Amy is home alone with their two year old while he’s having a major tantrum. Inspired by Melissa Fumero’s stories about her own tiny tyrant.

Amy takes a deep breath in an attempt to compose herself, her son’s wails piercing her ear drums. Kneeling down to his level, she reaches for his hand, but he slaps her away, his tantrum escalating.

“Mijo, please…” She whispers, rubbing her hands over her tired eyes. This has been going on for 32.5 minutes and she has no idea how to help her furious two year old. 33 minutes ago, he was casually sat on the floor, a truck in one hand and a handful of grapes in the other. Amy was sat on the couch, one eye on the work on her laptop, the other watching the “tiny tyrant”, as her brothers had taken to calling him. He had seemed perfectly content, babbling away to himself about something or other, and then out of the blue he threw his truck across the living room. Since then, he has not stopped crying, screaming, and refusing Amy’s attention.

“What’s up with you, buddy?” She says, trying to keep her voice calm, despite the fact that she feels very much the opposite of calm. This is the worst tantrum he’s had while she’s been alone with him and it’s utterly overwhelming without Jake, or Karen, or Abuelo’s super strict stare that instantly puts an end to Sam’s tears. “Are you hungry?”

As she reaches for him again, he shakes his head wildly, screaming, “mama, no!”

“Mama is trying to help,” she explains to no avail; he’s not having it. His only response is to throw the remaining grapes at her chest and Amy gasps, wondering how her sweet little newborn has become this feisty (less) little toddler.
“That’s it. You’re having time out.” Summoning all the strength within her, she ignores his kicks and screams, lifting him into his arms and taking him into his bedroom and putting him in his crib. He screams louder when she turns her back on him and she seriously contemplates calling Jake and interrupting his super important and potentially career-defining RICO bust. Instead, she rings her mom who, having raised seven boys and one headstrong girl, knows a thing or two about tantrums.

“Hi, sweetheart. You OK?”

“Not really,” she replies honestly, sighing down the phone. “Sam is freaking out and I can’t get him to stop.”

“The tiny tyrant strikes again,” Amy hears her brother Luis shout, but Camila quickly swats him away, knowing intuitively that this is no time for jokes. She can tell by her daughter’s voice that she is really anxious and she wishes for the millionth time that they lived a bit closer to the city.

“Ignore Luis. This kind of behaviour is totally normal for his age.”

“I know that.” In true Santiago Style, Amy had read every parenting book she could find while she was pregnant with Sam, bookmarking the pages on coping with a toddler with orange sticky notes. She had re-read them extensively over the last few months and searched the internet for any added advice and they’d tried everything. Sam still won’t calm down. “It’s just - it’s so hard, mom. He’s slapping my hand away now and he just threw grapes at me so I’ve put him in time out but I hate seeing him like this and I don’t know what to do.”

“First of all, you need to breathe. You panicking will only panic him more and make the situation worse. Secondly, you need to remember this is a phase and he will grow out of it.”

Amy murmurs non-committedly.

“Do you want me to put his Abuelo on Facetime?” Camila asks. “That’ll sort him out.”

Despite the tight ball of anxiety in Amy’s chest, she lets out a small chuckle. Jake is convinced that Victor Santiago has some kind of toddler superpowers. “I wish, but I need to learn how to deal with him on my own.”

“You’re never going to be alone, sweetheart. You’ve got Jake and a huge family to support you, as well as your friends at the Nine-Nine.”

“But it makes me feel like a bad mother that I can’t calm my own son down,” Amy confesses aloud for the very first time, chewing on her lower lip.

“You are an amazing mother, Amy,” Camila says firmly, unquestionably. “In fact, you are an incredible mother - and an incredible police officer at the same time - and I’m sure Jake would agree that you’re an incredible wife. Having kids is not easy though, nobody is ever going to be perfect. Hell, I had 8 kids and I was still making mistakes with Rafael. Stop doubting yourself. Sam adores you.”

“It doesn’t feel like it today,” Amy replies, glancing despondently over her shoulder at her still-crying son.

As if understanding his mother’s heartbreak, the screaming stops, his cheeks dry and he reaches out for her.

With her ears ringing at the sudden silence, she balances her phone between her ear and shoulder and picks Sam up with her now-free hands. He immediately curls into her side and her heart melts, the
past 36 or so minutes forgotten.

“You wouldn’t believe it, mom, but he’s stopped crying and is now giving me the tightest hug in the world.”

Camila smiles softly at the other end of the phone. “I told you that he adored you. Just because he has dreadful tantrums sometimes, that doesn’t mean he loves you any less.”

“Yeah, yeah. You want to speak to the little monster?”

“Always,” Camila agrees. There’s a little crackle as Amy puts the phone on speaker and then her daughter’s voice encouraging Sam to say Abuela. “Hi, cariño,” she coos down the phone.

Sam grins upon hearing her voice, babbling excitedly. He loves all his grandparents and is happily spoilt by them - even by Roger who picks Sam up a present from each airport he flies into. “Abuela! Abuela!”

“There’s my favourite little boy! You know, Abuela loves and misses you very, very much!”

“We’ll see her in two weeks, won’t we, Sam?” Amy says, bouncing him on her hip. He smiles wider, baring the two front molars that are trying to grow through. Suddenly his behaviour all makes sense. “Hey, mom? I think I know the cause behind today’s tantrum: he’s got two more teeth coming through.”

“There you go. I know you’ve researched enough to know how to deal with that. Do you feel better now?”

“Definitely. Thanks for helping.”

“Anytime, mija. I’ll leave you to some quality time with your son now. I’ll call you back tomorrow, OK? Love you.”

“Love you too.” Amy hangs up and pockets her phone, turning her attention back to the adorable curly haired boy on her hip. “Shall we go read until daddy comes home?”

Sam smiles, which Amy takes to mean yes, so she grabs one of his books, quietly reading to him in his rocking chair until he drifts off to sleep. Eventually she must fall asleep too, because the next thing she knows, her husband is laying a blanket over her knees and her son is back in his crib.

“Hi,” he says softly.

“Hey. How was work?”

“Caught all the bad guys, obviously,” he boasts, reminiscent of old Jake Peralta her partner, except he’s not chugging a beer in Shaw’s Bar after work, he’s in their son’s nursery, and they’re partners in life now, not just in crime. “How was the tiny tyrant?”

“Tyrannous? He calmed down eventually though. I think he’s teething.”

“Poor little guy,” Jake says sympathetically, now sounding like the more mature man she married and the father of her child. “I’m sorry you had to deal with his tantrums all alone.”

“Don’t be,” she insists, standing up and hugging him from behind. “I spoke to my mom and she made me realise that just because he has terrible tantrums, it doesn’t mean I’m a bad mother.”

“Oh, Ames, I could have told you that.” He turns around to face her, cupping her cheek gently and
staring into her dark eyes. “You are the best mother Sam could ask for. He’s so lucky to have you. We all are.”

Amy looks down at the tiny bump protruding from beneath her oversized NYPD shirt, her eyes shining with tears. “I love you and our tiny tyrant so much, Jake. And I love our new little tiny tyrant that’s on the way.”

“We love you too, Ames.”

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