



Years before “friend” became a verb, she and I clicked **By Jennifer Weiner**

**There are friends who are loyal**, steadfast, and supportive; friends you can call in the middle of the night or the middle of a breakup, who stay by your side no matter what.

My friend Susan, in addition to being all these things, is also the friend who does not hesitate to send me e-mails marked “urgent” that include images of a celebrity with a lamentable amount of plastic surgery (memo line: “must discuss”) or to share her insights about why that famous author should have known her much younger husband was gay (“His eyebrows looked better than hers did. Hello!”). The friend, in other words, who, come death or disappointment, can always make you smile.

We met the way single girls meet in the city. I’d just moved to Philadelphia to work at the city paper and didn’t know a soul except for the editor who’d hired me. I was walking my dog, Wendell. Susan was walking her dog, Daisy. The doggies sniffed each other. Susan and I eyed each other. Finally, one of us (I’m guessing it was her) said something (I’m guessing it was sarcastic). That’s how it started. Like true love,

or finding the perfect black cashmere cardigan with a three-quarter sleeve: We just clicked.

Susan was sophisticated and glamorous, with a mane of inky black hair and a string of brokenhearted ex-boyfriends. When we first met, she lived in a tiny jewel box of a row house, with an ornate wrought iron headboard and a sleek little couch covered in buttercup-yellow leather. I had a sensible brown bob, a practical denim couch, and a collection of not-terribly-disappointed exes whom I could count on one hand and have fingers left over. Based on appearances alone, we shouldn’t have worked. But we bonded over our mutual love for roast chicken, the same sense of the absurdities of life, and, these days, by Susan’s refusal to take me, or anything else, too seriously. (While everyone else oohs and aahs if one of my books gets optioned for the big screen, Susan’s impressed only because my dealings with Hollywood may bring her one step closer to meeting longtime crush Peter Strauss.)

Over the years, we’ve seen each other through major life transitions: weddings and kids’ birthdays, C-sections and biopsies, the deaths of dogs and of parents. We’ve talked each other off the ledge—when Susan wanted to drag a heavy planter in front of her ex-boyfriend’s garage so he’d run over it with his Lexus, I persuaded her that it was a bad idea and that, if she went through with it, I’d be unavailable to pay her bail. When I wanted to drive all night to convince a boy that we were meant to be together, Susan sat me down and gently but firmly explained that no, we actually weren’t. Other friends will reassure you that oh, no, that dress your cousin wore to your wedding wasn’t so bad. Susan will devise a scorecard for guests’ fashion infractions (thigh-high slit, no bra, flaming red dress) and, at the end of the reception, hand it to you as a memento.

There are friends who tell you, “Someday, you’ll laugh about this.” Susan’s my best friend because, with her, “someday” is always now. ■

*Jennifer Weiner is the author of seven books, including her latest, Best Friends Forever.*