

# HE CALLS ME MAMA

*A JOURNEY TO MOTHERHOOD*

JEENA 'CHAHAL' DHANKAR



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Stories Matter  
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BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

[www.BlueRoseONE.com](http://www.BlueRoseONE.com)

[info@bluerosepublishers.com](mailto:info@bluerosepublishers.com)

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For inquiries, permissions, or collaborations,  
contact: [chahaljeena@gmail.com](mailto:chahaljeena@gmail.com)

*To Tejas—my son, my sunrise.*

## *Dedication*

---

To my firstborn, my Tejas.  
One day, you'll ask me—  
Mama, what is love?  
And I'll hand you this book—  
because every word in it  
is the answer.

Love is you, my son.  
Always and forever—  
you.

# Acknowledgements

---

This book would not exist without the love that raised me, the support that held me, and the moments that inspired me.

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To both my mothers—my son's grandmothers. You don't just help me raise him, you raise the sky above him. I've seen your arms become shields, your hands become lullabies and your eyes soften into stars each time you hold him close. In your love, I've found grace. In your protection, I've found peace. He is lucky. So am I.

To Ashutosh, my brother-in-law—Tejas shines in your presence. The way you laugh together, the way you lift his mood like magic. Thank you for loving him so loudly, so freely, so completely. He may not have the words yet, but one day he will know—that his Chachu's love is one of the first, truest gifts he ever received.

To my brother, Pulkit—your love may not shout, but it is steady, rooted, and real. Tejas feels it. And so do I.

To my sister, Kiran—the most amazing maasi. Fierce, fun, forever present. Your love for Tejas wraps him in laughter and light.

To our fathers—who teach Tejas where strength begins.

To our grandparents—your love carries him across generations.

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To the ones who sent flowers every Wednesday, those flowers weren't just blooms, they were breath. A reminder that I was seen, loved, and quietly cheered for. Thank you for being the strength behind my soft days. For sisterhood that feels like shelter, and a brother whose quiet protection has always stood tall behind me.

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To my friends—who knew how important it was for me to give him birth, thank you for holding space for my dreams, my fears, and my becoming.

To Aaron ji—our first baby, our softest goodbye. You may no longer walk beside us, but you run through every memory. You taught us how deep love can go, and your absence still fills rooms.

To each of you—thank you for showing Tejas what love looks like,  
feels like, and lives like.

This book is for him.

But it's also for you.

## *Author's bio*

---

Jeena 'Chahal' Dhankar is a writer, poet, and mother whose words bloom in the quiet spaces between lullabies and laundry. Her debut poetry collection, *He Calls Me Mama*, is a tender reflection of the wild, raw, and wondrous journey of motherhood.

An alumna of Panjab University, Chandigarh, Jeena began her professional journey with the National Commission for Women. Today, she serves as the Assistant Director at a very prestigious institution (WCTM, Gurugram). Alongside her academic work, Jeena continues to explore storytelling through poetry that resonates with women, parents, and anyone who has ever loved deeply.

When she's not writing, she's wrapped in the giggles of her son, dreaming new verses over cold coffee and warm cuddles. She lives in a joint family surrounded by love, chaos, and endless inspiration—anchored by her husband, Aditya, and lifted by the everyday magic of motherhood. Her writing doesn't follow form, it follows feeling—flowing freely from the quiet corners of her heart to the pages that now carry her voice into the world.

## *Author's note*

---

I didn't set out to author a book. I set out to hold on—to the moments that moved too quickly, to the love that grew louder every day, to the little boy who called me Mama and unknowingly rewrote me. This book is a collection of those moments. Of wonder and worry, of spilled milk and silent prayers, of first words, first steps, and the thousand invisible ways a mother becomes. These poems are not just about him—they're about me too. The me I discovered in the middle of the night, with tired eyes and a full heart. The me who broke and bloomed with every heartbeat of my son.

*He Calls Me Mama* is my love letter to my son—and to every mother who knows the ache of letting go while holding on.

With all my heart,

Tejas's Mama

# Prologue

---

## **The Motherhood Mirror: A Thousand Ways to Be Enough**

Motherhood doesn't come with medals or manuals—just opinions, undone laundry, and the quiet courage to keep going anyway.

Before I was a Mama, I thought I had to get it all right.

Now I know—being there, even when undone, is its own kind of perfection.

In motherhood—as in most things in life—there will always be people who want you to know how much better they are at it than you. They come armed with milestone charts, ancient remedies, internet articles, and that infuriating phrase: “Oh, really? Well, when we had ours...”

Yes. We've met them.

They show up as early as the hospital—while you're still lying there, stitched, and starry-eyed, wondering if you'll ever feel like yourself again—or if your insides will fall out the next time you sneeze. Someone leans over, while your soul is still catching up to your body, and asks, “What's your birth plan?” Birth plan? I barely had a dinner plan!

And—— then the comparisons begin.

“They're not crawling yet?”

“Oh, ours were walking at ten months.”

“Do you not do baby-led weaning?”

“We only ever did hand-mashed organic vegetables from heirloom farms and served them on reclaimed bamboo.”

It's not always cruel. But it's often unkind. Sometimes, even the baby joins in. No offense to their gurgly innocence—but a poorly timed poop explosion mid-criticism really adds insult to maternal injury. Suddenly, your parenting feels like a public performance. Your child's milestones become everyone's business. Your instincts are questioned by strangers, and your confidence, dear mama, is left wondering— if, you're screwing up the only job that truly matters to you.

But here's what nobody tells you loud enough: There is no “better.” There is just “different.” There is just you—figuring it out on three hours of sleep and six tablespoons of cold coffee.

And somewhere among the judgmental whispers, there are women who don't want to one-up you—they want to lift you. They want to laugh with you about the day they left the house with no wipes, no bra, and a teething baby chewing through their last nerve. They want to cry with you in the cereal aisle, just because the tiny one needed goldfish cracker NOW.

They are the absolute tonic. The voices are worth listening to. The ones who will carry you through the wild, wonderful, wobbly ride of motherhood and remind you that you're doing a damn good job.

This book is for you—the mom rooting through her bag for wipes that don't exist. The one who isn't sure if the library books are due back or already lost forever. The one whose husband misses her—but the baby needs her more right now. The one who forgot sunscreen, or gloves, or their own name for a moment. The one who's holding it all together until she's not. Who's better than ever, until she cracks mid-toast. This book is for the mom who shows

up— on every messy, magical, marvelous day. Welcome to motherhood—the highest highs, the lowest lows, and all the joy, guilt, laughter, exhaustion, and magic in between.

Let's tell the truth. Let's laugh about it. Let's hold each other up.

