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War Mice Goran Simic

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Goran Simic

WAR MICE

In the second summer of war the town was swamped with mice. At night rats would come out of the sewer and occupy the empire of the trash dump. They would sometimes attack naive cats and lost children, and with the first dark we would lock our doors. As if by secret agreement, our apartments were inhabited by small, stupid mice we would discover in our flour supplies and among Sunday clothes, and the more we exterminated them, the more there were. The first one caught in the mousetrap behind the piano we named "the artist," and later followed a nameless army of mice that only had numbers.

I thought: even I remember only the name of the first victim who died for this town, and then came the black statistics of dead Sarajevans. What was her name? I try to remember and I bring from the attic a box of obituary notices. But I find inside only scraps of paper and the frightened eyes of the mice-nation we have not managed to destroy for centuries, though they do not even know the name of their first victim. Nor the name of their homeland they left long ago.

Translated from the Bosnian
by **Amela Simic** and **Christopher Merrill**