Picassos War by Russell Martin

From the bestselling author of Beethovens Hair comes a stirring narrative account of the bombing of the town that inspired one of the worlds most celebrated and controversial works of art, the painting Guernicas profound impact on the politics and culture of the twentieth century, and the artist whose immense passion and artistic vision are unequaled in modern history. On April 26, 1937, in the late afternoon of a busy market day in the Basque town of Gernika in northern Spain, the German Luftwaffe began the relentless bombing and machine-gunning of businesses, homes and villagers to test a new type of warfare waged from the air at the request of General Francisco Franco and his rebel forces. Three-and-a-half hours later, the village lay in ruins, its population decimated. This act of terror and unspeakable cruelty the first intentional, large-scale attack against a nonmilitary target in modern warfare outraged the world, and compelled a Spanish painter to respond with artistic fury. Pablo Picasso, an expatriate living in Paris, reacted immediately to the devastation in his homeland by beginning work on the canvas that would become his testament against the horrors of war. Guernica has become widely considered the greatest artwork of the twentieth century in the sixty-five years since its creation, and has been claimed as a powerful symbolic image first by the embattled government of Republican Spain and then, over time, by the international communist party, American artists opposing the war in Vietnam, international peace organizations, Basque separatists, survivors of the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and people everywhere. Weaving themes of conflict and redemption, doom and transcendence, and featuring some of the centuries most memorable and infamous figures, including Adolf Hitler, Eleanor Roosevelt, George Orwell, Jackson Pollock, Lillian Hellman, and Picasso himself, Martin follows this renowned masterwork from its fevered creation through its journey across decades, from many countries of Europe to America and finally and triumphantly to Spain. Picassos War is a book that vividly demonstrates how vital art is to human lives and how sometimes it even transfigures tragedy, a story that delivers an unforgettable portrait of
an artistic genius whose visionary rendering of the terrible wounds of war still resonates profoundly today.

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