

Transforming Us

By Jena Wade



Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

TRANSFORMING US

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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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TRANSFORMING US

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Photo Description

Dark-haired man sitting on top of a child's dresser with a picture of a Transformer on it, wearing only a red pair of briefs, holding a child's toy, with his head thrown back in laughter.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

**sigh* Is he the best dad ever, or is he the Best Dad Ever!*

I was so afraid of him the first time I agreed to babysit for him— he's very intimidating with his permanent five o'clock shadow, his gruff exterior, his buttoned-up business suits. Then I saw him with Bug.

But I showed up early to babysit Bug today, and found this. This! I remember walking in on him painting that dresser—seriously, how does someone get paint on their back?

He lives for Bug, and I don't want to do anything to change that, but how can I convince him that he deserves to have someone be there for him too?

Sincerely,

Babysitting Bug for the Babe (cturtlechick)

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: single father, men with children, sweet no sex, HFN

Word count: 6,883

TRANSFORMING US

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Adam smoothed his damp palms over his pale blue polo shirt. With a deep breath, he knocked on the door. He tried to shake off the nervousness again. It'd been three months since he'd been to Bryan's house to babysit for the single father. Before that, it had been a regular occurrence—every Tuesday and Thursday night from four to eight. He wasn't sure why Bryan had found a replacement babysitter, and Adam still tried not to take it personally. At twenty-five, he was a little old to be doing teenage jobs for extra cash, and he had a full-time job now, so it wasn't like he needed the money.

It'd still hurt when Bryan stopped calling, though. And Adam missed Colton. The little three-year-old had wiggled his way into Adam's heart from the very first day. Bryan had found his way there, too, but that had taken longer.

Four. Colton was four now. Adam hadn't been invited to the birthday party. His sister, Bryan's co-worker, had attended and shown him some pictures she'd captured on her cell phone. Bug, Bryan's nickname for the toddler, had grown so much since Adam last saw him.

Adam peeked in the window of the silent house. No movement. He checked his watch. He was on time, like always. He bit his lip. He could ring the doorbell, but if Bug was on the same nap schedule, it might wake him. As well-behaved as the kid was, interrupting his nap was not how Adam wanted to start the day.

He picked up the picnic basket he'd brought with him and turned the knob. The door was unlocked, so he let himself in.

“Bryan?” he whispered.

No response.

With another deep breath, he crossed the threshold. He knew his way around the one-story home and went straight to the kitchen to set the basket

down. As quietly as he could, he tip-toed through the living room. There were Legos spread across the floor in front of the couch. Bug had a pretty good-sized tower started and Adam smiled. He'd helped his sister pick out the Transformers Lego set for Bug's birthday, and it looked like they were a hit.

A grunt from down the hallway caught his ear and he turned to investigate.

When he reached the open door of Bug's bedroom, his eyes widened at the sight.

Bryan sat on the dresser clad only in a pair of bright red briefs. His bare chest was sprinkled with a patch of chest hair that trailed down through the middle of his six-pack abs. His dark hair was disheveled. He had dots of paint on his arms, with one big glob of yellow right above his eyebrow.

Adam wished he still had the picnic basket so he could hold it in front of his groin. His cock hardened at the sight of Bryan half naked.

"Bryan?"

Bryan dropped the Optimus Prime action figure he was holding and hopped off the dresser.

"Adam? What are you doing here?" Bryan's cheeks turned ruddy.

"Um, you texted me last week to see if I could watch Colton this afternoon. Something about a meeting..." Adam cleared his throat and averted his eyes from the man standing just a few feet from him. Apparently, Bryan had no qualms about standing mostly naked in front of his gay babysitter.

"Oh, shit." Bryan picked up the action figure and set it on top of the dresser.

Was that paint on his back? How did he get paint there?

Adam shook his head and looked around the room. Not much had changed since the last time he'd been there. A few more toys littered the space, but it was mostly the same. Transformers were piled high in the toy box. Bug loved the cartoon, and it was top on his wish list of toys, books, and clothes. If it had a Transformer on it, he wanted it.

