

Togetherness

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Togetherness

by [HauntedByShadows](#)

Summary

Life doesn't go as planned for Nancy Wheeler and her boyfriend, Jonathan

Chapter Notes

Hope y'all enjoy, stay safe! - Xee

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“The entire family is going to kill us, I’m so excited(!)”

Nancy Wheeler, resident good-girl, straight-A student and model older sister, was anything but excited.

“Nance, you have to relax. They’re our parents, they’ll always love us no matter what.”

Or relaxed, for that matter.

Despite having next to no contact with her family or (soon-to-be) in-laws for the best part of five months, minus a few letters, she felt queasy at the mere thought of facing them.

One may think: facing seems like an odd choice of word. One may think: why on Earth would anyone need to face their own family, of all people?

The reasoning behind it was quite simple, you see, because Nancy Wheeler, resident good-girl, straight-A student and model older sister, was eighteen years old and four months pregnant.

~ Three-ish months previously ~

The date of Nancy’s period had come and gone. At first, she’d assumed that she must’ve synced-up with some of her female friends, or that it was simply going to come a little late that month. She had, admittedly, glanced at the pregnancy tests she kept in her bathroom cabinet more than a few times but had shaken off the idea of actually using one.

That was, until day six of no-period had rolled around, and the tests were all but boring holes through their mirrored confines into her soul. Sighing softly, Nancy locked the bathroom door and took a test out of its box. ‘There’s no way, we’re always careful. I’m only taking this to stop worrying...’

At least, that was what she kept telling herself as she read the instructions, chugged two glasses of water and waited patiently. Just to stop worrying, that one phrase. Over. And over. And over.

Nancy placed the used test on the edge of the sink, sat down and hugged her knees to her chest. Three minutes. Three measly minutes and her feelings of unease would be laid to rest.

Or, she hoped they would.

As it turned out, three minutes could feel like a hell of a long time under the right (or wrong, depending on how you looked at it) circumstances. She'd paced, spun in slow circles, counted the frays on her jeans one string at a time; anything to keep her eyes off the clock that seemed to drag the seconds out to spite her.

'What if I am pregnant? It's unlikely, but... How would Jon react? Shit, how would our family react? No. No, I need to calm down. I'm not pregnant.'

Nancy looked back at the clock. Time was up. Taking a deep breath, she got to her feet and turned around to look at the test. It was face down on the porcelain where she had tossed it, then disbelieving but now, though she would never admit it, a little scared.

'It's a few centimetres of plastic. It can't hurt you.' She shook her head and grabbed the test, thinking that she would actually be much more comfortable holding some sort of poisonous snake.

Rather than wait around, which would only stress her out more, she flipped the test over and narrowed her eyes at the slight dent in the centre.

One pink line.

'That's negative, right?' Nancy flipped the packaging over and skimmed over the instructions. 'One line... One line, that's negative.'

Though a sigh of relief left her lips, Nancy couldn't deny the sharp feeling of disappointment stabbing at her heart. She was young, yes, and just out of school but she also dearly loved her boyfriend and the thought of having children with him.

The sound of keys jingling in the lock of the front door roused her back to her feet; Jonathan was home. Quickly, she stored the used test back in its box and hurried to her room, where she stored it in the back of her bedside drawer. There was no need to tell Jonathan, after all, there was nothing to tell.

"Nancy? I'm home." Jonathan called out, kicking off his shoes and squinting down the dark hallway before being slammed into with a whirl of wavy hair and a hint of perfume; his girlfriend. "Christ Nance, you almost gave me a heart attack." He chuckled, arms winding their way around Nancy and holding her close.

"I missed you." Came her muffled response, the vibrations of her voice reverberating in his chest.

Jonathan waddled backwards towards the sofa, Nancy on her tiptoes atop his own feet. "I missed you too baby, so much. But I'm here now and I'm all yours for the rest of the night." He flashed his signature, lopsided smile and sank into the sofa cushions.

Nancy landed gently on his lap, legs winding around his waist and face nuzzling into his neck. This made Jonathan a tad concerned; Nancy had her very affectionate moments but she

was rarely ever this clingy (not that he was complaining). “Nance, did something happen today?..”

She shook her head, looking up at him with her baby-blue eyes shining. “No, I just... I really love you, Jonathan Byers.”

Jonathan could practically feel his heart melting, even after two years together his heart still skipped a beat when he heard her say those words. “I love you too, Nancy Wheeler.”

