal self-confidence—some called it cockiness—returning. “Of course, if it only takes four... so much the better.”

Chuck threw back his head and laughed, a gut-deep bass sound that made my balls tighten up. Shit, but I wanted this man. I had to get my lust under control, or it was going to be a long couple of months before I got leave. Next port call was home base in San Diego, and I was already making plans to spend my leave taking a flight up to San Francisco and hitting the bars on Castro and fucking as many men as I could get through. It would have to last me for another six months, and I planned to make the most of it.

“You and me are gonna be good friends. I can tell.” He grinned and damned if my mouth didn’t go dry again. I just smiled back and nodded, and he stepped back into his billet and threw up a hand. “Catch you later, Perkins. Maybe you can show me around later, and we can grab some chow together.”

“Sounds great, bud. Later.” I closed the door, leaned back against it, and had my fatigues down and my cock in my hand before I even heard the click of his lock. Closing my eyes, I spit into my hand and stroked my shaft quick and hard, and pictured that mouth of Chuck’s on mine, our tongues locked in battle and those big hands of his on my ass. The suddenness of my orgasm slammed through me, so quick and powerful, and I gasped as white streaks of cum splattered my shirt and abs. My legs gave out, and I slid down to the floor in a satisfied, quivering mess.

I was so fucked.

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## CHAPTER TWO

Later that evening, I made my way to the officers mess and filled a tray with food. I'd hit the gym and done a full hour of reps on the free weights, followed by another hour on the treadmill. My iPod full of high-energy rock and roll, I pounded out mile after mile, the incline slowly ramping up and the speed increasing until my hamstrings screamed and my pulse raced. The cool down began and I stumbled off the machine, grabbing a towel and allowing the endorphins to take over my body. After a cool shower, I was starved and ready to eat.

And there he was, sitting with Giordi and the rest of the crew. Already making himself at home and fitting in. I didn't know whether to be grateful or pissed. The fact my partner was hitting it off with Chuck was a good sign; he could read people like no one else I knew. If Gio was joking around with him, and it looked like they were, then it was a *very* good sign.

"Hey partner, Chuck here says he's in the stateroom across from you and you guys already met." Giordi slapped Chuck on the back and pointed at me as I sat down with them. "Don't hold anything this jerk says against me, my new friend. Davey can be an ass—he's all about the flying and the planes and... well, just don't take it personally if he talks more about specs on the new prototype than about chicks or anything important. You get used to it."

I raised a hand and flipped him off. Chuck glanced between us, and a small smile ghosted across his lips. This was an ongoing back-and-forth with me and Gio, and he evidently could see it was nothing serious. "Not everybody thinks with their little head. And I *do* mean little."

I had to smile a little myself as Chuck choked on his water, his coughs a nice counterpoint to Gio's mock outrage. The quickest way to get him started was to talk shit about his cock. The man was hung like a horse, and was the butt of any joke involving dick size. He loved the attention, and I more than once chewed over the irony that the man I loved like a brother was famous for something I pretended didn't matter. Gio was a good sport about it, though, and Chuck seemed to go along with the joke.

The conversation switched back to the Miss America netcast, and the swimsuit competition. I zoned out, and nodded my agreement when a direct question came my way. Chuck was engaging, and the guys liked him, so I figured I'd just have to add him to the list of look-don't-touch men on the ship. Not a problem, there were a dozen guys who made my hands itch to get hold of them and explore their hard bodies. The flat abs. The strong pecs, and the light dusting of hair I was sure ran down to a treasure trail ending in...

I jerked my attention back to the here-and-now, and glanced up to meet gazes with Chuck. Fuck. I didn't know how long I'd been staring, and I could feel my cheeks burning with embarrassment. He held my gaze as a slow, easy smile spread over his face, and he winked and turned back to Gio to agree with whatever he was spouting, something about Texas sized hooters.

Was I busted? If so, it didn't seem to bother the man. But I'd worked too damned hard to garner the respect of every sailor on this ship, and I wasn't going to lose it over a pretty face and a hard body. I muttered something about needing to check e-mail and rose to carry my tray to the trash. Chuck stood at the same time and fell in beside me.

"Been a long day, men. The transport kicked my ass, so I'm going to catch some shuteye. What time's assembly?"

"Oh-six-hundred, and don't be late. We'll set up on rotation, and introduce you to the rest of the crew. Need anything, just knock on Davey's door. He'll take care of you." Gio shot me a sideways glance, and I flipped him off. Again. The man lived to yank my chain. But there was something about the way he looked at me, then Chuck, that bothered me this time.

