

Deus Ex Mama

by Steven J. Kolbe

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-for Susan Michelle

Charlie is hollering about Rex again. Every dinosaur right now is Rex. Also Rex: every animal with thick-looking skin--elephants, crocodiles. (Yesterday, he pointed to an ant and told me, "Buggy Rex.") In fact, every animal--including Charlie--is Rex. Large cars devour smaller cars, individual pieces of Honeycomb cereal rip each other open with their savage teeth.

His baby sister, Margot, is his best audience in all this. For her, a green and yellow Rex might dance, or snarl, or kiss her forehead. Charlie's Rexes have range.

Today, however, this same Rex is on the hunt. Charlie tip-toes toward Margot's rocker, checking his peripheries for other predators, a mama-predator or a daddy-predator. Then he cocks his arm back and, as the plastic carnivore lunges for Margot, two hands appear as if from nowhere and pluck brother and Rex, wriggling, into the air.

Margot, just two months old, clasps her gloved hands together as if in prayer. She half cries, half coos: "Umph-umph-achk-achk. Oowahm-yom." Then coming to the point: "Moorciful mother, powerful protector. Thou givest freely to us who depend on thee, who depend on thee and thine might, thine beneficence, thine tallness. Patron of newborns, interceptor of Rexes, queen of the living room, pity us defenseless ones who have recourse to thee."

Then Margot extends her hands to the heavens, to the ground, to all the corners of the earth. Really, it is a kind of happy flailing.

