Two Clear Lines

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by theotherwolfinsideyou

Summary

It's incredibly rare for alpha women to get pregnant. Even if they can, it's better if they don't. Alpha mothers are social pariahs, women who've started families the "wrong" way.

At the age of twenty-three, Nancy Wheeler finds out she's pregnant.

“Buying for your omega?”

Nancy blinked. “What?”

The teller shook the pregnancy test with a smile. The box’s lamination shone under the Walmart’s fluorescent lights. Nancy’s attempt to hide it under a package of paper towels had failed.

“Oh!” Nancy forced a smile. “Yeah. She’s super nervous.”

“I bet!” the teller said as she scanned the box. “You’d have to hold a gun to my mate’s head to get him to buy anything omega-related for me! You’re a great alpha.”

“She might disagree with you there,” Nancy laughed humourslessly.

“Then she doesn’t know how good she has it,” the teller handed her her bags. “Congratulations!”

Nancy couldn’t get out of there fast enough.

She took a deep breath once she was finally back in her car. The blue plastic bag sat in the passenger seat, mocking her. Omega-related. As if Nancy needed the reminder. Every box on the shelf had been some shade of purple with a big omega symbol on the front. It’d taken her forever to find one that could also work for betas, and even longer to read the fine print on the back of them until one finally said that it could work on alpha females too.

This was not something that happened to alphas. She’d learned that lesson young, when her mother had brought up Leah Anderson’s alpha daughter in hushed tones at the dinner table, the one who’d eloped with an alpha man, moved to Chicago, and gave birth to a baby girl.

“That’s just not right,” her father had mumbled, definitively, between mouthfuls of roast beef. “It doesn’t happen often for a reason. That’s not how a family’s supposed to be made.”

Nancy had seen her mother nod in agreement, and even all the way back then, before her feet could touch the ground when she sat on the kitchen chairs, she’d understood. Good alpha girls didn’t grow babies. They made them. And she was a good alpha girl, wasn’t she?

Hawkins’ High Sex-ed had driven in the message years later. The baseball team coach had stood in front of the class and told them that most alpha females couldn’t even get pregnant if they tried. Their systems were too full of testosterone to fuel their alphan reproductive systems, just like omega males had too much estrogen to produce much sperm.

“And that’s a sign from God,” the coach had said. “If He wanted us to reproduce like *that*, he wouldn’t have made it so hard.”

Nancy had walked out of that class like every other alpha girl at Hawkins High; thinking it was impossible, and that if it wasn’t, she better keep it to herself. So she kept the fact that she bled for four days before her rut instead of the usual two to her damn self, pre-opening

maxipads at home so no one would hear the crinkle in the school bathroom and not taking out tampons until she was home and could wrap them in a mountain of toilet paper. She was so good at it that Steve once asked her if she even menstruated at all. She told him she only ever did for one day.

And she deluded herself, in those years she tried to make it work with Steve and Jonathan, that she wanted this. That she wanted to mate a nice omega, put a bunch of pups in their belly, get a big house somewhere in the suburbs and provide for them. It was more of a performance with Steve, but even with all of Jonathan's dreams of moving to New York City and being more than his designation, she still had to put on a smile when someone mentioned pups. That was what good alpha girls did.

Good alpha girls didn't quit university and run off to Northampton, Massachusetts to chase after another alpha woman upon hearing that she'd broken up with her longterm girlfriend, because she'd spent the later half of her childhood fighting monsters and yet it still took her so, *so* long to stop being too scared to take the one thing she'd ever wanted. Good alpha girls didn't move in with other alpha women. They didn't share a bed, a kitchen, a *life.* They didn't tell their parents they were still with their high school omega boyfriend. They didn't have Robin Buckley's mating bite on their neck.

Above all, good alpha girls *certainly* hadn't missed their period before their last, uncharacteristically short, rut.

"Fuck," Nancy buried her head in the steering wheel.

Bad idea. She could feel nausea crawling up her throat.

She drove home quickly, missing a few stop signs along the way. For the first time ever, she hoped her mate wasn't home. She let out a sigh of relief when she saw Robin's bike missing from the porch.

Nancy beelined to the upstairs bathroom. She stared at the box for a long time, before she caught her reflection in the mirror. That was enough to make her spring into action. One minute later she was sitting on the toilet with her panties on the floor, staring at the little plastic stick as if she could make it go faster by sheer willpower.

It's just one missed period, she told herself, leg bouncing. *That can happen.* She pointedly ignored that missing a period usually accompanied a harsher rut, not a shorter one. She tried not to think about the last three mornings she'd spent hunched over the toilet seat either.

