

Always  
&  
Forever



The **eleventh hour** of the **eleventh day** of the **eleventh month**

November is poppy month, the time of the year when we wear a red poppy in memory of those who laid down their lives for our sakes

As Remembrance Sunday approaches, to pay tribute to our brave soldiers and those they've left behind, Total-e-Bound release our tribute anthology.

Total-e-bound wanted to do something to show our own real brave warriors—who fight to defend us and their countries every day—just how much their bravery means to us.

Being an ex-army wife myself, and having been brought up with the forces as a child, I know what it's like for the families when the soldiers go off to war. The pain, emotion and worry those families endure, never knowing if their loved ones will come home.

I also know of *their* strength and courage in the face of adversity, and I know just how much the forces wives band together to create a solid and structured support network for each other, the likes of which you just don't get in civilian life. But for sadly far too many, the pain and hardship goes on way beyond the scope of support networks and memorial parades, news reports and flag waving. As the years pass and the world moves on—news reports become historical texts. Memories fade for many but for some the pain is silent and deep, very real and enduring.

A forces life is not an easy one for the families waiting back home, but they are the backbone—the glue that holds it all together.

So for this anthology, we wanted to give something back. Give something to the wives and families who endure and who have loved and lost.

Total-e-Bound's profits from this anthology will be going to Forces Benevolent Funds to support and help those families who have lost their husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, in the recent conflicts.

Remember to wear your poppy with pride.

*Claire Siemaszkiewicz*  
Managing Director  
Total-e-Bound Publishing

*Our authors involved in this anthology would also like to say a few words as to why they decided to get involved in this project:*

The opportunity to partner with Total-e-Bound for such a wonderful cause was a chance I didn't wish to miss. While I am an author, first and foremost I am a Navy wife so if there was a way my writing could help families who have lost loved ones during these current conflicts, I knew I had to give it a shot. Military families are very often overlooked and I thank TEB for doing such a charity and allowing me to be a part of it.

*~Aliyah Burke*

I chose to participate in the Camouflaged Hearts anthology primarily due to the energy that evolved around the discussions and emails concerning this project. It just seemed right and meaningful. When I began the story, it took on its own voice and I loved writing about Emmy's journey. I hope you all enjoy!

*~Jennah Sharpe*

I have several family members who have served in the military, and I've seen first-hand, the struggles that military families endure as their soldiers are deployed. Participating in this anthology felt like tangible way to help in a situation where I've often felt helpless. In addition, I've also seen how love can flourish during these times, and I wanted to show that it's possible for something beautiful to arise from the horror of war.

*~Bronwyn Green*

I was thrilled by the opportunity to participate in the Camouflaged Heart anthology from Total-e-Bound. What a magnificent idea for a publisher to donate their profits to charity...and I wondered, how could I do less?

My daughter, you see, fell in love with a soldier. It was a wild, thrill of a ride, heightened by the realization he would be deploying to Iraq within weeks of their meeting.

When he returned safely, they married, a fairytale event in a local park, a hurried event before their move to Texas.

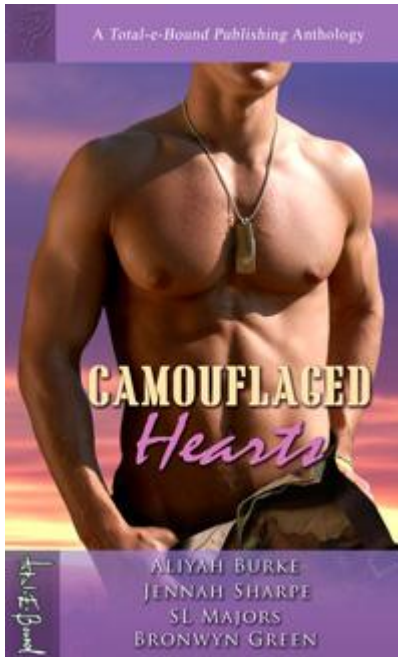
We're among the lucky. CJ has, thankfully, been safe. But as we know, a great number of his comrades have not been.