I dumped my tray off with the mess crew and turned to head back to my stateroom when I felt Chuck move in beside me. Not knowing what to say, I kept walking, trying to ignore the slight brushes he made against my arm, and once, when we met sailors coming towards us in the hallway, he fell in behind me so close I could feel his body heat against my back. I almost moaned, wondering how he would feel skin-to-skin, his chest against my bare back. Soon enough, we were back at our quarters, and with a quick *g'night* I had the door closed and was flopped down on my rack.

Forcing my body to relax, I gave my cock a stern talking to and reminded it of the five-year plan. The one that didn't include outing myself, mooning over some straight flyboy, or getting a discharge for fraternization. That calmed me down, and blood flow reversed. I stripped down, set my alarm, and finally managed to doze off to dreams of brown eyes and a killer smile.

It was like that day after day, week after week. Chuck was a good guy, dependable, smart as a whip, and the second best pilot I knew. The only flaw I could detect was his wingman. Alex Dale was one of those guys who talked a good game and had absolutely zero skills to back it up. Oh, let me give him credit for one thing—he could kiss brass ass with the best of them, and the only thing Gio and I could think of to explain his presence in the squadron was that either he was the son of some bigwig, or he had the goods on somebody higher up.

The man grated, and nobody could stand him. Which was especially fucked up since we had to have his back, and depend on him to have ours. Someone, somewhere must have been watching out for him because his pairing with Chuck was the only thing saving him from being heaved overboard. And Chuck tolerated the asshole. Which made me seriously wonder about the guy. Had we all misread him, and he was a kiss-ass? Giving him the benefit of the doubt, me and Gio kept watch, and to our surprise, we slowly began to see Alex's attitude undergo a subtle shift. Where he was arrogant and mouthy, he began to catch himself in the middle of shooting his trap. And when he did let loose with some shit, he would wince and look over at Chuck.

When, just the day before, he actually apologized for making a mistake on the pre-flight checklist, something he did frequently but never acknowledged, it was too much. Gio threw his hands up in the air. "What the fuck? Did Wilder beat you over the head and knock some sense into you, or did the pod people come and swap your brain out? I mean, really dude. *You*? Saying you're sorry? Did hell just freeze over?"

Alex had the good grace to redden, and glancing at Chuck, mumbled, "Yeah, man, I know. I'm a fuck-up. You know it, I know it, everybody knows it. But fuck, Gio, I just want to be part of the team. I thought if I came out



balls-to-the-walls, you guys would respect me. And by the time I realized it was the worst thing I could do, it was too late. You guys all tagged me as an asshole. So I figured I might as well keep acting like one. But,” and he glanced up, eyes shiny, “Chuck came on board and he didn’t know me. He gave me a chance, and shit, I just want to be a part of the team. He was willing to try, and goddamn it if I will let it go south this time.”

We all stood there, taking in his words. Chuck came over and slapped Alex on the back. “Never too late to do the right thing, buddy. And each minute, you can choose to do the best you can. I believe in you, Alex.” He looked at us. “And these guys, they want to believe in you too. Give them something to hang their hat on, that’s all they ask for.”

I caught Chuck’s eye, and nodded. Moving over to Alex, I stuck my hand out. “Welcome to the team, Dale. Now, you and Gio get us ready for flight. Right, Monroe?”

Gio shook himself out of the daze he was stuck in, and jumped. “Right, Davey. Let’s rock and roll, Alex.”

I don’t think I’d been so goddamned hard in years. The fact this guy took the time to see past the dickwad exterior and made a difference with Alex got to me like nothing else. Two months I’d been fighting my attraction for this guy. Two long, cock-teasing, unsatisfying sons-of-bitches months.

Something had to give.

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## CHAPTER THREE

I was up and at the gym at oh-four-thirty, and on the treadmill pounding the miles, and my frustrations, away. At this time of the morning, no one else would bother me and I could get in some quality thinking time. I did my best work alone, and as I pictured being back home, out on the farm and running the back roads before the sun was up, I felt a pang of homesickness. God, life was so much simpler when I was a kid and didn't have to worry about life and love and what the fuck? Love?

The tension between me and Chuck was almost more than I could bear. I wanted him, but it was more than just wanting to fuck him through the bulkhead. He was a funny, generous, kind and giving hunk of a human being, and ninety kinds of sexy to boot. I was so sure he was straight—he hung out with all the other guys and played all their reindeer games. But then he would give me a look, and every fucking hair on my body would stand at attention. Or he'd brush up against me, and I swore he would suck in a breath same as I did.

