



M.D. NEU

SECRETS, SKYSHIPS, AND SECOND CHANCES

DISCOVER THE ADVENTURE ON THE ...

# HAWAIIAN SUN



# *HAWAIIAN SUN*

**M.D. NEU**

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SAMPLE CHAPTER



FREDRICK SHUT THE BEIGE PINK DOOR, pushing the image of the two men out of his mind—or at least trying to. The low hum of the ship's engines had almost masked the noise but not the sight of Wilhelm on his knees before Gerhard in a state of undress and full arousal. Wilhelm should have been alone changing, so Fredrick didn't bother announcing his presence. He didn't think he would have to after everything they had been through.

*I should've given him warning. No. Gerhard would have seen me.*

Why would Wilhelm do such a thing? Fredrick and Wilhelm had plans. They were going to get off the airship, meet his aunt and uncle in New Jersey, and never look back, leaving Germany and the Nazis behind. The Frankfurt to New Jersey trip would be their final journey and now everything before him lay a jumbled mess. The airship was less than twenty-four hours away from New Jersey and their freedom.

Would America be any better than Germany? From the bits of information coming out of Germany and the rest of the world, who could say, but at least he wouldn't be rounded up in one of the raids. The last letter from his mother told him more of their neighbors had been taken away and that Gerhard had to report for military service.

His sister's youth might shield her, but his mother didn't sound hopeful.

*If all goes well, I should be able to send for my sister and my parents.*

Fredrick glanced down, taking in his white stewards uniform, ready for the dinner service. He pulled at a loose string and allowed the thread to fall to the floor. The smells of beef broth with marrow filled his nose as he moved closer to the kitchens. The sounds of the engines and the kitchen blocked out the banging of his heart as his fists unclenched. His face and neck remained warm. He would need to calm down. He couldn't be red-faced. Chief Steward Kubis didn't like to see any of the stewards in less than perfect order. And he didn't fancy a conversation with the airship's doctor, Dr. Rudiger.

Fredrick peeked over his shoulder toward the crew space, which wasn't nearly as nice as the guest's space, but this hall had been decorated in the same beige and pinks as the rest of the living space in case guests made their way down here. Nothing of interest would greet the visitors as the area had been built for function and nothing more.

As he inhaled more of the aromas from dinner, his heart slowed and his face cooled. Wilhelm's actions shouldn't surprise him—the man tended to be as bold as he was handsome. Wilhelm had no fear, unlike Fredrick, who always had to check over his shoulder, worrying someone would learn his secret. And then what? What would the Nazis do with someone like him? He had heard the stories, but who knew for certain? Information was always hard to come by.

He inhaled as deeply as his lungs allowed, notes of chocolate sauce and coffee that Chief made now filling his nose. His stomach gave a slight rumble as a hint of a grin tugged at his lips.

*Dinner for the guests smells wonderful—hopefully our dinner will be as nice.*

"I wouldn't mind some of that chocolate sauce," he whispered to no one, trying to replace the earlier images from his mind with something more pleasant. At least his duties would keep his mind busy.

Adjusting his black tie, he checked for any more errant pieces of lint, and took a few forward steps, pushing the image of Wilhelm and Gerhard from his mind. After all, he still had a job to do. Hurried footsteps approached him from behind on the gangway, finally reaching him as a hand landed on his shoulder.

"Will you wait?" Wilhelm pleaded. The words were soft but intense enough for Fredrick to stop and listen, despite his nose telling him he needed to report to the kitchen to begin his shift.

"What?" he snapped as he faced Wilhelm. His blue eyes and soft brown hair were only mildly messy from his dalliance. A pink tint colored his cheeks and his lips gave his earlier actions away.

Wilhelm's pleasant expression shifted to an icy glare as his brows narrowed. "You didn't see anything."

Fredrick laughed, but no merriment played through the tone.

"I'm serious, Fredrick. You saw nothing." Wilhelm quickly glanced over his shoulder and pulled him off the main walkway. "You weren't seen, only heard. Lucky for the both of us, the ship's engines masked all our noise."

"I may not know much," Fredrick started, the words oozing with as much venom as he could muster, "but I recognized what you were doing. We've done that very thing enough times."

Wilhelm pulled them along the corridor to the crew shower and bath. This area resembled the rest of this part of the deck, all built for the functions the locale served, but the crew accommodations were nothing compared to the guest showers. They knew this location would be empty this time of day as everyone was seeing to their duties.

*Like we're supposed to be.*

"Fredrick, it's not like that ..." Wilhelm paused, glancing over his shoulder and down the corridor of the giant flying machine. The drone of the engines and the gentle movements of the ship hopefully keeping their conversation quiet. He wasn't in his dinner uniform yet and would need to change, but he had the second seating, not the first.

*He better not want me to cover for him ... again.*

"Gerhard found out." The words dropped like ice in a scotch on the rocks.

