

Babies: A 6-Some Short

It was an idealistic, happy scene in the living room of Dallas and Isabelle's house, tucked away in a quiet neighborhood in Chandler, Indiana. Blake leaned against the wall, watching the going-ons with some amusement.

"Peek-a-boo!" Mya, sitting cross-legged on the carpet, popped out from behind her hands, and baby Aurora, her yellow headband nearly as bright as her cheeky grin, burst into peals of laughter.

Little Thomas, laying on the floor, began to fuss, and Derek picked the baby up, bouncing him on his hip as he laughed at a story Dallas was telling about some childhood prank.

"So the lower grades were having a tie-die day," Dallas was saying, arms crossed behind his head as he reclined on the couch. "Pay and I volunteered to help, and we switched all the sizes up when no one was looking. The little kids ended up with dresses, and the bigger kids had doll shirts. It was hilarious. They never caught us, either."

Derek snorted, shaking his head as he bounced Thomas. "Savage, man. That's just... terrible. Those poor kids."

Dallas laughed. "You should hear about the time I replaced all the pictures of the principal with Elvis."

"How did you make it to adulthood?" Derek groan-laughed, holding Thomas up. "Kiddo, don't you listen to your uncle's stories—he's a terrible influence."

Isabelle, next to Dallas on the couch, coughed. "Yes... very poor influence. Certain people would do well to never follow in his footsteps." She looked pointedly at Tirana, who was on the floor playing with the stuffed dog that Damian had given her.

"Hey!" Dallas protested. "I'm reformed. No teaming up on me! I'm sure *you* weren't the perfect kid, either, Derek."

Mya looked up from her game with Aurora, a quirk in her eyebrows. "He threw a snowball at his priest once."

Derek sighed. "And no one will ever forgive me for it! I thought he was my friend's dad, okay?"

Blake snickered. Derek had reportedly been the “perfect” Catholic kid... but Blake knew Mya’s husband had pulled off his fair share of pranks. He was just a lot more discrete about it.

A nudge brought Blake’s attention to Damian, who had somehow sidled up to Blake without him noticing. Blake raised an eyebrow at Damian’s smirk.

“Hey... wanna play a joke on Mya?”

“On Tirana’s birthday?” Blake frowned. “Really?”

“Hey, we’re all *here*.” Damian grinned. “Pay’s up for it.”

“I’m up for what?” Patience poked her head into the living room. “Damian, Blake, get in here.”

Giving Damian an “what did you get me into *this* time?” look, Blake followed Dai into the kitchen, where Patience was waiting. She tossed them both wet washcloths, and Blake scrambled to catch the one thrown at his face.

“Hey!” Damian swiped the washcloth out of the air and swatted it at her. “What’s that for?”

“You.” She grinned. “Wash up this place, boys. I heard you plotting. This is your punishment.”

“I wasn’t plotting anything!” Blake protested, giving Damian a squinty look. “It was all him.”

“Who said I was plotting?” Damian grinned, holding up his hands. “The plot’s been made, I’m just doing it.”

“I made the cake. You two get to clean.” Tossing her hair over her shoulder, Patience flashed them a grin as she sauntered out of the kitchen.

“But I said I wasn’t plotting!” Damian called after her, laughing as he frisbee-d the wet washcloth at her back.

Blake snorted. “Dude, you are trouble. With a capital t.” He paused a beat. “What was your idea?”

It was Damian’s turn to snort. “Switch the babies.”

“What? Why?” Blake raised an eyebrow.

“Because Mya dresses them alike.” He said it like it made perfect sense, too.

Blake narrowed his eyes, then grinned. “All we gotta do is take Aurora’s bow and put it on Thomas...”

“Exactly!” Damian rescued his washcloth from the floor and eyed the flour dusting the tabletop.

“But they’re with Mayo and Derek.” Blake swiped at the sugar and spilled batter dotting the counter.

“But they won’t be forever.” Damian disappeared behind the counter.

“Yeah, one day they’ll grow up and go off to college and have their own lives and forget about us old folk.” Shoving the crumbs into the sink—Patience was a *very* messy baker; Blake was surprised that Isabelle let her near her usually squeaky-clean kitchen—Blake smirked.

“Not what I meant!” Damian reappeared, flour streaking part of his face. “You know how much they get passed around after a while.”

“Oh yeah, hot potato babies.” Blake snickered. “Poor things. No one wants them for long.”

