

KAYLA SCHNOEBELEN

Part-Time Nanny

No” is what she says when I ask her to help clean up the toys. The toys she recently finished throwing on the floor, one at a time with decisive precision. The toys left splayed across the carpet and, sometimes, tossed under coffee tables lying just out of my reach. The toys I often discover after I step on or trip over them. The toys plucked from sore and tender muscles in my feet, back, arms, and, most often, the soft tissue of my butt.

“No” is what she says when I say it is nap time. Nap time, which is always preceded by me chasing her around the house first. Nap time, when I’m badgered with “Rella, Rella!” until I place the Disney DVD in the player. Nap time, when I’m subjected to rocking her to the beat while I sing along to the film. Nap time, when she sneaks out of her crib and plays with her toys. Nap time, when she wakes me up from my unplanned nap.

“No” is what she says when I ask if she has to potty. Potty is what she does in her crib, in my lap, in her chair, in her pants, in her skirts, in her underwear, but rarely in her toilet. Potty is what she does in her room, on her jungle gym, at the goat’s pen, but mostly on the bathroom floor. Potty is what we both prefer over the poopies. Poopies end up on the floor, on the outside of the toilet, on her feet and hands, in my hair, and on me. Poopies make us both say, “Yuck.”

“No” is what she says when I ask her to eat her dinner. The nutritionally-balanced dinner that was so carefully portioned out by her mother and me. The dinner mashed and stirred and mixed into a mound in the plastic dish. The dinner picked and prodded at, but rarely consumed. The dinner splatted upon the floor and

quickly lapped up by one or two hungry dogs waiting at her feet. The dinner flecked through my hair and hers.

“No” is what she says when her mother asks her to say goodbye to me. Goodbye, when tears and screams or giggles and smiles can happen. Goodbye, when she runs full speed to my waiting arms and knocks me to the floor. Goodbye, when my cheeks and lips will glisten from wet and sticky kisses from her. Goodbye, when her whole body waves me away. Goodbye, when she says, “Buh-bye, Kee-wa.”

“Yes” is what I say when asked if I love her. I love her even though she treats my body like a jungle gym or trampoline, depending on her mood. I love her even though she thinks I live for drawing cats, dogs, stars, suns, moons, trees, flowers, and balloons repeatedly in her sketch pad. I love her even though she kicks and screams at me when I turn off *Sprout*. I love her even though she prefers Cinderella over Belle. I love her even though I barely know her. I love her even though she’s not mine.