Whit and my beautiful grandbaby live with the knowledge that time is precious, that every moment with CJ is to be cherished.

I've seen amazing bravery as they each watch the calendar tick toward the date of the next deployment.

In honor of the brave service people throughout the world, I am proud to donate every penny of my earnings to charity, as well.

*~SL Majors*



[http://www.total-e-bound.com/product.asp?CAT\\_ID=&P\\_ID=185](http://www.total-e-bound.com/product.asp?CAT_ID=&P_ID=185)

'A Marriage of Convenience' by Aliyah Burke

A Naval pilot, a one night stand and years later a second chance, can they make it work this time?

Pharmacological student, Ayanna Barker, was working hard to give her and her son a good life. Sure, things were tight, but it was all worth it. The man who had given her her child has also given her the best night of her life...and she had never forgotten him.

US Navy pilot Lieutenant Michael Taylor loved the rush his job gave him but even that took a back seat to how he felt about the lovely Ayanna Barker, but circumstances keep them apart.

Four years later Michael sees her at a different military institution. Ayanna is more beautiful than his vivid memories had recalled her to be, but now she has a child...she has his child. Determined to be a part of her life, and his sons, Michael moves them in to his home and marries her. Each day reawakened emotions burn hotter and hotter as they try and keep things under control.

But can Michael and Ayanna realise what they share is so much more than just a marriage of convenience?

'In the Arms of a Pilot' by Jennah Sharpe

She found the touch she missed in another pilot, but the guilt could prove too much to bear.

Emmeline hated the thought of her man going off to war, but that was something she needed to keep to herself. When she received news that he was MIA, she didn't fall into grief as she thought she should have. Instead, she went looking for the arms of another man.

She found the touch she missed and craved in yet another RAF pilot. Ethan gave her everything her body missed and craved. But overcoming the guilt was another matter...for both of them.

'Double Time' by SL Majors

Well, it is for a good cause, Micah Collins tells herself. Queen and Country and all that, even if her suggestion is a bit over the top...

Micah offers big money for the local military fundraiser if she can purchase the services of two of England's finest soldiers.

And who could be better than devilishly handsome captain Trent Williams and sexy-as-sin captain Clayton Blackwell to help her get rid of the pesky problem of her virginity?

Since it's just for the weekend, Clayton and Trent, mates since university, agree to the unknown woman's odd request, not realizing they'll all get a lot more than they bargained for...

'From the Ruins' by Bronwyn Green

Cardiff Wales, 1943—Moira Boulton never expected her instant attraction to the American she meets thousands of miles from his home. Not in her home town. Not in the midst of a war. But there's no denying the desire burning between her and the foreign soldier, David Webber.

They barely have time to explore the explosive force between them when an air raid drives them to take shelter. Alone in a dark cellar, with bombs dropping overhead, they take comfort in each other and their undeniable passion.

When David disappears without a word, Moira is left to wonder, if a passion that burned so bright was nothing more than a pleasant diversion or if they actually can salvage a relationship from the ruins.

Excerpts:

Marriage of Convenience by Aliyah Burke

Michael Taylor had been talking on his cell phone when he'd stepped into the busy beer tent line. A jostle from behind had almost shoved him into the woman in front of him. His hand had swiped across the bottom of her back and in that second, everything else had faded away. Electrical currents had showered him. The second her soulful brown eyes had landed on his, it was as if he'd just hit mach one in his jet.

He'd stood still as her eyes had travelled hungrily over him. Part of him had wanted to preen while more of him had wanted to lift her up, carry her away from everyone and kiss her senseless. And keep going from there.

*What the hell am I thinking? I don't know this woman, but damn if I don't want to.*

She wore a purple open-backed shirt that perfectly offset the nutmeg hue of her skin and a pair of hip hugging black jeans. He saw sandals on her feet and if he moved his head just so, he could see the dark purple on her toenails.

While their physical connection was over almost immediately, the ardent impression still lingered between them. He wasn't blind to the desire swirling in her eyes no matter how she tried to pretend indifference.

Paying for her beer along with his, it seemed only natural to settle his large palm against the smooth, dark skin of her back as they left the overcrowded beer tent.