And let's remember—most of us are just doing our best.

Including you.

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## *He chose me*

---

I didn't find him—  
    he found me.  
A whisper in the dark womb  
    of uncertainty,  
    he stirred—  
and my universe answered.  
Not all miracles are loud.  
Some arrive wrapped in silence,  
    with a heartbeat  
that changes everything.

## *The two pink lines*

---

I didn't cry.  
I stood still—  
as if joy might shatter  
if I moved too fast.  
Hope sat gently  
on my trembling palms.  
I was a universe,  
and he,  
a star learning  
to shine within me.

## *Becoming*

---

They speak of birth  
as the baby's beginning—  
but I was born too.

In that room,  
with fluorescent lights and  
hands guiding life out of me,

I met myself  
for the first time.

Mama.

The name I didn't know  
I had been waiting for.

## *The waiting*

---

Nine months is not a countdown—

it's an awakening.

A stretching of skin

And soul.

A thousand silent conversations

between me and the life

growing inside.

He hadn't arrived,

but he was already everywhere.

## *Belly full of wonder*

---

Strangers touched my belly—  
but they didn't know  
they were brushing against  
an entire world.

A boy who danced to my laughter,  
paused for my sadness,  
and swam in dreams  
too sacred for words.

I was his shelter—  
and he,  
my secret magic.

# *What if*

---

What if I'm not enough?

What if I break?

What if my love  
isn't enough to hold him whole?

But then—

he kicked.

Just once.

And all my doubts  
took a breath  
and made room  
for faith.

## *Before he knew me*

---

I whispered to him—  
long before he knew words.

Promised him light,  
long before he saw day.

I loved him  
when he was only a dream  
with a heartbeat.  
Before he ever said “Mama,”

I was already  
his.

## *The shift*

---

The world stayed the same—  
cars moved, clocks ticked,  
people passed each other in silence.

But inside me,  
the axis tilted.

I was no longer  
just a woman.

I was someone's beginning.



## *Carrying you*

---

I carried you in my body—  
and now,  
in my arms.  
But someday,  
I'll carry you in my stories,  
in my prayers,  
in the quiet  
between heartbeats.  
This is only the beginning  
of a lifelong  
holding.

## *The first hello*

---

They laid you on my chest—

warm,

wet,

wailing.

And I—

I fell apart

in the most beautiful way.

Everything I'd been

ended,

so I could be

everything you needed.

## *The cord is still there*

---

You lived in me—  
I grew as you grew.  
Our heartbeats synchronized,  
one ancient, one new.

Before I knew  
if you were a he or she,  
you knew the sound  
and rhythm of me.

From the moment you existed,  
I was never alone.  
And even now—  
your body its own—  
I feel that thread  
between us hum.

It isn't seen,  
but it is strong.  
It pulls us back  
when the world pulls long.

It was cord once.  
Now, it's love.  
And it tugs me gently  
with every "Mama" you whisper of.

## *You made me new*

---

Before you,  
I was a name.

Now,  
I am a home.

You made me  
cry louder,  
laugh harder,  
feel deeper.

You made me  
doubt myself—  
then believe in myself  
even more.

You made me new.  
Not better.  
Not worse.  
Just real.  
Raw.  
Alive.  
And full  
of you.

## *Heartbeat without a sound*

---

Before you were mine,  
before you were even known,  
you were a whisper  
in the dark hollow of me.

No kicks,  
no shape,  
no name.  
Just  
a pause in my breath  
that didn't belong to me—  
a stillness too full  
to be empty.

You were  
a heartbeat  
without a sound.

And yet,  
my whole world  
leaned in  
to listen.

