

## LETTERS HOME

**Excerpt of a letter from Army Pfc. Jesse A. Givens, 34, of Springfield, MO. Private Givens was killed May 1 when his tank fell into the Euphrates River** after the bank on which he was parked gave way. This letter was written to be delivered to his family if he died. Melissa is his wife, Dakota his 6-year old stepson and Bean the name he gave his Son, Carson, who was born May 29.

My family,

I never thought that I would be writing a letter like this. I really don't know where to start. I've been getting bad feelings, though and, well, if you are reading this...

The happiest moments in my life all deal with my little family. I will always have with me the small moments we all shared. The moments when you quit taking life so serious and smiled. The sounds of a beautiful boy's laughter or the simple nudge of a baby unborn. You will never know how complete you have made me. You saved me from loneliness and taught me how to think beyond myself. You taught me how to live and to love. You opened my eyes to a world I never dreamed existed.

Dakota... you taught me how to care until it hurts, you taught me how to smile again. You taught me that life isn't so serious and sometimes you just have to play. You have a big, beautiful heart. Through life you need to keep it open and follow it. Never be afraid to be yourself. I will always be there in our park when you dream so we can play. I love you, and hope someday you will understand why I didn't come home. Please be proud of me.

Bean, I never got to see you but I know in my heart you are beautiful. I know you will be strong and bog-hearted like your mom and brother. I will always have with me the feel of the soft nudges on your mom's belly, and the joy I felt when I found out you were on your way. I love you, Bean.

Melissa, I have never been as blessed as the day I met you. You are my angel, soulmate, wife, lover and best friend. I am sorry. I did not want to have to write this letter. There is so much more I need to say, so much more I need to share. A lifetime's worth. I married you for a million lifetimes. That's how long I will be with you. Please keep my babies safe. Please find it in your heart to forgive me for leaving you alone... Teach our babies to live life to the fullest, tell yourself to do the same.

I will always be there with you, Melissa. I will always want you, need you and love you, in my heart, my mind and my soul. Do me a favor, after you tuck the children in. Give them hugs and kisses from me. Go outside and look at the stars and count them. Don't forget to smile.

Love always,  
Your husband, Jess