

M-O-T-H-E-R'-S D-A-Y

“The itsy bitsy spider climbed up the waterspout.”

Baby Kade spit up, and Rosalee dutifully wiped his mouth.

“Down came the rain and washed the spider out.”

Little Amy tried to roll away, and Kayleigh scooped her onto her spare knee, trying to bounce both Amy and her twin, Ben at the same time.

“Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.”

Seth struggled to his feet and tried to make a break for it. His mother, Terri pulled him back into a cuddle.

“And the itsy bitsy spider climbed up the spout again. Yay!”

Everyone clapped their hands, and the babies tried to join in. After Kade was born, Rosalee decided to organize a weekly mommy and me class for all the influx of babies into the pack. Really, they just got together, ate an inordinate amount of cake, complained about how tired they were and sang nursery rhymes. They loved it.

“Terri, how’s the morning sickness this time?” asked Liv. Her baby, Daisy giggled and clapped her hands as Seth smiled at her.

Seth was nearly a year old, and Terri Tanner was already five months pregnant with her second child. During her first pregnancy, she suffered horrific nausea to the point where she was almost on twenty-four-hour bed rest.

“Much better,” said Terri, struggling with the squirming Seth, who was keen to escape his mother’s grasp and explore. He was already walking with amazing surety, which led to an extremely thorough baby proofing of their house. “I still have a few bad days, but it’s so much easier.”

“Yeah, the second one was much easier for me, too,” said Kim as she dangled a rattle in front of baby Billie. She already had a six-year-old called Jamie, and had found her second pregnancy a breeze – comparatively speaking that is.

“Yep, I think it gets a little easier each time,” said Christy, who was feeding her fifth child, Mina. Christy and her mate James had been together for more than twenty years. Their eldest, Casey was twenty-one, and they had four younger daughters. Casey was a bit of a hell-raiser in his youth, but all the girls were sweet. “Although I’m determined that Mina is going to be our last... but then I say that every time.”

“I hope so because Mal also seems to think five is a good number,” said Terri, smiling. “But I’m feeling so good now that I’m even back to work part-time.”

“How on earth did you get Mal to get on board with that?” asked Delilah. Louise, a sweet, shy baby who shared her mother’s startling silver eyes and was affectionately nicknamed Lo-Lo, tried to burrow into Delilah’s chest.

Terri let out a breath. “It wasn’t easy.”

“Really?” said Kayleigh as both her babies tried to tug on her hair. “Don was fine with it for me. But then he’s...”

“The most perfect man in the world,” chorused the other women.

Rosalee rolled her eyes, playfully. “We know. We heard.”

“Besides,” said Liv, “you work part-time at the library and give palm readings, there’s not really a lot of danger in that.”

“I don’t know, I’ve had a few hefty papercuts while I’ve been there,” pouted Kayleigh.

“Besides, Terri works at the library, too. She’s in no more danger than I am.”

“But she’s pregnant, and we all know overprotective shifter males are when it comes to pregnancy.”

“Too right,” agreed Rosalee. “My mate tried to put me on complete bed rest after my first trimester.”

“It’s probably worse for you,” said Kim to Rosalee, “because your mate’s the Alpha. Being overprotective is in his DNA.”

“Or because he’s a blockhead,” muttered Delilah – the blockhead’s sister.

Kim and Christy – the other two wolf shifters of the group - shook their heads and smiled in mild disapproval, but a few of the other women tittered.

“Uh, don’t tell him I said that. I’m just tired.” As if to prove the point, Delilah let out a mammoth sized yawn.

“No, he is a blockhead,” said Rosalee. “I tell him so all the time. He’s quite proud of the fact. Doesn’t change the fact that he’s the all-powerful, sex on legs Alpha. How come you’re so tired? I thought Lo-Lo sleeps through the night.”

Delilah gave Louise an adoring look. “She does, she’s a treasure. I sometimes worry that she isn’t fussy enough. But Andy and I are arguing all the time about me going back to work. I mean, I’m a small town deputy – anybody would think I was breaking up international drug rings the way he talks.”

Rosalee rubbed Delilah’s arm. “Honey, what can I do to help? Maybe the blockhead could talk to him.”

“No, the blockhead is firmly on Andy’s side on this one. Until I got pregnant they couldn’t stand each other; now they’re firmly on the same team – the oppress Delilah team.”

Seth wiggled out of Terri's anxious arms and waddled over to Liv and Daisy, giggled and stumbled back to Terri.

"He sure takes after Mal," said Christy.

"He sure does," agreed his adoring mother.

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Delilah struggled into the kitchen with her grocery bags and seemingly enormous diaper bag. Sometimes she felt like she couldn't leave the house for a morning without taking more with her than when she left to go to college for four years.

Her wolf panted happily as she scented Andy. But her joy was cut short as she scented another she-wolf. Delilah adjusted Louise, happily burbling away in her sling, and strode into the living room.

"Andy," she growled as she took in her mate, sitting on their couch next to a young she-wolf, chatting and drinking coffee.