“I forgot to tell you. My meeting was cancelled. I don’t need you to watch Bug today. I’m really sorry.” Bryan ran a hand through his hair, making it stand straight. “Shit, I feel like a jackass.”

Adam nodded and tried to hide his disappointment. He’d been looking forward to watching Colton all week. Pretty lame for a grown man to be excited about babysitting a four-year-old anyway. Maybe he should spend his free day going to the coffee shop or park—try to meet some people or something. He needed to rid himself of this stupid crush on Bug’s sexy dad. This wasn’t his family and wasn’t going to be.

“It’s okay. Um, I’ll just go, then.”

“Adam! Adam! Adam!”

Little footsteps echoed down the hallway and within seconds Adam had a child hugging his knees.

“Hey, Bug!” Adam picked up the blond tyke and cradled him in his arms. “You’ve gotten so big. And why are you naked?”

“Daddy sleeps naked, so I do, too.”

Adam raised his brow. “Oh, really?”

“Yeah. Do you sleep naked?”

“Um, no. I sleep in pajamas.”

Bug pushed at Adam’s chest until Adam set him on the floor.

“Is it done, Daddy? Is it done?”

Bryan’s face lit when he smiled at his son and he ruffled Bug’s hair.

Adam’s chest tightened. Christ, he’d forgotten what a great father Bryan was. Always attentive, caring and patient, even when Bug was a holy terror.

“Yeah. It’s done. Don’t touch the sides. They’re still wet.” He pointed at the dresser. “What do you think?”

The dresser was painted off-white and a three-foot-high Optimus Prime picture covered the drawers.

“It’s awesome!”

“It really does look fantastic,” Adam said. “Last time I was here you just had it sketched out. Looks great filled in. I can’t believe you can draw like that.”

Bryan shrugged. “Well, I am a cartoonist.”

“I know. I read your column and comic strips every morning.” Adam bit his tongue. Now, why did he have to go and admit that?

“Really? Thank you.” Bryan flashed him a brilliant smile. “I’m surprised someone as young as you still reads the actual newspaper instead of getting all your news on social media.”

Adam shrugged. “I like getting the morning paper and reading it while I have my coffee.” *And because I know the artist.* He wasn’t going to admit that aloud, though.

Bryan turned to Bug. “Why don’t you run to the bathroom and get your clothes. You can sleep naked, but this isn’t a nudist colony, so you have to get dressed. Then we’ll have lunch.”

“But you’re still naked.” Bug looked up at his father and scrunched his eyebrows.

Bryan eyes widened. “Shi—Sugar Jets.” He looked at Adam and winced. “Sorry. I forgot I wasn’t dressed.”

“No problem.” Adam kept his eyes on Bryan’s face to avoid staring openly at his lickable chest. He bit back a groan. Lickable? Damn, he had it bad.

Bug tapped Adam’s thigh. “Are you havin’ lunch with us?”

“Um, actually I just stopped to say hi, but I’ve got to get going.”

Bug pouted and he looked at his dad. “Can Adam stay for lunch, Daddy?”

“That’s up to him, honey. Why don’t you go get dressed and he and I will talk about it? Okay?”

Bug ran out the room as fast as his little legs would carry him.

“Would you like to stay for lunch? I feel terrible about forgetting to call you. Lunch is the least I could do, even if it is just SpaghettiOs. And I can still pay you for your time.”

Ugh. That stung.

“Actually, I planned on taking Bug to the park for a picnic. I made a few sandwiches, put together a fruit salad, some cut-up vegetables, and pudding for dessert.”

Bryan’s eyes widened. “Awesome. Why don’t we all go? You and I can catch up and you can spend time with Bug. He’s really missed you.”

I haven’t gone anywhere.

“Sure. That sounds like fun.” *And pure torture at the same time.*

“Kay. I’ll go get dressed.”

“Um, Bryan? You might want to wash the paint off your arms, and face... and your back.”

Bryan laughed. “Yeah, I’ll jump in the shower real quick. I’ll just be a minute.”

“No problem.” Adam scrubbed his face with his hands after Bryan left the room. Christ, his attraction to Bryan hadn’t waned at all since he last saw him. This was going to be a long day.