Something was going to have to give. I was two weeks away from shore leave, and it couldn't come quick enough. As the *Georgetown* made its way into port, we would be flying in the day before to have the jets checked out and upgrades made to electronic systems. The whole flight team was looking forward to it, and Gio's girlfriend was planning on meeting him there so at least he would be out of my hair for two weeks. I doubted the two of them would leave the hotel room he'd arranged. Especially when he got down on one knee and made the proposal she'd been waiting for, and he was so nervous about.

But what to do about Chuck? Then, as if he heard me somehow, the door to the gym opened and in he walked. I almost stumbled and fell off the damned treadmill. A body like his was sinful, especially in a tank top and gym shorts. Tight, package-hugging, ass-clinging gym shorts that left very little to the imagination. Darkly hairy, perfectly muscled legs. And arms that made light work out of the free weights he pumped daily.

His smile lit up the room. “Fancy meeting you here.” His voice was cheery and he grinned, coming over to stand in front of where I ran, seemingly oblivious to what he did to me. He leaned against the front bar of the machine, and slung a towel around his neck. “Looks like it’s just the two of us this morning. You about done here? I need a spotter.”

I nodded, not wanting to lose my rhythm. Reaching out, I hit the button making the cycle slow down and the ramp decline. As my pace slowed, I felt his eyes on my body. This wasn’t a full workout for me, so I was lightly sweaty, my skin dewy-wet and my breathing under control. When the machine slowed to a fast walk, I allowed myself to straddle the sides and step off. Bending over from the waist, I stretched out my hamstrings, wrapping my hands around my ankles and pulling.

The touch of a hand on my ass almost made me fall over. I looked up and caught Chuck, a shocked expression on his face. He looked at his hand, then at me, then blushed. Actually fucking blushed. I knew then, goddamn it, that I’d been right, he *was* checking me out. And all my self-confidence came rushing back.

“See something there you like?” I stood, reaching my hands back over my head and working out my obliques and abs, bending slightly sideways and back and showing off my body at its finest. His eyes traveled down my torso, and I wanted to take this further, so damned much further. But now wasn’t time or place for it. Before he had a chance to answer, I inclined my head towards the steam room. “Come on in, let’s talk. Not out here.”

With a quick gulp, he nodded and followed. We both kicked off our shoes, and I stripped down, wrapping a towel around my waist, flashing Chuck a quick view of my ass, before stepping into the sauna. I hit the control to turn the mist on, and steam began pumping into the room. Settling on a bench, I turned and watched as Chuck entered and sat a few feet away.

“So...”

“Yeah. I’ve been wanting to do that for a long time. Since I saw you standing in the doorway to your stateroom that first day I came on board. Wasn’t sure you were interested, but I hoped.” His voice was almost wistful.

I sighed. “Honestly? I wanted you when you stepped off the transport and flashed me that fucking grin. You know what those lips of yours do to me, man? I’ve been jacking off for two fucking months thinking about them wrapped around my cock.”

Flopping backward, Chuck groaned. “Shut up, man. I’m raw from all the self-abuse.” He laughed. “So, the question is, what are we gonna do about it?”

Although it was tempting to toss my towel aside and jump the man, I wasn’t ready to throw everything away on a quickie when anyone could walk in on us. And to be honest with myself, I wasn’t sure I wanted just a one-off with this man. He was a friend now, and as far as I was concerned, had the potential to be more than that. And wasn’t that a kick in the ass? David Perkins, the man so far back in the closet his mothballs needed mothballs, was thinking about a relationship. With another man.

“What do *you* want to do about it?” I prayed it was the same thing I wanted him to do.

“I want you. I want to get you alone, strip you down and take my time. I want to taste you, spread you open and find where you are ticklish, find what makes you moan. I want to make you mine.” When I glanced over, shocked, his eyes were closed and he had a serious, almost sad expression on his face.

I swallowed, trying to decide how to answer him. “I want the same thing. But Chuck, I’ll be honest. I’m nowhere near being out. This scares me. I’ve never been the type of guy that wanted a relationship, and it’s usually a one-night stand for me. But with you, I can see myself wanting more. This shit is scary, and if you aren’t looking for something more than a quick fuck, tell me now. We can do that, but I like you too much to ruin a good friendship over sex.”

His expression never changed, and I felt like I’d blathered and probably spewed out too much twelve-year-old girl unicorns-and-puppy-romance novel shit, so I quietly stood and made my way out of the steam room. I glanced back before I let the door close, and he still had his eyes closed. Well, that was that.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

When I got to the flight deck later that morning, Gio was all over me. “Did you hear? Alex is in the infirmary, some kind of reaction to fucking peanuts. Who the hell’s allergic to nuts for God’s sake? Anyway, the roster’s been shaken up for the day, and you and Wilder are flying together. I’m with Winkler, flying lead.”