Maybe she really was sick, like she'd told Robin. Her body might have suppressed a rut to save energy. She'd still gotten it, after all. Pregnancies suppressed ruts altogether.

Only from the second trimester onwards, the book she'd read in the darkest corner of the library had said. She ignored that too.

It was her own fault, really. Robin had brought it up one night, after they'd showered and snuggled up under the blankets. She had pressed her face to Nancy's neck and asked, "Do you think we should use birth control?"

“I don’t need to,” Nancy whispered. That was probably true, anyways. It almost always was. “Do you?”

“Nah,” Robin tucked a strand of Nancy’s hair behind her ear. “I barely even get my period.”

Nancy knew that was true. Robin never hid her maxipads or tampons at the bottom of the trash can. Sometimes she only wrapped them in the packaging.

Even then, curled up in bed with another alpha, Nancy wanted to believe she was still a good alpha girl. And so she said, “Me too.”

They’d never brought it up again. And now she was here, staring at a pregnancy test in their bathroom, feeling like her heart was going to beat out of her chest. It was taking hours. She flipped the test over, hoping that would make it work quicker.

Her leg bounced faster. Since when had she been a leg bouncer? Her father had taught her how to sit straight, to never show nervousness or weakness to other alphas. It was of the first things she’d noticed about Robin, all those years ago, when she thought Robin was one step away from giving Steve the six pups and Winnebago he wanted. How Robin never seemed to care, how she was all restless energy, wearing her heart on her sleeve with every flailing limb. Maybe she was wearing off on her.

Nancy flipped over the stick.

Two clear lines.

Her hand flew to her mouth.

The world went quiet. She couldn’t hear the toilet running behind her, or the yelling of the neighbour’s kids outside, the one who thought she and Robin were cousins living together to save on rent. All she could focus on were those two clear lines, staring back at her.

That’s not how a family’s supposed to be made.

She wasn’t aware that her hands were shaking until the test clattered to the floor.

Nancy didn’t pick it up. She only stared at those two clear lines, head in her hands. She didn’t know what to do. So many emotions were rushing through her that she couldn’t make sense of them.

The front door slammed open like a bomb going off. Nancy swore she could feel the vibrations through the floor.

“Nancy, baby!” Robin yelled. Nancy could hear her stomping around downstairs. She’d never been a quiet one, her mate. “You won’t *believe* what just happened to me at the supermarket.”

Nancy didn’t respond. She stared at the test so hard her vision swam.

“Nancy!” Robin tried again. Jesus Christ, she was loud when she wanted to be. “I know you’re home, baby, your car’s in the driveway.”

“One second!” Nancy called back. She wiped her eyes, rolled the test in a tight wad of toilet paper, buried it in the bottom of the garbage can, and made her way downstairs.

Robin was in the kitchen, unloading the groceries while humming to herself. She smiled at the sight of Nancy, but Nancy had barely stepped through the doorway before her smile dropped. “What’s wrong?”

Nancy put on her best poker face. “Nothing.”

“Nuh-uh. I can barely smell the olive-y part of your scent right now, and that only happens when you’re trying to keep your scent even,” Robin crossed her arms. “Did something happen at work? That offer to beat Emerson up is still on the table, by the way. Sandwich stealing is a *crime.* Especially when I made said stolen sandwich.”

“I--” Nancy’s rebuke about being able to fight her own battles died on her tongue.

Robin uncrossed her arms. Worry flashed across her face. “Nance? Is everything alright?”

“I’m…” *fine.* Yeah, right. Nancy laughed.

Robin looked properly concerned, now. She stepped forward and put her hands on Nancy’s shoulders. “Nance?”

“I’m pregnant,” Nancy blurted out.

Saying the words sent a shock down her body. It was real, now, undug from its hiding spot at the bottom of the bathroom trash can and thrown into their kitchen. Robin’s mouth dropped open, her pepper and ginger scent growing strong with shock.

“Holy shit,” Robin breathed. “Holy shit. Oh my God!”

She pulled Nancy into a tight hug, practically crushing Nancy against her chest. Nancy buried her face in Robin’s neck as she grasped the back of her shirt. She hadn’t expected Robin to be angry, but it was still a relief that she wasn’t.

“Wow, okay,” Robin said, voice loud with shock. “How do we feel about this?”

That was almost enough to make Nancy laugh again. She’d spent so much time worrying over the *possibility* of being pregnant that she’d barely spared a thought about what she *wanted.*

“We’re so young,” Nancy said, because they were. God, they were. Robin had only graduated from Smith two years ago. So many omegas had pups in their early twenties that it’d felt normal growing up, but now Nancy was here and her life had just started and it felt like the least normal thing on earth.