Another week had passed and still, Nancy was late. On top of that, much to her absolute delight, she’d been dreadfully sick multiple days in a row. As usual, Jonathan had been doting on her constantly (and insisting that she stay in bed, much to Nancy’s protests) but had reluctantly left to attend his photography class.

As soon as she heard the lock click in the door, Nancy stumbled out of bed towards the bathroom. Minimal rummaging in the cabinet unearthed the three remaining pregnancy tests. She used all of them, one after the other, not panicking be damned.

‘It’s probably just the flu, lots of Jonathan’s classmates have been sick.’

So she repeated last weeks process of watching and waiting, apart from the pacing which her nausea prevented. This time around felt even longer, and the knots in her stomach couldn’t completely be blamed on illness.

Swallowing the lump in her throat, she flipped all of the tests over the second time was up. ‘No point wasting time now...’

Two lines. Two lines. Two lines.

Well... That couldn’t be any more obvious, could it?

‘Oh god, oh god... Okay, alright, it didn’t say that last week. Fuck. They could be faulty, there’s no way... I take my birth control everyday. But what if I am, Nancy Wheeler, pregnant at eighteen?’ She let out a nervous giggle, though this was far from a laughing matter. ‘Why am I laughing? This is insane, absolutely insane... I think I might be sick.’

And she was.

If Nancy was being honest, she had no way to describe how she was feeling; overwhelmed would’ve been a large understatement. It was a strange, emotional cocktail of happiness, shock, excitement and pure, unadulterated terror. She felt like crying and laughing all at once, so that’s exactly what she did.

After a considerable amount of tears, broken laughter and even more tears, the next step was to tell someone. Not her family, no way in hell, and Jon was in class, that left only one person. Steve Harrington.

Steve definitely seemed like the most sensible option; he was her closest friend, but not so close that he'd snitch to her family. Besides, when Barb had gone missing, he became the only person she could truly trust, apart from Jonathan.

"Steve, hey, it's Nancy." She curled up in her armchair, wearing one of Jonathan's sweaters that went down to her mid-thigh. "Are you okay to talk?"

"Hey Nance! Course, what's up?" Steve lounged across his desk, thanking God that he didn't have college that day. "You sound a little choked up, did you and Jonathan have a fight? You know I'll beat his ass if I have to."

Nancy shook her head, managing a soft giggle. "Nothing like that, I do have to tell you something though. But you have to promise not to freak out, it's really important."

Of course, Steve did freak out. He freaked out BAD.

"You're pregnant?! Like, actually, there's-a-being-inside-of-you pregnant? Is Jonathan the father? Have you even TOLD Jonathan?"

"What other kind of pregnant is there?! And of course Jon is the father! Who do you take me for?!" The brunette cried, clicking her tongue. "And no... I haven't told him yet. He's got class and... I'm scared how he's gonna react." She trailed off with a barely audible sniffle, but her best friend heard it loud and clear, and quickly calmed down.

"Hey, hey Nancy, don't cry. As much as I don't like him, Jonathan's a decent guy. He's not gonna leave, he's not... He's just not a straight-up dick like that." Clearing his throat, he continued with an uncharacteristically gentle tone. "Listen to me, okay? You're a badass, Nancy Wheeler, and you know it. When life throws a curveball your way, you hit it back a million times harder. I know it's your choice what happens now but for what it's worth, I think you'd make a wonderful mother. I mean, just look at how great you are with Holly and Mike, and all of the other kids when they're over. You're so kind, thoughtful, protective, and you always put everyone else first... I'll support you no matter what you choose to do but that kid would be so damn lucky to have you for a mom."

There was a pause, then Nancy sniffled again. "Steve... Thank you. We have a rough history, we both know that, so that means so much to me... I don't... I don't think I'm going to y'know, g-get rid of it. It's early on but, I want to keep it. I'm going to consider my options obviously, I'm not an idiot, but I don't think I could do that to a baby... to Jonathan's baby."

"As I said, I'll be behind you no matter what, but that's wonderful Nancy." Steve smiled. "I know Jonathan will feel the same way. But I swear to god, if he does leave, I'll hunt him down until the day I die and--"

"Steve, Christ! You're not going to have to do that." She laughed, "Even if things turn out that way, I don't really want to think about it but if they do, please don't hurt him. I don't need either of you landing in jail. Again."