He had no problem following her. The gentle scent on her skin reached out and wound around him, making him yearn for more of her. He craved to find out if her perfume was just around her neck or if the tempting smell went all the way to her feet.

When she stopped to allow a group of people to pass, he leaned forward and murmured, "Michael," into her ear.

Her head turned, positioning her full tempting lips a hairsbreadth from his, and she whispered, "Ayanna."

He kissed her. He had no choice. Her mouth had teased him as it formed her name and challenged him to sample her lips. She tasted divine.

The innocent kiss quickly evolved into something more. Michael hungered for all that this woman offered. He dominated the kiss, using his tongue to sweep throughout the recesses of her mouth.

His cock swelled and dug into her side as Michael plundered her mouth. He groaned his pleasure as the kiss lengthened.

The roar of jets in the sky rumbled around them and put a miniscule distance between their bodies as he struggled for restraint.

Ayanna's lips were swollen from the force of their kiss.

"I want you," he stated bluntly as he watched the rapid rise and fall of her chest. She ran her tongue over her lips.

"Yes," she breathed huskily.

"After the show." Taking her hand, he led her to a vacant spot on the ground. They watched the show like any other couple, holding hands, exchanging kisses, and occasionally staring into each other's eyes. As the park had begun to empty after the show, Michael kept one muscled arm around her, anchoring them together. They'd stopped at the entrance. Pressing her against the cool wall of a ticket booth, Michael ran his hands through her short hair. Strong legs settled on either side of her thin body, eliminating any means of escape.

In the Arms of a Pilot by Jennah Sharpe

The day was warm enough to need a hat for sunshade but cool enough that I wrapped my navy cardigan around my shoulders.

I stopped for lunch in a little bakery on the main street just over the bridge from Rose's cottage. I couldn't resist the scent wafting out into the street. I didn't speak to anyone inside, yet the local crowds watched me closely. Pond Hollow was a small town, full of closely-knit people and the patrons of the bakery were no different. It was obvious to me, that I was the stranger in town and that my actions right then would be my first impression. Where they wondering why I was staying with Rose? No one asked. If they wondered what my intentions were with the bachelor who owned the farm, it didn't come up. I knew I would have to be very careful what I said to Rose. Word would definitely get back to town. I decided to keep my thoughts about Ethan to myself.

It wasn't until after dinner that I noticed a lantern glowing in the loft of the barn. Ethan's broad form cast a dark shadow across the boards of the loft.

Sitting in my room reading a Jane Austin novel, I suddenly had the urge to talk to another human being and my gaze kept being drawn to his fluid shadow in the barn. Rose unfortunately was no conversationalist but that was no matter. I missed having a male in my life. That decided it. It wasn't a sin to want male companionship, was it?

Ethan was pitching hay from the loft of the barn down to the cattle. He was shirtless, his skin smooth and brown from the sun. I watched quietly as he smoothed his dark hair from his forehead. It stuck up momentarily before flopping back down in his eyes. He was the epitome of masculine form.

"Hello," I called up to him. "I'm Emmy Rosthorn."

He grinned at my obvious foolishness. "We've met," he said quietly. I'm sure he thought I didn't notice but his gaze was appreciative as it flicked over my body. I'm sure my

face was as red as a cherry, but he gave no indication of noticing. At least he found me somewhat attractive. That was encouraging.

Right that moment as he gazed at me with such intensity, I'd never been lonelier for someone to put his arms around me. It seethed inside me, threatening to pour out all over him.

"Right then. Have a good day," I said, backing away. I wanted him more than anything, but the prospect was also terrifying. I would essentially be having an affair. My mind was in turmoil and completely at odds with the feelings in my body.

"Emmy..."

I turned toward him. "Yes?"

"I'm just on leave." He straightened and leaned on his pitchfork.

"I'm aware of that," I said hesitantly, wondering what he was getting at.

"And you're promised to another."

I crossed my arms over my breasts. "What's that got to do with anything?" I hadn't said anything about my attraction out loud.

