

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# DANCE WITH ME

## Aubrey Watt

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Jake Carroll wanted—no, *needed*—to dance. Specifically, he needed to dance with Daniel Stapp. There were just three things standing in the way. First, Daniel was a ladies' man, with emerald green eyes and a flair for the dashing. Second, Daniel openly despised Jake for having inherited half of his father's ranch and third, for all his skill as a ranch hand, Jake Carroll did not know how to dance.

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## DANCE WITH ME

**By Aubrey Watt**

### 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 shirtless men, both wearing jeans and straw cowboy hats, are dancing together while the livestock looks on. The one with his back to the camera is blond, and blocks a clear view of the other man. They are well-matched in height and build.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*The only thing I can think of that might be sexier than two men dancing is two cowboys dancing.*

*What did they overcome to become bold enough to dance whenever they want to?*

*Sincerely,*

*Melanie*

*P.S. HEA please. Would love sweet and sexy, with or without much erotic action—your call. One of my favorite sex acts is a hot dry hump. No incest/twincest or hard core, but intensity and/or angst would be fine. The need/desire to dance with each other should be important within the story.*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** cowboys, first time, enemies to lovers, in the closet, coming out, homophobia

**Word count:** 7,020

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Jake Carroll wanted—no, *needed*—to dance. Specifically, he needed to dance with Daniel Stapp.

There were just a few things standing in the way. One was the fact that Daniel Stapp proved to be just as much of a ladies' man as his dad had been in his time, and there was less than a snowball's chance in the desert that he would ever reach a hand out to Jake, or any man for that matter. Daniel's brilliant green eyes and white-blond hair attracted the attention of all of the single women in Hartville, and some of the married ones. Jake couldn't blame them—he, too, had fallen prey to the hypnotic fever that those emerald eyes could produce. But Daniel would never turn those eyes to Jake, except in anger.

Second was the fact that the young, fair Daniel disliked—if not outright despised—the idea of sharing his inheritance with a grimy ranch hand like Jake. That Old Man Stapp had left half the acreage to Jake Carroll was a surprise to everyone in town, but a direct affront to Daniel himself, the sole offspring and rightful heir to his dad's ranch. Or so Daniel thought. Never mind that the man had no idea how to run a ranch, and without Jake's help, would likely as not run it into the ground by the time the frost melted in the spring. Never mind that Daniel hadn't bothered to come to his dad's side all these years, hadn't bothered to learn one damn thing about ranching. In Daniel's mind, Jake's share of the ranch should be given back, and he never let Jake forget it.

The third thing standing in the way of Jake's desire was that, for all his ranching skill and agricultural knowledge, for all his dexterity roping a steer and jumping his sorrel over fences, Jake Carroll did not know how to dance.

He sat at May's every Friday night, nursing a beer and scowling at the dance floor, his dark hair hanging down over his darker eyes. Everybody thought he hated to dance—why else would he turn down all the pretty young girls who asked him brightly if he would come out on the floor? He was strong, tall, with a firm jawline and hair that got cut when he remembered, and he didn't remember often. Not unhandsome, if a bit scarred from life and

weather; Jake looked the picture of health and manliness, and plenty of girls would jump at the chance to dance with him.

Of course, some people whispered about Jake behind his back, told rumors of the one Mexican boy who'd helped Jake on the ranch *too closely*, but Jake was so hard-working and dedicated and generous with his time and advice, few people wanted to make a big deal out of his abstinence from dancing or dating, no matter the cause.

Jake sat and sucked at the bottle in his hands, watching as Jenny Ruth, Susan, and even squat, stolid Betty Ann took turns dancing with the dashing Daniel Stapp. If Daniel was bad at ranching, he was terrific at dancing; he twirled around the dance floor, his blond hair darkened with sweat to a deep golden brown, and his eyes flashing in joyful motion.

Jake imagined himself in Daniel's arms, being turned around on the burled oak floor by the younger man, held tightly in his embrace. Perhaps they would play a slow song, and Daniel would rest his head against Jake's shoulder. Perhaps he would come up to Jake, hold out a hand. "Just for fun," he might say. "Just for a laugh." Perhaps—

But of course Jake never danced. He sat and waited and *needed*, with everybody in the happy, loud bar around him blind to what he really wanted. Sometimes he needed to dance with Daniel so intensely that he thought the emotion might color the air around him, shimmer a dark red all over him as he yearned, even though he knew nothing would happen.

