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War Stories

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WAR STORIES

A man makes miniature soldiers and sailors, ship models, an array of tiny weapons. When his health fails, his wife takes over the business, casting the molds, painting figures, filling mail orders. The man is in pain and short-tempered. When the wife makes an error—she has trouble telling the guns apart—the husband yells at her: Stupid woman! The ships rock and the little men quake. The cannons and swords and bayonets, the Gatlings, Lugers, Derringers, and Remingtons lie in rows, poised.

*

How clear Picasso was that war is chaos—explosives falling from the sky, body parts flying. With the Guernica success behind him he went on fracturing the given. Pulling hair was just a start. What a kick to stretch a smile, to disappear an eye. A charming face bordered by curly hair, on a plate.

*

She was thinking of "historical precedent" and reading reports of the disintegration of a certain nation state—tribal wars, atrocities. Learning of the current barbarisms—mass rapings, giving knives to prisoners and ordering them to cut off each others' genitals, nailing children to doors—she was reminded of hearing that, in a former war, in another country, soldiers nailed horseshoes to the feet of their prisoners.