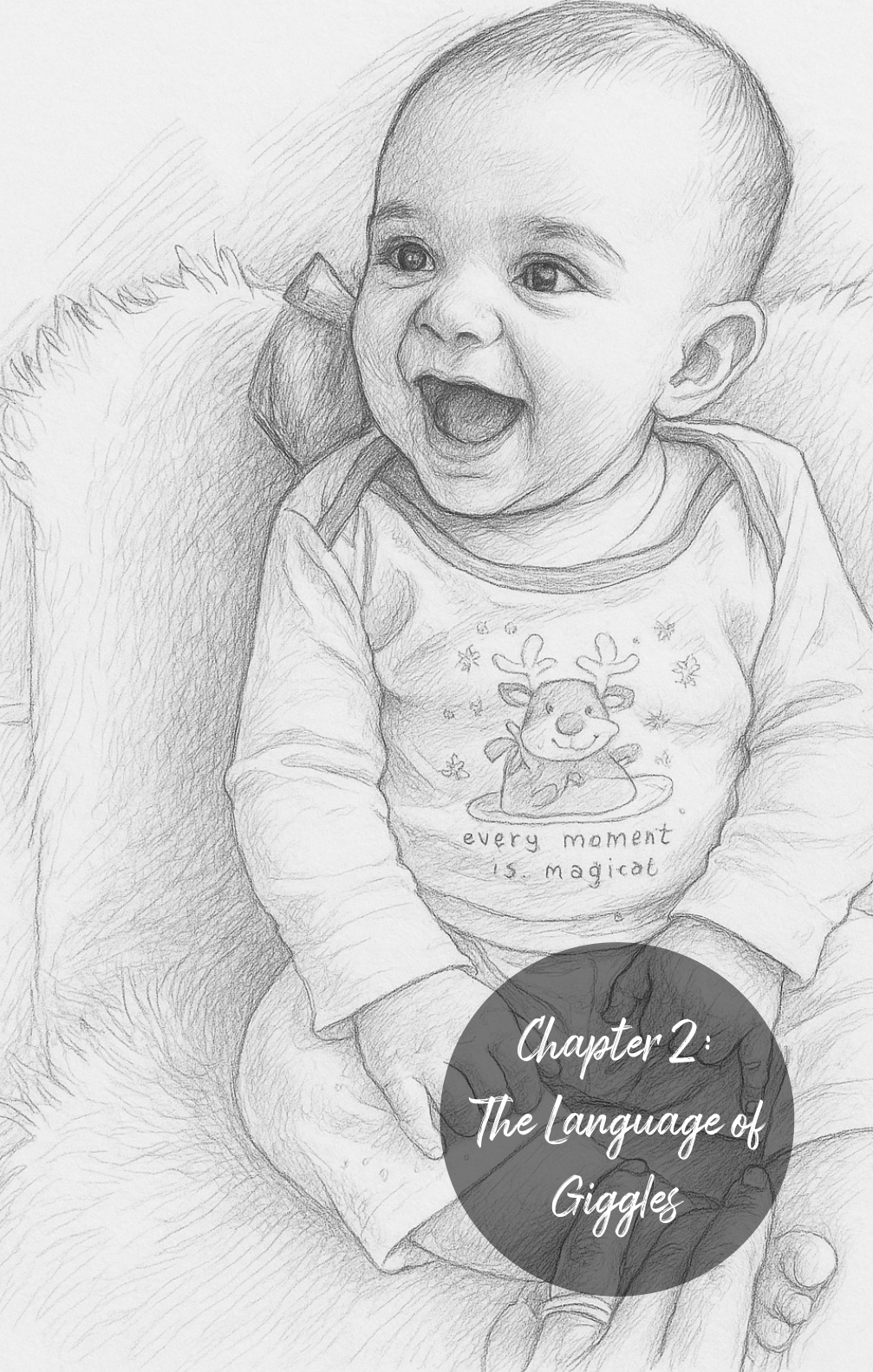
## *I dreamt you in Decembers*

---

Long before the test turned pink,  
before the cravings and lullabies,  
I dreamt of you.  
In cold months,  
curled under quilts,  
I imagined a warmth  
that had nothing to do with weather.

You had no face yet,  
but your presence  
pressed gently against my soul.  
You were an ache  
and a promise,  
a name I hadn't said aloud  
but already whispered in my sleep.





*Chapter 2:  
The Language of  
Giggles*

## *The smile that saved me*

---

It was a day like many others—  
toys everywhere, dishes stacked,  
me unsure of everything.

And you,  
out of nowhere,  
smiled.

Not a little smirk,  
but a full grin—  
toothless, brilliant,  
completely unaware  
of how perfectly timed it was.

And suddenly,  
I remembered what mattered.  
I was still your universe,  
even if I couldn't keep mine together.  
That smile saved me.  
Again.

## *The first laugh*

---

It wasn't just a sound—  
it was sunlight breaking  
inside a storm.  
A burst of joy  
so pure,  
it made my eyes water  
and my soul hush.  
He laughed—  
and I knew  
I'd never be the same.

## *Talk without words*

---

Before “Mama,”  
before “Hi,”  
he spoke in gurgles and glances—  
language written  
on the walls of my heart.  
He didn’t need to say a thing.  
I understood every blink,  
every sigh,  
every wriggle.  
Love has always been fluent  
in silence.

## *His gurgle, my grace*

---

You didn't speak  
but you saved me.  
In the soft gurgle  
that escaped your lips  
mid-bath,  
in the high-pitched squeal  
after your nap—  
there was grace.

Not the kind  
they write in books.  
The kind that lifts a weary woman  
who doubts herself.  
The kind that reminds her—  
she is doing enough.

Your gurgle  
was my sermon.  
And I never missed a word.

## *Soundtrack of us*

---

Our days are made of  
babbles and belly giggles,  
raspberries blown mid-diaper change,  
and squeals that echo like music  
in a tiny, toy-strewn world.

No song on earth  
sounds sweeter  
than his joy  
falling into mine.

## *Giggling at nothing*

---

He laughs at shadows,  
ceiling fans,  
and his own toes—  
as if the world  
is made of magic  
only he can see.

And I—  
I laugh too,  
because maybe it is.  
Maybe joy lives  
where logic doesn't.

## *Kiss symphony*

---

I cover his cheeks  
with kisses,  
until he squeals—  
that squeaky,  
sudden, unstoppable joy  
that makes my heart  
leap into my throat.  
He doesn't know  
he's music.  
But oh, how he plays me.

## *Peekaboo philosophy*

---

He disappears behind tiny hands,  
then returns—delighted,  
as if discovering  
he exists  
again and again.

Peekaboo:  
proof that joy  
can be reborn  
a thousand times  
in a single day.

## *Your laugh, my prayer*

---

Each time he laughs,  
I offer it up  
like a quiet prayer.  
Let the world be gentle,  
let life be kind—  
but if not,  
let him always find  
reasons  
to laugh anyway.

## *The joy we built*

---

I stack blocks,  
he knocks them down.

I make silly faces,  
he howls in delight.

Together,  
we build joy  
from nothing—  
over and over again.

He reminds me:  
laughter is the only architecture  
that never crumbles.

## *The mirror game*

---

He smiles—  
I smile back.  
He mimics,  
gurgles,  
tilts his head.  
And I see it—  
the unspoken truth:  
he's learning  
what love looks like  
by watching my face.

## *Born together*

---

He let out his first cry—  
and I took my first breath

as someone new.

In that same moment,

I birthed him,

and he birthed me.

He into the world,  
me into motherhood.

His giggle—

my rebirth  
echoing through time.





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Chapter 3:

*Held and Holding*

## *When arms became home*

---

I used to hold books,  
bags,  
coffee cups.  
Now I hold  
a universe—  
breathing, babbling,  
wrapped in cotton and dreams.  
And somehow,  
I don't miss  
anything I let go of.

## *Rocking chair theology*

---

In a chair that creaks  
like an old hymn,  
I rock him through cries  
and lullabies.  
We say nothing—  
yet everything heals.  
This chair knows my ache,  
and his rhythm.  
Some days,  
it's the only church I need.

## *We became us*

---

There was a moment—  
quiet, unmarked,  
between a feeding and a sigh,  
when the shift happened.

Suddenly,  
it wasn't me anymore.

It was us.  
Two souls braided  
by need, by love,  
by something far older  
than language.

## *Skin to skin*

---

Your chest on mine—  
bare, soft,  
more real than any name I had before.

No one told me  
that your breath  
would teach mine  
a new rhythm.

You weren't just held—  
you were memorized  
into my heartbeat.

## *Sleepless and sacred*

---

3 a.m. is lonely—  
unless you're holding a soul  
who once lived inside you.

The world sleeps.

We sway.

He drinks,

I hum.

Exhaustion and wonder  
hold hands  
in the dark.

## *Mama magic*

---

He cries.  
Others panic.  
But I just  
hold him close.  
Because my body  
knows his music.  
I am his map,  
his anchor,  
his calm.  
To the world, I'm "mother."  
To him,  
I am magic.

## *I carried you*

---

Beyond Tired  
People ask,  
“Don’t the night feeds exhaust you?”  
But how do I explain—  
my arms may ache,  
my eyes may blur,  
but my soul?  
It blooms.  
These breastfeeds don’t tire me—  
they teach me  
how infinite love can be.

## *All of me*

---

I gave him  
my sleep,  
my body,  
my time.

Not because I had to—  
but because I wanted to.