Even though he knew it was impossible.

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The sun rose on a cloudy, hot Friday. Jake and Daniel had been working in the barn together all morning, and Daniel was in one of his moods. For the most part, Jake could handle any issues with the boy by reason alone, but sometimes Daniel's eyes turned hard and irritated, and nothing Jake told him would stick.

"The second one," Jake said, reaching across to point out the correct bale for Daniel to fasten down. It was the second time he'd had to correct Daniel, and if the friction straps weren't fastened right they could snap, sending the bale and possibly Daniel flying from the top of the ancient machine. "Reach the strap across."

Daniel grunted and adjusted the strap he had in his hand. The wrong strap.



“The second bale,” Jake said. “Second from top.” Daniel never irritated him so much as when he failed to listen to Jake’s orders out of spite.

“I know how to do it!” Daniel insisted.

“Then do it right,” Jake said, exasperated.

Jake was done walking on eggshells. If Daniel wanted to mess up feeding the chickens, that was one thing. Old Man Woods hadn’t been able to afford new machinery for what seemed like decades, and the standing baler’s friction straps were as dangerous as they were old. As much as Jake wanted to see Daniel brought down a notch, he didn’t want the man to be injured.

“Do it your own goddamn self, you’re so smart,” Daniel said. His face flushed dark with frustration as he threw the strap across the bales and jumped off the side of the machine. He strode toward the door, his blond hair a white halo with the sun shining through it. Jake hit the emergency stop just in time to avoid snapping the strap.

“Fucking hell,” Jake muttered.

Daniel left in a huff, slamming the barn door behind him. Jake took a deep breath and turned back to the baler, clearing out the track that had gotten clogged with hay. As he pulled the strap tightly over the bales, he dreamt about laying Daniel down on top of the hay. He dreamt of tying the young man’s wrists above his head, and having his way with him. Daniel would twist and writhe, his taut muscles straining, his green eyes wide. Jake smiled at the thought.

Another hour passed. Jake had just finished stacking the last bale when the storm clouds rolled in. To the inexperienced eye, the clouds could’ve heralded just a rainstorm, but Jake noticed the dark pressure areas, the electricity in the air, all indicators of danger.

Daniel wasn’t in the main ranch house, and Jake looked in every cabin before realizing that he must have gone out in the fields to work with the cattle. If there was one thing Daniel liked to do on the ranch, it was ride his horse.

Jake slung himself onto his own sorrel mare and rode out, his eyes glancing up to the dark clouds that roiled above. Wind whipped out his dark hair as he rode, and when he reached the main herd, his mare sidled and snorted nervously.

“Easy, girl,” Jake said, patting the sorrel’s neck.

His eyes caught sight of Daniel on horseback across the field. Wisps of clouds were already beginning to twist down toward the earth as the wind whistled over the restless herd. All of the classic signs of a twister were evident, but Daniel didn’t seem to notice.

Jake urged his horse into a gallop, and rode around the herd toward Daniel. There was no time to waste. Above them, the clouds were circling into the beginnings of a funnel, and it looked to be a big one. By the time he reached Daniel, dust and tumbleweeds already skimmed the ground around them, pulled into a cyclical motion by the wind, and a low roar filled the air. Daniel’s horse reared as Jake approached, and Daniel tumbled off, sliding out of the saddle and falling to the ground. A hard fall.

Jake’s heart sank, but Daniel quickly leapt up from the ground, grabbing for his horse’s reins and swearing. The high scream of the wind grew louder and louder, the circling clouds above making it clear that the twister would touch down, and soon. The sky curled into itself, the clouds roiling, and Jake saw wisps of darkness come twisting down to lick the ground.

“Daniel!” Jake yelled. “Come on, we have to go!” He dismounted and ran to Daniel, who was still struggling to get his horse under control. The clouds whipped into a whirlpool above, the wisps growing bigger, stronger, into arms that reached down to the earth and became larger as they ate the dust. Jake grabbed Daniel’s arm. “Come on!”

“Get off of me!” Daniel shoved Jake backwards.

