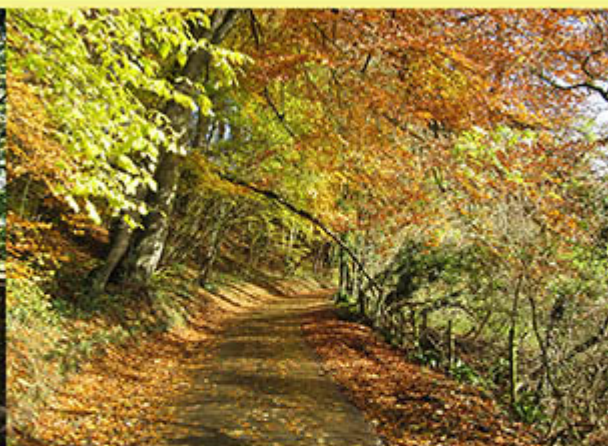


LOVE IS AN OPEN ROAD



Don't Read in the Closet 2015

**BECOMING DAD**

**MA Jackson**

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# Love is an Open Road

*An M/M Romance series*

## BECOMING DAD

**By M.A. Jackson**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the Love is an Open Road promotion sponsored by the Goodreads M/M Romance Group and is published as a gift to you.

### What Is Love is an Open Road?

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 these authors 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 is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, 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.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

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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M/M Romance Group Publication

# BECOMING DAD

By M.A. Jackson

## Photo Description

A man, his broad, bare, and tattooed back facing the photographer, holds a small, sleeping newborn baby. Tiny hands and fingers stretch out across the man's shoulders, almost clutching a set of dog tags that rest over the scripted, Old-English style inked word of "Family".

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*It's been seven months since I have been deployed. It's been nine months since we found our surrogate. So much has happened in so little time. It should be happening anytime now; our baby coming into the world. I hated leaving him to handle this alone. I should be home in three months. The baby will be here and I can finally meet him/her. Please tell our story?*

*Sincerely,*

*Reeeelly*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** military, men with children, established couples, homecoming/reunited, shower sex

**Word Count:** 5,903

*Acknowledgements*

To CC, KW, Al, DC, and all the others who helped make this story better; my heartfelt thanks and gratitude are given freely and without end. Reeeeeelly, I hope you truly enjoy the tale I've spun for you.

# BECOMING DAD

**By M.A. Jackson**

Staff Sergeant Kyle Bennington ducked his head through the open portal of the KC-135, pausing as he stepped out onto the platform to wait his turn to descend, and looked out over the base's tarmac. The cavernous hangar doors yawned open with more military personnel and family members spilling out of the darkened depths. A rope-lined barrier held back the crowd waiting for their loved ones to disembark.

The early spring sun's bright rays reached inside the shed, brightening the dimness, and momentarily blinding him. He squinted in spite of the mirrored shades he wore, still trying to see his family past the glare. The ticking of the engines slowed as they shut down, the quiet intense and immense after the hours-long flight home from the Middle East.

Cool New England air breezed around Kyle, a welcome caress after the stinging, sand-filled winds that ripped about the body in Afghanistan. Though the weather was warming, the smell of the snow that had been on the ground until recently lingered. He breathed in the scent of home, of jet fuel on the crisp air, and heard the crowd's cheers and sobs as each soldier before him set first foot on U.S. soil once again.

Somewhere in the midst of welcoming families was his partner, his Alex, and their babies. The family he had left behind to defend their way of life had grown while he was away. Nervous about the changes, but ready to get back to his life, he steadied himself, shook off the daze of the sun, and started down the metal stairs, his eyes slowly gaining focus on the marked barrier that separated him from his enlarged family.

The crowd seemed to part just for him, even though Kyle knew it was only his imagination, and he walked with the line of men and women searching for their loved ones. Then, as if he had conjured him, there was Alex. His blond hair blew in the chill wind, and the scarf Celina, Alex's sister, had knitted flowed out behind him like a beckoning flag. Celina stood beside Alex and waved at Kyle, her other hand curled around the granddaddy of a contraption Kyle assumed was the baby stroller Alex had purchased when their surrogate came back with the news that they were having twins.