"It's why there can't be anything between us." His gaze didn't leave mine.

"Did I ask that of you?"

He bowed his head and kicked at a pile of straw. "All but."

"You seem to know an awful lot about me." I took the opportunity to walk closer to him.

"We're both lonely, Emmy, and you're quite beautiful. I saw you watching me, and I just want you to know where I stand."

"Do you say this to all the girls?" He blushed then and I felt I had some semblance of control over the conversation. I pushed him a bit more. "Did you tell Rose the same thing?"

"Rose is like a sister to me. We practically grew up together and she doesn't have the need inside her that I see in your eyes. And such lovely blue eyes they are, Emmy."

I was close enough now to feel his breath on my face. He smelled of sweet hay, sunshine and sweat. It was a heady mixture. It struck me just how much I missed someone touching me, someone wrapping their arms around me. The feeling was something Will would have understood. I'm more than sure he would have wanted the same thing for himself, if I were lost to him. He would have taken the opportunity, I told myself. And so would I. I reached out to stroke Ethan's upper arm. He didn't move, but his breath hitched in his throat.

## Double Time by SL Majors

"Absolutely not." Captain Trent Williams's fingers formed a death-grip around the pint of beer on the table in front of him. Jaynie, his younger sister's best friend, could beg and cajole all night long. But he wasn't budging. "I am not fucking a woman I've never met. No matter how long I've been in the desert." Or how horny he was. He had morals and scruples to go along with his hard dick.

"It's only for two days," Jaynie shouted above the noise.

Clayton, his mate since university, hid his laugh by taking a deep swig from the amber liquid in his mug. What the hell was a best friend for, anyway, if not to laugh his ass off when his mate was faced with female disaster?

It was no accident that she'd invited him and Clayton to a public place that served up loud, throbbing music, cocktail waitresses in short, short skirts, and lots and lots of beer. Get him liquored up, that would be Jaynie's plan, and then move in for the kill.

She batted her baby blues hopefully. "Please, Trent? It's for a good cause. Promise."

"It's always for a good cause. Last time it was posing for a calendar with a puppy."

"And we raised a mint for the dog shelter."

Unfortunately for her and this week's charity, he was wiser than he'd been last time he was home. And he'd made sure not to drink more than a pint.

"Sorry, love. You'll have to find some other bloke."

"Blokes."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Blokes." She repeated. "The lady in question specifically requested you..." Jaynie had the good grace to flush with embarrassment before glancing at the table. "And Clayton."

Trent looked at his comrade.

"Wait. Both of us?" Clayton asked.

"She doesn't just want me? She wants...?" Trent trailed off, snapping his mouth shut. Jaynie was a harebrained mastermind, but this? She might as well have dropped an IED in the middle of the room.

"Yes. And she's willing to pay for it. Uh, for you. Willing to pay for both of you. Handsomely, I might add." She smiled sunnily, her embarrassment apparently forgotten. "Did I mention it's for a good cause?"

"Jesus, Jaynie," Clayton said. Beer sloshed over the rim of his glass. "Trent's right. You're out of your mind."

"Not so funny now, is it, mate?"

"What kind of woman pays for sex with a stranger?" Clayton asked.

"Not a stranger," she corrected. "Two of them. Actually, you both have quite the reputation in town, so it's not as if you're an unknown. Actually, I wish I'd thought of it myself. I'd have bought you in a heartbeat."

Clayton choked on a drink of beer. Trent smacked him on the back.

"It was the calendar," Jaynie said, going on as if neither had spoken. "Mr. July." She nodded to Trent. "Hot enough to sizzle for summer. And Mr. December." She grinned at Clayton. "Cool as ice. In fact..." She reached into her handbag and pulled out a cheque book. She uncapped a ballpoint pen, then started to scrawl her signature on the bottom line.

Trent's blood heated to a slow boil. "We are not sleeping with you, Jaynie."

"Then...?"

"Or the mystery woman," he added.

She pouted. "Ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand..." Clayton trailed off.

"And it's all or nothing. She gets both of you, or she wants neither. Think about it." She dropped her pen and curled her hand around Trent's wrist. "No one will ever know."