“Look!” Jake grabbed Daniel and spun him around, pointing out a hundred yards away where the twister’s main funnel had just touched down.

Daniel stood, slack-jawed in terror. The twister had sucked up all the dust on the ground, and for a moment the funnel was white, with streaks of orange and grey; the sky still showing through in parts. Then it locked onto the ground with a growling noise, chewing up divots of earth and ripping out brush. The funnel turned dark with soil, starting at the bottom and widening to the top as it ate more and more.

“Come on!” Jake pulled at Daniel’s arm.

“Holy Jesus save me,” Daniel said, the only prayer Jake had ever heard him utter. He stood rooted to the ground, frozen in fear. The twister turned and dipped, curling in on itself in a deepening roar. It moved toward the herd.

“Run!” Jake screamed, and Daniel finally listened, turning away from the growing monster of a tornado. They flew through the herd, dodging cattle as best they could. The tornado whipped back and forth, and Jake had no idea where it would go next. His only thought was to get away from the cows—having one of those land on top of you would kill you as easily as anything else.

The tornado bore down on them, the dark funnel growing ever wider as it zigzagged closer. The mouth of the funnel twisted south and picked up part of the herd, flinging cattle onto their sides and backs. Jake could hear their lowing underneath the hot roar of the wind and he turned to see one of the larger steers slam into another cow, the sharp cracking of bone on bone as the twister ground over the helpless animals.

They reached a gully and Jake pulled Daniel down into the low ditch. The small gully stretched out only six feet or so wide, and only a few feet high, but it was better than nothing.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Daniel screamed. Jake could barely hear him over the wind and fury.

“We have to get down!” Jake said.

“Run! We need to run!” Daniel’s eyes flashed wild with terror, and for one hideous moment Jake thought he would bolt out of his grip and onto the open plain. Jake shook his head no and jerked Daniel down by the arm, just as a thicket of brush whipped overhead. Daniel’s eyes widened.

“Down!” Jake yelled, and Daniel nodded, crouching low on his heels. Jake looked over the edge of the gully at the dark funnel barreling toward them. It was too big. They would never make it. A stray piece of fencing blew through the gully and scratched Jake across the face as it blew up and out, sucked into the air by the twister. God, this thing was massive. They had to get down, as low as possible.

Jake knocked Daniel over, shoving him face first into the gully and stretching his own body out over the younger man’s. Daniel’s hand reached up and clutched at Jake’s arm, and despite the fear of the moment Jake felt himself respond to the touch, a desirous heat radiating through his body.

He pressed himself closer to Daniel, letting his body drape over the other man’s. Jake’s face nuzzled down into Daniel’s neck, his lips touching the man’s skin, one arm over him in a protective embrace, the other curled back to

protect his own head. Who cared what kind of trouble he would get into, or what Daniel would say afterwards? The wind tore through the air above them as the twister moved in, and the low pressure sucked at their bodies.

Daniel clasped his fingers even tighter around Jake's bare arm. Oh god, such ecstasy that a single touch could bring. If Jake died now he wouldn't even mind. Blood dripped down his face and onto Daniel's head and neck, leaving a trail of red that shone bright against the white-blond of his hair. A spray of grit made Jake clench his eyes shut.

The twister came closer, it was *there*, it swept over the gully and over the men. Daniel tensed his muscles underneath Jake, his body hard and beautiful and oh-so-perfect. The wind tore around them, and brush and sand whipped through the air, stinging Jake's body, his hands.

There came a sudden quiet. Jake squinted up and saw the whirl of the tornado above them. The eye of the twister. Sunshine filtered through the top of the clouds and the deafening roar of the wind softened to a low murmur.

"Oh my god," Daniel said. His body shifted under Jake's, causing Jake to twinge with desire in the worst way possible. "Oh my god." His voice sounded like a lover's would, amazed and wondrous.

The wind started up again, and Jake bent his head back down as the twister arced across the low gully, ripping out the sides of the ditch and flinging dirt and sand across the men's backs. More roaring of wind, the pull of the sky, and branches scraping their bodies. Then it was gone.

Jake rested a moment on Daniel's back, not wanting to move an inch for as long as he could. The roar of wind lessened as the twister moved away. After a few moments, he pulled himself up reluctantly and peered out over the edge of the gully.

