

Hugh & Nick: The Announcement

At 10 weeks pregnant, Hugh leaned back in his desk chair as he scrolled through a report from R&D, his left hand rubbing little circles on the soft paunch of his belly. Every so often he would pull his hand away to type a correction or a note into the report, but then it quickly returned to his belly. Hugh was finding it harder and harder to keep from touching his belly when he was around people who didn't know he was pregnant - which was almost everyone. He was so sensitive there. He had started wearing his jeans two sizes larger than normal, because even though he could usually manage to button one size up, he found the feeling of the waistband pushing against his tummy to be disproportionately, distractingly, uncomfortable. Meanwhile a gentle stroking felt incredibly soothing, in part because Hugh was certain that the fur on his belly was softer than normal. Nick agreed, and had discovered that he could get Hugh to purr like a feline with a belly rub.

It wasn't just the physical sensation though. The twins were too small for Hugh to feel them moving, but he still felt aware of them inside him. He could feel all of the changes to his body and knew it was adapting to nurture his babies. Keeping a hand on his belly felt the tiniest bit like holding them, and he loved it.

There was a knock on his office door and Hugh sat up, pulling his shirt down over his belly. "Yeah," he called. Martin opened the door. "Hugh, Gina and Missy are here. Nick isn't yet. Do you want to wait for all three?"

Hugh marked his place in the report before responding. "He's probably saving the world." Hugh glanced at his phone then removed his glasses. "He didn't text so he'll probably just be a couple minutes. You can send the others in now and have Nick come in as soon as he gets here."

Missy, a slim tabby cat who served as Coopertech's Communications Director entered, followed by Gina, a tall, stunning white rabbit who owned the PR firm that Coopertech had on retainer.

Hugh greeted them and made small talk for several minutes before the door opened again and Nick entered. Hugh grinned. Nick was wearing a perfectly tailored navy suit with purple paisley tie. He looked incredible. The fox crossed to him and planted a kiss on his head. "Hey, baby. Sorry I'm late. Client meeting ran a little long."

"No problem, we're just getting started." Hugh turned to the two women who were staring at Nick in surprise. "You guys have both met my husband, right?" The cat and the rabbit both recovered quickly and greeted Nick warmly. "Let's go over there so there's room for all of us," Hugh indicated the corner of his office where there was a sofa and two matching chairs. Nick held out his hand to Hugh, who smiled and gratefully accepted the assistance to his feet. Nick knew that Hugh had been feeling heavy and tired lately but also couldn't resist dropping a hint. The couple took the couch, sitting close together, and the women seated themselves in the chairs. Hugh rested one arm on the couch back behind Nick's shoulders, and smoothed his shirt over the small curve of his belly. The paunch was much more noticeable than it usually was when he was standing or seated behind a desk or at a table.

"Alright," Hugh said. "I hope you guys are ready to work hard." He paused to glance at Nick, who reached over to squeeze his knee. "We need a rollout strategy to announce that I'm pregnant."

The strategy started by calling a meeting of Coopertech's board. The reaction from board members was mixed. Many were happy for Hugh but some worried about things slipping at the company while he took leave and they worried about stock prices if the perception was that he wasn't devoting his time and energy to the company. Hugh had given his prepared responses to the concerns - well-developed team, great press, blah blah - and gotten through it.

Next was the meeting with all management-level employees of Coopertech, followed by distributing a video announcement to all staff. Knowing that the video would be leaked almost immediately, Hugh and the PR team had scripted it carefully for public consumption. At the same time the video went out they issued the press release.

The last part of the announcement was the social media strategy. Nick and Hugh had taken a picture in the mirror of their bathroom. But first Nick had scrubbed the bathroom spotless, and they had received the PR team's input on their clothes, and the pose to use. Ultimately Hugh wore a tight white t-shirt that showed off his muscled arms, and jeans that he buttoned below the curve of his belly. Nick wore a dark green polo and tight fitting jeans. They were both profile to the mirror with Nick pressed against Hugh's back. Nick held the phone in one hand and reached around to caress Hugh's baby bump with the other. Hugh held up his shirt and covered Nick's hand with his own. Hugh looked down at his belly with a soft smile, while Nick pressed his cheek to Hugh's shoulder blade, also smiling. At this point, when Hugh was fully clothed he looked like he had perhaps let himself go a little and developed a bit of a gut. But with his shirt pulled up, the firm round curve of his belly was unmistakable. They had taken several shots then sent them to the PR team for review and touching up. What they got back was perfect.