The two looked up, and Andy leaped to his feet, managing to bang his head on the light fixture. He was so clumsy sometimes, she thought affectionately. Before her wolf growled on seeing her pack mate, Julie smirking at him - tall, skinny, lithe Julie. Usually, a woman like Julie wouldn't bother her. Julie was built in much the same way as Delilah pre-baby weight - like a surfboard. But Delilah still had a few extra pesky pounds around her ass and waist, and now, she was bothered. Except Delilah found she liked her larger breasts - they could stay. She'd always lamented how flat she was in that department so that change was welcome.

Andy rubbed his head. "Honey, there you are."

He bounded over to her and gave her a thorough kiss before extracting Louise and cradling her in his huge arms. His rugged face softened as he made cooing noises at their baby.

Julie giggled. "Your pup's gorgeous."

"Takes after her mother," said Andy, proudly.

"Or should I say cub?"

"Either way. Think you'll be able to handle her if she is a bear?"

"Sure." Julie walked over and stroked Louise's tiny hand.

Delilah resisted her wolf's urge to howl at the female to stay away from her pup. Instead, she asked, "What's going on?"

"Julie's starting a pack daycare. I asked her to stop by to talk about her taking Louise for a couple of days."

Her wolf snarled. "What?"

"I'd be happy to," said Julie. "I gotta run, but call me when you two know which days." She baby-talked a goodbye to Louise was out the door.

"What is going on?" howled Delilah.

Andy frowned. "You don't seem as happy about this as I thought you would be."

"Happy about what?"

He sighed. "I'm not exactly thrilled about it, but if you want to go back to work, I'm not going to try and stand in your way. Well, my bear might, but I'll try and keep him at bay."

"And Julie?"

"I talked to the sheriff, and I asked if you could only have day shifts for the first few months, and I managed to fit my shifts at the bar around them. I figure we only need to have Lo-Lo in daycare for a couple of days a week."

"Oh." Delilah deflated, and her wolf whimpered. "What made you change your mind?"

Andy smiled bleakly. "Esther." His ex-wife, who happened to be happily mated to a she-wolf, too. "She kind of reminded me that her dad used to forbid his mate from doing anything, too. And well... I'd rather not turn into someone like him." His face darkened at the thought. By all accounts, Esther's father had been monstrous.

Delilah placed a hand on his heart. "You never would."

"Yeah, well, if I ever start acting like a J-A-C-K-A-S-S again, you have my permission to hit me upside the head."

"I will," she readily agreed. "But I don't think you really need to spell words yet. Lo-Lo's still a little young for that."

Andy beamed at his cub. "Are you kidding? She's a little genius."

Delilah's wolf swooned. "Love you, even if you do act like an I-D-I-O-T."

He chuckled. "Me too. By the way, your A-S-S looks amazing today." He reached down and gave it a squeeze.

"K-I-S-S-A-S-S."

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"I can't believe my brother decided to throw a pack party for Mother's Day," said Delilah. Her wolf snorted. Yes, Adam loved pack parties. But the kind where there was lots of booze and big bowls of fire blaster chili. This one had finger sandwiches, cream cakes, and tea. Blankets had been spread out on the ground. It was more like a tea party picnic. Maybe fatherhood was softening him.

Andy laughed as he spotted Adam scowling into a cup of tea. "I think his mate is the brains behind this."

Just about all the pack members had amassed to celebrate Mother's Day. Andy was surprised Hans Lucas had shown – the grouchy, surly wolf hardly seemed to type to submit to tea and small sandwiches. But then, he did have a mother – a nice, patient woman called Ilse. And Hans' mate, Melanie could pretty much make him do anything. He freely admitted that; though he went ballistic if anyone else tried to say the same thing.

Hans scowled as he watched his younger twin sisters. Gwen was snuggling into the arms of her boyfriend, Darryl Tanner. While Britt was smiling shyly as Craig Tanner followed her around like a puppy dog. Melanie rubbed Hans' chest and made soothing noises.

Alec chuckled. "Can't keep teenage she-wolves locked up forever."

Hans' scowl deepened.

Baby Seth escaped Terri's arms and wandered over to baby Daisy. He stroked her hair, and her eyes lit up as she giggled.

"Ooh," cooed Liv, "do I see a future mate claim?"

"What?!" roared Alec, ripping his eyes away from Hans to look at his baby daughter and her 'suitor'.

Hans smirked at him. "Not quite so funny when a Tanner's after a female in your family, is it?"

"Mal, restrain your pup," hissed Alec. "He has designs on mine."

"He isn't even a year old," protested Mal, trying not to laugh as Terri tried to corral the resistant Seth.

"Apparently they're never too young in that family," chuckled Hans.

Alec started trying to shield Daisy while Liv chastised him for being silly.

Louise burred. "You're not allowed to date until you're twenty-five," whispered Andy down at his daughter.

Delilah kissed Andy's neck. "D-U-M-M-Y."

The end