Full

by Steven J. Kolbe

The trash is full. Again. I open the bathroom trash—because the diaper genie is stuffed—but there's no room. I try the kitchen next. The lid swings open, catapulting carrot shavings onto the floor. I lay the diaper on the counter for later.

The floor is full of choking hazards. Little plastic pieces mainly. So are Margot's hands. I pull something black and gray from her mouth—an axle and wheels from one of Charlie's toy cars.

Charlie is full of sugar. Or caffeine. Or the life force of the sun. I'm not sure which. He ricochets around the house like a ping pong ball fired from a gatling gun. We need to leave the house in twelve seconds, and he's wearing one shoe and the pajama shirt he slept in. Charlie crashes tsunami-like into Bonnie, and sends her carefully orchestrated dinosaur tea party into sheer anarchy. Cups, saucers, and lambeosaurs clatter to the ground among the choking hazards.

Bonnie is full of justified indignation. She stomps her foot at Charlie as he caroms around the living room and then out into the hall. She stomps her foot at me as I take my first life-saving sip of coffee. She stomps her foot at the universe as it silently folds and unfolds. Then, finding no recourse in either of us, she stomps her foot at no one and nothing.

So when you say, as we load children into car seats, that our life is full, I have to agree, but then I imagine the opposite. I picture a life without this busy-ness and, momentarily, I am George Bailey after the angel leaves: so grateful to be in the here and now, not because I've given so much to the world, which would be in shambles without me, but because I've received so much, I who would be in shambles without these diapers, these hazards, these lambeosaurs. I look briefly into the camera and my face, black and white and gray, is the picture of cinematic contentment.

Then I remember the diaper still sitting on the counter and—forgetting everything else—I stomp my foot at the fullness of it all.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/steven-j-kolbe/full»*
Copyright © 2020 Steven J. Kolbe. All rights reserved.