



Expecting beauty How one writer's pregnancy transformed a once-rocky relationship with her body.

 **Thirty-seven weeks** into my pregnancy, I found myself rolling around naked on the floor of my friend Christine's apartment, her Canon snapping photos at breakneck speed like fireworks on the Fourth of July. Christine and I met in a fertility clinic waiting room. Our friendship was instantaneous, our personalities syncing along with our periods in preparation for in vitro fertilization. A professional photographer, she had been pleading to take my picture throughout my hard-won pregnancy (three rounds of IVF, one early miscarriage). For the longest time, I wasn't into it: I thought pregnancy pics were cheesy and cliché. But in the final stretch, my thoughts took a 180. At 5 feet 11 inches, it took me a long time to show, and I was finally rocking a real bump that I wanted to preserve on film.

I exercised—hard—throughout my 40 weeks and loved the way my body looked: lean and fit yet still swollen with life. For the shoot, we envisioned something artsy and luscious and Ansel Adams-y, so Christine blacked out the windows and guided me through an array of poses worthy

of their own vinyasa class. Her lens transformed my B-cup breasts and belly into shadowy, cavernous dips and rolling gray mountains.

My relationship with my figure has been similarly stormy and undulating over the years: While struggling with an eating disorder throughout college or fighting to conceive in my 30s, I've often felt betrayed by or angry at my body. But clad in nothing more than a swipe of lipstick, I felt more gorgeous than ever before. Like many infertility patients, it took me a long time to truly embrace my pregnancy, to accept that a healthy baby was actually growing inside of me. With every click and flash of Christine's camera, I felt more and more connected to that life.

I know I'll look back at these photos for years to come with a dreamy smile, never forgetting how I felt while posing for those pictures: lovely, alive and full of promise. *

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