The tornado had shredded the plain, pulling up the earth and leaving a dark track where it had passed. The herd of cattle wandered across the empty plain, lost and lowing. Some lay where they had fallen and did not get up.

Jake whistled for the horses and was surprised when all that came out was a hoarse whisper. He wiped the grit from his lips and coughed up moisture into his mouth, then whistled again. The obedient sorrel came out of the herd and cantered over, shaken but not obviously hurt. Daniel's horse took another whistle before skittering out of the herd towards the men.

Jake caught their reins and handed Daniel's horse to him. Daniel stood shakily, his legs atremble from the shock of the twister.

"Got to get the herd back in the corral," Jake said. He swung up onto his mare. "Help if you like."

Daniel didn't say a word, and Jake clucked at the sorrel, riding toward the confused and damaged herd. It would take some time before he could wrangle all the cattle back to the main ranch. It surprised him pleasantly to see Daniel come around the rest of the herd and help lead them back. And after such an ordeal as that. The man must have something worthwhile inside his bones.

A pleasant surprise, indeed.

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Neither man spoke a word even as the last head of cattle came through the corral gates. Daniel seemed to have something brewing in his mind, and Jake hoped to god the man hadn't sensed his thoughts while they were stretched out in the gully, their bodies pressed against each other. Just the thought of it made Jake's groin twitch uncomfortably under his stiff denim.

Before either of them broke the silence, Jake turned and rode off, leaving Daniel to lock up the gates. Let him wonder. Let him stew. There was nothing he could say.

Jake sat alone at the oak table in his small cabin. The main ranch house had been taken over by Daniel as part of his inheritance, and although Old Man Woods had always let his ranch hand stay in the more comfortable quarters, Jake really didn't mind the cabin off the side of the house. He had made the hard cot more palatable with a straw pallet and a worked-leather headboard he made himself; and having less space to live in just meant he had less space to clean, as far as he was concerned. A table, chair, sink, bath, and bed. All you needed to live, really. And Jake liked the quiet solitude of the cabin.

A knock on the door interrupted Jake's thoughts and startled him enough for him to jerk upwards in his chair. Daniel had never come by the cabin, made it a point to stay away. Now, though, Jake opened the door to see him standing in the doorway, a bottle of whiskey in one hand. Daniel hadn't bathed yet; dust still coated his face and a streak of blood—Jake's blood—was smeared red on the side of his neck. The top button of his shirt was undone and it was all Jake could do not to stare at the man's hard chest, the light hairs tufting out of the cotton fabric.

“Don’t mean to interrupt,” Daniel said. “Just wanted to stop by and thank you, and bring a little something. To celebrate our survival.”

The speech sounded rehearsed, but Jake didn’t care one whit.

“Come on in, then,” he said, waving Daniel into the room. Standing awkwardly at the head of the table, Daniel looked around with guilty eyes at the cramped living space.

“Sit down,” Jake said, motioning to the only chair in the room. He went over to the sink, grabbed two spotted glasses from the drying rack and wiped them on a towel before setting them on the table. He leaned against the edge of the table, trying to look casual and relaxed as Daniel poured them both a whiskey. Two ample doses.

“You aren’t kidding with your liquor,” Jake said, raising his nearly full glass in salute. “To a hell of a twister.”

Daniel clinked his glass against Jake’s and drank quickly. Jake’s eyebrow raised in astonishment as the fair-haired man drained the cup, and, without missing a beat, poured himself another glass. His green eyes were tinted golden in the dim light of the cabin.

“You see those often?” Daniel asked. His voice trembled, and as he raised the glass to his lips again Jake could see his hand shaking slightly.

“That one was the biggest I’ve seen yet since I was a kid,” Jake said. “There was a bigger one, knocked over our barn when I lived in Tennessee.”

“Shit,” Daniel said. “That thing scared the bejesus out of me.”

“You don’t got to tell me. I would have pissed my pants if I hadn’t just pissed.” Jake chuckled.

Daniel looked down at the table. His fingers tapped at the oak nervously. “I wanted to thank you,” he said. His voice caught on the last word, and he had to cough to get it out.

