



Ruby

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~~ONE~~

Ruby

They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time. No need for hurry out here ^{They are} five miles from ^{town} Fairly which has seventeen miles between it and any other ~~town~~. ^{will be} Hiding places ~~are~~ plentiful in the Convent but there is time and the day has just begun.

They are nine, over twice the number of the women they are obliged to capture or kill and they have the paraphernalia for either requirement: rope, palm leaf crosses, handcuffs, Mace and sunglasses along with clean, handsome guns.

They have never been this deep in the Convent. Some of them have parked Chevrolets near its porch to pick up a jar of honey or have gone into the kitchen for a gallon can of barbecue sauce; but none has seen the halls, the chapel, the school room, the bedrooms. Now they will. And at last they will see the cellar and expose its filth

to the light that is soon to scour the Oklahoma sky. Meantime they are startled by the clothes they are wearing--suddenly aware of being ill-dressed. For at the dawn of a July day how could they have guessed the cold that is inside this place? Their t-shirts, work shirts and dashikies soak up cold like fever. Those who have worn workshoes are unnerved by the thunder of their steps on marble floors; those in Pro-keds by the silence. Then there is the grandeur. Only the two who are wearing ties seem to belong here and, one by one, each remembers that before the mansion was a convent, it was a gambler's folly. Bisque and rosetone marble floors segue into teak ones. Ising glass patterns early morning shadow on walls stripped of fabric and white-washed fifty years ago. The ornate bathroom fixtures which sickened the nuns were replaced with good plain spigots, but the princely tubs and toilets, which could not be economically removed, bordered on corruption. The gambler's excess that could be [^]demoished was, particularly in the dining room which the nuns converted to a school room where stilled Arapajo ^{girls} once [^]sat and learned to forget.

Now armed men search rooms where macramè baskets float next to Flemish candalabra; where Christ and His mother glow in niches

yesterday's
holds light
where there is none
and patterns

one) has clarified it like butter: the pure oil of hatred on top, its hardness stablized below.

Outside the mist is waist high. It will turn silver soon, even yield a rainbow or two before the sun burns it off, exposing acres of clover and maybe witch tracks as well.

The kitchen is bigger than the house in which either man was born. The ceiling high as a barn's. More shelves than Ace's Grocery Store. The table is fourteen feet long if an inch and it's easy to tell that the women they are hunting have been taken by surprise. At one end a full pitcher of milk stands near four bowls of Shredded Wheat. At the ^{end} other vegetable chopping has been interrupted. Stock simmers on one of the eight burners of the industrial size stove; a dozen loaves of bread swell under white cloths. A stool is over turned. There are no windows.

One man, called Sargeant, signals the other to open the pantry while he goes to the back door. It is closed but unlocked. Peering out Sargeant sees an old hen, her bloody, swollen ^{hindparts} tail cherished, he guesses, for delivering four or five eggs a week. Soft stuttering c

yield
to ground grass
left rainbows (here and there)
keeps low to the ground made
enough for children
One bright enough

Scallions / 12th Feb
Lily a handful of
Green Coriander
next to brilliant
his I cannot - but

trimmed in grape vines. ^{the had} Nuns chipped away all the nymphs, but curves of their marble hair are still entangled among the grape leaves. The chill intensifies as the men spread through the mansion, taking their time, looking, listening, alert to the female malice that hides here and the yeast and butter smell of rising dough.

One of them, the young one, looks back, forcing himself to see how the dream he is in might go. The woman, lying uncomfortably on the marble, waves her fingers at him--or seems to. So his dream is doing okay, except for its color. He has never before dreamed in such clear color.

The leading man pauses, raising his left hand to halt the silhouettes behind him. They ^{stop}~~stand~~, measuring their breath, making friendly adjustments in the grip of rifles and handguns. The leading man turns and gestures the separations: you two over there toward the kitchen; two more upstairs; two others into the chapel. He saves himself, his brother and the boy who thinks he is dreaming for the cellar.

They part gracefully without words or haste. Earlier, when they blew open the Convent door, the nature of their mission made them giddy.

? But the venom is manageable now. Shooting the first woman (the white

comes from the coop beyond; younger chickens pad confidently into the yard's mist, each flat eye indifferent to anything but breakfast. No foot prints disturb the dirt around the stone steps. Sargeant closes the door and joins his partner at the pantry. Together they scan dusty Mason jars and what is left of last year's canning: tomatoes, green beans, peaches. Slack, they think. August just around the corner and these women have not even washed the jars.