Chuckling, he faux-wincing at her playful pointedness. "Ouch, Nance. No need to fret, I've very much learned my lesson from the last time."

“I’m very glad to hear that, Mr Harrington. No more fighting in alleyways.”

“Yep, next time I fight Johnny-boy, it’ll be in the comfort of my own home.” Steve grinned.

“You know that’s not what I meant, Steven!”

Time passed surprisingly fast for Nancy, after hanging up the phone she tidied up the apartment and headed downtown to get groceries. There was a spring in her step that hadn’t been there before; Steve really knew how to cheer her up, and she was grateful for it.

While at the store, amidst the milk and eggs she needed to buy, Nancy picked up a few extra tests; there was no harm in being extra sure till she went to the doctors. She was still extremely nervous about breaking the news to Jonathan, but decided the best way about it would be to tell him over dinner.

The next few hours passed in a productive, if a little tiring, blur. By the time six o’clock rolled around there was chicken and rice cooking in the oven (Jonathan’s favourite) and Nancy was curled up on the worn loveseat, a book in one hand and a mug of hot chocolate in the other. She had placed a shoe box full of the pregnancy tests, now nine in total, on the kitchen counter; close enough to the table for easy access. The living-room clock was directly in her line of sight; Jonathan would be home soon and fortunately, her Xanax had kicked in quickly enough to take the edge off her almost-panic-attack-level anxiety.

As soon as Jonathan came through the door and called out his usual greeting, Nancy marked her page and stood up to meet him. Her boyfriend was already leaning in the kitchen doorway, eyes wide at the candlelit dinner laid out on the table. Touched but a tad suspicious, Jonathan smiled and relaxed back when Nancy’s thin arms wound around his waist. “This is incredible Nance, what’s the special occasion?”

“Nothing.” She smiled, standing on tiptoes to kiss his cheek. “You’ve been working incredibly hard and you deserve some looking after.”

Jonathan rolled his eyes playfully, of course his girlfriend would say something like that. “You’re the best, you know that right?”

“So I’ve been told.” Nancy laughed, a lot more relaxed, though that was probably due to her medication more than anything. “Now, sit. You need some down-time.” She brushed his hair out of his eyes and grinned. “And a haircut.”

Dinner went as perfectly as was possible when one half of a couple had a big secret to announce; the food turned out well and the aura of the room was generally relaxed. Halfway through the meal, Jonathan had pulled a stack of photos from his bag, flicked through them and placed one on the table facing Nancy. “We had to pick a stimulus for a personal project, I chose family...”

Nancy glanced down at the photograph and gasped softly; she remembered that weekend like it was yesterday. Last summer, the Byers had planned a family trip to the beach. Joyce and Hopper were newly married, and both Will and Jonathan were delighted that they had a new sister, El. The day before the vacation, Nancy had spent the night; the other Wheelers were out of town on a camping trip and Joyce had insisted that she stay with them rather than be home-alone. Jonathan, of course, was overjoyed, as was El who had taken quite a shine to the older girl.

The holiday itself only lasted two days but the memories were timeless; the days were spent chasing the younger teenagers in the water and eating ice cream, while the nights were full of bright stars and stolen kisses. The picture in Nancy's hands was one from their last night, the sun had barely set and casted a warm glow over the sandy stretch of land. El and Will both had big smiles on their faces, their hair damp and skin salt-streaked. Hop and Joyce sat off to the left by the fire pit with their fingers intertwined, and Nancy was kneeling in the sand between the two pairs. She was mid-laugh, slightly sunburnt with messy, wavy hair; she looked... Beautiful. Not perfect, like she'd been conditioned to be. Not straight-laced, or composed or proper, and that was what Jonathan loved most about taking candid photos of his girlfriend. Without the pressure of knowing the lens was on her, she smiled wider, let her nose crinkle adorably, didn't worry about fixing her hair or sucking in her stomach.

Biting her lower lip shyly, Nancy glanced up to meet Jonathan's gentle gaze and felt her heart skip a beat. 'He considers me family...' The thought made her stomach do flip-flops. "Jonathan, you're such a sweetheart." She gave his hand a light squeeze, then got up and walked over to the fridge. "I hope you're not too full, I made dessert as well."

"Bring it on." Jonathan smiled, which grew wider when Nancy sat on his knee. Two plates were sat on the table, blue in front of him and pink in front of her. "Pink for a girl and blue for a boy, huh?"