The press release had gone out on a Wednesday and for the rest of the week Hugh, Nick, and the publicists all gave relatively bland statements. They scheduled interviews for the following week. The Saturday after the press release, Nick and Hugh were snuggled on a couch in their house, Nick's head resting on Hugh's chest and both looking at the laptop balanced on the rounded bulge of Hugh's belly.

"Ready?" Hugh asked.

Nick nodded. "Let's do it."

Hugh created a tweet that read "So y'all want to see the bump, right?" He sent it. The reaction from his millions of followers was immediate and enthusiastic. They watched the replies and likes roll in for a few minutes, ignoring the expected homophobic bullshit. Then Hugh took a deep breath and posted the picture.

The fox and the wolf watched the internet lose its mind about their photo. Both of their phones started blowing up, but they ignored them.

"Hungry?" Nick asked.

"Always," Hugh replied, then watched his husband pad to the kitchen for snacks.

Hugh was going through emails on his phone in the back seat of the car while Steve drove him to work the Monday following the drop of "the bump picture." A text from Gina popped up in the "Preg PR" group that consisted of Hugh, Nick, Gina, and Missy. "Vanity Fair wants in depth interview with both of you and preggo photo shoot for multi-page spread."

Hugh smirked. Vanity Fair had published their wedding photos 6 years ago and had run a short puff piece to go along with them. At the time both of them were notable up-and-comers rather than public figures, so it was more "well-connected hot gay couple has beautiful wedding" than a celebrity piece. This would be different. "Thoughts?" He texted to the group.

Nick texted, "Oooh! I want sexy Vanity Fair photos of HPC all pregged up! Do it in a couple months when you're rounder?"

"I meant thoughts from the professionals, horn dog," Hugh replied.

Missy texted "Oh man, given the international freak out over 1 selfie, can you imagine what the response would be?"

"Bring on the Gay Men Have It All think pieces!!" Nick texted.

Hugh grimaced and shifted in his seat as his stomach gurgled. He quickly put the phone down, took off his glasses, and rolled down the window a bit, breathing the warm air deeply.

"Boss?" Steve said from the driver's seat, "Ya need me to stop?"

Hugh didn't answer for a moment as he cleared his throat and deliberately swallowed. "No, I think I'm ok," he said eventually.

There had been a few times when Hugh had to have Steve pull over so he could vomit or dry heave by the side of the road. Hugh had expected snarky comments from Steve after the first time, but instead the raccoon had just reached up to pat him on the shoulder, then handed him a bottle of water. When they had returned to the car, Steve had pulled a sleeve of saltines out of the center console and handed them back without a word. Now at the beginning of his second trimester, the morning sickness wasn't as frequent as it had been, but it still hit every few days.

Hugh slipped a hand under his shirt to rub his belly. It didn't necessarily take the nausea away, but it felt good when he otherwise felt bad. It felt even better when Nick did it for him. After a few minutes he put his glasses back on and picked up the phone again to see a few links to think pieces that had already been written about the bump picture and several jokes. A new text popped up from Nick just to him. "You went quiet in the group text and you can't be at work yet. You ok baby?"

Hugh texted back "love you. Just nauseous for a few minutes."

"Love you too" Nick replied. A moment later he sent another text to the group. "Seriously on VF, if we decide to do it then I don't want to just be the supportive spouse. Esp if HPC talks about Coop a ton, I'd like to have coverage of my firm too."

"I agree" Hugh texted quickly. "Nick, would you want them to cover your coal ash case or is that too new?"

"Eh. Explaining what coal ash is might be too much. They could do the lead pipes one. Everyone gets lead pipes." Nick replied.

"So Gina, we want guaranteed coverage of Coop and AT LEAST one of Nick's cases." Hugh texted.

"That's fair." Gina texted. "Would you guys be ok with a couple meetings with the reporter?"

"Ok with me. Baby?" Nick answered.

"I'm in." Hugh said. "Maybe by the time I'm big enough for good photos I won't be throwing up every few days."

"We get good photos even when you're pukey, baby. You're just too hot for it to matter!"

"Sexiness quotient of the bump pic was seriously upped by the gorgeous fox on my back."

"OMG take it to your private text you two!" Missy put in.

"Not my fault y'all got me thinking about my smoking hot husband in sexy pregnancy photos." Nick responded.

"I'll respond to VF with your conditions and will let you know what they say," Gina said.

"Gina, you are a consummate professional," Hugh responded.