Sargeant turns the fire off under the stock pot. His mother bathed him in a pot no bigger than that. In the Old House, that is, the one in Haven that his grandfather built. The house he lives in now is much bigger and better than ^{the} Old House and ^{fairly} ~~Fairly~~ ^{this town} is resplendent compared to Haven which, divided and contentious, ate itself alive by 1950. That is why they, the New Fathers, are here in the Convent. To make sure it never happens again. That nothing inside or out brings rot into the one all-black town worth the ^{name} ~~name~~. All the others merged with white town^s, or, if they didn't, ^{shrank into tracery} ~~failed completely~~: Langston, Boley, etc. ^{in 1900} ^{in 1930} tk. Five thousand citizens becoming twelve hundred, the five hundred, ^{railroad companies} ~~railroads~~ ^{their} laid track^s elsewhere. Subsistence farming, once the only bounty a large family needed, became, over

on the lines of foundations
recognizable by the way ~~the~~ grass
grew

walls ~~split~~ ^{the} elder trees

~~split~~ ^{floor}
moved aside

growing a
through ~~the~~
collapsed
roof.

~~mass~~
showing become
negatives

of themselves

slope
and

~~the~~
in

behind

broken windows

Vapour
bests in

time and with succeeding generations, just scrap farming as each married son got his bit which had to be broken up into more pieces for his children until finally the owners of the bits and pieces welcomed any offer from a white speculator, so eager were they to get out and try again elsewhere.

A big city, a small town--anywhere that was already built.

^{Ruby}
~~Fairly~~ was the exception and the solution. World War II veterans who loved what Haven, Oklahoma, had been--the idea of it--who carried that idea from Bataan to Guam, from Iwo Jima to Stuttgart took ^{Haven's} ~~the town's~~ oven apart and carried the bricks, the hearthstone and its iron plate one hundred and forty miles west ^{far} ~~of Haven, from~~ from the old unassigned land that used to be Creek Nation. The veterans, known to themselves as the New Fathers, were not the men who built the oven; they were the ones who lovingly took it apart. Sargeant remembers the ceremony

^{oven's}
when the ^{polished} iron lip was re-assembled and re-cemented into place and ^{polishing} ~~the iron lip~~ ^{the worn letters} for all to see. He himself had cleaned off sixty-two years of carbon and animal fat so the words shone ^{brighter} ~~almost as brightly~~ ^{as bright} as they ^{did} ~~must~~ have in 1888 when ^{they were new, when} ~~the Old Fathers built in smack in the~~ center of Haven. Round as a head, deep as desire. Ex-slaves all,

(and it did)
 And if it hurt - pulling
 their grandfathers ~~putting~~ asunder
~~tearing apart~~ what
 they had ~~put together~~ put together -
~~the same~~
 it was brief - quickly dismissed
 the pain ^{mercifully} by

nothing compared to what they had ^{endured} seen
 And what they might become if
 they did not begin anew. Just
~~Exactly~~ ~~the way~~ the old fathers ~~had~~ ^{Ex-slaves} ^{hadn't} they

Could Ex soldiers ^{be} no less purposeful
 than ex-slaves?

Would new fathers ^{be} — than old fathers
 these who

had cut out of the mud (knew enough to seal)
the Old Fathers who founded Haven sealedⁿ their triumphant arrival with
rounds...

this priority. [^] Living in or near their wagons, boiling meal in the open,

cutting sod and mesquite for shelter, they did this first: put most of

their strength into constructing the huge flawlessly designed oven that

both nourished them and monumentalized what they had done. When

it was finished--each pale brick perfectly pitched; the chimney wide,

lofty; the pegs and grill secure; the draft pulling steadily from the

opening in back; the fire door hanging straight, ^u then the iron monger

did his work. From barrel staves and busted axles, from pot handles

^{bent} and [^] nails he fashioned an iron plate five feet by two and set it at the

base of the oven's mouth. It is still not clear where the words came

from. Something he heard, invented, ^{or} something whispered to him

while he slept curled over his tools in a wagon bed. His name was Morgan

and who knew if he could even read ^{the} ~~ten~~ half dozen or so words he forged.

Words that seemed at first to bless them; later to confound them.

The Old Fathers built a roof to shelter the area and people gathered
under it for talks, ^{society} and the comfort of hot game. Later, when

[^] buffalo grass gave way to a nice little town with a road down the middle,

and good houses, one church, a school, a store the citizens still gathered there. They pierced turkeys and whole pigs for the spit; they turned the ribs and rubbed extra salt into sides of ^{cooking} beef. Those were the days of slow cooking when flames were kept so low a twenty pound turkey roasted all night and a side could take two days. Whenever livestock was slaughtered, or when the taste for unsmoked game was high, Haven people brought it to the oven and ^astayed sometimes to fuss and quarrel with the Morgan family about seasonings and the proper test for "done."

They stayed to gossip and drink cool water in the shade of the eaves.

In 1910 there were two churches and the All-Citizens Bank, four rooms in the school house, five stores selling dry goods, feed and foodstuffs-- but the traffic to and from the oven was greater than to all of those.