Kyle continued in the line, waiting his turn to move closer. Alex's mouth curled into a grin, welcoming him, and his crooked smile revealed an uneven set of white teeth. It took everything Kyle had to keep from pushing past the line of returning soldiers to sprint into his arms.

He began jogging, hastily slipping through the spaces between the soldiers as they found their loved ones, his eyes remaining focused on Alex's face. He grinned as Alex stumbled, Celina pushing him closer to the front of the crowd. Alex gave her a look, his mouth never losing the happy curve. He turned then and shoved past a kissing couple, moving forward, leaning across the barrier, and reaching for Kyle. Kyle crossed out of the line and met him, wrapped his arms around Alex and drew in a breath filled with cold Massachusetts air, and the fragrant scent of Alex's cologne.

"I made it back, safe and sound, as promised." Kyle huffed out a breath, closing his eyes against the emotions welling up, and squeezed Alex tighter.

"Welcome home, Kyle," Alex murmured, the sound disappearing on the wind when Alex reached up, pushed back Kyle's sunglasses, and brought their mouths together.

\*\*\*\*

The ride home from the base hadn't changed much. The roads were the same, just a few added streetlights and the ever-present construction on the streets. Here and there, he could see where a business had gone in and another one had closed. The trees, some still winter bare, were just starting to bud with spring's first green leaves. The scenery, however, wasn't what held his interest.

Kyle turned around in his seat, probably for the fiftieth time, and looked back at the two car seats buckled and tethered to the seat and floorboards of Alex's roomy SUV. Since the car seats had to be installed facing the rear of the vehicle, the handles and hoods of the carriers actually hid a full-on view of the children from him. Several times he had to stop himself from adjusting the hoods and disturbing the sleeping boys.

"Go on. Make it to where you can see them," Alex interrupted his thoughts.

Kyle grinned. "You know me so well." He reached back, moving the obstruction from his view of his children. He still couldn't see their faces but he stroked one finger over the top of each little head.

Even after all these months, he still couldn't believe they were now parents of twin boys. The biggest change he had a bit of control over during his absence

and it still had him awed. He was a father, now. Kyle and Alex had been together, a couple, but now they were a family.

“Tell me again, how did this happen? I mean, I read the letter, but that was months ago.”

Alex laughed and shifted, looking up into the rearview mirror. “Right, well, sometimes when a man and a woman procreate, a gay couple gets lucky...”

Kyle glared at Alex, turning in his seat to give his husband the full effect. “I know that, smart-ass. Just talk to me.” He looked back at the boys again and reached through to touch Ethan and James one more time.

“You remember we stored a couple of donations just in case Celina had problems?”

“Yeah, but I didn’t realize... I didn’t think they would end up looking completely like me since you and Celina are so similar.”

“It happens, even with fraternal and singletons; the babies looking more like one parent over the other.”

The images sent to Kyle, both online as well as the physical copies he’d received in letters, didn’t do the boys justice. Both boys had most of his physical characteristics, dark hair and blue eyes, though he’d been told that could change later on. He and Alex’s sister had made beautiful children, and the transition had been amazing to watch, even belatedly through the jpegs. They had gone from blobs on an ultrasound to looking like wrinkly, red-faced old men, after Celina had given birth. Then the pristine, tiny babies he saw this morning. He wondered if they still had the newborn dark blue eyes or if they had changed already.

The wisps of baby fine black hair were covered by matching bright blue little skullcaps, but Kyle recalled from Alex’s letters and photos the description of his sons. His own black hair was shorn short for duty, and he ran a hand over his head, listening to Alex as he spoke more about Celina’s pregnancy. He’d read it all, devouring each letter and email over the past year, and it brought back every emotion and doubt to hear it in Alex’s dulcet tenor tones.