"I guess you could say that, yeah." Her eyes seemed to glimmer with a hint of mirth, though it was gone in the blink of an eye. Mentally shrugging it off, Jonathan propped his chin on Nancy's shoulder and took a bite. "Mmmfffff, sho damn goob!"

Nancy erupted into giggles, further fuelled by her ever-so graceful boyfriend swallowing half of his cake whole. "Don't choke! You're as bad as Steve, oh my god." Nevertheless, she wolfed down her own dessert at a similar pace and grinned playfully.

Then streaked icing down Jonathan's cheek.

"Oh, you wanna play like that, huh~?" He smirked, flicking crumbs in Nancy's general directions and topping it off with a dollop of icing on her button nose.

Cue a tirade of laughing, squirming and cake-throwing; neither party got away unscathed. Both of them had landed on the kitchen tiles halfway through mini-scale WW3, where they lay now trying to get their breath back.

"I love you so much." Whispered Jonathan, rolling onto his side to face his partner and cupping her cheek.

Nancy smiled and pressed a hand to her stomach. “And I love you, more than anything. Well, we both love you...”

Chestnut eyes wide as saucers, Jonathan glanced at both her stomach and face repeatedly. “I-We? Wait, you don’t mean- Oh my god, Nancy, are you being serious?” He watched her eyes start to well up, panic setting into his heart.

“Mmhm, t-totally serious.” She sniffed, smiling despite the tears in her eyes. “I kinda suspected something last week but I found out for sure this morning. I really didn’t know how to tell you...” Reaching up, she lifted the cardboard box onto the floor and lifted the lid.

Jonathan gaped at the contents of the box, resembling a rather shocked fish. “These are... They’re all...”

“Positive.”

In a flash, a strong pair of arms were wrapped around her and lifting her into the air. Nancy squealed but wrapped her legs around her boyfriend, running her fingers through his hair. “I take it this is a good reaction?” She giggled under her breath.

“Are you kidding me?!” His eyes shone like stars, “Nancy, I’m fucking stoked! This is incredible, I can’t believe it!”

Tears had brimmed in her eyes again, threatening to spill over at any second. “You m-mean it? I’m not sad, I just... Holy shit, I thought you were gonna get angry or... Or l-leave me...”

“Hey hey hey, don’t cry, I’m not going anywhere m’kay?” Jonathan cupped Nancy’s cheek with his free hand, gently thumbing away the salty drops that clung to her lower lashes. “This is the most wonderful thing you could have ever told me Nance, I know it seems scary but we can do this. I know we can. You don’t have to worry about money or housing or anything, and you sure as hell don’t have to worry about me leaving, I’m not my dad... I want to be there for my kid, I want to be there for you...” He held her closer to his chest, reassuring her in silence that he meant every word.

For a few fleeting, peaceful moments, they stayed like that; wrapped around each other under the dim kitchen lighting, breath rising and falling in a calming lull. Beyond the window, the sky was a blur of purples and navy blues, dotted with golden smudges from the buildings that rose towards the darkness.

“J-Jonathan...” Nancy sniffed, face buried in the crook of his neck as she mumbled. “I love you...”

“I love you too Nancy, I love both of you...”

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- Short comments
- Long comments
- Questions
- “<3” as extra kudos
- Reader-reader interaction

This author replies to comments.

Note: If you don't want a reply, for any reason (sometimes I feel shy when I'm reading and not up to starting a conversation, for example), feel free to sign your comment with “whisper” and I will appreciate it but not respond!

~Present day~

Here they were, almost four months on, driving up to see their families for the first time in half a year and aside from their anxieties resurfacing over the prospect of bad reactions, both of the future-parents couldn't have been any happier.

Over the last few months, even with college and part-time work, Jonathan had attended every appointment, checkup and parenting class religiously. Meanwhile, Nancy had taken up a job at the Hawkins Post, and in her spare time, had begun clearing out one of the small, spare rooms to use as a nursery. And, after one of their earlier appointments, while walking through Central Park in the pouring rain, Jonathan had even gotten down on one knee.

Rain lashed at the windows as they pulled into Hawkins, the town sign greeting them with a weathered familiarity. Despite the knots clawing her insides apart, the oldest Wheeler child smiled softly and curled her legs up underneath her. "I've missed this place." Her breath fogged up the glass of the passenger-side window, breaking the silence that had fallen over the pair for the past half an hour.