“Hey, no problem,” Jake said. He reached over and slapped Daniel on the shoulder. Too much? He was feeling risky today. Luck seemed to be floating all around him. Any other day and he would have been told off for acting too presumptuous. But today—today was different.

“You saved my life.” Daniel’s eyes pooled wet with tears, and Jake froze, unsure of how to react to the display of emotion.

“Wasn’t nothing.”

“It was my life,” Daniel said. He looked up at Jake. Jake thought he could see something in those green eyes. Something confused, something scared.

“Out here’s a hard place,” Jake said. He took a sip of his whiskey. “Got to stick together. Help each other out. You woulda done the same.”

Daniel opened his mouth as though he was going to say something, but then closed it.

“Anyway, this is great whiskey,” Jake said, swirling the whiskey in his glass. “Where’d you get it?”

“It was my dad’s. He left me a collection of the stuff.”

“Generous man,” Jake said.

Daniel looked up at him, a frown on his face, as though expecting some evidence of malice or sarcasm. The expression melted as he saw neither. “Yeah, he was,” Daniel said.

“He told me a lot about you.”

Daniel looked up sharply. Jake thought there was fear in his eyes, but he couldn’t understand why.

“Like what?” Daniel asked.

Jake leaned back casually. “Just what you were like. He talked about how smart you were, at university. All those classes you were taking.”

“See how much good they did me.” Daniel laughed bitterly.

“They did you fine,” Jake said. His voice was meant to be kind. Daniel huddled in his chair, and Jake did not know where all the easy confidence had gone to that the boy normally possessed. Daniel seemed like a frightened animal.

“Why didn’t you ever come back to the ranch?” Jake tried to ask the question like he didn’t care, but he was curious.

Daniel shook his head. “We had a falling out. Me and dad. He didn’t like me all that much.”

“Didn’t sound like it, the way he talked about you.”

“We fought over a lot of things,” Daniel said. “One day it got to be too much, and I left. Maybe he changed his mind about me once I was gone.”

Daniel put down his glass and laughed weakly. “Guess I’m easier to get along with when I’m not around.”

“Sorry to hear,” Jake said. “He was a good man, and he seemed to be proud of you.”

“He told me he was leaving half the ranch to you,” Daniel said, his voice suddenly serious. There was a slur to his words from the whiskey, and Jake tensed up to hear it. “Before he died. Said it was the right thing.”

Jake said nothing, just murmured a small hum of assent. It was obvious that Daniel had been hurt by his dad’s decision.

“He was right about one thing,” Daniel said. “He said I needed you.”

Jake’s heart leaped in his chest, even as he smiled and sipped at his whiskey casually. “You’re damn right you need me. You’re dumber than a cow in a twister.”

“Only when I’m in a twister.”

The two men chuckled. Daniel poured them both another shot of whiskey. That shot turned into two, then three, and then Jake forgot to keep track anymore. It was wonderful to sit with Daniel and shoot the shit and crack jokes with each other. He had always imagined them like this.

Jake had gotten up to rinse his glass, and was letting the water run halfheartedly over the spotted surface when Daniel idly asked him a question.

“Why don’t you dance?”

Jake paused. Daniel sat right behind him, and Jake made a show of rinsing the glass once more, carefully. The question cut to the center of his heart. “What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean. Why don’t you dance?” Daniel said. “I even asked Linda to ask you to dance last time, and you told her no.”

“Yes, I did,” Jake said. He hadn’t known that Daniel was behind Linda’s hopeful query on the dance floor. How strange.

“Why?” Daniel asked. “Seems like a mean thing. She was so hopeful. And so put down afterwards.”

“Not so put down that she couldn’t dance with you three times that night,” Jake said. Immediately after saying this, he felt the blood rise to his skin. *What was he saying?*



“Do you count all the girls that dance with me?”

“Better than counting the sips left in my bottle,” Jake said. He dried the glass on a dirty rag next to the sink, pretending an interest in the lime-spotted rim.

“Why don’t you dance?”

*Was he never going to stop asking?*

“I can’t.” Jake’s fingers clutched the rag whitely, and scrubbed at nonexistent residue on the glass.

Jake heard the screech of the chair legs across the floor as Daniel got up. He felt his whole body tense as the younger man walked towards him.

