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Dawn Over Kitty Hawk: The Novel of the Wright Brothers

Walter J. Boyne

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The names Wilbur and Orville Wright stand out in history as the inventors of the airplane, but lost in history are those who in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth shared the same passion: to develop the first powered aircraft. Some spent entire lives and fortunes chasing the dream, including men like the embittered Augustus Herring, who'd flown a heavier than air machine for several seconds in 1898; the pompous Samuel Pierpont Langley, of the Smithsonian Institution, who was backed by the US War Department, and even the legendary American inventor Alexander Graham Bell. These men, along with European competitors such as Louis Blériot, chased what many believed to be the impossible dream of manned, powered flight. But the Wright Brothers were the first to succeed, thanks to a combination of courage, genius, and downright stubbornness! Many followed in their footsteps, including such arch-competitors as Glenn Curtiss.

The Wright Brothers' father was a huge factor who dominated their lives, trying to control their every thought and action. A bishop of the United Brethren Church, Milton Wright wanted his sons to succeed in their bicycle shop in Dayton, Ohio, not risk their lives. Bishop Wright saw no reason for his sons to risk everything on an isolated, windy beach in faraway North Carolina a beach called Kitty Hawk. He tried to quash their dream, but Orville and Wilbur rebelled, ultimately proving the impossible by flying on December 17, 1903. They brought the dawn of aviation, the industry that dominated the twentieth century and set the stage for the space race.

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