Adam retreated to the kitchen while Bryan and Bug got dressed. He shook his head. Bryan slept naked. He’d tuck that piece of information away for later—when he was in bed.

Making himself at home, he opened the fridge and slapped together a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He hadn’t made enough lunch for three.

“Hey, there you are.” Bryan entered the kitchen with Bug on his shoulders. Adam wiped the counter to keep from staring. He was afraid his less-than-overt ogling of Bryan had caused the man to quit calling him to babysit in the first place.

Adam picked up the basket. “Shall we?”

Bryan tossed him a knee-weakening smile. “Yeah. Let’s go.”

The stroll to the park was quick, only three blocks from the house. Adam quizzed Bug on his colors, and they sang the ABCs as they walked. The kid was sharp as a tack and had learned so much since Adam had last seen him.

At the park, Bug ran off to play with some of the neighborhood kids he knew.

“Stay close!” Adam stood on the edge of the area designated for five-and-under children. He kept a close eye on the little four-year-old as Bug climbed the ladder to the slide.

“He’s fine, Adam. Come sit. We can see the whole playground from here.”

Adam sat on the opposite end of the too-short bench—as far from Bryan as he could get. “How have you been? Work keeping you busy?”

Bryan nodded. “Yeah, but they let me work from home two days a week, so I can spend time with Bug. He usually plays on the office floor while I work.”

“That’s great.”

Bryan rested his arm on the back of the bench, his hand almost touching Adam’s shoulder. “So, what have you been up to? Your sister says you got a full-time job at the university?”

Adam nodded. “Yeah, I’m working for the Communications Department coordinating newsletters and other publications the university puts out.”

“Great. Good for you.” Bryan leaned forward and rested his elbows on his knees. He turned toward Adam with a hard-to-read expression. “I hear you have a boyfriend now, too.”

“What? Where did you hear that?” Adam shook his head. “No. I’m not seeing anyone.”

“Oh. Stephanie mentioned that you had a date, I just assumed...”

Adam thought he saw a smile, but Bryan turned away too quickly for him to be sure. “Well, I’ve had a few dates, but they were just casual. Nothing serious. What about you? Have you been seeing anyone?”

Bryan grimaced and shook his head.

“I’m sorry. That was none of my business. I wasn’t thinking.”

“No, it was a fair question. I mean, I asked you first.”

“I know, but after Annie—”

“Annie?” Bryan’s brow furrowed. “What’s Annie got to do with me not dating?”

“Well, she was... um... Bug’s mom and your girlfriend.” Adam stomach turned. Why did he have to mention Bryan’s dead girlfriend? Christ, he was such an ass.

“Adam. I’m gay.” Bryan straightened and met Adam’s stare. “Annie was my best friend, not my girlfriend. I thought you knew that.”

Adam blinked. Once. Twice. Three times. “You’re gay?”

Bryan laughed and turned toward the playground. “Yeah. I’m sorry, I really thought you knew.” His smile disappeared. “Annie and I both wanted kids and we weren’t getting any younger. So, we had one together—via a test-tube.” Bryan’s eyes clouded with sadness. “She would’ve loved Bug. She’s the one who gave him the nickname actually. Her little Bug. She used to talk to him every night when she was pregnant.”

Not knowing what else to do, Adam grasped Bryan’s hand and squeezed. “You’re doing a great job with him. She would be proud of you and him.”

Bryan took a deep breath. “It’s hard to believe she’s been gone for four years.” He smiled and waved at Bug standing on the platform of the playground equipment. “He has so much of her in him.”

“He’s got a lot of you, too.”

Bryan faced Adam with a full grin. “Like my stubbornness?”

“Well, he does have that.”

Bryan narrowed his eyes. “You really didn’t know I was gay?”

Adam shook his head. “No, it’s none of my business. I just assumed that Annie was your girlfriend. I’ve never been given any reason to think otherwise.” Despite spending a lot of time hoping.

Bryan’s eyebrows shot up. “Really?” He looked down at their clasped hands. “I just figured that your sister would’ve told you.”

Adam pulled his hand away. “No, she’s not one to gossip. She probably assumed that you told me, you assumed that she told me, and I assumed it was none of my business.”

“Well, you know what they say about assuming. Makes an ass out of you and me.”