Daniel reached across Jake’s arm to set his empty glass into the sink. “Can’t?”

Daniel turned and crossed his arms, leaning back against the sink. Jake could smell him, he was so close. The smell of cologne, sweat and leather.

“Can’t dance.” Jake began to wash Daniel’s glass, his hands running across the surface tenderly, carefully.

“The hell you mean?” Daniel sounded incredulous.

Jake wiped at the clean glass with the rag. “I mean I never learned.”

“Well, it’s not like it’s hard.”

Jake set Daniel’s glass next to the other. Before he could respond, Daniel caught his wrist and pulled him out to face him, and god, oh god, the angel was facing him, fingers around his arm.

“Look, I’ll show you.”

Jake froze as Daniel reached out and pulled Jake’s arm to his waist. He could feel the other man’s skin hot under the fabric of his shirt, and the smell of him was overpowering, so close. Jake felt dizzy. This was a dream.

“You okay?” Daniel stopped suddenly, and Jake saw a real fear in his eyes under the whiskey glaze. He felt the man tense under the palm of his hand. “We don’t got to.” Daniel released his grip on Jake’s wrist and Jake felt like reaching out to pull him closer, to keep that closeness between them.

“No, show me.” He coughed the words through the lump in his throat.

Daniel looked up at him, his face tentatively hopeful. “Okay, well it’s real simple. Just watch me and do the opposite with your feet.”

Daniel’s hand was still wrapped around Jake’s wrist, and Jake’s other hand was planted steadily on Daniel’s hip. As the man moved, Jake moved with him, feeling the muscles under his palm.

“Forward, back, rock step. Forward, back, rock step.”

Jake tried to follow the moves as Daniel called them out, and quickly got the hang of it. He had watched Daniel on the dance floor so many times that it was easy for him to catch the gist of the steps.

“Okay, now you gotta spin me.” Daniel moved his hand up and then their hands were clasped together and god, oh god, Jake didn’t know what was happening. His entire body burst into desire as Daniel’s fingers slid across his palm and intertwined with his own fingers. Skin on skin, he let Daniel guide him around into a slow turn under Jake’s hand. The motion made Jake’s nerves burn with longing. This wasn’t all he wanted, no. He wanted more, so much more.

As Daniel turned back to face Jake, Jake reached out and clasped his hip easily, as he had seen Daniel do so many times. Daniel’s hand rested on his shoulder, the other hand still pressed against Jake’s, and he finished the turn in a closer position than before. Jake could feel the man’s hot breath between them.

They stopped moving, and Jake was only dimly aware that it was inappropriate, standing there holding Daniel’s hand and staring intently down at his feet. His groin ached and he needed to get away, to hide before it became obvious to Daniel that his ranch hand wanted something more than simply dance lessons.

“Jake.”

Jake lifted his gaze to see Daniel’s deep eyes only inches away from his. There was a questioning look in them, and... fear? Jake inhaled the man’s scent, feeling another rush of desire sweep over him. Whiskey wafted off Daniel’s lips. Jake’s mouth opened slightly enough to feel the cool air over his tongue.

“Jake,” Daniel said again, this time a whisper. He was looking at Jake’s lips, and before Jake could say a word, the younger man leaned forward and

pressed his mouth up hard against Jake's own. He tasted like whiskey, his tongue soft and hot. Jake froze. It couldn't be. *Daniel?*

The kiss was over before Jake could begin to realize what had happened. Daniel pulled back sharply.

"Sorry," he said. He pushed himself away from Jake and stumbled back to the table. His fingers shook as he tried to cap the bottle of whiskey.

Jake pulled himself out of his stupor. "Hey, no, Daniel." He stepped over to where Daniel was fumbling unsuccessfully with the whiskey bottle.

"Sorry," Daniel repeated.

"You don't gotta—"

"Fuck it, you can keep it." Daniel tossed the cap down onto the table. "Thanks for helping. For saving me, I mean." His words were slurred. "Sorry."

Jake reached over and took hold of Daniel's arm. "Hey, I didn't know—"

"Well, now you do!" Daniel threw off Jake's hand. His voice rang out in the small cabin, his throat hoarse with whiskey and sorrow. "A fucking queer, that's why my dad didn't leave me the whole fucking ranch. There, now you know."