Kyle looked to his children again, wanting to hurry the trip, but dreading it, too. He wanted to hold his boys. They’d slept the entire time they were on the base and had remained so during the drive so far. Alex had packed them into the car and taken Celina home while he had gone through customs and debriefing, but being this close and still denied was wearing on him.

“Since Celina is my twin, it was always a possibility the egg would split, but we never expected them to end up identical. Usually it’s the drugs or the number of implants that bring about a case of multiples.” The blinker clicked, ticking on Kyle’s nerves as he stroked his fingers over one of the knitted caps and Alex continued to speak.

“After the first set didn’t take, I gave the go-ahead to try again, since we had just enough to attempt one more IVF. And that time she caught.” Alex turned into the subdivision, and Kyle leaned with the car, still gently touching one baby cap.

“When they told us that there were twins, Celina about had a heart attack, since both her other pregnancies had been singletons. I expected that two different eggs implanted. We were both surprised to hear that one egg had split.”

Kyle chuckled as the car came to a stop. “I remember laughing as I read the emails from both you and Celina.” He turned around and faced Alex, grinning at him. “Show me how to detangle the kids and I’ll unload the bags later.”

Alex rested his forehead against Kyle’s. “I’ll show you, but you might want to get everything out at once. Any minute no—”

Alex’s sentence cut off in mid-word because the wails that came from the back seat rent the air and startled Kyle.

“What the hell?”

Alex laughed. “We stopped.”

“Seriously?”

“Oh, yes. Hurry now before we’re deafened, because it’s only going to get worse.” Alex slid out the driver side and opened the backdoor. “Alright soldiers, enough. Daddy is home and so are we. Let’s get inside.”

Alex looked up at Kyle as he deftly hit the buckle, releasing the seat belt over the car seat, and pressed the button on the handle, lifting the carrier out of the plastic base still attached to the seat. “Easy as pie, now hurry up and get James.”

As soon as Alex swung the carrier out of the car, Ethan’s crying stopped. “That’s my little man.”

Kyle blinked and pushed open the door, sliding his long legs out to the ground. He tugged open the passenger door and eyed the belts. James’ crying

kicked up, the mewling sound beginning to strain the infant's voice. "Pie, huh?"

Alex drew the canopy over Ethan's head and closed the door, walking around the truck to help. "You are a United States Air Force jet mechanic and you can't figure out a car seat?"

Kyle glared at Alex. "Only two buttons, so yeah, not complicated enough."

"Not complicated enough, huh? God, I have missed you."

Alex leaned in and slanted a kiss on Kyle's mouth. Kyle hummed, pressing harder against Alex, moving with him as he continued to give Ethan's carrier a slight sway to hold the baby's tears at bay. James' cries crescendoed, though, and Kyle groaned as he broke away. "There is no excuse for being a cock block, son."

Alex snorted and reached across the seat, unbuckled the safety belt, and pressed the button to free the carrier from its base. "Now, now, no foul language this early in the relationship. Young minds are impressionable."

"You are so full of S-H-I-T." Kyle muttered and pulled at James' seat, only to have his arm jerked back by the seat belt still crossed over the handle. He stumbled, nearly dropping the carrier, and James screeched even louder.

"Fuck! How in the hell did you do that so easily?"

"Easy, Sergeant," Alex said, and steadied Kyle with his other hand. Bending, he placed Ethan's carrier on the sidewalk and untangled Kyle and James. "It takes practice, babe, and you'll get it, eventually."

"All right, fine." Kyle rubbed a hand over his face as Alex set the baby on the ground beside his twin. "I'll just get my bags." He waved a hand over the two baby carriers. "You can get those right?"

Alex arched a brow. "You're funny. You want to see how I've been doing this for the past month?" He pressed the button on his key fob to open the tailgate of the SUV.

Kyle set the large green duffle down in the street then grabbed a second bag. "Yeah, show me. I figure sometime within the next month I'll have to do it all on my own. You might as well keep playing teacher."