"Not like the damn calendar," Clayton grumbled.

"Ten thousand quid to benefit John MacDougal's family."

"Fuck." John MacDougal's family. He'd served in the Middle East with John. Fine man. Fine soldier. With three-year-old twins. Fuck. Trent took a long drink from his beer. "That's low, Jaynie, even for you."

"I didn't make the offer," she said, softly. The teasing was gone. Nothing but the weight of a fallen comrade shrouded the table. Even the music seemed to recede.

They all knew John and Susan. Jaynie had gone to school with the couple. He and Clayton knew John from the Army. Trent remembered that the man had carried a picture of the twin girls and his wife in his pocket, tucked inside a small Bible. *Fuck.*

"What does she want us to do?"

At Clayton's question, Trent raised a brow.

"She's willing to send a car for you on Friday, around tea time. You'll be returned on Sunday, most likely in the afternoon, if that suits you. You could probably negotiate a longer stay if needed." She smiled sweetly, innocently. She was neither, Trent knew.

"That wasn't my question," Clayton said.

"Oh, the usual, I suppose." She waved a hand dismissively. "Whatever it is that two men do when they get a sexy woman in bed."

"Sexy?" Clayton asked.

Trent shouldn't have clapped Clayton on the back. He should have boxed the man's ears. The idea was preposterous. Outrageous.

"Sexy," Jaynie repeated.

"So why is she paying for a fuck?" Trent asked.

"You're being crude, Captain."

"Answer Clayton's question, Jaynie."

"I didn't ask. I took the money and ran."

Very carefully, he enunciated each word. "You took the money?"

"Oh. Uhm. Well..."

He let her dangle from the noose of her own words.

"I knew you wouldn't say no, not when you knew it was for Susan and the wee babies." This time, she appealed to Clayton. Smart woman. "You like don't have to touch each other. Just her. I think."

"What the hell?" Trent demanded.

She ignored him and continued to look at Clayton. "You could even take turns. One of you in her bedroom at a time. Wear a condom if you want."

"Jaynie," Trent warned.

"Ten thousand quid," she said again. "Not for you, for the MacDougals."

"Susan needs it," Clayton reminded Trent. "And we always said we'd do what we needed to in order to help out."

He looked from Clayton to Jaynie, and then back again. They had both lost their collective minds. The calendar was beginning to look as if it had been one of her better ideas.

"She's John's widow, Clayton." Jaynie stroked the back of Clayton's hand and ignored Trent. "No commitments or obligations. You'll be making the generous donor happy as well as helping Susan and the children."

Trent brought his fist down on the table. All three beer mugs jumped. "Forget it."

"I'm in," Clayton said.

Trent blinked. "You're what?"

"It's for a good cause, mate. Queen and country and all that."

From the Ruins by Bronwyn Green

"Where are you going? I just got here."

Moira Boulton and her friend, Bethan, stopped on the stairs of the USO dance hall and stared at the handsome stranger with the American accent and the glacier-blue eyes. Her breath stalled in her chest as she met his gaze. She would have thought that eyes the colour of a winter sky would be cold and remote, but not his. Fiery and intense, his gaze raked over her body, sending tingles coiling through her middle.

Despite his overly forward behaviour, her lips twitched in amusement. "I'm sorry, sir, but do we know each other?"

Flashing her a devastating smile, he bowed slightly, his burnished brown hair drooping over his forehead. "I'm Private David Webber of the United States Army, and if I'm not mistaken, you're the mother of my future children."

His companions whom she'd barely noticed chuckled good naturedly as a startled laugh escaped her. "The mother of your children, you say?"

"Well, future children," he said with a wink.

"How often does that line actually work?"

"I don't know. You're the only one I'm ever going to say it to."

He obviously wasn't serious, but he was charming. Shaking her head in bemusement, she offered him her hand. "I'm Moira Boulton and this is my friend, Bethan Jones."

He nodded politely to her friend as his large, warm hand closed around Moira's. "Will you give me the honour of the next dance?" he asked. "After all, we have a wedding to plan."