Fredrick's set jaw and puffed out shoulders deflated and he rubbed his brow. Sweat built up on his forehead as his stomach plummeted to the floor. "What? How?"

"I don't know," Wilhelm countered, peeking over his shoulder before quickly meeting Fredrick's gaze again. This time his eyes were filled with worry and fear. "This is a small ship and you know

the walls are thin. Perhaps he heard us, or intercepted a message from my father. I don't know. I think he only knows about me ..."

"Not us?"

Wilhelm bit at his lower lip. "I don't think he knows anything about ... that ..."

"Are you sure?" Fredrick's heart sank—he didn't want either of them to be found out. His family wasn't as connected as Wilhelm's and they couldn't protect him, but still, he didn't want anything to happen to Wilhelm. They had plans together.

"I don't know, but I didn't have a lot of opportunity to ask." Wilhelm ran a hand through his hair. "I think you're safe ... no, I know you're safe. Gerhard's stupid and would've said something."

"Why didn't he report you?" Fredrick glanced both up and down the passageway. So far no one was present, but the clock was ticking and soon they would need to report to duty. Most of the guests were up on A Deck in the writing room or lounge. Perhaps a few men remained in the smoking room or at the bar, so he wasn't worried about being seen by the guests. Those not there would be getting ready for the dinner service, but he couldn't be certain. Wilhelm was correct; the *Hindenburg*, despite her overall size, was not a big ship and even he couldn't account for all 97 people on board at the moment.

Fredrick's gaze narrowed. "Instead he had you on your knees before him." He wanted the words to sting and hurt, but as they came out the malice he intended came out as worry.

"I did what I had to do." He rubbed his lips. "I won't be shamed for that."

"And what about me?" Fredrick lowered his voice. "What about us?"

Wilhelm remained silent but the way his stare bounced around, unable to meet Fredrick's gaze, told him what he needed to know. Things had ended.

"I see." Fredrick shook his head. "I have work to do before dinner. I have my duties for the rest of the afternoon and supper. I won't be free again until later tonight."

"Are you mad?" Wilhelm extended out a hand.

"Yes. No. I don't know." Fredrick glanced around the space. "I thought this airship was the most glamorous place I'd ever been and I imagined you were one of the most amazing people I'd ever met. Now ..." Fredrick held out a hand and stopped himself, hearing voices

from down the passage. "Go change. I'll tell the Chief Steward and the Chief you had a headache and will be a few minutes late."

Wilhelm squeezed Fredrick's arm before rushing off.

Fredrick closed his eyes and took as deep a breath as his lungs would allow before he headed to the kitchen. He needed to check in and see to his duties for dinner service.



Fredrick examined the mirror, meeting his reflection. The darkness under his eyes was inevitable after how he slept, or didn't sleep, the night before. Every part of him ached with exhaustion from yesterday and the poor rest he had. Even the gentle motion of the airship did nothing to help him sleep. As he continued his personal examination, he thought back to lying in his berth. He found the ceiling above his bunk more interesting than the back of his eyelids. When he laid his head on his pillow, a hum, or more like a growl, seemed to grow around him and continued, not appearing to take a break.

*That noise is probably what kept me awake. The winds around these ships can cause many strange sounds.*

He pushed the night's thoughts from his mind his lips pinched together. He didn't get the opportunity to speak with Wilhelm, but what more was there to say? Now they have a busy day ahead. The weather reports out of New Jersey were not in their favor if the officers were to be believed. If anything would hinder the airship's arrival, bad weather would be the offender, despite the advances. The *Hindenburg* now had some of the most advanced equipment available thanks to their refresh in Frankfurt.

He didn't envy the engineers or the pilot. Because of the potential delays, there would be no slacking off. Plenty of work needed to be done. He had cabins to tend to, luggage to account for and the guests still needed, and expected, the quality of service the *Hindenburg* provided.

*The pride of the German Reich and the Führer.*

However, the delays meant they would have a whole day of service in the air. Breakfast, dinner, cocktails, and light supper were on the schedule, depending on when the high landing, or flying moor, would take place. The last he heard, they would moor around 1900 local time. He glanced at his timepiece.

"I have a lot to do."

He pushed the growing growling or moaning out of his mind. Somehow the noise had swelled, not loud enough to keep him from doing his job, but an annoying background level that seemed to follow him around the ship.

As the morning turned into the afternoon and the afternoon met the evening, everyone grew anxious for the arrival. His enthusiasm to see his aunt and uncle grew, and now that he had the time to clear his head, he wasn't angry at Wilhelm any longer. Fredrick supposed he understood. He wished he had a moment to speak with him, but the universe was against them. They saw each other as they rushed about their duties, but they never had a moment alone to speak. They were able to share a smile now and again throughout the day. And a lot can be conveyed in a grin—at least that's what he had read.