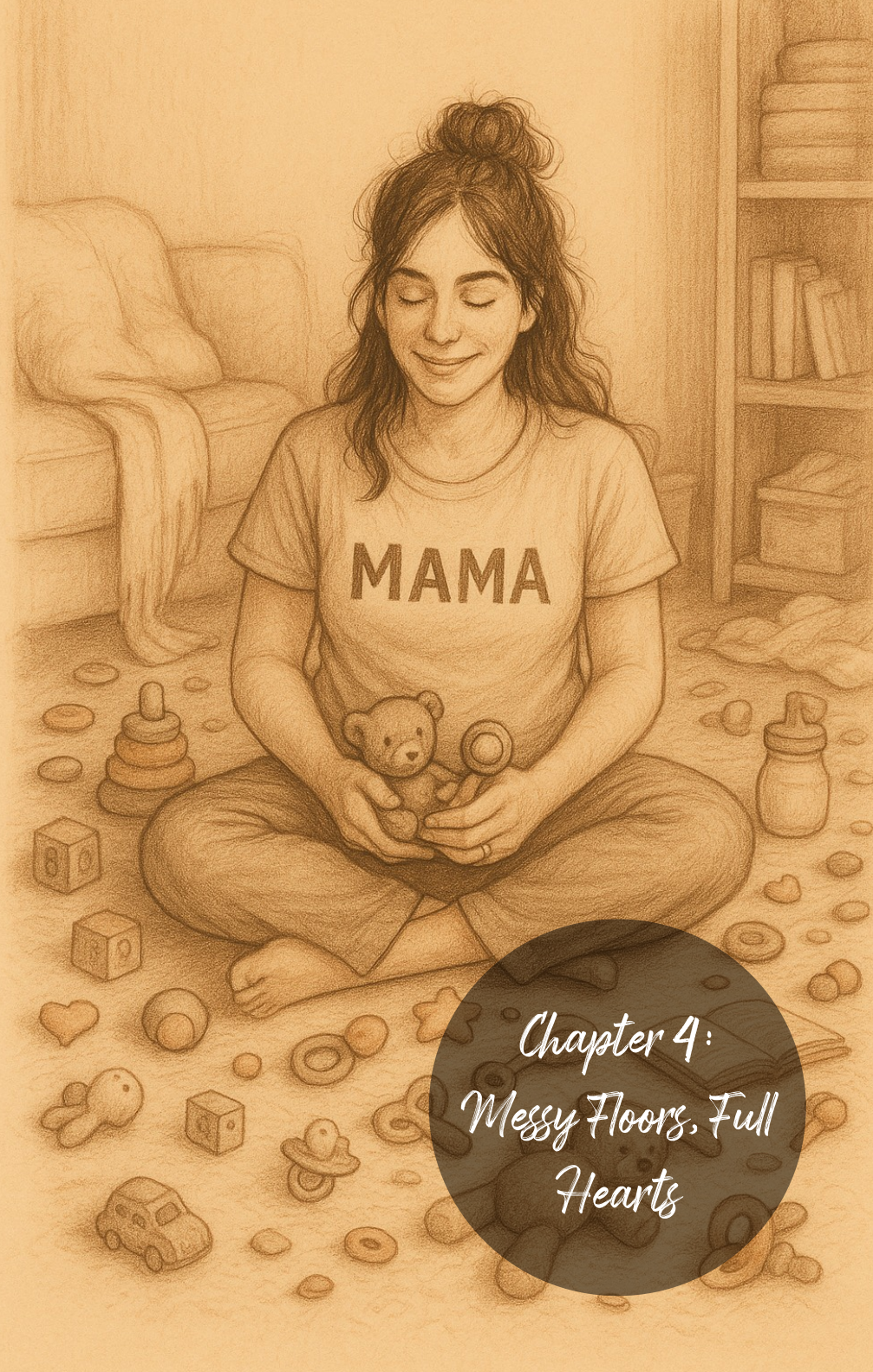
Unconditionally,  
without pause,  
without pride.

That's the kind of love  
he pulled out of me.

## *Held and holding*

---

He nestles in,  
fingers clutching my shirt  
like a lifeline.  
And in that moment,  
there's no world,  
no time,  
no self.  
Just us—  
woven in a hush  
only mothers understand.  
I hold him now,  
but he's the one  
who's holding me.



*Chapter 4:  
Messy Floors, Full  
Hearts*

## *Toy-strewn temples*

---

My living room  
used to be clean.  
Now it's cluttered with blocks,  
rattles,  
half-eaten biscuits—  
a shrine to boyhood  
and growing up too fast.  
And I?  
I kneel among the toys,  
grateful for the chaos  
he brings.

## *Laundry and lullabies*

---

Burp cloths.

Onesies.

Tiny socks that vanish  
like whispered dreams.

I fold mountains of laundry—

not with resentment,

but reverence.

Because each stained bib

means one more day

I got to love him.

## *The unmade bed*

---

My bed is no longer perfect—

the sheets rumpled,

milk-stained,

creased by little feet.

But it holds

midnight feeds,

morning snuggles,

giggles tangled in blankets.

Who needs neatness

when love

lives in the folds?

## *Spaghetti on the walls*

---

He painted with dinner again—  
spaghetti on the walls,  
peas in his curls,  
milk on the floor.  
And yet,  
I couldn't be mad.  
Because in the middle of the mess,  
he looked up,  
grinning like an artist  
who just created joy.

## *Crumbs and crayons*

---

My floor crunches  
beneath my feet.  
Crumbs from snacks,  
crayons cracked in half.  
A mess to most—  
but to me,  
it's evidence  
that a boy is learning  
to live  
out loud.

## *Mirror smudges*

---

Tiny fingerprints  
smudge every mirror,  
and yet—  
I can't bring myself  
to wipe them off.  
Because they remind me:  
he was here,  
reaching,  
wondering,  
growing—  
right before my eyes.

## *A home rewritten*

---

Once, I bought things  
that matched.

Now, nothing does—  
except the laughter  
echoing in every room.

My decor changed.

My priorities shifted.

My heart?

Expanded

to fit a little boy  
who sees beauty  
in every mess.



## *Bath time floods*

---

The bathroom floor's a lake again—

towels drenched,  
shampoo lids missing,  
giggles echoing off tiles.

And I just sit there,  
soaked in joy.

Because this isn't a mess—

it's a memory,  
dripping with love.

## *Tantrums and tenderness*

---

He screams  
because his toast broke in half.  
I breathe,  
kneel,  
hold space for his storm.  
Because love isn't only lullabies—  
it's staying calm  
when nothing else is.  
Even his tantrums  
teach me patience  
I never knew I had.

## Fullness

---

The house is loud.  
Dinner's late.  
My hair's a mess.  
And still—  
my heart is impossibly full.  
This isn't the life  
I dreamed of.  
It's louder, messier,  
more beautiful  
than I ever imagined.