Adam chuckled. “That it does. So, what keeps you from dating then?” Oh, shit that really wasn’t his business, but he was dying to know.

“Bug.” Bryan turned his focused eyes on his son playing with the other kids. “He doesn’t need me introducing a different guy every few weeks.”

Always the vigilant father. Adam gazed at Bryan. His dark hair was longer than when Adam had last seen him. His permanent five-o’clock shadow covered the lower half of his face. Adam would gladly suffer whisker burn just to feel Bryan pressed up against him. Adam sighed. Bryan deserved to find someone to share his life with. And Adam was more than willing to apply for the position.

He shook away the thoughts. *Keep dreaming.*

“Well, now you’re assuming that whoever you’re seeing won’t work out. You don’t know until you try. After all you’ve been through, you deserve to take a little time for yourself.”

Bryan smirked. “That’s all easier said than done.”

“But, you could have anyone. You’re successful, sexy—” Adam clamped his mouth shut.

“And a single father. That last one throws a wrench into the dating game.” Bryan laughed. “No one wants a premade family.”

“I do.” Adam resisted the urge to slap his hand over his mouth. *Idiot*. “I mean, I want a family. Someday. Sooner rather than later, preferably.”

“Daddy.” Bug ran to the bench and launched himself onto Bryan’s lap. “I’m hungry.”

“Me too, Bug. Let’s break out this picnic basket.” Bryan sent Adam an apologetic smile and stood.

Adam unpacked the picnic blanket and spread it out on the ground. “Come here, Bug. I got some hand sanitizer for you. We need to wash your hands.”

Bryan sat on the ground and pulled out the sandwiches. “You brought hand sanitizer?”

“Of course. And bug spray and sunscreen.”

“Geesh. Which one of us is the dad, again? I didn’t even think of bringing any of that.”

Adam laughed. “Well, it’s better to have it and not need, than to need it and not have it. Besides, I used to take my younger brothers to the park all of the time. You can never have enough sunscreen and bug spray.”

“I didn’t realize you had younger brothers.” Bryan narrowed his eyes.

“Yeah, Steph and I are the oldest and the only ones that were planned. The twins were born when I was ten. Then my mom... well, she left.” Adam shrugged. “Most of my teenage years were spent babysitting my little brothers, and they got bored fast, so I had to get creative to keep them out of trouble.”

“That explains why you’re so good with Bug.”

Heat infused Adam’s cheeks and he started handing out their food. While they ate, Bug asked questions and talked non-stop. With him keeping the conversation going, Adam could focus on not saying the first thing that popped into his head.

Bug fell asleep on Adam's shoulder on the walk home. They'd eaten their lunch and then played tag. Which was more Bug chasing Adam and Bryan in circles, than an actual game. The afternoon tuckered the four-year-old out and within minutes of walking home, he asked Adam to carry him. There was no way Adam could resist those eyes, so much like his father's. He'd handed Bryan the picnic basket and swung Bug into his arms.

Bryan opened the door quietly. "Go ahead and put him in my bedroom. His still smells like paint."

Adam nodded and shuffled through the house to the master bedroom.

Unlike Bug's room and the rest of the house, which was neat and tidy, Bryan's room was a disaster. Clothes were strewn across the room—hanging off the dresser, piled on the floor. Everywhere. Adam shook his head. The man needed a maid.

He carefully laid Bug onto the middle of the king-size bed and gathered pillows around him to keep him from rolling around. Not that it was likely that he would. The kid slept like a rock. He covered Bug with the blanket. With one last look to make sure he was asleep and secure on the bed, he left the room, trying not to imagine Bug's father sleeping there naked.

Inside the living room, Bryan sat on the couch with his head leaning back against the cushions.

Adam bit back a chuckle. Looked like Bug wasn't the only one tired out from their afternoon.

"He still asleep?"

Adam plopped on to the couch next to Bryan and sighed. "Oh, yeah, he'll be out for a bit."

Bryan scoffed. "Or he'll wake up early and be cranky."

"Yeah, that could happen, too."

Bryan turned and pulled one leg onto the couch, his foot resting against Adam's thigh. "Thank you for lunch and for getting us out of the house today. It was a lot of fun."

