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Army Men

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Army Men

When we were boys,
we'd beg our mothers
in the check-out line
to buy a bag of army men;
we'd deploy our ranks,
brave molded plastic soldiers,
divided the battle front between
valiant American green and foes
in gray: German, Japanese,
Korean, Russian, Vietnamese;
sandbox or lawn became
arid desert and lush jungle.

We were the generals
clenching in our small palms
the platoons of havoc:
infantry in fatigues, helmet, boots,
eager to quell an enemy
with rifle, pistol, grenade, and mortar,
the most fierce thrusting bayonet.
From a high altitude view,
with fistfuls of driveway stone,
valorous troops were blitzed,
bombs whistling from lips;
mimicked explosions fractured
a placid suburban afternoon.

When we were boys,
there were no screams, no
blood, gore, or shredded flesh, no
limbs tossed heedlessly,
somersaulting in the air, no
stench of burned buddies, no
retching flavor of death, no
medic, parades, of VFW,
no post-traumatic stress.

When we were boys,
in minutes the intrepid fell
then, again and again,
without pause we'd prop up
our dauntless men to resume
the war, our play relentless.

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