

In the dark of yet another night, an exhausted Mother nurses her newborn. She has lost track of time; in fact, time itself seems to be warping. A small clock beside her throws up its arms, declaring “Why bother?” and goes off for a sulk. When Mother tries to find answers in her breastfeeding book, it hovers as if in lotus pose, and chants passive aggressive spiritual platitudes. The book is soon drowned out by a throng of complaining body parts: hair, breasts and vagina each springing to life to voice their grievances.

Rallying herself, Mother turns to her to-do list, but is thrown off course by the emergence of nasty nagging dust bunnies, rolling across the floor and taunting her. She kicks them under the couch, but their shrill giggles remind her they’re still there. Ever-helpful, a liquor bottle slides in from the bookshelf to cheer Mother up like an old friend.

Before they can enjoy so much as a single drink, an alpha-mom parenting book is quick to intervene. A battle royale between book and bottle ensues: Matrix-style flying kicks and WWF-style body slams happen all around Mother, still nursing, ducking to avoid the mayhem. Ultimately it is the book that emerges victorious.

Mother, still seeking escape, wanders to the window towards her beloved bicycle, now left to rust on the balcony. He sings to her of her lost liberty, so enticing and seductive that Mother is terrified by the strength of her desire to abscond.

Turning away from that electrifying thought, Mother hopes her dusty doctoral research can distract her. She quickly finds she doesn’t have the mental clarity to focus on her work, and her dissertation papers bite their nails and tear their hair, wailing over missed deadlines and their own journey to irrelevance. But as the heavy academic tomes flap back onto their shelves like fat owls, a murmur of smaller book-birds rise up and shimmer around Mother’s head: a chorus of beloved children’s books, come to remind her of the joys of what she has to share with her baby in the future.

Unfortunately, before she gains this strength, the dark voices double down on her. A breast pump enters to lead a high intensity aerobics workout: “Get that ass back in the workforce!” Dirty diapers crawl out of the garbage and slug over her, warning of the dire environmental impacts of adding another human to the world.

The fear and anxiety approach a fever pitch as Mother feels more and more trapped, her darkest voices snake-whispering the inevitability of failure. Suddenly her baby coughs, gags and chokes. Instinctively, Mother slaps the baby’s back, hard, until the baby throws up. The darkest voices, get unceremoniously covered in curdled milk in the process, losing their power.

The baby is safe. The dawn is breaking. In the darkness, Mother finally manages to sing her first lullaby, discovering that she is capable. Not perfect, serene, nor beautiful - simply capable.