Fuck. I wasn’t in the mood to deal with all this today. I’d thought I’d be able to get in the cockpit and escape up into the clouds and let the sky soak up all my problems. That’s where I felt the most at home anyway. Maybe I was meant to be alone, and this was just a sign. But no, now I had to share my holy of holies with the guy who probably thought I was a lunatic. I mean, what kind of man talked about forever without having at least one date?

And oh, shit! I almost missed the last part, and it was the most important thing of all—they were going to let Gio be point! I grabbed him in a hug, ignoring his squeals of protest, and spun him around in circles. “Dude! I am so fucking proud of you. Point! See? I told you that if you hung around me long enough, the gold would rub off on ya!”

Gio laughed, pushing away from me. “Fuck you. And it felt like you rubbing off on me. Although,” he flashed me a shit-eating grin, “I bet you’d rather be rubbing off on Wilder.”

What. The. Fuck?

When I just stood there, in shock, Gio’s face fell and he looked upset. “What? Did I say something wrong? You do like him, don’t you?”

“Wha-what do you mean? Like him? He’s a good guy, and a good friend.” My face must have shown my horror at his words, and he grabbed me and pulled me away from the tarmac. When we were away from everyone else, I calmed down enough to try to make some sense out of what he’d said. “Gio, I’m not sure what you meant. I—”

“Davey, buddy, it’s okay. I thought you knew I knew. I swear, I wouldn’t have said anything if I thought it would upset you so bad.”

Oh hell. “I’m not upset. I just don’t understand what you mean.”

Gio met my gaze, his face open. “Davey. Man, I know you’re gay. I’ve known since, well, remember when we all went out that first time together in Singapore? To that strip club and everyone got shitfaced?” I nodded, and he continued. “I wasn’t as drunk as the rest of those goons, and I saw you eyeing the waiter, and when you disappeared with him and came back looking like the cat that ate the canary, well, it didn’t take a rocket scientist to put the pieces together.”

I was fucking shocked. He’d known for *four* years? And never said a word? “Gio, why didn’t you say anything?”

He shrugged and looked away. “I figured if you wanted to talk about it you would. And you never did, so I let it go. Didn’t make a difference to me. And you aren’t the only one on the ship, hell, even on the crew, that’s gay. Now it’s okay and you can’t get discharged for some bullshit you have no choice about. It was called Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell for a reason, you know.”

This man had been a much better friend to me than I’d ever been to him. Damn. I didn’t know what to say. But I had to say something, let him know how much his honor and friendship meant to me. “Yeah.”

“Yeah? What, yeah?”

“Yeah, I want to rub off on Chuck.” I looked around, and leaned in. “He’s the first man I’ve ever thought about doing more than fucking, Gio. I like him. A lot.”

His eyes grew wide. “You mean, you *like him* like him? You wanna go steady? Go to the prom with him and wear his letterman jacket?”

A burst of laughter escaped before I could stop it. I reached over and slapped his head, smiling at the howl that he let out. He jumped me, knocking me down on the flight deck and holding my hands over my head, straddling my waist. “Careful, Monroe. You got a nice ass and all that, but your girl might not like it if you showed up and had to explain why you were wearing *my* ring.”

“Fucker. As if I’d let you top me. With this cock? Man, you know you’d put that shiny white ass up in the air and beg for it.”

My jaw dropped. “Who the hell are you and what have you done with my wingman?”

“It’s time you got over it, L-T. Nobody cares. Especially me. And lookie there, here comes your boyfriend now. And he don’t look so happy. Hmm, wonder if I do this what will he think?” Gio leaned back and sat on my groin, letting his hands slide down from over my head and pinched both nipples through my flight suit. My hips bucked up involuntarily, and he leaned down, that troublemaker smile firmly in place. “Bingo. He’s pissed now.”

Rising to his feet and offering me a hand, Gio pulled me up and turned to leave just as Chuck stopped and glared. With a wink, Gio took off towards the plane he was to pilot, leaving me alone with Chuck. I opened my mouth to explain when he cut me off. “So all that big talk about wanting more than a one night stand was just that, huh. Talk. Should have known.”

Anger flared through me, and I thrust my jaw out at him. “You don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about. That was just... you know what? Never mind. It doesn’t matter. We have a job to do and this shit isn’t part of it.” I turned on my heel and started towards the plane. Stopping for a moment, I threw back over my shoulder at him. “They are pairing us up today since your wingman is sick. You’re my second. I expect you in place and ready to go in fifteen. Don’t be late.” Not waiting for a response, I went to grab the pre-flight checklist and make sure we were going to be ready for takeoff.