"Daniel—"

"Now you know!" Daniel turned menacingly at Jake. He looked like nothing more than a cornered animal, and a cornered animal was dangerous.

Jake reached a hand out cautiously. "Daniel—"

Daniel's green eyes spilled over with tears, and he pushed Jake away even as Jake moved closer. "Don't," Daniel said. "I'm sorry."

"Daniel." Jake wrapped an arm around the younger man, pulled him close into an embrace.

Daniel's hands came up to his chest, balled into fists, pushing him away. "I'm sorry," he said again, his voice weak. "About everything."

Jake couldn't take it. He reached his hand up, grabbed Daniel's chin and tilted it into a kiss.

Daniel's fists dissolved against Jake's chest as Jake deepened the kiss, letting his body move against Daniel's. Letting him feel the hard desire against his hip. His tongue pushed tentatively against the man's hot lips, probing, and

then Daniel opened up and Jake felt his arms come up and around, clutching at his back.

“Jake, oh god, Jake,” Daniel said when the kiss broke. His breath was heavy.

“Thanks for the dance lessons,” Jake said. He took ahold of Daniel by the waist, spun him around toward the table and set him atop it, pressing forward into another deep kiss. Daniel’s legs came up around Jake’s hips and Jake could feel the other man’s erection stretching his jeans. He moved one hand down to touch Daniel there, and Daniel let out a sigh that melted Jake’s heart and set his body aflame with desire.

Fingers scrabbled at buttons and zippers as Jake pressed himself between Daniel’s legs, leaning further in and kissing his cheek, his neck, his shoulder. Daniel tore Jake’s shirt while trying to get it off, and Jake pulled off the younger man’s pants without ceremony, lifting him up bodily to do so. They crashed together in another kiss, their pent-up desire no longer willing to wait for anything.

Jake quickly pulled away to help Daniel shrug out of his shirt, and then shuffled out of his own jeans. Finally, they were both stripped to their underwear, their chests hot and pressing against each other. Daniel’s erection bulged out from under his briefs, making Jake’s mouth water with anticipation. He stroked the man’s cock through the fabric and was rewarded with a moan that nearly made him explode with yearning.

“Jake, oh god, Jake.” Daniel whispered. Jake pulled off the last of his clothes and stood naked. Daniel’s hands scrabbled at his hips, the long fingers gripping his cock, stroking his balls. Jake gasped as Daniel slid off of the table onto his knees, and took Jake into his mouth. His tongue was hot and wet against the tip of Jake’s cock, and he circled the head with long slow swirls.

Jake’s hand came up automatically, running his fingers through Daniel’s golden-white hair. His cock throbbed as Daniel licked the length of it, his hands cupping Jake’s balls. He flicked the tip with his tongue and Jake swallowed a gasp as Daniel took him whole between his lips. Beads of sweat tickled Jake’s upper lip, and he wiped his mouth with one arm.

“Oh, fuck,” he said, his fingers gripping Daniel’s hair. He couldn’t help but rock his hips back and forth as Daniel sucked and bobbed, one hand gripping the base of his shaft, the other still fondling him lower. His tongue was everywhere, licking and sucking and teasing. Wave after wave of pleasure

swept through Jake's body, but as he was on the edge of exploding Daniel pulled away.

"Christ," Jake gasped. His cock was rock hard, throbbing in the cool night air. His entire body shone with sweat, his breath hard and fast. "Don't stop. Jesus, please don't stop."

Daniel stood quickly, stripped of his briefs and turned his back to Jake, bending himself over the table. His lean body rippled with muscle, and he tilted his hips back, offering himself to Jake. He turned and there was a glint of mischief in his brilliant green eyes. *No. It couldn't be.* Jake's mouth went dry.

"Daniel..." The word was halfway between a whisper and a moan. Daniel smiled.

"Take me," he said. He brought his fingers up to his own mouth and sucked on them. As he turned his face away, he reached those wet fingers back and plunged them into his hole, slicking the way for Jake. Jake's cock twitched at the sight.

"Oh lord," Jake whispered. He moved forward as though in a dream, his cock pressing between the curves of Daniel's ass. Daniel's fingers gripped his cock and guided him to his entrance.

"Slow, now," Daniel said.

