



Source: James Button, 'Turkey starts its long trek to Europe', *The Age online*, 05/10/05.

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She wants to see lines. Two lines, parallel and pink. Parallel, pink, positive. She waits for her child, every month, to come. She is waiting at the gates of motherhood. She waits for the sickness, the difficulty. She waits for the joy and the pain and the holding tight and wrapping up and cooing softly. She waits, and waits, for those two pink lines on the pregnancy test stick.

It is early morning, and she has risen from the bed, feeling that it must be it, and knowing that she feels that every month. She has not bled, her breasts ache, her heart is ready. But every month, when she has not bled, her breasts ache, and her heart feels ready, the rest of her isn't. She has bought the test, traveled to different pharmacies so as not to look desperate, because she does not want to look desperate, for all the world, she wants this to look easy, unimportant.

Every month, she buys the test, dips the stick into a small cup of her urine, and waits. She watches as the liquid moves up the stick, clouding the test window. Her hands shake, her heart beats heavily, as the first line appears. Every month, that first pink line has appeared—strong and straight and clear. The liquid continues to travel up the test line. No twin appears. Month after month, the pink line has remained without a partner. A lone, lonely line. She straightens her back, places the pregnancy test stick back in its packet, throws it in the bin. She often clears her throat, begins to hum a tune, brushes the lint of her tee-shirt. She attempts to forget the moment, get on with her day, with things, with life.

Life. That's what she wants. She wants to start one. She wants to grow one. She is getting older, her hormones are not at their right levels. She's had tests. She could do something, have more tests, jab herself with needles, be implanted, see if something takes. But the doctor says that no, she doesn't think it's necessary, not just yet. Give it a year. Wait it out. Don't get too desperate. But she wants, she wants, she wants. And she bleeds every month and she washes out the stains from the sheets and she takes pills for the pain. And she tries not to get desperate, and she tries to list all the good things about not having a child, and she doesn't believe them.

She wants she wants she wants.
And she waits and she waits and she waits.

She has lost a child. A formless, sexless child, who slipped away from her body, cramping and bleeding. She screamed for her child, for the idea of her child, but it slipped away, and now she waits for another.

She mourned for her child, alone, for without a name and without a form, no one else could join her. She alone had stood with her child, the two of them together, like the two pink lines, parallel, close, together. And then the child slipped away.

She wonders if her body is toxic. She does not really know what this might mean, but she worries that she has proven herself unworthy.

'It is not your fault', said the baby's father and the doctor and the social worker and her mother and a dozen others. It is like a mantra she is unable to take up. Because the emptiness, the loss, the hope and despair and the joy and the pain, it felt so central to her that it all must be within her. How could it not be her, be her fault?

They say that a second pregnancy will not relieve her pain and loss. Others tell her that a new baby will make it all better. Still others say that she cannot replace her child. She listens to what they say, and all of it feels true and false all at once. She does not want to replace her child. She wants to replace her motherhood. When she lost her child, she lost herself, because she was a mother for only a matter of weeks and then she wasn't, and she wants to return to the way she was. It is not the replacement of her child, but the replacement of motherhood. She wants those gates to open.

And so she is desperate for her two pink lines. She is desperate to prove herself worthy. She sits, on the edge of the toilet and she tries to be calm and she tries to think 'oh well, whatever happens, happens. What will be will be.'

But she doesn't believe this. She knows what it is that she wants. She wants, she wants, she wants.

She draws out the test stick from its cup. She replaces the cap over the stick, and she gently places the stick on the edge of the bath, so that it is level and so that it can be read properly.

And the liquid moves past the test window, and the first line appears. And her breasts ache and her hands shake. And then the liquid moves further up the window, and the twin that she has been waiting for and longing for, the line that she has wanted, wanted, wanted, that line appears. It is faint, a paler pink than that first line. But it is there, and that is what counts.

And she sees the gates, so close. She feels herself smile, and she feels her heart swell. And she hopes, she hopes, she hopes, that these two lines will stay together, that they are meant to be together, and that this one will not slip away.

And she finds, quite strangely, that she does not feel relief. And that she still wants, wants, wants.

And as she opens the gates, no longer waiting, passing through, she thinks that on the other side, it does not yet feel safe. And never will be.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sophie Townsend.