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I could see him off my wing, and now that the anger had burned out of my system all I felt was sad. This was why I didn’t try relationships, especially with men I worked with. Too much drama. I’d seen it with straight couples—one wrong word and the whole squadron would end up taking sides, or one person would transfer out and we’d be short a hand. Not worth it.

It was better, me alone. Just me and the sky.

My helmet beeped, letting me know my wingman was sending me a private signal. I sighed, sure this would be as unpleasant as the last exchange. Flipping the privacy channel open, I stuck to protocol. “Echo Charlie Tango Niner, over.”

There was a pause. “Davey, I’m sorry. That was a dick move on my part, classic Chuck Wilder fuck-up, and you didn’t deserve it.”

Well now. “I’m listening.”

“I saw Gio with his hands on you, and it pissed me off. I don’t share well. And I thought you were asking me to—well, to see if you and I couldn’t try to see if there was something between us. And then he was touching you and I was... jealous. Okay? I didn’t like it and I was jealous.”

“You do know he’s proposing to Lena next week, right? And he’s straight as they come.” I couldn’t help the snark in my voice. Damn, when had I gone back to high school?

He heaved a sigh. “Yeah, and I also know you and he go way back and that half his weight is in dick. And honest to God, why someone hasn’t snatched you up already is beyond me.”

I grinned, wishing I could see his face. “Half? More like three quarters. Have you seen that thing hard? It’s one of the seven wonders of the modern—”

“Do we really have to go there?” he growled.

“No, sorry. Listen, I’m sorry too. I was a prick. This is all new to me. Three months ago if someone had asked me if I would ever consider asking a guy from the squadron on a date, I would have told them they were crazy. And as to considering a relationship? Fuck no. But now, I don’t know what’s changed, but yeah, something has.”

There was silence, and I wasn’t sure what he was thinking. Then, “So are you going to?”

“Going to what?”

“Ask me on that date.”

I was really, really glad no one was in the plane with me to see the grin I was sure that took up half my face. “Chuck Wilder, will you have dinner with me next Friday night?”

“I would be honored. And Davey?”



“Yeah”

“Make reservations somewhere nice. I have the feeling you might get lucky.”

“Woohoo!” I went off into a barrel roll, flipping off the com channel and alerting base I was headed back.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

Keeping my hands off Chuck for the next week was one of the hardest things I'd ever done. Alex felt better a couple of days later, and Gio was back being my wingman, but I felt... freer than I had ever been. I wasn't ready to come out to everyone on the team, and Gio assured me only a couple of guys knew and the rest wouldn't care. But I wasn't ready. Plus, if this thing crashed and burned, I didn't want to deal with the drama of the homophobes making both our lives miserable.

By the time we flew out and into home NAS SDO and took a commercial flight up to San Francisco, I'd worn my right hand out thinking about all the things I wanted to do with Chuck. But the best part was, we were taking it slowly. We took rooms at a nice hotel off Union Square, and met in the bar for a cocktail before heading up to get some sleep. Alone.

Somehow, Chuck had never been to San Francisco, so the date we'd planned for Friday night stretched into an all-day affair. Visiting Alcatraz, taking the trolley cars, and walking through the Castro, then a taxi ride to the Embarcadero and more of the sights of the city, we made our way back to the hotel to shower and change for dinner. We'd agreed to meet back in the lobby, and take a taxi over to Fior d'Italia, the oldest Italian restaurant in the United States.

What I hadn't counted on was the sight of Chuck in black wool dress slacks and burgundy banded-collar shirt. His black hair shone like raven's wings and his brown eyes made me a little weak, and the sight of him did funny things to me inside. I never considered myself to have even a little bit of poetry in me, but something about this guy did it for me. Made me want to be more, think deeper, try harder. He was... magic.

Evidently he liked what he saw too, because we stood there, staring at each other. Goddamn it but why did we have to go out again? Then I remembered. This guy, he deserved something more than a quick roll on the mattress. He deserved someone who deserved *him*. And if I had any say in it, I would be that guy.

Coughing, I broke the silence. "Ready to head out?"

Chuck nodded, and we made our way into the cool Bay evening. The ride to the restaurant was spent in idle chitchat, the lights of the city just beginning to shine like diamonds on a jeweler's cloth. As we stood in the doorway of the restaurant, it struck me. In my adult life, I'd never been out on a true date. Fucked, tricked, picked up guys for an hour or two, but never really more than that.