## *Socks don't match, but we do*

---

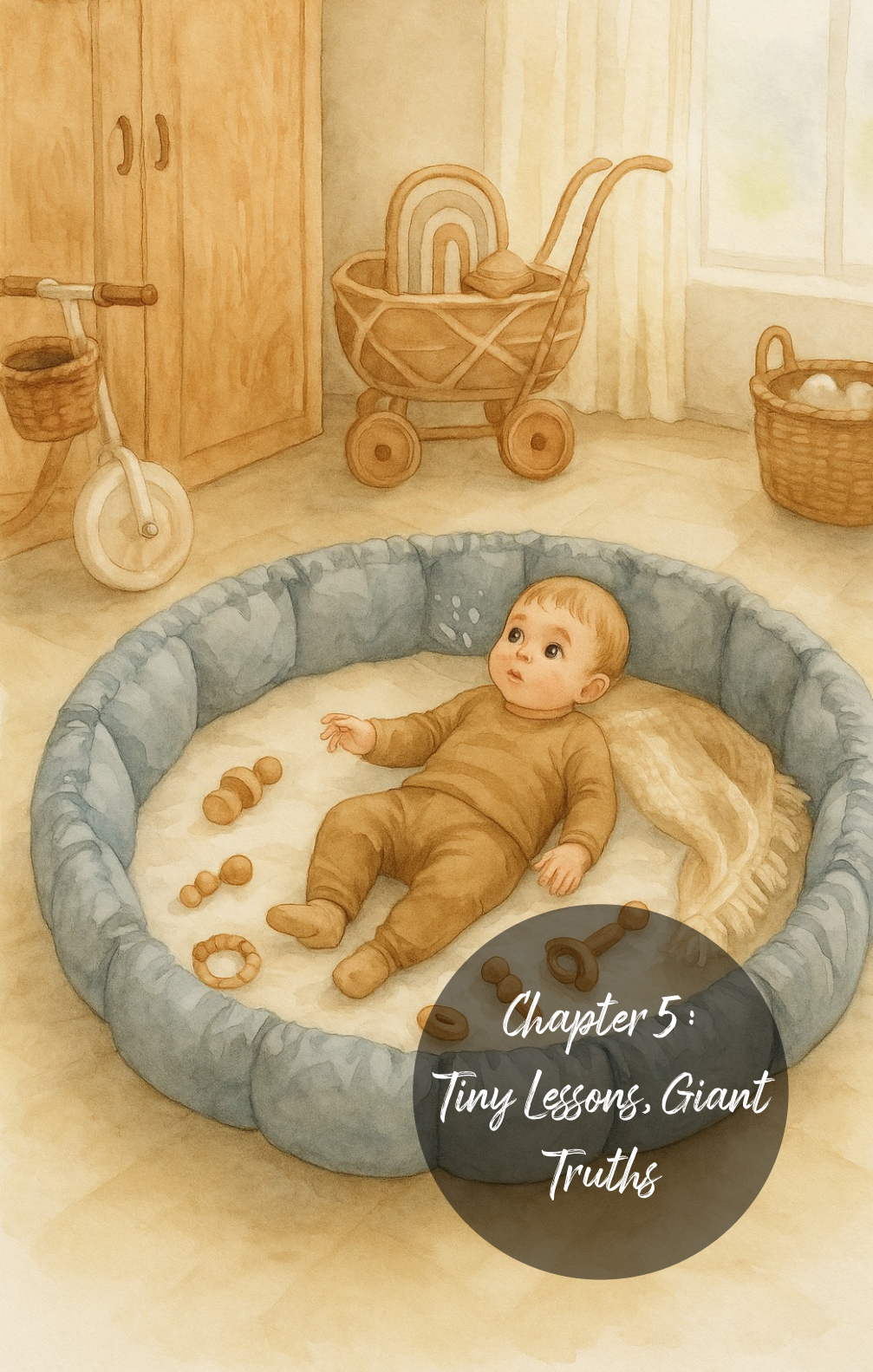
He is in one yellow sock,  
one blue.

And I am in sweatpants  
from yesterday.  
And dreams I folded away  
to pack his snacks.

But then—  
He laughs at the mirror,  
and I laugh with him.  
And I remember:  
we're not here to impress.  
We're here to connect.

We don't have to match the world.  
We just must match each other.





*Chapter 5:  
Tiny Lessons, Giant  
Truths*

## *The Teacher in the Crib*

---

He doesn't speak in words yet,  
but he teaches me still—  
to marvel at fans,  
to find rhythm in the rain,  
to pause for pigeons on the sill.  
Wisdom wrapped  
in chubby fingers  
and wide-eyed wonder.

## *The art of now*

---

He doesn't plan.

He doesn't rush.

He sits in the moment—  
mouth full of banana,  
watching the curtain dance.

And I learn,  
slowly,  
that joy lives here—  
not in what's next.

## *Falling with grace*

---

He falls—

so often.

But never with fear.

He stumbles, wobbles,

laughs, tries again.

And I wonder:

When did I stop

believing that failing

is still flying

in its own way?

## *His entire world*

---

Tiny shoes by the door,  
never where they should be—  
but always where he's been.

Each scuff a story,  
each crease a journey  
told in babbles and boldness.

He doesn't speak much,  
but his steps  
say everything.

## *Mama's here*

---

He falls.  
Not far—  
but enough for tears.  
And with just one hug,  
my arms rewrite the moment.  
He learns that pain is real—  
but comfort is stronger.  
I whisper,  
“Mama’s here.”  
And the world feels  
whole again.



## *The way he looks at me*

---

He looks at me  
like I know everything—  
where the toy went,  
why the wind sounds scary,  
how to fix the world  
with just a kiss.  
And somehow,  
in that gaze,  
I find the strength  
to try.

## *My lap, his world*

---

One day, he'll run—  
into streets, into dreams,  
into places I can't follow.

But today,  
he climbs into my lap,  
places his head on my chest,  
and breathes like  
I'm the only safe place  
he knows.  
And I am.

## *Willing to be exhausted*

---

Nights break me—

hour by hour.

But then he stirs,

searches,

finds me.

And suddenly,

my arms forget their ache.

Because I know—

my tired body

is the home

his little heart trusts.

## *What he teaches without words*

---

He doesn't say,  
"Thank you for the milk,"  
or  
"I love how you rock me."  
But he teaches me  
that love is quiet.  
That showing up—  
bleary-eyed, broken,  
again and again—  
is louder  
than words could ever be.

## *My greatest teacher*

---

I thought I'd be the one  
teaching him.