Alex shot him the bird and then reached into the truck, dumping the third bag Kyle came home with out on to the street.

"Watch it or no gifts for you."

Smirking, Alex dragged out the monster stroller, flipping it open with one swift jerk. He grabbed Ethan's carrier, attaching it to the stroller base then plucked up James and placed him into the next space, too. He grabbed the smallest bag Kyle brought with him and tucked it into the basket underneath the boys before slinging the next smallest sea bag across his back.

Jerking up the diaper bag, he swung it over his shoulder then gestured at the entire carriage ensemble. "Drive, flyboy. No loop-the-loops, or wheelies, or you will overbalance. And don't forget the rest of your junk, too."

Kyle stared after Alex as he made his way up the walk towards their brownstone, Kyle's luggage bouncing with each step. He glanced down at the stroller and took a deep breath. It must have been a sign of some sort because as soon as the door to the house opened the children began to cry again.

Kyle shook his head. James' crying had ceased once Alex had pulled him from the car, but as they sat, waiting for Kyle to ferry them along, both boys took up the chorus once more.

Shouldering the final go bag, Kyle wrapped his hands around the handle of the stroller, gently pushing the contraption up onto the drive and toward the house. He sighed as the wails softened, then silenced with each step he took.

Once again, he noticed the changes that had occurred over the past year. He expected them, just like the ones he'd seen as they drove home from the base, despite not wanting to see the differences. When he had left, the leaves had been in full bloom, spring was making a slow slide into summer. Now, new buds were just popping from the trees, the flower beds were taking on the rainbow hues of the season, and, through it all, their home remained the same. Alex usually made very few minor changes; furniture rearranged or new linens in their bedroom, while he had been deployed. He liked coming home to that sameness, and Alex had kept that tradition since they'd bought and renovated the old brownstone.

Kyle tensed, his fingers tightening on the handle of the stroller, as he neared the open front door. He knew there would be changes in here, too. He and Alex had spoken about the additions necessary to welcome their children. Knowing and seeing were two different things and his heart raced, his breath caught, as he maneuvered the stroller inside the foyer.

"Welcome home, baby." Alex was standing in front of the fireplace, which had a small fence around the riverstone hearth. His hands were folded behind his back as if hiding something, and then he spread his arms, encompassing the room, a huge grin on his face. "Well?"

Kyle dropped his go bag and began to breathe again as he looked over the entryway and sitting room. The changes were subtle, not at all drastic, and necessary for their family to grow. It was a relief to see that Alex hadn't completely rearranged their life while he'd been away. The house still looked the same, the color scheme hadn't changed, but it did have a different feel to it. It no longer seemed like a bachelor pad, and now had an aura of a home.

Glancing around, he took in the changes to the wide, mostly open space of the first floor. A wooden and metal gate separated the area between the sitting room and the dining area and the industrial kitchen. Kyle spotted two high chairs against the wall behind their butcher block table, and a second gate that divided out the kitchen. What looked like small white knobs had been added to the doors of the glass front cabinets, stainless steel refrigerator, and ovens.

He pondered over the new additions before walking forward into the main room. All-in-all the changes didn't bother him so far. Kyle clung on to the stroller's handle, rocking it forward and back to keep the motion going for the babies, and he continued to stare at the alterations to their home.

Most of the furniture remained the same. The fat emerald and sapphire throw pillows and blankets nested on the comfortable and huge sectional sofa, which curved around the room's fireplace and held court with the La-Z-Boy rocker-recliner. The square, low coffee table and end tables had been replaced with rounded ones. The hardwood flooring had been covered with a large area rug that matched the neutral color of the furniture with ribbons of blue and green jewel tones flowing along the edges.

It was then that Kyle noticed how neat and clean, how utterly organized the room felt. He and Alex had never been the overly tidy sort, managing to have a bit of odds and ends left lying about. The room was different as there was almost no clutter left anywhere now. All of Alex's books were up on the shelving units around the room.