"You couldn't wait to leave all through high school. You were all, ooo Jonathan, I hate it here~! Ooo Jonathan, I'm moving as soon as you leave for college~!" Jonathan caught the small hand that shot out to push his shoulder, laughing and squeezing it tight. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see his girlfriend roll her eyes but giggle nonetheless.

"Okay, that may have been true. But it's different not living here anymore, it's nice to visit." She watched the trees pass until they became a green blur, soon turning into a slideshow of shop fronts.

Jonathan smirked, shifted gear and turned the corner onto Nancy's old street. "Are you actually agreeing with me for once? God, I must be dreaming(!)"

Cheekiness sparkling in her eyes, Nancy snorted. "No way! I said it /may/ have been true, don't get cocky."

"You're unbelievable." He laughed softly, parking behind Hopper's jeep that was recognisable from a mile away. "Well, here we are.... Everything's gonna go fine, are you feeling okay?"

She nodded, suddenly very quiet, teeth tugging at her swollen lower lip. "I'm fine, a bit shaky, but fine." Their hands met on the dashboard; 'a bit' was a major understatement.

But Jonathan didn't push, he knew her too well; sometime's openly worrying made things worse rather than better in Nancy's case. Instead, he pressed a quick kiss to her forehead and unlocked the car doors. "C'mon, let's get this over with together."

"Together." Nancy nodded and stepped out onto the pavement.

The moment the pair made it through the front door, before they'd even had a chance to announce their arrival, they were bombarded by a crowd of teenage boys. Namely: Mike, Will, Dustin, Lucas, and at the forefront, Steve, who swept Nancy off her feet and into a bear hug. "Guys, they're here!!"

Nancy laughed and hugged her best friend. "Put me down, you tree!" She grinned, holding onto his shoulders till she was back on solid ground. "You've gotten taller, how?!"

It was true, somehow, Steve had grown at least a few inches taller. "Y'know, I'm pretty sure it's all in the hair." Chuckling, his eyes softened with a glance at her torso. "You look great though, Nance, you really do."

"Aww, Steve..." She went in for another hug, only for her 'tree' to be pushed out of the way by her younger brother.

"Oi Harrington, stop flirting with my sister and let me see her." Mike scowled but wrapped his arms around Nancy; though he'd never admit it out loud, he'd missed her dreadfully. "Hey Nancy, how's things?"

While Nancy marvelled over Mike's newfound height, Jonathan and Will ranted about the music they had to share, and the others crowded on the stairs, the adults had gathered in the kitchen doorway. Splitting the sections of grownups and adolescent boys, were El, Max and Holly. All three of them waited for the boys to disperse, most likely to avoid getting crushed, then rushed forward to deliver the second wave of hugs and greetings. Quickly, however, they too moved over as Joyce and Karen were getting visibly fidgety in the background.

Joyce was the first to move, breaking away from Hopper and running to Jonathan's open arms. In their tight embrace, it was clear just how close they were; they'd been through hell and back as a family, especially when Will had gone missing for weeks, after all. The same couldn't be said for Nancy and her mom, their relationship had always been a strained clash of too much pressure and too little affection. However, over the past few months Nancy's maternal instincts had surged and in turn, she found herself wanting nothing more than contact with her own mother.

"Mom..." Nancy whimpered, a sound that had Karen from the kitchen to her daughter's side in a split-second. They held each other as they hadn't done in years and for once, Nancy was soothed by her mom's presence. "I missed you..."

Karen threaded her fingers through the younger woman's hair. "I missed you too sweetheart, you have no idea..."

They stayed like that for a while, silent, in their own little world. In the background, Nancy could vaguely hear the boys discussing their latest D&D campaign, Joyce chastising Jonathan fondly for 'looking peaky' and Holly babbling away about presents, Santa and snow.

It was good to be home.

By the time the food was ready (an impressive roast dinner, curtesy of Karen and Joyce's surprising teamwork), everyone had migrated into the living room; the only room big enough to host fourteen people comfortably. Not much had changed in the Wheeler household, apart from the festive tree in the corner and the strings of lights lining the walls, not unlike the ones that tangled up the Byers house years previously.

Dinner hadn't stood a chance against the ever-hungry, energy-filled tornado (aka, the kids) that swept through the kitchen, which had now subsided into a puddle of snoozy bodies on the carpet. A pillow at her back and under her legs, Nancy sat with Holly on her knee, who was talking animatedly about everything under the sun. The older of the girls was responding with obviously over-exaggerated gasps and cries of "Really?! That's amazing!" but it made Jonathan smile; she had a way with the children.

