This book is dedicated to every mum who has ever shed a tear (or two) reading one of my poems.

And to my own mum, who is simply my very best friend.



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Set in Kingfisher by Becky Chilcott.

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Murphy's Sketches



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Foreword



I've always been an emotional person. Sometimes I feel like I've spent my whole life on the brink of tears or on the brink of hysterical laughter, without much in between. Everything has always felt . . . a lot to me. That's the only way I can describe it. So when I became a mum, and I was faced with all the emotions that come along with that, it knocked me off my feet.

I always wanted to be a mum – it just wasn't exactly next on my to-do list when it happened. I finally had a grown-up job that I liked well enough, I lived with my best friend in our cosy little girl flat. Everything was just slotting into place, and then life threw me a curveball in the shape of a true angel: my eldest son.

I didn't really do the whole preparing-for-a-newborn thing very well. I sort of imagined everything would go back to how it was before: I'd be sat back at my desk in no time, my body would magically transform over night from pregnant to totally back to normal, my social life would start back up again immediately whilst someone looked after my little bundle of joy. I just didn't ever sit down and think about what was actually going to happen when he arrived. But the thing I learnt was that no one – no matter how many books they read, how many antenatal classes they attended, how many weeks they spent trying for a baby, wishing, hoping, praying – not one of them ever could predict what would happen in that moment when you hold your child for the first time.

For me, it was true euphoria. It was love at first sight, totally confirmed on the spot by this little heartbeat that was placed on my chest, all soft and warm skin that felt as natural as my own. The memories I have of labour are scattered and blurred, but I do remember so vividly his bright eyes locked mine, and my heart

was forever changed. It felt like an entire lifetime had been leading to this perfect moment: he was here, and I was his mum.

I was never the same again: being a mum altered every single bit of me, and I didn't find it easy. I loved him more than anything, but all those emotions I had struggled with my whole life now felt so loud, so impossible to ignore. As much happiness as it brought me, it equally brought me fear, sadness, anxiety – could I keep this perfect person safe, happy, healthy in such an imperfect world? Was I actually any 'good' at being his mum? Did I deserve him?

I hid my worries away for a long time, and I thought that I was the only mum who felt the way I did – but of course that's never the case. Two more babies and two more hits of that love-at-first-sight euphoria later, I started sharing bits of writing on my Instagram page, opening up a little bit about my struggles with anxiety after becoming a mum, or just little poems about having a child and everyday life. Some of it was silly, and some of it was me really laying my soul bare. In hindsight, I think I was looking for some help, some reassurance . . . and I found it.

I realised that there were other mums out there – lots of them – who felt exactly the same way I did. Who had suffered postnatal anxiety, or who had intrusive thoughts, or who just simply loved their kids so blooming much that they felt totally overwhelmed by that love. With their support, I kept writing and creating and sharing my words, inspired by my own experiences with my children. I wrote not just for me but for those mothers too, who might not have had the words to say how they felt, or who might not have felt like they wanted to share them just yet.

Perhaps you are one of those mums, or perhaps you've been

gifted this book by one of them. Either way, I want to say thank you. You've helped me to find my voice and set free the words that were kept inside my head and my heart for too long.

And now here they are in the form of this book. There are poems that celebrate the very beginning of becoming a mother, poems that will reassure you that you're doing a good job, poems that will rejoice in those wonderful connections we make with each other as mothers, poems that will let you know you're not alone if you're struggling, poems that will shine a golden light on those beautiful, everyday moments of being a mum – which to me is just the most wonderful thing I have ever done.

Once, someone told me that my words and illustrations will always remind them of when their children were little, and I hope that this book can feel that way for some of you. I hope the words bring you comfort, that they make you smile as much as they might make you cry, that they validate your feelings, and that they become reminiscent of this time of your life as a mother.

I hope that you enjoy them.

Love, Kerri x


Welcome to
Motherhood



All of My Days

When I first looked at your face,
And into your eyes,
I saw the reason for my entire existence.
And I knew that my purpose
Was simply to love you,
All of my days.



Welcome to Motherhood

Welcome to motherhood.
At times you're going to feel
Overwhelmed, exhausted, scared, confused,
overworked, hungry, thirsty.
You're going to really need to wee
but you'll be trapped under someone sleeping,
when you yourself might not have slept for days.
You're going to work hard.
Maybe harder than you ever have before.
And it won't be easy.
BUT . . .
You are always going to feel loved.
You will always have a best friend.
(Maybe more than one.)
You are going to feel joy and happiness every single day.
Even on the hard ones.
And no matter how overwhelmed, exhausted,
scared, confused, overworked, or tired you are,
you're going to do a great job.
Because you are a mum.
The best mum they could ever have.



My Reason



That wave of fear drew out,
To let that tide of love rush in.
I was surrounded by calm water,
When I felt our skin on skin.
I knew I'd always have an anchor now,
To pull me to the shore.
I had a reason to keep floating,
That I'd never had before.
My whole life I'd felt shipwrecked,
Now I was no longer lost at sea.
I found a calm within my storm,
I had a reason just to be.



The Plan

I had a plan.
I had a bag.
Folded all neatly,
The things that I'd need.
I'd been to classes,
Read some books.
They told me, "You'll KNOW
When to push, how to breathe."

There wasn't
Any warning –
How plans can all change
In the blink of an eye.
And when it did,
I knew nothing –
What had happened,
The how or the why.

For months
I'd try to run through it.
But the details,
They all became blurred.
The sounds,
The smells, the lights,
Their faces.
I'd never been so scared.