As the ship moved into position for its mooring, Fredrick finally had a few moments to go over his and Wilhelm's plans. He had received written approval to see his aunt and uncle from Kubis and their Commanding Officer. He would need to keep it with his travel documents, in case there were any issues. Fredrick would leave everything on the ship with the exception of the one hundred and fifty dollars he had managed to save over the last two years, and a couple of photos of his parents, brother and sister. The rest, his clothes and everything else, could be replaced. He patted his pocket, feeling the coins and his billfold. He knew his aunt and uncle would have clothes for him and Wilhelm so he wasn't worried about that.

"Hey," Wilhelm called from behind him.

"Hello." Fredrick turned, pushing the continuing background noise away and planting what he hoped to be a pleasant expression on his face. "I haven't had a chance to talk to you all day. Sorry."

Wilhelm shrugged, delicious in his dress uniform. If he were honest, Wilhelm looked good in anything, but somehow this uniform genuinely made Wilhelm stand out. "It's a busy day. You ready? I heard we'll be mooring ..."

The noise plaguing him all day grew and for a moment Fredrick imagined a great beast might be attacking the ship. "Do you hear that?"

"Hear what? The ship?" Wilhelm asked, looking around.

"No ... it's like a groan or whine, perhaps even a growl. I've been hearing it since last night and the sound's getting louder."



Wilhelm beamed. "You and your super hearing. It's probably ship noises and the weather outside."

Fredrick's gaze narrowed as he glanced up and down the corridor. Yes, he agreed, he was probably hearing things, so he pushed the racket away and softly set his hand on Wilhelm's shoulder. "About yesterday ..."

Wilhelm held up a hand. "Don't worry, I took care of him last night after my final rounds. I told Gerhard that if he says anything, I would report him to the Chief Steward or our Commanding Officer. Perhaps both. I asked him who were they going to believe, him or me, especially with who my father is in Berlin. That took the wind out of his sails." His lips pulled up in a grin, enhancing the dimple in his chin.

"You think that'll work?"

"Well, when I saw him this afternoon, he wouldn't look at me, so I think we're in the clear. I wish I would've considered that before, but he caught me off guard and I panicked."

"I can't wait to get off this ship." Fredrick laughed with a glance to his timepiece: 19:20. "It'll be nice to feel the earth under my feet again."

"You say that every time we arrive at our destination."

"I suppose ..."

The ship listed backward as Fredrick stumbled to hold on, howls and screams filling his ears as he tried to regain his footing. An explosion rocked the ship yet again. Wilhelm lay on the floor and Fredrick knelt down to help his friend, trying to pull him up, blood dripping from a spot on his head where he must have gotten hit. "What's happening?" he yelled, trying to bring Wilhelm to consciousness by patting his face. "Wilhelm!" A rush of hot air engulfed him. Heat built around him as he tugged Wilhelm along the gangway to the airship's exit or one of the windows. "Wilhelm!" he yelled again. "Someone help! Please!" he called out, but was met with more screams and bellows for assistance from all over the ship. The moan he had been hearing was now a full-blown growl like someone had released all the dragons from hell to attack. Fredrick glanced up as a flood of reds, oranges and yellows came for him. A beast of flames rushed toward him as all senses seemed to vanish. "Oh my ..."

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

M.D. Neu is an international award-winning inclusive queer Fiction Writer with a love for writing and travel. Living in the heart of Silicon Valley, and growing up around technology, he's always been fascinated with what could be. When M.D. Neu isn't writing, he works for a non-profit and travels with his biggest supporter and his harshest critic, Eric, his husband of twenty-plus years.

## ALSO BY THE AUTHOR

### **A DRAGON FOR CHRISTMAS**

M.D. Neu

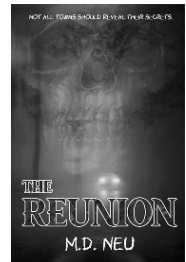
*Since Carmen was seven years old, she understood two things: she was going to be the strongest Dragon Keeper there ever was, and she was going to marry her best friend, Mattie.*



