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## Cute!

The kids burst through the door talking tiny kitchens. *Could you die?* they say, waving me over. I leave off chopping for the family screen. There, before us, are these enormous hands pinching out tiny chunks of chopped meat.

This is what you learned at school?

They hush me. Ssssh, they say, don't ruin it.

At home we are smug about technology – we have rules, safety controls – but that only goes so far. Kids see what they see.

It feels benign. Cooking hands: adult yet lotioned. Nails buffed and smooth, absent of hanging raw bits. Hands crack tiny eggs into tiny pans, sprinkle tiny sprigs of parsley to those tiny lumps of meat. Hands roll out meatballs the size of boogers, toss spaghetti with tweezers, sizzle on a toy-sized stove.

Lucky dolls, I say.

Mooooooooooooooooooooom.

We watch and watch. Tiny kitchens, big hands. Donuts pierced with straws, tacos folded by paper clip. Everything is edible only you never see the big mouths. You only see the work. The labor is painstaking.

I say, Why would anyone invest the effort in something so small?

They say, You're missing the point!

In my parents' house, I feel like my head will break through the roof, as if somewhere there is a cookie marked Eat Me. I don't know why. I'm not a big person. The walls of my room are pasted in the same print I've had forever. At night the flowers become stars, dots to connect. Faces. Once, this was a game. I still fit easily into my childhood bed.

It's almost dinnertime, I say.

One more? They look at me like kewpies and who am I to argue.

Besides, it's seductive. Cupcakes, sprinkled in rainbow dust. Did I light the oven? Have I set the timer? My knife is idle. It's easy to get sucked in.

Don't tell your father.

When my husband comes home late, it's my favorite. He smells like the guys but is affectionate, except when his affection carries him away. Last night he bit my ass – oh, but it was a loving bite! – and does not remember in the morning.

Who wants to set the table?

I flap napkins, but suddenly, the kids have homework.

*Kawaii*, the computer emotes later, when I'm cleaning up. The accent is offensive but the word is Japanese for all things cute. Kittens and braids, knee socks, kilts. Grown women dress like stars of after-school specials, the porn edition. Infantilization is a culture, not just a fad.

Cute! I click. But there's more to it. Math, science. Tiny kitchens are fueled by votive. Heat is hard to regulate. Cook too fast: scorch. It's a matter of scale. There will always be some discrepancy. The hands feel all knowing, larger than life, steady as puppeteers. I watch them set out plates of tiny steaks, tiny A-1 sauce. God, they are beautiful.