Jake eased himself forward into the tight flesh, pausing as he heard Daniel gasp for air.

"Slow... oh god, you're so big." Daniel's hips shifted underneath him. Jake pushed forward slowly, steadily, and felt himself slide into the tight ring of muscle. God, it felt so good. It felt like heaven. He had to stop himself from plunging in completely. Every inch sent another wave of sensation such as he had never felt before, the slick tightness making his brow wet with the sweat of desire.

"Fuck yeah," Daniel said. Jake began to rock back and forth, working his swollen cock in farther and farther. He spit on his fingers and slicked himself to ease the entry. Daniel was so tight. Jake leaned over, bending his body to press against the other man's, and kissed the back of his neck.

"Ohh," Daniel moaned, his body writhing underneath Jake's. Pushing his cock in deeper, Jake reached around and clasped one hand across Daniel's chest. Skin slicked against skin as he rode the younger man, thrusting furiously

into a faster tempo. Daniel's hair grew dark with perspiration, and he emitted a low moan each time Jake thrust his cock forward.

God, he felt so tight. As Jake reached with his free hand to grip Daniel's hard cock, the sweet pucker of flesh clenched around his own shaft. Jake was surprised to feel how hard Daniel was under his palm. Daniel's fingers scrabbled against the table for purchase as he twitched and twisted under Jake's hold.

"Fuck me harder," Daniel hissed. The whispering breath was all Jake needed to push him over the edge. One hand stroking the other man's hard shaft, he thrust himself deeply into the dark, tight hole, his breath panting all the while. As the tempo increased, he felt the hard want inside him push closer and closer to the edge of ecstasy.

"Yes! Yes!" He heard Daniel's gasping breath as he jammed his cock even deeper into the man's body, the ache of desire spiraling up inside him. Under his palm Daniel's cock jerked upwards once, then again, spilling hot seed through Jake's fingers.

"Ohhhhhhh!"

It was too much. With a groan, Jake felt the surge of pleasure crest inside him and he arched into the man, thrusting once more to the hilt before he released his own ecstasy inside Daniel's sweet ass. His every nerve pulsed together as he erupted, moaning, his chest pressed hard against Daniel's back.

They rested for a moment like that, Daniel's heart beating hard through his skin. Then Jake released Daniel, eased himself out, and collapsed backward onto the small cot next to the table. Daniel pushed away from the table and sat carefully on the edge of the cot, his eyes cast down toward the floor. It wasn't until Jake reached out and drew him into an embrace that he relaxed, letting Jake pull him close into a soft kiss. Jake caught his breath, his skin turning cool in the night air after the exertions of their lovemaking.

"Some dance lesson," he said, once he could breathe easily again. Daniel laughed, and then both of them were laughing uncontrollably, the tension between them dissipating entirely. Jake wiped tears from his eyes.

"Did your dad know?" Jake asked.

"About me?" Daniel shrugged, an oddly endearing gesture. "Yeah, he figured it out. That's why I left."

“Oh,” Jake said. His fingers played with Daniel’s light hair.

“What about you?” Daniel asked, his eyes downcast as he leaned against Jake’s shoulder. “Did my dad know? About you?”

“I don’t know.” Jake had never given it much thought. “Maybe.” He had the sudden thought that perhaps the old man had left him half the ranch for another reason.

“I did need you,” Daniel said, looking up at Jake.

Jake reached over and took Daniel’s hand. He couldn’t say anything. He had always needed Daniel, and now a rush of warmth swept through his heart.

“Come sleep in my bed?” Daniel asked.

Jake nodded.

“In a minute.”

He pressed a kiss to Daniel’s forehead and rested his head against the man’s chest, listening to their hearts beating in the quiet night air. Daniel’s body rose and fell under his cheek. In Jake’s mind, he could see all of their dances together in the future, could see them falling together into rhythm, and, for the first time in a long time, he let himself smile.

**THE END**

## **Author Bio**

*Aubrey Watt thinks that the best western is a gay western. All the cowboys she writes about are smoking hot with a soft, emotional side to them. When she's not reading or writing spicy m/m erotic romance, she likes to swing dance and do jigsaw puzzles.*

## **Contact Info**

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## **Other Works by Aubrey Watt**

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