The sofa cushions sank slightly as his mom sat down, a mug of tea in one hand. She too looked down at the sisters with a smile and leaned closer to Jonathan with a whisper. "I can tell how happy she makes you, you're a perfect match."

"Thanks mom. Nancy, she... She's my whole world, I can't imagine life without her." He mumbled back shyly, hair slipping into his eyes.

"And I hope you tell her that on a daily basis. Jonathan, when you meet someone like her, you hold on tight and you don't let go. I don't want things to end up like, well..." Joyce didn't have to finish her sentence, both knew what she was thinking.

Jonathan shook his head and took his mother's hand. "I promise I won't let her go. I love her too much, and I do tell her. I tell her everyday."

"That's my boy." She kissed his cheek, then paused. "You know... Having kids young can be very beneficial--"

"Mom, we're only eighteen(!)" Whisper-yelled Jonathan, though a smile quirked the corner of his mouth. "Don't you think it's a little young?" Even though he knew it was too late anyway, he still wanted, nay, needed to know how she felt.

"I've always dreamed about grandkids, I miss the things we did when you and Will were kids." Joyce began carefully. "You grew up so fast Jonathan, you've practically been Will's father figure for the past few years and you're great with him. Look at Nancy with Holly, she's a natural too. You'd make wonderful parents, regardless of age."

"That means so much, but mom, me and Nancy actually have something to tell you. Well, to tell everyone." Glancing around, he caught his girlfriend's eye and shot her a nervous smile, which she returned. "Nancy, I think it might be a good time to share our news."

"Oh?" A flicker in her eyes; recognition. "Oh."

Jonathan took Nancy's hand and helped her to her feet, Holly still resting on her hip. For a moment, he imagined that the child wasn't Holly at all, but rather their own child. Their

child, who'd no doubt grow up with messy, chestnut hair, and a knack for getting themselves into mischief; merely the thought sent his heart shooting for the stars.

All eyes on them, it was ultimately Nancy who broke the silence. "So uh... Jonathan and I do have something to share with you all. I guess you could say it's been in the works for a while but we couldn't find the right time where we'd all be together--"

"I knew it, they're getting a dog!" Will grinned.

"Shut up Will! They're probably getting married." Max rolled her eyes, though not unkindly.

"Guys, stop fighting. They're going to tell us." Sighed El, a slight smile on her face.

"Besides, I'm sure it's about moving house."

Jonathan chuckled; the kids hadn't changed a bit. "Well, you're not totally wrong. Nancy and I are engaged, we have been for a few months."

Nancy held up her hand to show the small band glimmering on her finger, cue cries of elation from Joyce (and Karen, surprisingly) accompanied by Max and Will's good natured squabbling.

"Why didn't you tell us sooner?!" Joyce gasped, pulling the couple in for a hug. "This is amazing!"

Jonathan laughed again. "Honestly, we did wanted to do it in person. A phone call or letter seemed too impersonal."

"Exactly, plus, I was nervous how everyone would take it." Nancy chimed in, returning the hug with her fiancé.

"Honey, don't be ridiculous, you've basically been a part of the family for years now." Joyce smiled softly, then moved over to allow the others to clamour around them.

Karen was a little more reserved than Joyce, though neither Nancy nor Jonathan had expected anything less. However, she did hug both of them as best as she could with Hopper slapping his step-son on the back. "I'm very happy for you both, I know you're old enough to make sensible decisions."

Nancy smiled. "Thanks mom, I promise we will."

The six kids were much less civilised than the adults, mutually deciding to rush at the couple from all angles and hug them tightly. Holly gladly copied them; smushing her face into her big sister's shoulder and giggling. Laughing, Nancy looked up to see Steve by the fireplace who gave her a grin and a thumbs-up, then back at the swarm of teenagers. "Guys, calm down, we have something else to tell you as well! That's only half of the story."

"Yeah, we figured we'd tell you about this last, sorta like an early Christmas present." Smiled Jonathan, interlocking fingers with Nancy. "You all might want to sit down first."

Looking quite concerned, the adults perched on chairs with furrowed brows. “Honey, did something happen?” Karen probed.

Nancy just shook her head. “No mom, nothing happened. Well, something did happen but it’s a good thing.”