Twenty-eight years old, and a virgin. Well, to the ways of romance anyway. Wasn't that pathetic?

Some of it must have shown on my face, and Chuck moved in close, bumping shoulders with me. He leaned in and murmured, "This place? Love it. Nobody's ever taken me out on a date like this. It's usually beers and bed, you know? This, this is something else, man." He kissed my cheek. "Thank you."

Oh, holy Christ on a cracker. I was so done.

We were seated, and appetizers and wine gave way to antipasto and seafood marinara and veal so tender it fell apart on the fork. We had a second bottle of wine and by then, were ready to split a cannoli and panna cotta with fresh berries. I was feeding him bits of the berries with my hand, and he sucked the juice off my fingers. The heat between us was rising, and I was ready to take it back to the hotel. Evidently so was Chuck, who let go of my forefinger with a pop and threw a hand up to signal for our waiter.

Neither of us could keep our hands off the other in the cab on the ride back to the hotel. It had been way too long since I'd been touched by a man, and I wanted him like I'd never wanted anything else, other than flying, in my life. So much so that I didn't know whether it was the wanting or the wine that drove me to let my guard down and kiss Chuck in the backseat. The taste of sweet ricotta and Chuck drove me crazy. Only in San Francisco, I thought, but then realized I didn't know that. I'd seen men kissing in cities all over the world, but I'd never had the balls to do it outside a club or the bedroom.

Never letting Chuck go without a touch, I kissed him and held his hand until we arrived back at the hotel. After paying the driver, I held out my hand, feeling shy, and he took it and we walked into the lobby.

“Good evening, gentlemen.” The concierge smiled and nodded to us. “Did you have a good dinner?”

“The best,” I answered and, feeling daring, said, “and now it’s time for dessert.”

The man’s rich baritone laugh followed us to the elevator, and Chuck squeezed my hand. “I like this side of you.”

“I like this side of me too. It’s been... way too long coming.”

When the doors closed on us, I moved behind Chuck and ran my hands around him, pulling him against my chest. My erection pressed into his ass, and he lay back against me with a moan. “Soon,” I promised.

The car stopped with a ding, and I gave Chuck a small push to get him started down the hallway. By silent consent, we moved to my room and after fumbling for the key, we let ourselves in. Chuck pulled me back against him and wrapped his arms around me, taking my mouth in a slow, sweet kiss. “I want to make love to you. Please say I can,” he whispered.

I closed my eyes and shivered. “Please.”

Chuck continued to lick and suck at my ear, stepping back slightly and reaching up to unbutton my shirt. His fingers slid inside, opening the fabric and splaying his hands across my pecs. Moving his mouth to my neck, he found my nipples and tweaked them between his forefinger and thumb. When I groaned and pushed against him, wanting more, he gave me a push and I fell back onto the bed. *When the hell had I moved across the room?* I wondered.

Looking up at him, my mouth went dry. He was so tall and handsome. His eyes went dark, almost black, and all that intensity was focused on me. I raised myself up on my elbows and took him in. “Chuck, I want you naked. Now.” He stood there a moment, then his hands went to his shirt. He unbuttoned it slowly, his fingers sure, and tossing it aside he toed off his shoes while he tugged his belt open and unfastened his pants. They fell to the floor, and *oh God* he had been commando all night. His gaze never leaving mine, he reached down and pulled off both socks before moving towards me.

Fuck but he was beautiful, if you can call a man that. His skin was pale like marble, and the light dusting of hair across the plane of his chest made my mouth water. My eyes roamed down his body to the thick, strong cock rising from the darkness of his pubes. When he reached down to loosen my belt and yank my pants off my hips and down my legs, I let my head fall back and closed my eyes in anticipation. I felt more than saw him take my shoes and socks off, and sure hands slid my boxer briefs off. My cock, so hard for him, slapped against my stomach.

“Look at me,” he commanded. When I opened my eyes, Chuck crawled onto the bed and, moving us both into the center of the king-sized mattress, stretched himself out on top of me, his body fitting against my own perfectly. We were the same height, the same build, and all that bare skin against mine was heaven. Chuck’s lips grazed across mine, and I chased after them. I had to taste him again, and reaching a hand behind his head, I pulled his mouth to mine and kissed him hard. He brought both hands up and held my face still, pulling back and staring into my eyes. “I want you, Davey. More than I’ve wanted anything my whole life.”