Adam yawned. “Yeah, we should do it again sometime.” He snapped his mouth closed. So much for not saying the first thing that came to his mind. “I mean, if you ever need some time to yourself or if you do decide to start dating, I’d be happy to watch Bug for you.”

Bryan rested his arm on the back of the couch and his fingers grazed the back of Adam’s neck. “That sounds nice.”

Adam gazed back at Bryan, whose eyes were filled with interest and a spark of lust. He darted his tongue out to wet his lips, debating whether or not now was the time to make his move. He’d been wanting to for so long, and when would he have another opening like that?

Reaching his hand around to the back of Bryan’s head, he hesitated a moment. When Bryan didn’t pull away, it was all the encouragement he needed. His lips crashed hard onto Bryan’s. They tasted faintly of the chocolate pudding they’d had for dessert. The sweet scent of his cologne tickled Adam’s nostrils and intensified his arousal.

He moaned low in his throat as he coaxed Bryan’s mouth open with his tongue. Bryan’s fingers tangled in his hair and his other hand lay on Adam’s chest, fingers sneaking under his collar to touch his skin.

Adam pushed into the caress. His body tingled with excitement and his cock pressed against the zipper of his jeans. Bryan’s hands wandered down Adam’s body, slipping under his shirt and resting above his hips. His tongue swept into Adam’s mouth. The kiss was sheer perfection, everything Adam had hoped it would be and so much more.

He bucked forward, wanting more, needing Bryan’s hands on his skin. Adam slid his hands down Bryan’s back until he found the waistband of his khakis. He ached to see if Bryan still wore the red briefs from this morning. Adam moved his hands to the front and found the button quickly and popped it open with one hand. He pulled his mouth from Bryan’s and focused on releasing the man’s cock from its prison of fabric.

Bryan’s hands returned to Adam’s chest and he pushed. It took a moment for Adam to grasp that Bryan was telling him to stop.

He met Bryan's eyes. "What's wrong?"

Bryan looked away and fumbled with the fly of his pants. "We can't do this." He stood and walked away. "It's not right."

Adam's heart thundered in his chest and he struggled to catch his breath. "What do you mean?"

"You're a young kid, Adam." Bryan shook his head. "I can't do casual hookups. I'm a single father—it wouldn't be right for Colton."

Adam collapsed into the sofa like he'd been sucker-punched. "Oh."

"You have your whole life ahead of you. You don't want to tie yourself down to a family."

Anger killed the last of Adam's arousal and he shot to his feet. "I'd like the option, thank you very much." He kept his voice low, so they didn't disturb Bug. "I'm a grown man. I can make my own damn decisions."

Bryan winced. "I think maybe you should go."

Tension settled in the air around them. Adam's shoulders slumped and he walked toward the door. He glanced down the hallway to Bug's room and briefly wondered if he'd ever see the kid again—or his dad. Damn him for getting too attached to a family that wasn't his. And damn Bryan for letting him have a taste of what could be.

Adam stared at the television while some sort of terrible sci-fi thriller played out on the screen. Were those sharks with octopus tentacles? What the hell kind of crap was he watching anyway?

He searched around for the remote just as his phone rang. A glance at the clock told him it was well into Saturday night. He picked up the phone and pressed ignore, not wanting to tell his friends he wasn't coming out for yet another Saturday night. For the past two weeks, he couldn't shake the feeling of loss that had settled in his chest the moment he'd left Bryan's house.

The phone rang again and he looked at the screen. A picture of Bryan and Bug flashed on the screen with Bryan's name displayed across the top. He answered without thinking, wanting to hear the voice that set his body on fire and pissed him off at the same time.

“Hello?”

“Adam. It's Bryan. Colton and I are on our way to the hospital. Can you meet us there?”

Adam hesitated. Bug was hurt?

He walked toward the door. “Of course. Yes. Which one?”

“Sacred Heart. We should be there in about fifteen minutes.”

“No problem. I'll be there in ten.”

A sigh came through the other end of the phone and made Adam's heart melt. Why couldn't he just stay mad at Bryan?