But he—  
with his sleep fights,  
his mid-meal cuddles,  
his wide-eyed trust—  
he teaches me instead.  
How to rest in the moment,  
how to rise when I'm tired,  
and how to love  
without limits.



*Chapter 6:  
Your Firsts Are My  
Forever*

## *The last time*

---

No bell rings.  
No one warns you.  
One day,  
you'll rock him to sleep—  
for the last time.  
Change the last diaper,  
breathe in that baby scent  
one final time.  
And you won't even know  
it was the last.  
So today,  
I hold him  
like time is listening.

## *Firsts etched in me*

---

His first smile—  
my heart burst wide.

His first crawl—  
I forgot how to blink.

Every first,  
tiny to the world,  
was a galaxy  
to me.  
Because when he begins,  
I become.



## *Forever in a spoonful*

---

He opened his mouth,  
and I fed him  
one little bite of mashed banana.

He blinked,  
chewed,  
and smiled with his whole face.

And I stood there,  
realizing—  
this is forever.

Not the banana,  
but the way he trusts me  
to give  
and give  
and give.

## *The first wave*

---

He waved today.  
A wobbly, curious motion—  
open palm,  
wide grin,  
as if saying  
“Look, Mama, I’m part of the world now.”  
And though it lasted seconds,  
that tiny wave  
rippled through my forever.

## *When he sat up*

---

He sat today—  
without help,  
without falling,  
as if the earth had shifted  
to support him.  
His eyes sparkled  
with pride.  
Mine with tears.  
Because he didn't just sit—  
he rose  
into a new chapter  
of becoming.

## *First crawl*

---

One moment—still.

The next—

motion.

Knees planted,

hands forward,

determination in every wobble.

He crawled—

and the floor became a map

of wonder.

I watched, breathless,

as my baby

moved away

just far enough

to break me

and build me

at once.

## *The smallest triumphs*

---

No one clapped  
when he turned his head to my voice,  
or reached for the toy,  
or giggled at the ceiling fan.

But I did.

Because I knew—  
in the quiet world of firsts,  
the smallest triumphs  
are the ones  
etched deepest.

## *First step*

---

One foot,  
then the other—  
like the earth  
was whispering,  
“Go.”

He let go of the couch,  
then of my hand,  
then of needing  
anything but courage.  
And I cheered through tears,  
knowing  
his journey  
had just begun.

## *First mama*

---

It wasn't just a word—

it was a sunrise.

Soft.

Sacred.

He looked at me,  
eyes full of knowing,  
and said it:

“Mama.”

And in that breath,  
my name became  
my purpose.

## *I remember everything*

---

The world says,  
“You’ll forget these days.”

But I won’t.  
Not the weight of him  
on my chest,  
the way he fit  
exactly right on my hip,  
or the sound  
of his sleepy sigh  
against my neck.  
His firsts may fade  
for him—  
but in me,  
they live forever.



*Chapter 7:  
The Mama  
Mirror*

## *You were given this child*

---

You—  
not by chance,  
not by mistake,  
but by divine knowing.  
You were given this child  
because your soul  
was crafted  
to hold his storms  
and soothe his skies.

You are his anchor  
on the hard days,  
his light  
when the world feels loud.  
Your arms are a refuge,  
your voice, a home.

And when you question  
if you are enough—  
look into his eyes.  
He already knows  
you are.

## *His eyes don't lie*

---

In the mirror,  
I see messy hair,  
tired eyes,  
milk-stained clothes.

But in his eyes—  
I am warmth.  
I am wonder.  
I am perfect.  
He doesn't see flaws.  
He sees **me**.  
And I'm learning  
to see me too.

## *Enough*

---

On the days  
I feel like I'm falling short,  
he wraps his arms around my neck  
like I've done everything right.  
His love doesn't measure—  
it believes.  
And slowly,  
I begin to believe,  
too.

## *Becoming through him*

---

Before him,  
I knew strength  
in pieces.  
Since him,  
I know it  
in full.  
He made me softer—  
not weaker.  
He made me louder—  
not less graceful.  
Through his eyes,  
I met a version of myself  
I didn't know I was waiting  
to be seen.

## *My name is mama*

---

I had names before—  
friend, daughter, lover,  
even dreamer.  
But none wrapped around me  
like **Mama** does.  
It holds the ache,  
the joy,  
the breathless awe.  
It's the name  
I never asked for—  
but now,  
can't live without.

## *Forgiving myself*

---

I forgot the pacifier.

I lost my temper.

I cried in the kitchen,

quietly,

so he wouldn't hear.

But later,

he reached for me

like nothing had changed.

And I realized—

in his love,

there is room

to forgive myself.

## *This body*

---

Stretch marks.  
Soft belly.  
Heavy arms from carrying love.  
This body doesn't look  
like it used to.  
But it made him.  
Fed him.  
Held him through every fear.  
And when he lays his head  
against my heart—  
I know,  
it is holy.

## *More than enough*

---

He doesn't ask me  
to be perfect.  
Just present.  
He doesn't count  
how many things I do—  
only how fully I do them.  
In his world,  
I am not failing.  
I am the answer  
to every question  
he doesn't yet know how to ask.

## *Chosen again*

---

Every time he cries  
and reaches for me,

I am chosen—  
again.

Not for being flawless,  
but for being his.

It's not my perfection  
he looks for—  
it's my presence.