Damian choked on a snort, stumbling as he tripped over his own feet (or maybe Pay’s flour—it was hard to tell).

A high-pitched cry came from the other room, and Blake exchanged a glance with Dai, who looked somewhere between mischievous and pained. If Blake didn’t secretly share Damian’s fear of the babies, he might have laughed. Instead, he tossed his dishcloth on the counter. “Wanna collect a hot potato?”

“Dude, stop.” Damian made another noise like he was trying and failing to not burst out laughing.

Blake just chuckled, heading towards the living room and taking the crying baby from his sister, who gave him a relieved look.

“Thanks,” she whispered, and he nodded, gulping as he cradled a very fussy Aurora—who also stank. Mya must’ve noticed his scrunched up noise, because she sighed. “Poopey diaper? Here, I’ll change her—”

Blake glanced at Damian, who had somehow succeeded in getting Thomas from Derek. Damian gave an almost unperceivable nod, his eyes wide as he held Thomas like the baby was about to jump out of his arms, and Blake sighed. “Don’t worry about it. I know how to change a diaper by this point.”

Mya shot him a grateful smile. “You’re the best, little bro.”

He almost choked, blaming it on the smell coming from Aurora's bottom, and carefully juggled the kid around so she wasn't squishing in her diaper.

He met up with Damian in the nursery/spare bedroom. Thomas was already laying on the bed, and Damian was eyeing the kid with a weird, half-awed and half scared look.

Blake set Aurora on the changing table, wrinkling his nose. "Yours came free, at least."

Damian glanced up with a snort. "Sure." Then his own nose wrinkled, and he eyed Aurora. "Oh, gross."

"Mya thinks I'm her knight in shining armor." Blake unsnapped Aurora's sunflower onesie, choking back a gag.

"Anyone who touches that stuff is crazy. Or a parent—or you, apparently." Damian glanced at Thomas. "He's good...right?" The sudden panic in Damian's voice made Blake laugh as he turned back to Aurora.

"Check for yourself, dude. My hands are full." Literally, too, as he struggled one-handly undoing the dirty diaper as he tried to hold Aurora's kicking legs with his other hand. For not even being half a year old yet, she was *strong*. And feisty. And not cooperating. Blake grunted as he finally eased off the dirty diaper and set it to the side, only to groan as he realized he'd forgotten to get a clean diaper ready.

"Hey, Dai, gimme a hand here."

"But I'm watching Thomas," Damian protested. "He could roll off the bed or crawl away or something."

"Can you just pass me a diaper from the bag?" Blake tightened his grip on Aurora's legs as she squirmed. "And... the baby wipes. Thomas'll be fine—Mya leaves them on the bed all the time." At least, Blake was pretty sure she did. Maybe that was before the twins could crawl, though? But before Blake could start second-guessing, Damian was already up and rummaging through the oversized diaper bag.

"Why do babies need so much stuff, anyway?"

Blake snorted. "Beats me. It's like Mya's preparing for a zombie apocalypse with everything she packs for them."

Damian muttered something under his breath before he held up a pack of baby wipes and a diaper. "This the right thing?"

“Looks it.”

Damian stood up and limped over to set the items on the changing table, but just as Blake was able to ask him to open the diaper, Thomas let out an ear-piecing shriek. Blake jumped, nearly elbowing the soiled diaper off of the changing station.

Damian caught Thomas right before the twin would have rolled off the bed.

“I told the others I was going to break their babies,” he said breathlessly, glancing over his shoulder like Mya was somehow watching.

Aurora began to fuss, too, and Blake glanced at Damian helplessly. “Just help me get this on her.”

Juggling Thomas, Damian opened up the clean diaper and slid it towards Aurora. “You’re the uncle, you get to do the dirty work.”

Blake grunted. “And you’re the honorary uncle—you can’t just let babies fall off beds.”

“You said he’d be fine!”

Blake didn’t have to look at Dai’s expression to detect the thread of hurt in his friend’s voice, and Blake sighed as he finished with Aurora. “I was wrong, apparently. There’s a reason Dallas calls them the trouble twins.” Scooping Aurora up, Blake turned to Damian. “So... master hot-potato plan?”

Damian’s face brightened, and he held up one of Aurora’s poofy pink headband bows that he must have grabbed from the bag.

After the twins were... modified, Blake and Damian stood back to look at them, laying next to each other in the center of the bed and babbling in baby. Both were dressed in matching white onesies with smiling sunflowers, and Thomas sported Aurora’s bright yellow headband—Damian had thrown the pink one back because Blake had convinced him that it didn’t match.