“Thanks, Adam. I—”

“Don't worry about it. I'll see you soon.” Adam hung up and grabbed his keys from the hook.

This wasn't the first time he'd gone to the ER for Bug. The last time had been in the middle of the day when Adam had been watching him. Bug was just learning to walk and Adam had turned away for just a second. He'd fallen in the living room and cut his head on the coffee table. Adam shook the thought away. Remembering that day made his blood run cold.

What could be wrong with Bug right now? And why did Bryan call him? Adam didn't care, he just wanted to get to Bug, make sure the kid was all right. He sighed. No matter what happened, he was going to get his heart broken in this situation.

Bryan pulled up to the hospital entrance just as Adam jogged to the door. Bryan flew out of the car and opened the backseat. Within a few seconds he

had Bug in his arms. Bug had his blanket over his face, so Adam couldn't see what was wrong with him.

“Go inside and check in. I'll park,” Adam said.

Bryan nodded and carried Bug inside.

Adam parked Bryan's car next to his and ran back to the ER. Did Bug fall out of bed? Down the stairs? Was the child even conscious right now?

The hospital was slow for a Saturday night. Thank God. Bryan and Bug were being taken back to a room just as Adam stepped in the door. He moved toward the waiting area, but Bryan motioned for him to follow. Adam caught a glimpse of Bug's face resting on his father's shoulder. His skin was pale and sweat dampened his blond hair. Adam stomach tightened. His poor baby was sick.

He's not your baby, dumbass.

Bryan laid Bug on the examination table and the nurse took his temperature and pulse. Bug remained still the entire time. He didn't even open his eyes.

The nurse smiled at both Bryan and Adam. “The doctor will be in shortly.”

How about quicker than that? Like right now? Adam kept the thought to himself. He didn't need to cause a scene in the middle of an exam room.

“Thank you,” Bryan said.

After she left the room, Adam turned to Bryan. “What's wrong? Is he sick? How long has he been this way?” He scooted his chair closer to the table and picked up Bug's hand. It was warm and clammy.

“He said he wasn't feeling well this afternoon. So, I kept a close eye on him. I took his temperature before bed and he had a slight fever. I gave him some Children's Tylenol, but his fever didn't come down. I woke him up to bring him in. And when I got him dressed, I found a rash on his back.” Bryan bit his lip and stared at the floor. “I called you because I didn't want to sit up here all night worrying.”

“I’m glad you called.” Adam cleared his throat. “Even though we... you know. I’d still like to watch Bug whenever you need me to. I miss the little guy.”

Bryan nodded. “I know. I wanted to talk with you about—”

The doctor came in the room holding a clipboard in his hand. “Hello, Mr. Daniels, what brings you in this evening?”

Bryan stood. “My son, Colton. He has a one hundred and four fever. It started earlier this evening, and he has a rash on his back.”

Bug stirred and both Bryan and Adam moved to hold him still so he didn’t fall off the table. His lips curled into a pout and little tears pooled in the corners of his eyes.

“It’s okay, Bug. You’re just at the doctor’s office. Your dad and I are right here.” Adam brushed the damp hair from Bug’s forehead as the child turned to look at him.

“Adam!” Bug’s pout turned into a small smile and he reached out for Adam to pick him up.

“Go ahead and hold him. I’ll take a look at his back,” the doctor said.

Adam held Bug in his arms and the boy snuggled into his shoulder. He looked over at Bryan, realizing he maybe overstepping his bounds as a friend who was there for support. Bryan stared back at him. His dark hair pointed in every direction and he had bags under his amber eyes. Maybe he needed Adam to hold him, too.

“Is this the first day that he hasn’t felt well?” the doctor asked as he inspected the rash on Bug’s back.

“Well, yesterday he didn’t want to eat and said he had a sore throat. I didn’t think anything of it. I was trying to get him to eat broccoli, so I assumed he was just being stubborn.”

Adam chuckled. “You don’t like broccoli either.”

Bryan smiled. “No, but he’s never given it a chance.”

The doctor began writing on his clipboard. “It appears as if little Colton has chicken pox. Nothing to worry about, it just needs to run its course.”