And any child in earshot was subject to being ordered to fan flies, haul wood, clean the work tables or beat the earth floor with a tamping block.

No Haven family needed more than a simple cook stove as long as the oven was alive, and it always was. Even in 1930 when everything else about the town was dying; when it was clear as daylight that talk of electricity would remain just talk and when gas lines and sewers were Tulsa marvels, the oven ^astayed alive. Running water was not missed

212

682

4750

at the oven because there was a sweet water creek nearby. As a boy Sargeatn had swung hand over hand from the branches of cottonwoods lining it and peered through clear water at the stones below. He ^{heard} remembered stories of the blue dresses and bonnets the men bought for the women with cash from the first harvest. The spectacular arrival of the St. Louis piano, ordered soon as the church floor was laid. He imagined his mother as a ten year old among the other young girls clustered quietly about the piano, sneaking a touch, a keystroke before the deaconness slapped their hands. Their pure sopranos at rehearsal: "He will take care of you...." Which He did, safe to say, until He stopped.

But in 1949 Sargeant, young and newly married, was no fool. Even before he left for the war, Haven people were leaving and those who had not packed were planning to. He stared at his fast shrivelling future and it was not hard to persuade him to join other veterans to try to repeat what the Old Fathers had done in 1888. Lessons had been learned, after all, about how to protect a town. So, like the Old Fathers who knew what came first, the veterans broke up the oven and loaded it into two trucks before they took apart their own beds. Fifteen

families. ^{Before} At first light in the middle of August, fifteen families moved out--²hed not for California as some ¹had done, but deeper into Oklahoma, as far as they could get from the inside rot of the town their grandfathers had built.

"How long?" asked the children from the back seats of the cars.

"How long will it be?"

"Fairly soon," the parents replied. Hour after hour the answer was the same. "Fairly soon. Fairly soon." When they saw the Spavinaw River sliding through the acres their pooled discharge pay had bought, through gentle hills dotted with cardinals, it did seem fairly if not too soon.

What they left behind was a dream town whose once proud streets were weed-choked, monitored now by eight ^{CCN} stubborn people wondering which one of them could get to the Oleander post office where there might be a letter from long gone grandchildren. Where the oven had been small green snakes slept in the sun. Who could have imagined that ^etwnty-five years later a ¹convent would beat out the snakes and become Fairly's only enemy?

1
the depression
the tax man
and the Railroad

Sargeant eyes the kitchen shelves. He moves to the long table and lifts the pitcher of milk. He sniffs first and then, the pistol in his right hand, he uses the left to raise the pitcher to his mouth, taking such long measured swallows the milk is half gone by the time he ^{smells} ~~smells~~ the wintergreen.

On the floor above, Roger and Fleet walk the hall and examine each of the four bedrooms with a name card taped on its door. Grace. Mavis. ^{Seneca} ~~Geneva~~. Divine. They exchange knowing looks when they learn that each woman sleeps not in a bed like normal people, but in a hammock; that except for a narrow desk or end table, there is no additional furniture. ^{in the closets} No clothes, of course, since the women always wore no-fit dirty dresses and nothing you could call shoes. But there are strange things nailed or taped to the walls or propped in a corner. A 1963 calendar, large X's marking various dates; astrology charts; a whip; a high school year book and, for people who swore they were Christians--^{well} Catholics ^{anyway} ~~at that~~ --not a cross of Jesus anywhere. But what alarms the men most are the series of infant booties and shoes ribboned to the hanging ^g cord of a hammock in the last bedroom they enter.

Fleet tells Roger to start looking in the four other bedrooms on the opposite side of the hall. He himself moves closer to the bouquet of baby shoes. Looking for what? More evidence? He isn't sure. Blood? A little toe, maybe, left in a white calfskin shoe? He slides the safety on his gun and joins Roger's search across the hall.

These rooms are normal. Messy--^{the floor of one of them is covered} ~~one~~ piled with food-encrusted dishes, dirty cups and a clothes-covered bed; another sports two rocking chairs full of dolls; a third the debris of a heavy drinker--but normal at least.