The television was now mounted to the ceiling and tilted to a proper viewing angle. Cords from the electronics, which had once spaghetti-ed behind the entertainment center, now ran in sleek-lined tubes along the walls and baseboards then up to the floating shelves that had replaced the bulky wooden home theater center. His Xbox, secured on a higher shelf, stood next to the Blu-ray player, the remotes and game controllers all lined up like soldiers at roll call.

Baby swings sat across from one another and small framed chairs with bars of hanging toys in vibrant colors rested on the floor. He turned to Alex and nodded, still a bit stunned by the changes but liking what he saw.

“I realize some of this, the baby safety proofing and such, is a bit early, but I wanted to get used to having them up. Believe me it was quite a difference when I came down one morning at three a.m. and stumbled over the gate blocking off the kitchen in my quest for the Keurig.”

Kyle nodded and laughed. Alex joined him, the sound washing over and relaxing him. “It’s all good, Alex.” He swallowed. “I’m sorry you had to do it all by yourself.”

“*Pfft*... those women in the spouse group are fiends when it comes to things like this. I think me and a couple of the other househusbands just stood back as they planned and the dust flew.”

Kyle chuckled again, watching Alex as he stepped forward and reached into the stroller, lifting James out first and settling him into the swing. His little head lolled to the side with the motions of the swing, and Alex tugged the cap from his head. Wild, black baby hair stood on end, and his eyes opened. Kyle watched, his shock at the changes fading even more as he got to see his son’s eyes for the first time. The dark, crystal-clear blue had changed, and they were so unlike his own eyes that it took his breath away again. The small lids slipped closed, hiding the green color from view as James slipped off to sleep with the rocking motion of the swing.

“I can imagine.” Kyle walked around and bent down to retrieve Ethan. Watching as Alex showed him how the buckles worked, he unclipped everything and lifted the baby out of the carrier to his shoulder.

“Oh, watch your uniform.”

“What?”

Ethan struggled in his arms, giving a small, displeased cry, and Kyle held him away from his body to find the problem. Ethan’s eyes widened, the color a startling and vivid green just like Alex’s. The combination of his dark hair and Alex’s eyes stunned him. In choosing Celina as their surrogate, Alex and Kyle had managed to have children that looked like both of them. He stared at his son in wonder.

“Don’t hold him out like that, he needs support.” Alex held out his hands to take the baby then helped Kyle adjust his hold on Ethan.

“Close, got it.” Kyle cradled Ethan near his chest and looked at Alex, wincing as Ethan began to whimper again.

“What did I do?”

Alex slipped Ethan from Kyle’s arms and placed him in the swing opposite of James. “The cloth, babe. It’s rough against their little bodies. Go change and you can hold him again.”

Kyle looked down at his sons, then around the room, wondering when he had lost control of the situation. He glanced back up at Alex. “Join me?”

Alex smiled at him. “Sure. It’s almost naptime, anyway. I’ll just put them down in the bedroom and be with you in a bit.”

Kyle hurdled the gate to the hallway, making his way up to their bedroom, noticing more changes here and there. He could hear Alex cooing and talking to their sons, and he quickly stripped off his desert camouflage uniform. His boots hit the floor with a resounding thud, and he padded, nude, into their en suite.

The instant hot water nearly made him gasp in surprise, but he sighed and leaned against the slowly warming tiles of the stall. The simple scents of their bathroom, Alex’s Old Spice body wash and the same scent of his shampoo, nearly brought tears to his eyes. He was finally home. And while many things had changed, he had an entire month off to reacquaint himself with his husband and his new children.

Rubbing his hands over his face, Kyle just stood under the needle-like spray and breathed in the scents of home, telling himself that he hadn’t been left behind and he would adjust to the newness. He shivered when cold air flowed in next to him and Alex’s arms wrapped about his middle.

Now, this, this was familiar and oh so very welcome.

“Isn’t this cozy?” Alex breathed into his ear and nestled closer to Kyle’s back. Kyle leaned against him, nodding, as the water cascaded over them both.