“Isn’t he young for that?” Bryan asked. “Colton was supposed to get the vaccine, but he’s allergic to Neomycin. I guess I didn’t expect it to happen this soon.”

“It can happen at any age. The younger the better, really. The rash usually lasts about five to ten days, and he’ll be contagious until the bumps crust over. Both of you have had it before, correct?”

Bryan and Adam nodded.

“Great, then there’s nothing to worry about. He’ll have to stay home while he’s contagious.”

Bryan’s brow furrowed. “That won’t be a problem, I can always work from home and when I do have to go into the office—”

“I can work from home, also. We’ll figure out a schedule.” No way was Adam going to let his little Bug suffer without him. Whether Bryan liked it or not, he’d pulled Adam into this and he was staying for the duration.

The doctor nodded and smiled. “Good. You can give him some over-the-counter fever-reducing medication, and once his rash sets in, I suggest using some anti-itch cream or soaking him in a baking soda bath.”

Adam chuckled as he rocked Bug gently. “And getting some oven mitts for his hands. This little guy won’t listen when we tell him not to scratch.” He glanced at Bryan. “My brothers had it when they were four and they were terrible with the scratching. Now they have some small scars from it.”

The doctor nodded. “Yes, that is a concern. You don’t want him opening up any sores.”

“Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate it.” Bryan rolled his shoulders back and the tension cleared from his face.

“Not a problem. If his fever gets worse, or he doesn’t regain his appetite, give Colton’s primary pediatrician a call.”

Bryan nodded and picked up Bug's blanket.

Adam carried Bug back to the lobby while Bryan signed paperwork. Once he was done, they walked to the car together.

"Thank you for coming," Bryan smiled. "I feel silly. It never occurred to me that he could have chicken pox."

"It's not a problem. I'm glad you called."

Bryan opened the door of the car and Adam set Bug into his car seat. The little guy slept like the dead, even though he didn't feel well. Adam bit back a laugh as he buckled the straps to the car seat.

He straightened and closed the door quickly. "He doesn't feel as warm now, though it could just be from holding him for so long."

"That's good." Bryan shuffled his feet. "Would you like to come back to the house? I feel like I owe you coffee or maybe a stiff drink after dragging you out so late."

"Sure. Why don't I stop at a twenty-four-hour store and pick up some cortisone cream and baking soda? That way we—I mean, you—won't have to leave the house tomorrow."

"That would be great." Bryan opened the driver's side door and slid inside. "Adam? You had it right when you said 'we'."

The door closed, leaving Adam contemplating what Bryan could've meant. The man was hard to understand sometimes. He's lucky he had a cute kid.

Adam picked up everything he could think of that Bug might need in the next few days—juice, popsicles, anti-itch cream, baking soda. Plus, he found a cheap Transformers toy that changed from a robot to a car. Bug probably had a million like it, but it would make him smile while he was feeling sick.

When he finally arrived at Bryan's house it was dark. He let himself in the front door and tip-toed to Bug's bedroom.

Bug was half-awake and talking to Bryan.

“But I didn’t see any chickens.” Bug rubbed his tired eyes and frowned.

Bryan chuckled. “No, honey. You don’t get chicken pox from chickens. That’s just the name. Get some sleep, buddy. You’ll feel better in the morning.”

Adam leaned against the doorframe, drinking in the sight of Bryan tucking his child into bed.

Bryan kissed Bug’s forehead and stood. He switched on the night-light and turned to leave.

Bug snuggled into the blankets. “Night, Daddy. I love you.”

“I love you, too, Bug.”

Bug glanced up at Adam in the doorway and hugged his teddy bear closer to him. “Night, Adam. I love you.”

Adam cleared his throat. “Night, Bug. I love you, too.” The kid sure knew how to tug on his heartstrings. He probably got that from his father.

Together, Bryan and Adam walked to the living room and sat on the sofa. Exhaustion rippled through Adam and he yawned.

“I’m sorry I kept you out so late.”

Adam shrugged. “It’s not a big deal. I was up anyway.”

“You can sleep on the couch if you want.”

Adam turned his head to stare at Bryan with a raised brow.

Crimson swept over Bryan’s cheeks. “I’m sorry about... you know.”