“He’s a lot bigger than she is,” Blake observed, narrowing his eyes. “You really think it’ll fool Mayo?”

Damian shrugged. “We just need to keep her distracted.”

“I guess.” Blake eyed the twins for a moment longer before lunging to grab a Thomas who was trying to fall off the bed yet again. “But next time, come up with a prank that *doesn’t* include wormy hot potato babies.”

Damian gave that lopsided smirk as he reached for Aurora and carefully picked her up. “Hey, the girls want us to get used to tiny humans.”

It took Mya approximately 12 minutes to notice something had happened to her kids. Damian played it surprisingly cool, the only clue that he had done anything the meaningful “see? No one’s noticing” glances he kept sending to Blake.

Blake, for his part, had made sure to hand Thomas off to Derek. and Aurora had gone to Patience. Patience had raised an eyebrow when Damian handed the baby over, but apparently decided the kitchen was clean enough to keep the secret, and Derek was too engrossed in Dallas’ stories to pay close attention to which kid he was holding.

It was, incidentally, Tirana who sealed the fate of the prank. She had pulled herself to her feet using Dallas’ knees, and toddled over to Thomas with her stuffed dog clutched in her hand.

Since Derek was sitting on the floor, Thomas in his lap, Tirana was easily able to pull the bow from his head before anyone noticed what was happening.

“Tirana,” Isabelle said quickly, standing and scooping up her daughter, “we don’t do that.”

The bow fell to the floor, but Tirana held her toy tightly, blinking innocently up at her mom. “Uh-oh.”

“Yes, uh-on indeed.” Isabelle sat back down, holding Tirana on her lap. “That bow is Aurora’s, not yours. You shouldn’t take it from her—that’s not very nice.”

Damian choked, covering the sound up with a cough, and Blake glanced away from him as he fought the urge to laugh himself.

The timer dinged from the kitchen.

“Hey—!” Damian’s protest cut off as Patience shoved Aurora at him and vanished into the kitchen, and Damian was left holding a baby. Again.

Blake snorted at the wary look on the agent’s face. “Payback,” he mouthed. Damian just grimaced, awkwardly shifting his arms around the twin.

“Uh-oh,” Tirana said again, pointing at Thomas.

“Yes, you took off Aurora’s bow. That wasn’t very nice of you,” Isabelle said patiently. “Tell Aurora that you’re sorry.”

Tirana shook her head, sticking her dog's ear in her mouth. "No 'ora," she said past a mouthful of dog.

"Tirana," Dallas started, turning to her, "tell Aurora that you're sorry."

Again, Tirana shook her head stubbornly. "Nah-ah."

Derek scooped up the bow and put it back on Thomas's head, and Tirana began to bounce.

"No, no, no!"

Blake glanced at Damian, who looked low-key horrified—either because a two-year-old was about to foil their hard-put-together ruse, or because Aurora was spitting up, Blake couldn't tell.

Mya, who'd been relaxing in the recliner, seemed to notice Damian's expression too, and she stood with a low sigh and made her way across the room to Damian and held out her arms. "I'll take him."

Damian shot another panicked glance at Blake, but apparently decided that not holding a baby was worth getting found out and handed over the hot-potato kid.

Isabelle and Dallas were still talking to Tirana, and Mya picked her away back across the living room to her seat. Her face changed about two seconds after sitting down, and she frowned, holding up Aurora, then glancing at Thomas in Derek's lap.

"No sorry!" Tirana's voice was getting progressively louder.

Damian inched over to where Blake stood. "I think she knows," he whispered.

"Who—Mya or Tirana?" Blake glanced over the living room of increasing chaos, then back at his friend.

Damian winced. "Both?"

Blake eyed his sister. Yup—Mya was definitely suspicious.

"Derek," she said, voice low, "bring Aurora over here."

Derek looked up, eyebrows creasing, but did as his wife bid and stood up, Thomas cradled in his arm. Blake had to look away to bite back a snort, and Damian elbowed him.

"Pay's filming. Look—she's in the kitchen doorway with the camera."

"Why do I get the feeling that we'll never live this one down?" Blake muttered under his breath.

“Who switched my babies?” Mya’s sharp voice cut through the noise, and Blake and Damian exchanged a glance before looking away, trying not to laugh.

Yup... they were done for.