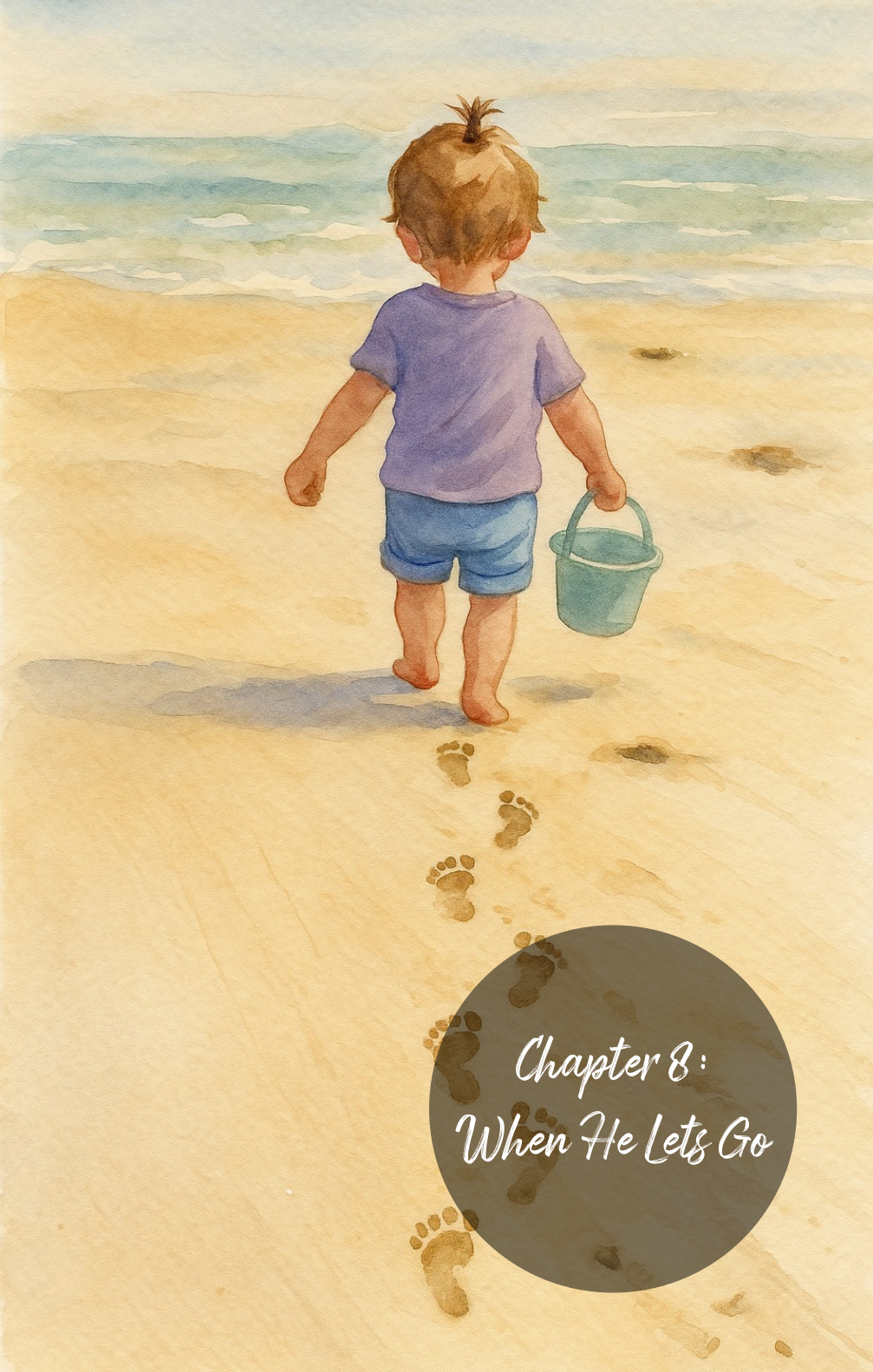
And that,  
I can give  
without end.

## *Mirror of love*

---

I once searched for worth  
in mirrors,  
in praise,  
in doing more.  
Now,  
I find it  
in the way he clings to me,  
laughs with me,  
calls out for me  
in sleep.  
His love reflects back  
the best version of me—  
even on the days  
I can't see it.





*Chapter 8:  
When He Lets Go*

## *The first letting go*

---

He toddled across the room—  
not far,  
but far enough  
to make my arms ache.  
He didn't look back.  
And I smiled,  
even as my heart whispered,  
You can let go, Mama—  
he'll always find his way back.

## *From arms to ankles*

---

He used to live on my hip—  
clinging, curled,  
always close.

Now he slips away,  
barefoot and bold,  
chasing light across the floor.

And I watch,  
half-proud,  
half-broken,  
entirely in love.

## *Just a few steps away*

---

He doesn't need my hand  
to walk anymore.

But he still checks—  
mid-step, mid-giggle—  
to make sure I'm watching.

And I am.

I always am.

Even as he moves away,  
he carries  
everything I've poured  
into him.

## *The bed climb*

---

He used to wait—  
    arms up,  
    eyes wide,  
trusting I would lift him  
    to the clouds.  
Now he tries to climb the bed himself,  
    determined,  
grunting with effort,  
    bruising my heart  
    with pride.

## *The toy instead of me*

---

He crawls into the corner  
of the room,  
chattering to a stuffed animal  
instead of curling into my lap.

And I sit nearby,  
watching him build his world  
without me in the center.

A tiny letting go—  
a giant ache,  
wrapped in joy.

## *No more rocking*

---

Once, he could only sleep  
in the cradle of my arms.

Now,  
he turns,  
tucks in,  
drifts off on his own.  
I stay there a little longer,  
not to watch—  
but to remember  
what it felt like  
to be his moon.

## *When he pushes back*

---

He pushes away the spoon.

He says “No”

without words.

He wants to do it

his way.

And I let him—

smiling, sighing,

learning to hold space

for the boy

who once lived

entirely inside my arms.

## *Still within reach*

---

He runs toward the open door,  
bare feet slapping the floor,  
laugh echoing down the hall.  
And though he leaves my arms—  
he's still within reach.  
Because love,  
real love,  
follows  
without needing to hold.

## *The soft goodbye*

---

Not all goodbyes are spoken.

Sometimes,

they're the moment

he chooses the swing

over my lap,

the floor

over my arms,

the world

over my chest.

And I let him go—

just a little—

because growing

requires space.



## *Always returning*

---

He will let go—  
of my finger,  
of the habit of looking back,  
of the need to be held.  
But he'll return.  
Not always to my arms,  
but to my love.  
Because what I've built in him—  
patience, safety,  
home—  
will call him back  
in ways  
even he won't understand.

## *The distance in inches*

---

He walks away now—  
just five steps,  
maybe seven.  
But each one  
feels like a mile.

He turns back quickly,  
just to check—  
Am I still here?  
And I am.  
I always am.

There's distance now,  
but it's measured in inches.  
My arms stretch easily.  
My love doesn't have to.

## *He climbs me, then climbs down*

---

He used to cling—  
tight,  
constant,  
heavy as heartbeat.

Now he climbs me,  
laughs,  
and then—  
climbs down.

It isn't rejection.  
It's becoming.  
It's confidence,  
wrapped in baby skin  
and biscuit crumbs.

And I let him.  
Because I'd rather be  
the soft place he leaves  
than the hard place he fears.

## *The reach has changed*

---

He still reaches—  
but not just for me.  
He reaches for the spoon,  
for the light switch,  
for the cupboard  
I haven't child-proofed yet.

He is curious,  
daring,  
wobbly with wonder.

And while my arms ache  
to hold him close,  
my heart whispers,  
“Let him reach.  
Let him grow.”  
And then quietly,  
“I’ll always be the place  
he reaches back to.”

## *Closer than far*

---

He runs to the edge  
of the room,  
laughing.  
Feet unsure,  
eyes sparkling.

I stay back,  
just a few steps,  
biting back the instinct  
to follow.

