

THE HIGGS WELDON

My Fetus and I Are BFFs

By Jessica Allen

We first started getting close right after I found out I was pregnant. Even though there wasn't much to him at that point—a couple thousand cells or so, collectively the size of a poppy seed—I had a feeling we would get along. Sometimes you just know, you know? You meet someone, or, as in my case, you pee on a stick, and boom... you click.

I guess you could say that I was the one who jump-started our friendship by giving him a place to gestate for forty-odd weeks. But he's given me some swell stuff too, such as a supersonic sense of smell. No longer do I have to wonder whether something's burning or ask my husband whether he's scooped the litter box. Then there was the instant boob job. Thanks to my best friend the fetus, I got to say so long to my push-ups and shove them aside to make way for bigger, and shockingly still bigger, new bras. For Christmas, he got me heartburn, which admittedly wasn't that thoughtful. But friends let grievances go. Besides, our relationship isn't about who gives the better gifts. It's mostly based on mutual interests.

For example, we both really love cheese. Also milkshakes, cheeseburgers, tacos, and really spicy food, especially shrimp fried rice with loads of hot mustard. And cake. And cookies. Burritos too. And dumplings. Have I mentioned how much we both like dumplings? Or cheese? If only someone would make us a cheese-coconut dumpling, possibly with a milkshake-based dipping sauce. We'd both love you forever.

We also like a lot of the same people, which makes life easier. Who doesn't want their friends to like their other friends? Whenever he hears his dad's voice, my fetus begins kicking. I kick sometimes when I hear his dad's voice as well, such as when he's trying to pry me up off the couch to go to bed despite the fact that I've been happily napping there for at least two hours.

A lot of pregnancy books recommend that you start a ritual to bond with your baby while he or she is still in utero. Not to get all braggy, but my fetus and I didn't need to take warm baths by candlelight or to listen to me sing lullabies in order to develop an affinity for one another. Instead, we have our own special projects, and I'm not talking about binge-watching *Sherlock* or *Game of Thrones*. Well, okay, we do a lot of that, but recently we've been on a quest to find Girl Scout cookies, much harder than it by all rights should be. We downloaded the app, we started following our local chapter on Twitter, we've even taken to walking slowly past elementary schools in our neighborhood. Tough as it's been, the struggle to get some Samoas and Thin Mints is bringing us closer, I think.

My fetus and I don't need words to communicate. That's a good thing, since he isn't much of a conversationalist, and he's too small for texting. I'm not sure how he could get a smartphone in there anyway. No matter. As with the very best BFFs, we've developed an almost telepathic closeness. To wit: sometimes I'll be sitting at work, typing away, when all of a sudden I absolutely have to Google "coconut oatmeal bars" or "easy Oreo cheesecake." Totally my fetus's doing, I know.

Naturally, there are plenty of times when it's not all stalking Girl Scouts, chomping on cheese, and

Googling food porn, times when we're not getting along. Every friendship has its ups and downs, of course. Why he sometimes feels the need to flip over and rest his hard head directly against my bladder, I don't know. Could it be that he wants me to recognize that he has a personality that's separate from mine? Hey, unlike my fetus, I have lots and lots of other friends, and I get that occasionally we'll disagree or need some space. If anything, I should be teaching him that lesson, considering our age difference.

And I know he'd prefer that I walk faster. While I'm waiting for the light to change at crosswalks, he'll kick and kick, as if to say, "I don't have all day," or, "let's get a move on, Ma." He's not too fond of walking up stairs, and often protests by jamming himself into my pubic bone. Frankly, I don't much care for walking up stairs, either, especially now that my fetus makes his home right about where my intestines used to be.

So, fine, maybe our friendship is a little odd. After all, I'm a fully grown adult woman, while he is pretty much the exact opposite. Just a few weeks ago, he couldn't even open his eyes. His time is largely spent drinking and peeing amniotic fluid, sleeping, and developing his cerebral cortex, among other organs and systems he needs to function on the outside.

I'm not complaining. I cherish our BFF-ness and wouldn't have it otherwise—until he leaves the womb, that is. Once he's here, it's my way or no way, also known as my prerogative as his mom.

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