

MARBLE
RUN
CHRIST-
MAS

by MICHAEL FERTIK

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Even the way I virtue signal virtue signals.

I write the story of the marble run construction
the minute my kids go to bed
and click send to publish
in a litmag that knows today's manhood is
dadding to daughters
over boy-profiled erector sets.

Every Flex Track I conjoin,
every Paddle Switch we mount,
each Xylophone Ball Trap we giggle
through attaching brings me one step closer
to the I-thou (little "t," that's wassup)
serenity the HR department says the
World Economic Forum has modeled
for ideal male executive leadership.

Bring-my-daughters-to-work-day
on any given Wednesday,
pop the Chaos Tower video selfie up on the 'Gram,
gather round my phone in the lunchroom
in case you missed me coaching the girls
on their engineering jawns.

Oooh, that's right,
righteous dad,
male influence figure sitting on the floor
in jeans assembling the future
from furnished plastic pieces
with two girls wearing purple pink dresses
because they can do that, too.

The marbles strike the B Bell on the way down,
and if you bend your ear,
you can hear it chime “Not Me Too.”
“Yeah, they’re up on Minecraft,
and when a lemon drops from the tree
outside the kitchen,
we do the Newton dance,
you haven’t seen that video?
Lemme show you.”

*Go ahead. Seriously, please do it: ask me
about the ethnicity of the youngest you see
in the foreground.*

Not a soul in this house cares about marbles.
That was mom before she died.
It’s after midnight now.
I’m supine
on the living room floor looking
at the bum turn
on the tower where the marbles fall
off half the time
and the Catch Basket that bounces them
out half the time
and wondering which of us will fix everything.