“Don’t forget broke,” Robin added.

“And broke,” Nancy nodded, thinking of their toilet upstairs, still running because between her salary as a journalist and Robin’s as a radio broadcaster and part-time waitress it was a

wonder they made their mortgage payments sometimes. She'd had to ask her dad for help, once, after Robin's appendix had burst and she'd had to miss two weeks of work. That road would close forever the second he heard about this.

Was that what she wanted? Struggling to make ends meet with a screaming baby in tow? It'd only get harder, if they did this. She'd get fired the second she had the baby; alphas didn't have the right to ask for maternity leave like beta womens and omegas did. She already knew which coworkers would start to avoid her gaze and whisper behind her back the second she started to show. Boston was a better city to live in for these things, but it wasn't perfect. Nowhere was perfect. There was barely anywhere *good.*

"It'd be so hard, Robin," Nancy felt tears form in her eyes. "It'd be so hard."

Robin somehow hugged her tighter. "We don't have to do it, Nancy. Not if you don't want to."

They didn't. They truly didn't. They could drive to a clinic upstate and get it dealt with discreetly, act like it never happened. The protestors outside abortion clinics wouldn't even try to stop her, like they did the omegas and beta females. They'd see it as the right choice for a woman like her.

"Would you want to?" Nancy asked. "Would you want to keep it?"

"Want to?" Robin said. "Nancy, I've *dreamed* of it."

"You have?"

"Oh yeah. A little boy or girl with your curls?" Robin laughed. "Ask Steve."

"You told Steve you wanted to get me pregnant?" Nancy asked incredulously.

"Or for you to get me pregnant. I tell Steve everything. You know that," Robin said. "Besides, he could commiserate. Everyone wants a baby with these curls, Nance."

"Oh my God," Nancy breathed. It'd been years, but she'd never truly get used to the fact that her mate's best friend was her ex.

"But that doesn't matter," Robin said. "I'm not the pregnant one. What do you want, Nance?"

It was a bad idea, unquestionably. They were young and broke and Nancy had *finally* started to get her career off the ground. If she'd been an omega, she'd already be on the phone with Planned Parenthood, booking an appointment.

But she wasn't an omega.

"What if this is it, Robin?" Nancy asked, voice hiccuping. "What if this is our only chance?"

They'd been *far* from chaste in their four years together. Sure, half the time they weren't doing anything that could get *Nancy* pregnant, but still. If Nancy'd been an omega, she'd have four pups by now, with another on the way. And yet this was the only time it'd

happened, and Nancy wasn't going to get younger. Most alpha females didn't even get one go. Getting a second one was unheard of.

You're lucky, you know, a male alpha had told her once in a Boston club. *That you've got a chance.*

Hardly, Nancy had laughed between sips of vodka. Robin had dragged her to dozens of clubs by then, introduced her to all her queer friends from college, and Leah Anderson's daughter was still the only alpha mother Nancy had ever heard of.

He'd smiled, eyes sad. *Better than none.*

Leah Anderson's daughter had come back to Hawkins, once, for her father's funeral. She'd brought her daughter with her, a beta girl who'd been Holly's age. Nancy remembered the way everyone had stared at that little girl, eyes open in wonder or narrowed in distrust, whispers following her every step. Nancy had never forgotten the way her mother's lip had curled when she learned that Nancy had let Holly play with her in the Starcourt playpen after all the other moms and babysitters had quickly hurried their pups out.

Nancy had talked to Leah Anderson's daughter for a few minutes while the pups had played. The woman's exhaustion had been clear on her face. Nancy hadn't blamed her. She couldn't imagine a harsher place to be an alpha mother than Hawkins, Indiana. She'd almost seemed bewildered that Nancy was willing to talk to her at all.

Above all, Nancy remembered the look on that mother's face when her little girl ran out of the playpen and into her arms. The exhaustion melted away, until her face shone. You'd think she was holding the world in her hands.

Nancy had heard about pups her whole life. About how she'd be a great father, about how she and Steve, and then Jonathan, would have such beautiful pups. She'd heard it so often she'd almost started to believe it. But it was only then, staring at that mother and pup, that Nancy had truly *wanted.*

She was young and broke and it would be so *unimaginably* hard, but Nancy wanted that more than anything. A little pup with Robin's eyes or smile or laugh or propensity to overexplain every thought she'd ever had. A little pup who she'd get to hold in her arms and know that *she* made, all on her own, to be hers and Robin's.

"We don't have to decide now," Robin said, taking Nancy's hand in hers.

"No," Nancy said, mind made up. "We don't."

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