“What about Ethan and James?”

Alex pointed out the shower door, and Kyle wiped away the condensation from the glass. On the wall opposite to the shower was a small box. Red lights flickered and he heard, just barely over the water, the little noises of the boys. “What is it?”

“Intercom. I had it installed throughout the house. There’s a monitor in each room, along with a cam in the nursery. A viewing monitor is also installed in



our room.” Alex ran his hands up Kyle’s stomach, fingers gliding over his abs to cover his pectorals.

Kyle hummed, turning his head to press his mouth to Alex’s. “Convenient.”

Alex nodded. “I figure we’ve got about an hour or so, though, we might still hear them occasionally.” He leaned back, covering his mouth as a yawn split his face.

Kyle moved, putting his back to the showerhead, and tugged Alex close to him again. “Tired?”

“*Mmm*, but I’ll stay awake for this.” Alex wrapped his hand around Kyle’s prick, stroking in long, slow motions.

“I’ll not last long if you do that,” Kyle murmured and slanted his mouth over Alex’s.

Kyle slid his tongue past Alex’s lips, relearning his husband’s mouth. Alex responded in kind, sucking on Kyle’s tongue and humming. The motions, familiar and beloved as well as missed, made Kyle’s heart race and he found his focus divided, listening for the smallest sound to come out of the intercom and interrupt them, and the fact that he had Alex in his arms again after a year’s time.

“They are fine,” Alex whispered and tugged a tuft of Kyle’s hair. “Pay attention to me now because we won’t get these moments too often.”

Kyle nodded and bent to kiss Alex again, but Alex stopped him.

“You certain you are all right with all the changes? I know we had to plan most of everything through messages,” Alex said and reached up to frame Kyle’s face with both hands. “I know you told me to do what was necessary, but this is our home, babe. Do you like it?”

Kyle smiled and rested his forehead on Alex’s. “It’s home, Alex. Best thing I have seen in a year. Now, can we continue?”

Alex laughed and pressed their mouths together. “Yes, let me welcome you home properly.”

“About damned time,” Kyle muttered and then was rendered silent when Alex canted his hips against Kyle. Their erections rubbed together, slick enough with water but with just the right amount of friction to raise his desire.

Closing his eyes, he rocked his hips, his mouth on Alex’s as they moved together. Kyle groaned as Alex’s hand wrapped about his cock, squeezing and

stroking, and adding another layer to the sensations between them. He hadn't been lying when he said he wouldn't last long. Each movement, each tug and pull on his skin, brought him closer to finishing and he most likely wouldn't be able to wait for Alex.

Alex kissed him as if it was the last thing on Earth he would ever do again. Kyle sucked on his tongue, nibbled at Alex's mouth, and swallowed every sound Alex offered him. Alex's other hand clenched on his asscheek, holding Kyle as close as he possibly could and still move, his motions just as urgent and needy as Kyle's.

As soon as Kyle curled his fingers around Alex, Alex's entire body stiffened and his release spurted over Kyle's fingers. The heat of the water paled in comparison, and Kyle thrust his prick into Alex's clenching fingers. He groaned, low and deep in his throat as Alex recovered enough to bring him to climax.

Panting and huffing out breaths into Alex's face, Kyle leaned against him. Alex returned his embrace, ghosting small licks and kisses along his jaw and mouth.

As the water began to cool, Alex quickly scrubbed them, wrapping Kyle in the masculine scent of Old Spice soap. Together, they washed away the travel grime and the afters of their lovemaking. The bubbles swirled down his body and into the drain, and Kyle barely even noticed when Alex shut the water off. He stepped out onto the bathmat, yawning while he wrapped a towel around his waist.

Lavender-and-vanilla-scented Tide and Downy flowed around him as Kyle dried off his face and body. The soft scents of home-washed clothing versus the stiff starched clothes from the base cleaners soothed him. He'd put away the man in uniform for now and become Alex's husband once more. Kyle padded into the bedroom and landed face down on the bed.