For a moment, she imagined the sensation of laying her head against his broad chest and feeling his strong arms around her. It was tempting to return to the loud, crowded hall, but she needed to get home. "The last bus is leaving shortly, and we need to be on it."

His disappointment appeared genuine, but how could it be? After all, they'd just met. "I'm sure there are plenty of other girls inside who would love to dance with you," she said

as she pulled her hand free, ignoring the sour feeling in her stomach as she imagined Mary Katherine Landis in his arms.

He frowned waving away the suggestion and cocked his head toward the open door of the dance hall. "Give me your hand."

There was something about this man that encouraged her trust. Even if Bethan hadn't been there, she'd still feel safe with him, but somehow that same sense of trust left her feeling somewhat unnerved. They were in the middle of a war, for God's sake, not to mention the fact they didn't know one another. But as she studied his open expression, she realised she wanted to know him. Taking a leap of faith, she placed her hand in his again and allowed him to lead her to the walk-way at the bottom of the stairs.

A lively tune drifted from the building along with the scent of cigarette smoke, and David gently pulled her into his arms. "At least give me the pleasure of a dance until your bus arrives."

She glanced around the street. "Here?"

He gestured to the darkening sky. "The moon is almost full, and the stars seem nearly close enough to touch. But you're still the most beautiful sight here."

Following his lead, she swayed to the faint strains of music. "You're a right charmer, Mr. Webber."

"David," he corrected smoothly. "And I only speak the truth."

She had no doubt she was nothing more than a passing fancy for him. After all, he was stuck in a foreign country, and she was a diversion. As handsome and charming as he was, she was likely one of many such diversions. The question was, did she care? Despite Bethan's disapproving stare, Moira melted into David's warm embrace.

He tucked her hair behind her ear as he stared into her eyes. "You're a hard woman to catch, Moira."

She frowned. "Beg your pardon?"

"I've been trying to meet you for the last three weeks, but every time I make it to the hall, you're getting on that damnable bus."

Moira laughed, shaking her head.

"It's true. I snuck out early tonight in hopes of at least one dance with the most bewitching woman I've ever seen."

His compliments warmed her, false though they might be. "You do tell a lovely tale."

Shaking his head, he leaned toward her, his lips hovering above hers. "And you're stubborn," he muttered. "You ought to know, I'm about to kiss you."

"I should hope so," she breathed.

His lips brushed across hers, the barest of touches. With a soft caress, he cupped her cheek as he deepened the kiss. Opening against the gentle press of his mouth, her lips parted and welcomed the slight stroke of his tongue against hers. He tasted of coffee and rich, warm male.

For a moment, she forgot they were on a public street. She forgot that they'd only just met. She forgot everything but the pleasure of his kiss and the shelter of his embrace.

"Moirira!" Bethan snapped, breaking the blissful spell David wove around her. "The bus is coming."

David raised his head, regret plain in his gaze. "When can I see you again?"

She glanced at the approaching vehicle, torn between the desire to stay and the relief that she couldn't. "I don't know."

"Be here tomorrow night."

She took a step back, sanity trickling back. "How do I know you'll be here?"

Releasing his hold on her, he unbuckled the brown leather band of his wristwatch and pressed the timepiece into her hand and held it there. "My sister gave this to me before I shipped out."

Moirira tried to follow his logic, but shook her head in confusion.

A warm smile curved the lips that had so recently been on hers. "She told me she'd kill me if I came home without it. "I'll be back because I have to get my watch. And you'll be here so you can return it to me." Gently, he brushed her hair from her eyes. "I'll be here to see you, because I can't go home without it."

Clearly pleased with his logic, he dropped another kiss on her upturned mouth.

"How do you know I won't sell it in the meanwhile?"

"You won't," he said as he brushed his thumb over her cheekbone. He gave her another quick kiss and walked her to the open door of the bus.

Camouflaged Hearts is available for sale from Monday 12th November.

[http://www.total-e-bound.com/product.asp?CAT\\_ID=&P\\_ID=185](http://www.total-e-bound.com/product.asp?CAT_ID=&P_ID=185)

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