

Unborn Love

By Bailey Holloway

How can a human being love, truly *love*, someone they have never met? Love is a complex emotion difficult to describe. It cannot be consciously controlled. Love often occurs when two people make an intimate connection after meeting and assessing each other's personality. It is difficult to explain, however, how love occurs between a mother and a child *in utero*. The two have never formally met. Love, however, occurs automatically, almost unconsciously, between a parent and a child.

Love can be felt at the first thought of a new being entering your life. I was eighteen years old and had just graduated high school when I first experienced my "mother's intuition." I was vacationing with my fiancé and his family in Tennessee when I had this overwhelming feeling that I could be pregnant. Although there were no physical signs of a pregnancy, I could not get the idea out of my head. I told my fiancé about my feelings. He didn't even think about doubting my "premonition". A variety of emotions plagued us both. Excitement, anxiety, happiness, and fear were just some of the emotions we experienced. However, we did not want to get too worked up in case the hunch turned out to be nothing at all. When we returned home, we bought a home pregnancy test. It was positive! The range of emotions flooded over me once again: excitement, anxiety, happiness, fear. This was real now. It was no longer a thought that could be dismissed. We were to become parents. I felt for the first time the mysterious feeling of love for this unknown child.

Associating an appearance or a name with your unborn child allows the parental love to grow. I received the first picture of my baby when I was just seven weeks pregnant, and he

received his first nicknames. It was amazing to see the tiny form developing inside of me. While examining the live sonogram, I noticed a tiny part of the baby pulsating, and Dr. Ellis told me that this pulsing was the baby's heartbeat. I was actually able to *see* the heartbeat before *hearing* it. It was all so surreal. I was even more excited when Dr. Ellis printed off a picture of the sonogram. Like the proud mom I am, I showed my baby's first picture to everyone I came in contact with. My father thought the ultrasound picture resembled a key on a keychain. Thus the developing fetus became known as "key" to my family. He had another nickname from his father's side of the family. His father, Matthew, joked that he wanted to name his son or daughter "Poot." My growing belly was then referred to as "Poot" by this side of the family. This unborn child had a photo and a name after just seven weeks of development. To this day, my son is known by these nicknames.

My affections continued to grow along with the developing baby and my belly. I received two more ultrasounds. It was amazing to see how much he had developed. The second ultrasound was taken at about twenty weeks. I saw a much larger, more developed child. It revealed a baby boy (95% certainty)! The last ultrasound (at about thirty weeks) revealed an actual baby. I could see that there was an actual human being inside of me. He no longer looked like an alien form (an adorable alien form at that). I still had not met this little boy, but every time I saw him I fell more and more in love with him.

If seeing isn't believing, then feeling is. The movements began as "flutters" or little bubbles as he would flip around *in utero*. It was thrilling to feel this life form maneuver about inside of me. As he grew larger and space decreased, the occasional foot or hand could be felt as well as seen sliding across my abdomen. He was most active at night. Some mornings I awoke with a deformed pregnant belly, a bulge sticking out on one side. He had shifted to that side.

Even the occasional jab in the ribs, although painful, gave rise to excitement. My affection grew for this little boy with every little kick, maneuver, and jab.

As the due date approached, he had a growth spurt, and I became more uncomfortable and even more anxious to see this baby I had grown to love so much. I was excited that my baby would be here soon. I wanted to be able to hold him in my arms rather than in my belly. I needed to see him. I wondered what color eyes he would have. Would he have any hair? Who would he look like? Is he actually a boy? Will he be born healthy? I had so many questions. No matter what the answers to those questions, however, I knew I would love him more than anything. After all, he was my little boy. I waited and waited for him, and as the due date came and went with no baby, I became miserable with anticipation.

March 1, 2006, two days after the predicted due date, I was happy to call my mother at work to tell her that I was about to have a baby. She rushed to meet my fiancé and me at the hospital. She radiated with excitement. One might have thought that *she* was the one about to have this baby. My fiancé, Matt, was excited, but he remained rather quiet. I could tell he was nervous. He was more nervous than I was. I just wanted that baby out of me! I lay in the bed knowing that the contractions were only going to get worse before I could see my little boy. Two and a half hours after my mom arrived, at 6:12 p.m., I gave birth to a healthy baby. I asked my fiancé, “He’s still a boy, right? How is he? Is everything okay with him?” Then the nurse placed him in my arms. At that moment I knew he was fine. He was perfect! I stared at his beautiful blue eyes as he looked up at me. I was in awe that this little boy was mine. He was my son, and in a few days I would take him home and be responsible for his upbringing. I couldn’t believe that I was a mother.

We named our little boy Matthew Ryan Padgett II, after his father. From the moment he was born, he was very alert and active. He entered the world with those blue eyes tracing the room over and over again. Matty weighed in at 7 lbs., 8 oz. and measured 20 ½ inches from head to toe. He had a fair amount of dark brown hair covering his head. Matthew resembled both his father and me. I loved everything about him. I wouldn't change a thing.

Matty is 11 months old now with his 1st birthday approaching fast. His personality has developed, and I love everything about it no matter how ornery he may be (I continue to rewrite these sentences as he pounds on my backspace button). I am left in awe as I watch him learn and grow. His appearance has not changed much. He is much bigger, obviously, and his hair has lightened quite a bit. I often wonder if his hair will turn blonde like his father's. He is still a skinny little thing, weighing only 17 lbs. I am glad to say that he still has those beautiful blue eyes I fell in love with the day he was born. He resembles my brother and me a bit more than he resembles his father now. I continue to question who my son will become. Will school come easily to him as it did for me or will he struggle as his father did? Will he be athletic and play a variety of sports? Will he be a Bears fan like his mommy or a Colts fan like his daddy? Is he going to obsess over video games as much as his father does? All I know is, no matter what, I will love this little boy for the rest of my life.