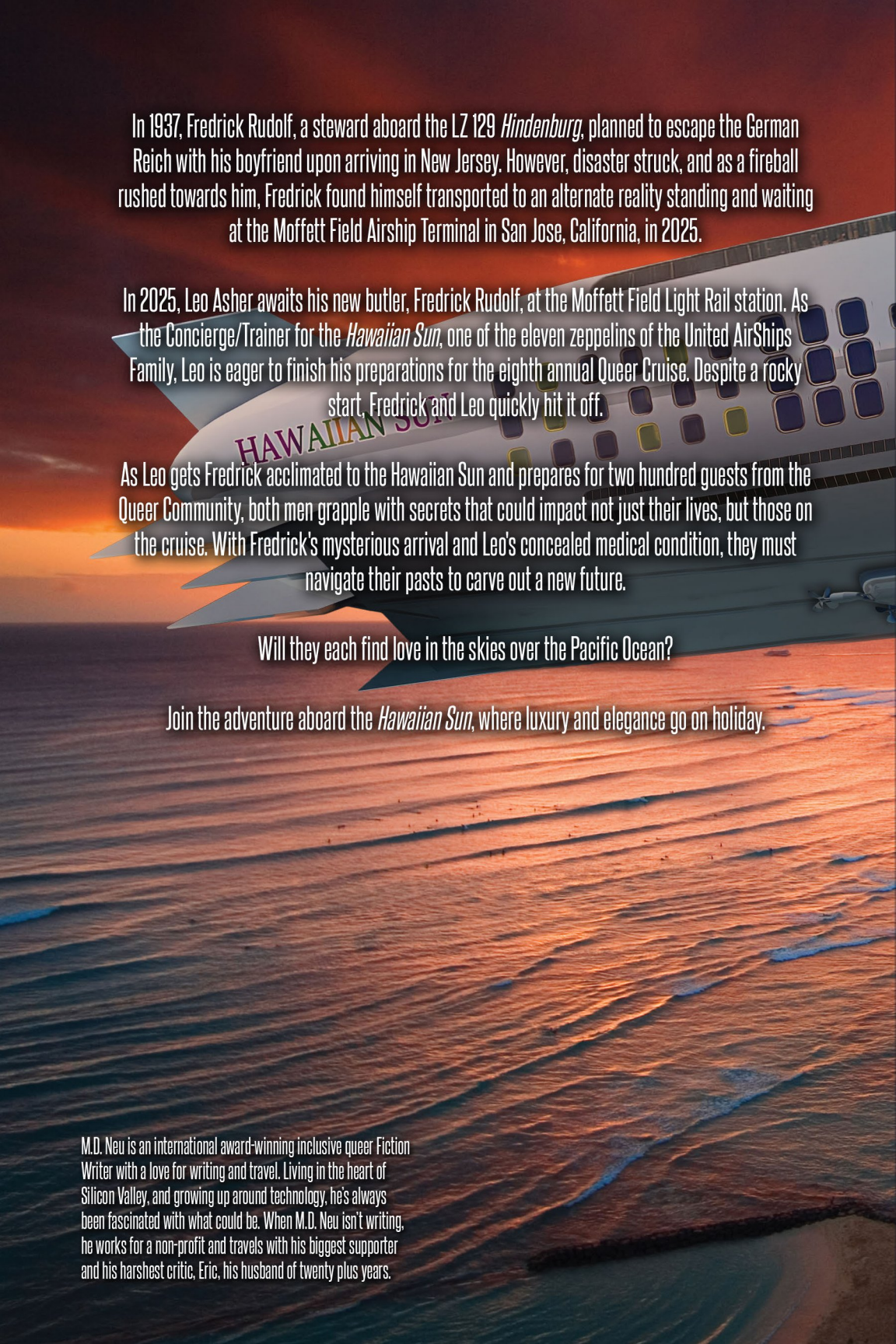
### **THE REUNION**

M.D. Neu

*It's been 20 years since the quiet Midwestern town of Lakeview was struck by tragedy.*



Available from Water Dragon Publishing in  
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In 1937, Fredrick Rudolf, a steward aboard the LZ 129 *Hindenburg*, planned to escape the German Reich with his boyfriend upon arriving in New Jersey. However, disaster struck, and as a fireball rushed towards him, Fredrick found himself transported to an alternate reality standing and waiting at the Moffett Field Airship Terminal in San Jose, California, in 2025.

In 2025, Leo Asher awaits his new butler, Fredrick Rudolf, at the Moffett Field Light Rail station. As the Concierge/Trainer for the *Hawaiian Sun*, one of the eleven zeppelins of the United AirShips Family, Leo is eager to finish his preparations for the eighth annual Queer Cruise. Despite a rocky start, Fredrick and Leo quickly hit it off.

As Leo gets Fredrick acclimated to the *Hawaiian Sun* and prepares for two hundred guests from the Queer Community, both men grapple with secrets that could impact not just their lives, but those on the cruise. With Fredrick's mysterious arrival and Leo's concealed medical condition, they must navigate their pasts to carve out a new future.

Will they each find love in the skies over the Pacific Ocean?

Join the adventure aboard the *Hawaiian Sun*, where luxury and elegance go on holiday.

M.D. Neu is an international award-winning inclusive queer Fiction Writer with a love for writing and travel. Living in the heart of Silicon Valley, and growing up around technology, he's always been fascinated with what could be. When M.D. Neu isn't writing, he works for a non-profit and travels with his biggest supporter and his harshest critic, Eric, his husband of twenty plus years.