“A great thing.” Jonathan interjected, “Before we tell you, we want you to know that we’re taking it very seriously. We’ve considered lots of options, I’ve been working extra shifts and we made our decision after talking over everything for a few months. It sounds scary, I know, but we’re really happy.”

Squeezing Jonathan’s hand, Nancy looked up at her family, heart hammering in her chest. “I’m... I’m pregnant.”

He could hear her crying through the locked bedroom door, the sound broke his heart like nothing else could. “Nancy, please let me in...”

There’d been so much shouting, god, it made the room shake. He’d never heard Mrs Wheeler so angry, let alone at Nancy, or seen the kids so petrified before. Feet rooted in place, he couldn’t move an inch. But he wanted to. So badly.

His baby was in there -both of his babies-. She was hurting, it was evident in her watery yelling, and all he could do was listen with trembling fingers. Everyone else in the room mimicked his behaviour; cringing away from the kitchen door. Only when Nancy stormed out into the hall and ran upstairs, had he wrenched himself after her. Despite his best efforts, she’d slammed and locked her bedroom before he could reach her.

Now, here he was; forehead pressed against the wood barrier that withheld him from the most important thing in his life. “Please don’t shut me out...”

“Go away Jonathan...” Nancy’s voice quivered under her tough persona. “Please...”

“You know I’m not leaving until you’re okay... Remember on our first date, I promised that you never had to go through anything alone ever again? I meant that, Nancy, I still do. This is our family, our baby, we can do it together...” Tears welled in his own eyes, wanting nothing more than to whisk her away from all the pain.

Upon hearing the lock click, Jonathan lurched to his feet, rushed into the room and gathered his girlfriend in his arms. “I love you, oh god, I love you so much...”

Nancy sobbed into his shoulder, clinging to him as if her life depended on it. She cried as he cuddled her, as he rubbed her back, as he lay down with her on the bed. ‘I don’t care what mom thinks, I don’t care what she thinks, I don’t care what she thinks...’ But she did, and it ripped her heart to pieces.

“N-Nancy, Jonathan?...” A soft voice called out from beyond the door. The couple glanced up tearfully to find the kids in the doorway with Steve, lead by El, who’s dark eyes shone with

emotion. “Can we come in?...”

The older girl nodded despite the crushing grief clawing at her, brushing away her tears hastily. In an instant, the two bodies on the bed became ten, all curling into a mass hug. They stayed like that, collectively watery-eyed, for a few moments, just breathing in each other.

“Thank you...” Nancy whispered, feeling multiple small arms squeeze her in response. “You guys are the best...”

“But I’m your favourite...” Will mumbled, ever the positivity-bringer despite the disaster of a day.

The older girl cracked a smile. “Yeah right...” She ruffled his hair, tilting her head back on the pillow and taking a deep breath.

“We love you...” El murmured into her shoulder, the others humming in agreement. “No matter what...”

“I- Oh!” Her eyes flew open, a hand on her stomach as she felt... Something. Nothing major, not quite a bump, but definitely something. “Did you-?... Was that-?...“

Again. Harder this time.

A kick.

“I... think she loves you too.” Steve smiled, looking a little stunned. “Has she ever kicked before?”

Nancy shook her head, too amazed for words. Another wave of tears threatened to spill, happy tears, it was one thing knowing you were pregnant and a completely different thing feeling it.

“This is the first time...” Jonathan breathed and, looking ready to cry himself, laced his fingers with his fiancée’s atop her stomach. “I can feel it, little peanut...”

“We are not calling our child ‘Peanut’, no way.” Nancy giggled and dabbed at her eyes with her shirt, shifting so the kids could feel the movements too.

“What about ‘Laurie’?” Max piped up, sitting back on her knees. “Y’know, after Laurie Strode, she’s badass!”

“Hey, it could be a boy!” Lucas cut in. “Like ‘Axel’ or-... or...”

“Joey!” Will yelped, bouncing up on the bed. “Joey, Joey Ramone!” Grinning madly, he high-fived his brother then looked back at Nancy as if awaiting her approval.

“Laurie Byers... Joey Byers...” Nancy mulled over the names, letting them roll off her tongue. “They both have nice rings to them, don’t you think?”

Jonathan nodded eagerly, feeling the tension in the room begin to disappear. “I like them too, especially Joey.”

Steve chuckled, taking Nancy’s spare hand and giving it a reassuring squeeze. “Well, Joey or Laurie, I don’t know about the others, but I for one can’t wait to meet you.”

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