In the background, he heard Alex laughing and speaking to him, the actual words a semi-indistinguishable sound. "Whatever you want, dear," he breathed and drew in the same laundry scents on the bedclothes and rolled over, dropping the towel onto the floor.

Another scent joined the sweet sleep-inducing smells, and Kyle opened one eye to see Alex standing at the side of the bed with one of the boys. Both of them almost naked, with only a towel preserving Alex's modesty and the diaper, his son's.

“Here, sit up,” Alex murmured. “Someone wants to see you.”

Kyle scrambled to sit up in bed, pulling the blankets out from under him to cover his bits, and then took his son.

“Hold him against you so he can hear your heart, babe.”

“Show me.”

Alex’s hands manhandled Kyle’s arms, and then he pulled back to let Kyle and Ethan adjust to one another. Kyle shifted, trying to get comfortable and hold Ethan just as he had been shown.

Ethan snuffled against his throat, the baby’s skin warm and soft on his body. The slight weight of his son was incredible and almost unbelievable to feel. Pride swelled in his chest at the sensations the wriggling little body caused him to feel. Kyle’s large hand reached up, cradling Ethan’s head, fingers stroking the silky baby fine hair, and he felt the tiny fingers scratching along his skin. He reached between them and tugged his dog tags out of the way, adjusting the beaded chain over his shoulder, so the baby was skin to skin on his chest.

Ethan adjusted to the movements, squirming and mewling, making himself comfortable on Kyle until the slow, easy pants of breath from his mouth warmed and dampened Kyle’s skin. Ethan gave a soft sigh, rubbed his face along Kyle’s shoulder once more before finally settling down to sleep.

“Oh, wow,” Kyle breathed and held on to his tiny son. He swallowed the hard lump in his throat as he looked up at Alex. “I’m holding my son.”

Alex grinned down at him and nodded. “I know.”

He turned and left the room, returning with a fussy James. Kyle pulled back the blankets on Alex’s side of the bed and leaned back against the headboard, all traces of sleep gone as he waited for Alex to join him.

Alex came around the bed again, though, and adjusted Ethan, then carefully placed James down along beside him. The two boys moved closer together, and Kyle gently wrapped his arms around both of them, slowly scooting down into the bed with both infants on his chest. The sweet scent of the children drifted up to him, and he closed his eyes, breathing it in.

“What’s the name of their smell?”

Scents were a big part of their life, and Kyle associated them with his loved ones. He and Alex both used the same Old Spice brand, so that was a welcome

comfort as his emotions wandered the spectrum. He now needed to learn his children. Kyle breathed in the scent of baby and subtle perfume each boy shared, committing it to memory so he could recall it the next time he was away. Despite just coming home, Kyle knew leaving again was part and parcel of being a soldier, and wanted to remember this first time.

Alex slid into bed beside him and rested one hand over Kyle's. "Baby Magic."

Kyle grinned. "Indeed it is," he whispered, inhaling the smells of spice and sweetness.

Alex leaned over and kissed Kyle, then dropped soft pecks to each boy's head. "Welcome home, Daddy."

Kyle hummed and sighed as Alex cuddled up next to his side. Though he had missed most of the preparation for bringing his children into the world, he would adjust to the changes. James and Ethan were more than he'd planned for, but a joyful surprise nonetheless, and nothing was better than coming home to his family.

**The End**

## **Author Bio**

*MA Jackson has written speculative, fantasy fanfiction under the nom de plume unbroken\_halo for over ten years and is now working toward publishing her original works. She likes to try and focus on realism in her stories as well as spinning a good yarn.*

*A career in homemaking led her to the brink of insanity. Or—depending on whom you ask: her best friend, her husband, or her daughter—past the brink. Her hobbies include violating the rules of good writing and grammar simply because she can, playing games on her tablet, and telling strangers to chill the hell out. Please deposit an additional twenty-five cents for more bio.*

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