I bucked under him, flipping him off me, and rolled on top of him. Straddling his hips, I leaned back in and attacked his mouth. In between heated kisses, I mumbled nonsense, I know. *Mine. Gotta have you. Chuck, please...*

He thrust his groin up, his shaft rubbing alongside mine. The friction drove me crazy, and I reached between us to take both of us in my hand. We were leaking pre-come, and the heat and slickness felt incredible. Chuck groaned and grabbed hold of my hips, his legs kicking and jerking with pleasure. I leaned down to kiss him again, biting his lower lip and pulling.

“Davey, baby, so good. Please, baby, I need more. I want inside you.”

“Not yet. I want to feel you first.” I let go of our cocks, bringing a moan out of both of us, and moved my hands to his chest. Massaging him, I caught his nipples between my fingers and pinched lightly, laughing when he thrust his chest upwards, begging for more. Bending down, I took one between my teeth and bit, holding his arms by the biceps to keep him in place.

“Patience, babe. I’ll take care of you.”

He fought me, wanting to touch with his hands and his mouth. Bracing his heels against the mattress, Chuck pushed up with his hips, trying to chase after something, some bit of friction against his cock. It had to be aching, because mine was. I needed him, to have him in me. There would be time later for me to take him, I promised myself. I would give him what he needed, then I would have him on his knees, pounding into him and...

Okay, it was time. I needed to get him inside me before I came. "Are you ready? 'Cause I am, baby. You want me?" I stroked his arms and chest to get his attention. "Just lay there, let me take care of you."

I stretched over to the nightstand and grabbed the bottle of lube and condoms I'd left out before we went to dinner. Sitting back on my haunches, I ripped open the foil and placed the rubber on the head of his cock. "Watch me." His gaze focused, his eyes following me as I rolled the condom down his cock, then popped open the lube's lid and squeezed a stream down his hard cock. Stroking it to cover the shaft, his breath caught, but his eyes never left my hands and what they were doing.

When I squirted out enough lube to cover my fingers, I reached behind myself and circled my hole. He twisted to watch, and groaned as I slowly put one finger inside myself. It felt incredible, and I fought the urge to throw my head back and close my eyes. Adding another finger, then another, stretching myself open, he began to beg. "Please, for the love of God, Davey, you have to... don't tease me anymore. I'll do anything, just touch me. Let me in you. Please."

I let out an evil little laugh. "Anything? Be careful what you ask for, babe. I have an... active... imagination. And a very long memory."

Chuck dragged his gaze up from what I was doing, and my breath caught in my throat. "Anything. Just... I want you. So bad. So bad." The hunger and need I saw on his face, fuck. It was time.

I moved then, straddling his hips and reached down to grab his cock. Holding it straight, I pressed it against my hole and dropped down, feeling the head press against the tight muscles. It'd been way too long since I'd had a man inside me, and I wanted it. Sucking in a deep breath, I blew it out and

dropped down onto his dick, taking it all the way in, balls deep. Chuck's shout matched mine, and we both stilled. Fuck, fuck, *fuck!* He was big, I was tight, but God it felt so good. I focused on loosening my muscles, but I could feel them grip and tighten on Chuck, and his hands grabbed my hips, holding me in place.

“For the love of God, man, please tell me I can move. I think I will explode and blow pieces of us both into the ocean if you don't tell. Me. I. Can. Move.” His jaw was clenched, and his body was vibrating.

I slowly pulled up, then dropped down again, taking him in even deeper, if that was possible. Chuck panted, and I slid myself up on his shaft again, clenching my ass on him as I rose, and something like a sob escaped from the man under me. This time, when I went to lower myself on him, he thrust upwards and I felt the head of his cock drag against my prostate. I let my head drop back in pleasure, and Chuck took the opportunity to grab my hips, hold me in place, and begin to fuck me. Hard and fast, he pounded up and into me, and I managed to move my hand and grab my cock.

When I began to stroke myself, I tried to match the pace he set. Sparks shot up and down my spine, and I felt my balls tighten and begin to pull up against my groin. Jacking myself furiously, my weight on one arm against the mattress, I looked down and saw Chuck's face. I almost came. His neck was straining, his mouth open and jaw slack as he sucked in air in great heaves. His rhythm faltered, and his fingers dug into my hips. “I'm... oh, I'm going to, oh fuck, I'm gonna... *come!*”

His whole body went rigid, and I felt the sudden swelling of his cock as he pumped stream after stream into the condom. That's all it took to take me over the edge, and I shot, ribbons of pearly cream splattering Chuck's chest and abs. I shuddered, riding through the spasms before falling to the side and collapsing, my eyes closed with pleasure. Small tremors shook me, like aftershocks to an earthquake. I couldn't remember ever coming that hard, and was vaguely aware when strong arms pulled me closer to a sweaty body.