The guilt
Was overwhelming.
It was never my fault,
But that's just how it feels.
My baby
Got here safely,
I was lucky, I know,
But my mind didn't heal.

It took
A long time to accept
There was nothing
That I could have done.
The trauma
I went through in childbirth,
Didn't make me any less of a mum.





The Bubble

Tea and toast,
Brew and biscuits,
Milky chops and soggy tops.

One-handed dinners,
Ten-second showers,
Those little toes and tiny clothes.

Hundreds of photos,
Hundreds of nappies,
That new baby smell on their soft fluffy head.

Chaos and calm,
Joy and despair,
Midnight cuddles snuggled up on the bed.

We Are Beautiful

We are told to love our bodies
Because they created life,
Whilst also being told to 'bounce back'
In record time.
That we must quickly erase
Any evidence at all
That they were once a home to our babies.
It's okay if you struggle to love a body
you don't recognise.
Or if you don't ever 'bounce back'
(whatever that even means).
Our bodies change so much
when we become a mum.
Some of us don't recognise ourselves at all
when we look in the mirror.
And some of us don't like what we see,
And some of us feel exactly the same as before.
If you don't feel like 'you'
Mentally or physically, after having children,
I hope one day you do.
And that you feel happy and comfortable
in your own skin.
And I hope that you know
that you don't have to change yourself to feel that way.
But until then, know this:
You are NOT alone.

So many of us feel the same way,
And we're embarrassed or too sad to talk about it.
But we are beautiful,
Even if we can't see it yet.
Especially to those babies
Who still think of us as
their home.



Everything You Need to Be

When I became a mum,
I thought I had to become superhuman.
But I was so wrong.
I had to become more human than I'd ever been before.
I had to feel more deeply,
I had to love like I had never loved before.
I had to confront my worst fears,
And face every one of my flaws,
And see that in spite of all of them,
I was already everything I needed to be.



The Greatest Gift

Last year you were a wish,
This year you're here with me.
The greatest gift there ever was,
And there will ever be.



A Family

You grow up thinking,
"I'll have a family".
Like it's as simple
As having a biscuit,
Or a chippy tea.
Like it will happen overnight,
Or like magic.
"I will have a family!"
And they just appear.
You never think
You might struggle to meet
Someone to have a family with.
You never think
You might meet the perfect person
To have a family with,
And then struggle to conceive.
You never think
you'll get pregnant,
And then lose a baby.
You never think
You'll have a baby,
And then struggle with postnatal depression.
You never think
you'll have a family with someone,
And then grow apart.
We grow up thinking

That having a family
Is such an easy thing.
That it's a given –
And it isn't.
It's a struggle,
For so many of us.
But it's a struggle
That is always worth it.
Because having a family,
It *is* magic.
It is like the best biscuit
Or chippy tea you've ever had
In your whole life.
It is worth every struggle,
Every fight,
Every single heartache.
Family is worth every second of it.



Little One

Little one
Who I adore,
I'm not sure
What was before.
Before there was you,
What did I do
With my hands, or my time?
I haven't a clue.
Now they're both full up,
And so is my heart.
It has been since the very start.
The day that I laid my eyes on you,
And knew my dreams
Had all come true.









There's No Map

When you feel that you're lost in it,
Just know there's no map for this role.
At times it can seem like
You've lost the path,
And there's nothing that you can control.
It's a funny old journey at times –
It can feel like it's swallowed you whole.
But you're okay,
And you will find a way,
Just give it your heart and your soul.



We Were Made For Each Other

The moment that we met,
It was love at first sight
And forever.
I thanked every single star above
That we were brought together.
By the universe or fate,
Or whatever powers that be,
I knew that I was made for you
And you were made for me.
In each other we found home
When we became a family.



Hey, Mum

Hey, Mum,
I know you're tired.
I'm kind of sleepy, too.
But as I lay there in my bed,
I started missing you.
I thought it would be nicer
To sit with you a while.
Hear you sing a song or two –
That always makes me smile.
I just find it so soothing,
To listen to your voice.
And in your arms is where I'd stay,
If I could have my choice.
I thought it would be lovely
For you to stroke my face,
Or just to lie beside you.
That's my favourite place.
Mummy, I am sorry,
I know it's time for bed.
But right here on your chest
Is where I think I'll rest my head.

I Needed You

You need me for everything,
I take care of you.
Whatever it is you need from me,
Well that's just what I'll do.

You need me for everything,
For comfort, food, to play.
Whatever it is that you need me to do,
That's how I'll fill my days.

But something caught me by surprise,
Something I never knew.
I never even realised
How much I needed you.

So you can ask for anything,
And when you call, I'll come.
Because what I'd always needed
Was to become your mum.

To Be a Mother

To be a Mother
Is simply this:
Take out your very heart and soul,
And watch them walk around the world
Without you.
If they hurt,
You hurt.
If they feel joy,
You feel joy.
You will be apart,
And yet forever connected.
You will always walk to that same beat.
Together always.



Little Feet, Little Steps

Little feet suddenly taking
Little steps across the floor.
But it doesn't seem a minute
Since we brought you through the door.

Little feet that step towards me,
Little steps with arms stretched out.
I'll pick you up each time you fall
And come whenever you shout.

Little feet, you just go steady.
Little steps, you take your time.
Those little feet will have adventures –
They'll find mountains they can climb.

Little feet that keep on trying.
Little steps, Now off you go.
I'm so proud of all those little steps,
But now I want time to slow.
It's bittersweet,
Those little feet,
Just how quickly they do grow.