Adam chuckled. “You shouldn’t be sorry. I’m sorry. I thought you were interested.” He shook his head. “I obviously saw something that wasn’t there. It was a stupid move on my part.”

Bryan picked up Adam’s hand. “No, you weren’t seeing things. I am attracted to you. I’d love to have the chance to go out sometime on a date, where we eat something other than peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.” He

looked away. “But, I have a child to think about. I can’t do the casual dating thing anymore.”

“You aren’t giving me any credit here. Christ, I’m not some sort of flake who just wants to get in your pants.” Adam pulled his hand from Bryan’s. His skin prickled with irritation. “I know you’re a single father. But you gotta make time for yourself, too. I was raised by a single dad, Bryan. I have a pretty good idea of what it’s like.”

“It’s not that easy.”

“You’re making it difficult.” Adam shook his head. “What are you going to tell Bug when he starts dating. ‘Don’t do it, it might not work out. Don’t take chances unless it’s a sure thing?’”

“Hopefully, Bug won’t date until he’s at least thirty.”

“You’re thirty-four. When are you going to start?”

Bryan leaned forward and rested his elbows on his knees. He stared at the carpet like it was going to give him the secrets of life.

“Look, we don’t have to talk about it anymore. I’m going to crash here though, there’s no way I can—”

Bryan’s arms encircled Adam and pulled him close. His lips crushed against Adam’s, stopping what Adam had been trying to say.

Adam melted against the embrace and moaned into Bryan’s mouth. He placed his hand on Bryan’s cheek and held him there. Bryan wasn’t going to pull away from him this time.

The kiss was warm and slow. Adam felt like he was home for the first time in weeks.

Bryan lifted his lips from Adam’s and pressed their foreheads together. “Was this what you had in mind? If we were dating, I mean.”

Adam blinked. “Well, I was hoping to get dinner first, but there aren’t any rules that say we can’t make out a little before the first date.”

Bryan laughed. “Any date we have in the next week and half is going to have to be takeout. We have a sick child to care for, remember?”

“Yeah. Luckily, both Bug and I love the same kind of pizza.”

Bryan leaned back on the couch and Adam settled against him, held close by Bryan’s arms.

Cuddling. Bryan was a cuddler. Who knew?

“Does this mean you’ve changed your mind? Or are you just being a tease? I kind of need to know, like now, if we’re actually going to try this or if you’re going to freak out again.”

“You’re right. I have to give us a chance. I’d like to go out sometime. On a real date—not to McDonald’s Playplace or the playground. Though, I’m sure we’ll have plenty of dates there, too.” Bryan cupped Adam’s face with his hand. “It’s not going to be easy. But it will be one hell of an adventure.”

Adam met Bryan’s eyes. “It could be easy. Everything could fall into place and be perfect.”

Bryan laughed and covered his mouth to muffle the sound. “Oh, I think you have a bit to learn about raising kids.” He kissed Adam’s forehead. “I wonder if Rachel has had chicken pox.”

Adam stifled a yawn and laid his head against Bryan’s chest. He made a good pillow. “Who’s Rachel?”

“The sitter I hired to replace you, after I couldn’t be around you without thinking about ripping your clothes off.”

“Hmm. We’ll have to try that sometime.” Adam eyes drifted closed and he fought to stay awake. “Why do we need Rachel?”

“So we can go on a date. She can watch Bug. Though, I think it’s going to be your job to explain to him that you and I are going out without him.”

Adam’s eyes popped open and he froze. “Yeah, that might become a battle. We’ll need a good distraction. Is it too soon to get him a puppy?”

Bryan chuckled, the laughter rumbled through his chest and vibrated against Adam's ear. "You are going to keep things interesting around here, aren't you?"

Adam lifted his head and smiled. "I'm going to try." He kissed Bryan's lips softly and then settled against his chest. "Go to sleep Bryan. It's gonna be a long week."

THE END

Author Bio

Jena Wade is new to this writing business. She's an avid reader. By day she is a web developer. She overuses smiley faces in everyday emails.

Most of her evenings are spent typing away on her laptop, with her beagle and basset hound curled up at her feet.

Yup, that about sums up her life.

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