“Fuck. That was...”

I let out a choked laugh. “Yeah. I haven’t felt that in... ever. It’s never been like that before. Never been that good.” I was too open and vulnerable in that moment to register what I said, much less try to filter my words.

Chuck hugged me tight, and whispered against my jaw. “Me either. I could get used to that. And next time, I want you in me.”

My cock gave a twitch, too worn out to rise to the occasion, but definitely interested. “Give me five minutes.”

His warm breath ghosted across my ear as he laughed. “Make it ten and you got a deal.”

“Mmm. Shut up and kiss me.”

And he did.

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## EPILOGUE

### *Six Months Later*

“Gio, what the fuck, man?” We were standing on deck, the last rays of sunlight shining off the steely gray plating of the jet.

He looked at me, humor in his face and his eyes sparkling. “Come on, big guy. You know you want it. Beg for it, baby.”

I laughed then. “In your dreams, straight boy. Or have we succeeded in drawing you to the dark side?”

Gio’s proposal in San Francisco had been accepted. For all of a week. When he walked in on his fiancée with two men in their hotel room after he came back early from a called meeting on the ship. He had been ready to celebrate—he was finally awarded the promotion to squadron leader and a transfer to another carrier, when his world came crashing down around him.

The worst thing in the world I could imagine was a crushed Gio. It’s like the sun not shining, like being grounded forever and not allowed to fly. It’s just... not right.

He’d finally called me after going on a bender and ending up in an underwear contest in a bar on Castro. I’m not sure if it was all the attention he was getting, the offer he got to make porn, or the fact he was seriously considering taking a guy up on an offer to pop his cherry. Whatever it was, Chuck and I rescued him and preserved his purity, what there was of it.

The whole experience made him re-think what he wanted, and he decided to stay aboard the Georgetown with the crew we had in place. He liked being my wingman, and in a drunken moment confessed his brotherly love for me and Chuck. I believe his exact words were, “I love you two homos. Not that there’s anything wrong with it. Hell, you can put me in the middle of you two any night and I’d feel safe.”

Of course, the pictures we’d taken on our cell phones of a very drunk, passed out and naked Gio snuggled up between us, butts to nuts, with the caption “Gio is the meat in any sandwich” made for great blackmail material.

For Gio, not for us, though. After two weeks together on shore leave, and three more months dating, we'd decided to come out to the squadron. Who already knew of course, but it was nice to say it out loud.

I'd even come out to my family. That had gone... not as well, but we were working on it. They hadn't reconciled the "gay" with Navy aviator and athlete. But I had hope.

And speaking of hope, I turned and saw Chuck standing on the wing of the plane he'd just landed. Gio slapped me on the shoulder and said, "Hell, if somebody looked at me like you look at him, I wouldn't care if they had an outie instead of an innie."

I looked at my best friend and wingman, and smiled. If he only paid attention, he would have noticed that a certain young aviator—Alex—looked at him like he hung the moon. Ah well, he'd have to figure that one out on his own, I wasn't going to play Cupid.

Yet.

"So what is it you wanted, man? Why was it so important I get my butt back out on deck?"

Again, the grin. "Go up there, my friend. Your buddy has something to ask you."

What the hell? But really, any chance to spend some time with Chuck was good with me. The sun was almost set, and I climbed up on the wing of the Hornet and joined my guy. The view from that height was incredible; the purples and blues of the sky and the setting sun merging with the deep blues and blacks of the water. Amazing. Made a guy believe in God and his country. And love.

"Hey."

"What's up? Gio said you wanted to ask me something. Everything good?" I was suddenly nervous.

Chuck turned to me, the last rays of the sun outlining him. "Never better. Just wanted to ask... what are you doing the rest of your life?"

I saw the small box clutched in his hand and knew.

Raising my gaze, looking at the man I loved, what else could I say?

“Spending it with you.”

**THE END**

## Author Bio

*T.A. Webb is the writing name for the Mean Old Bear That Could. By day, he's the director of finance for a non-profit agency. He's worked with people living with HIV/AIDS and with children in the foster care system for over twenty years, and takes the smaller pay for the chance to make a difference for those who can't help themselves. After hours, he's the proud single papa of four rescue dogs, was born and raised in Atlanta, where he still lives, and is a pretty darned good country cook.*

*His sister taught him to read when he was four, and he tore his way through the local library over the next few years. Always wanting more, he snuck a copy of The Exorcist under his parents' house to read when he was eleven and scared the bejesus out of himself. Thus began a love affair with books that skirt the edge, and when he discovered gay literature, he was hooked for life.*

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