He isn't far.  
He's just a breath away.  
And when he looks over—  
I wave,  
smile,  
and let him believe  
he's all alone.

That's the magic.  
He thinks he's flying.  
I know  
I'm the wind beneath.

## *Not far, just facing forward*

---

He doesn't want to be held  
all the time anymore.  
But he still wants me nearby.  
He toddles ahead,  
his back to me—  
but every few steps,  
he turns,  
eyes bright with questions.

And when he sees me—  
he doesn't stop.  
He just smiles,  
like that's all he needed  
to keep going.





*Chapter 9:  
Always Home*

## *He's my everything*

---

He's  
the quiet in my storm,  
the giggle in my silence,  
the tiny hand that holds my world.

He's the dream I never dared to dream,  
the hope I didn't know I needed,  
the miracle wrapped in a smile  
that greets my every morning.

He teaches me patience with a glance,  
courage with every fall,  
and love—raw, wild, and unfiltered—  
with every heartbeat.

He's not just my son—  
he's my becoming,  
my forever,  
my everything.

## *My heart has feet*

---

He walks now,  
but it's my heart  
doing the moving.  
Across rooms,  
into the world,  
further each day.  
And though he drifts,  
explores,  
forgets to look back—  
my love walks with him,  
tethered by every kiss  
he didn't know he was keeping.

## *I am his safe place*

---

One day, he won't fit in my lap.

One day, he won't call me  
just to say "Mama."

But I'll still be his safe place—

the memory he runs to  
when the world is too loud,  
too sharp,  
too much.

Because I was the beginning.

And beginnings  
never fade.

## *I am the constant*

---

He may not always want  
my arms around him.

He may grow curious,  
defiant,  
independent.

But I—

I will be the constant.  
The one who always waits,  
always watches,  
always believes.

He is my miracle.

I am his anchor.

And anchors  
don't drift.

## *He won't remember*

---

He won't remember  
how I held him for hours,  
how I sang the same song  
    sixteen times,  
or how I whispered prayers  
    into his fevered skin.

    But I will.  
And that's enough—  
to have been his shelter,  
    even if only  
    in the beginning.

## *He doesn't know yet*

---

He doesn't know  
I hold back tears  
when he sleeps  
a little longer without me.

He doesn't know  
I peek through doors  
just to see  
he's still breathing  
peacefully.

He doesn't know  
that I've memorized  
every freckle,  
every breath.

But one day,  
he will feel  
how deeply  
he was loved.



## *My love outgrows nothing*

---

He'll outgrow onesies,  
and cartoons,  
and holding my finger to walk.

But my love?  
It outgrows nothing.  
It stretches with him,  
follows every version of him  
he'll become.

No matter his size,  
his silence,  
his distance—  
he'll never outgrow  
me.

## *The things I fold away*

---

I fold his clothes  
with slow hands—  
not because I'm tired,  
but because  
I know one day  
I won't be folding  
this small.

I put away his bottle  
knowing  
the sippy cup  
will soon follow.

I tuck away his blanket  
like it's an heirloom.  
Because in this house,  
the smallest things  
carry the loudest love.

## *The sound of his name*

---

I say his name  
like a hymn—  
soft, steady, sacred.

It's in my breath  
when I stir coffee,  
in my thoughts  
before I sleep.

He doesn't know  
that even when he's far—  
his name  
echoes in my chest  
like home.

## *The door will always open*

---

He'll slam doors one day.  
He'll leave,  
for hours,  
for years,  
for things I won't understand.  
But the door to me  
will always open—  
quietly,  
without condition,  
without pride.  
Because love like this  
asks nothing  
but to be found again.

## *I'll still be there*

---

He'll forget how he once  
fit on my chest,  
how my hum  
was his lullaby.

But years from now,  
when he's lost or lonely,  
a familiar calm will rise—  
and he won't know it,  
but it will be me,  
still there,  
loving him  
quietly.

## *My love doesn't expire*

---

I won't always hold him  
through his tantrums.  
One day,  
he'll handle the storm himself.

But even then—  
my love won't fade.

It won't expire  
with age,  
or distance,  
or silence.

It will live  
in the way I answer the phone.

In the way I remember  
his favorite shirt.

In the way  
he never has to ask  
if I'm proud.

## *My body remembers*

---

His first cry.  
His sleepy weight.  
His hand wrapped around my finger.  
Even when he's taller than me,  
sharper with words,  
quieter with love—  
my body will remember.  
The ache, the bloom,  
the becoming.  
Because motherhood  
never forgets.

## Home

---

He will travel  
cities, dreams,  
heartbreaks, triumphs.  
He will find homes  
in places I've never seen.  
But a part of him—  
the softest, oldest part—  
will always know the way back  
to me.  
Because I was his first home.  
And first homes  
never fade.

## *He was my first forever*

---

Before him,  
love was fleeting—  
a moment,  
a phase,  
a season.

But he—  
he made love  
eternal.

He made it stretch  
into the future,  
curl through memory,  
settle into bone.

He was the first  
to show me  
what it means  
to be forever  
for someone else.

A note to my Husband

*To the dad*

---

We don't talk enough about what dads go through  
after the baby arrives.

The sleepless nights you never post about.

The diapers you change  
without anyone clapping.

The 6 a.m. alarms,  
the long drives to work  
after long nights holding our son.

You don't get a break.

You don't get a parade.

You don't even get space to say,  
"This is hard."

But still—  
you show up.

You see me break down,  
and wish you could do more,  
even as you're already doing everything  
to keep this family afloat.

You hold steady  
when I wobble.  
You stay silent  
when the world should be cheering you on.

Your love is quiet.  
Consistent.  
Unshakable.

You don't ask for credit—  
but here it is.

Tejas and I,  
we see you.

We feel your presence  
in the calm you bring,  
the pressure you carry,  
the patience you live.

And I need you to know—  
every act of yours  
that goes unnoticed by the world  
is etched into our every day.

To the dad—  
the man who holds the fort  
so I can hold our baby,  
the one who wakes, works,  
and still comes home with love left to give—

we appreciate you.

We love you.

And we know

none of this

works without you.

## *A note to my son*

---

One day, you'll outgrow my lap.  
You'll chase dreams I won't understand,  
ask questions I won't know the answers to,  
and walk paths I can only pray over.

But no matter how tall you grow,  
how far you roam,  
this truth will always hold:  
You are my beginning,  
my miracle,  
my reason.

This book was written with your giggles in my ears,  
your tiny hands tugging at my sleeve,  
and your name folded between every line.

When life feels loud,  
when the world forgets your softness—  
read these pages again.  
They'll remind you who you are.  
And where you'll always belong.

Forever,  
Mama