Fleet's saliva is bitter and although he knows this place is diseased, he is startled by the whip of pity flicking in his chest. What, he wonders, could do this to women? How can their plain brains think up such things: disgusting sex, deceit and the sly torture of children. Here in wide open spaces ^{orderly} near a quiet community ~~like Fairly~~ ^{Ruby}, tucked away in a manion-- ^{insult} no one to bother or ~~assault~~ them, they managed to call into question the value of almost every woman he ever knew. Here, in this place of all places. Well, ^{they} ~~it was true that Fairly~~ ^{Ruby} had a few problems like every other place in the state, and the country too for that matter. But unique and isolated, ^{it was a town} ~~Fairly~~ was justifiably proud of its people. It neither

Get here
in this place
Just X miles

Away there we
like ~~the~~ woman
to ~~none~~ others
he knew or heard
tall of

In this
place
Fall places
The

the ~~Seal collar~~
his winter coat ^{money} for which
in secret saved ~~money~~
The fight in his m's
eyes when she stroked
of Seal collar

had nor needed a jail. No criminals had ever come from this town. And the one or two who acted up, humiliated their families or threatened ^{Duty} ~~Fairly's~~ the town's view of itself were taken good care of. Certainly there wasn't a slack woman anywhere in town and the reasons were clear. From the beginning its people were free and protected. A sleepless woman could always rise from her bed, wrap a shawl around her shoulders and sit on the steps in the moonlight. And if she felt like it she could walk out the yard and on down the road. No lamp and no fear. A hiss-crackle from the side of the road would never scare her because whatever it was that made the sound, it wasn't something creeping up on her. Nothing for ninety miles around thought she was prey. She could stroll as slowly as she liked, thinking of food preparation, of family things, or lift her eyes to stars and think of nothing at all. Lampless and without fear she could make her way. And if a light shone from a house up a ways and the cry of a colicky baby caught her attention, she might step over to the house and call out softly to the woman inside trying to soothe the baby. The two of them might take turns massaging the infant stomach, rocking, or trying to get a little soda water down.

When the baby quieted they could sit together for a spell, gossiping, chuckling low so as not to wake anybody else.

The woman could decide to go back to her own house then, refreshed and ready to sleep, or she might stay her direction and walk further down the road past other houses, the three churches toward the oven.

The churches she passed differed on a lot of things over the years, but not everything. The oven is one of the things they agree on. Once upon a time it was practically a church itself.

Fleet + danger in women's rooms + a glancing figure.

Harper doesn't smile, although when he and Sharktooth first enter the chapel, he feels like it because it was true: they worshipped idols. Men and women in white robes and capes of blue stood on tiny shelves cut into niches in the wall. Holding a baby, gesturing, their dull faces faking innocence. Candles had obviously burned at their feet and, just like REv. tk said, food had probably been offered as well since there were little bowls on either side of the doorway too.

Whatever the differences among the congregations in ^{Ruby} ~~Fairly~~, they merged solidly on the necessity of this action: Do what you have to.

Neither the Convent nor the women in it can continue.

Once the Convent had been a true if distant neighbor, ^{Surrounded} by five miles of buffalo grass and clover, [§] approached by ~~more of~~ a gravel path ^{rather} than a road. The mansion was there long before ^{Ruby} ~~Fairly~~, and the last boarding Arapajo girls had already gone when the fifteen families arrived. Only the mother superior with her servant lived there while the Bureau or the See or something looked for a buyer. There were none, although Sharktooth said he'd inquired about it. Even talked to the mother superior about what kind of money they were ^{looking} ~~look~~ for. That was ^e ~~tw~~enty years ago when all their dreams were ^{rapidly} ~~quickly~~ coming true. A three mile road had been cleared in ^{Ruby} ~~Fairly~~, lined on one side ^{straight as a die through} in the center of town ^{and} by a paved walk. Seven of the New Fathers had farms of more than three hundred acres, and ^{thee} had five hundred. The Morgan's application for the bank had been approved. And the oven, perfectly re-assembled within the first month of their arrival, was still a pleasant place to congregate.

Harper's father and a man named Ossie had organized a horse race to celebrate its restoration. From half finished house ^s and just seeded

farms people rode in bringing what they had. Out came stored away things and things got up on the spot: guitars and late melon, hazel nuts, rhubarb pies and a mouth organ, a washboard, roast lamb, pepper rice, Red Spot beer and ~~meat~~^{groundhog} meat fried and simmered in ~~gravy~~^{gravy}.

The women tied bright scarves over their hair; the children made themselves hats of wild poppies and river vine. Ossie had a two-year old; X an auburn mare, both fast and pretty as brides. The other horses were simply company: Jessie's Tk, Miss X's ancient featherweight, all four of Nathan's plough horses and a half broke-in pony that grazed the creek bank but that nobody claimed.

The riders quarreled so long over saddle or bare back the mothers of nursing babies told them to mount or changes roles. The men argued handicaps and placed dollar bets with abandon. When the gun went off only three horses lept forward. The rest reared or tried to cut sideways over lumber stacked near unfini^{sh}ed homes. ~~As~~^{When} the race finally got underway, the women yelled from the ^{road}side while thier children shrieked and danced with delight. The pony ~~got to the~~^{ed} finish first, but since it lost its rider two furlongs out, the winner was the auburn mare. The little girl with the most poppies on her head was chosen

to present the first place ribbon hung with Ossie's purple heart. The winner was twelve years old then and grinning as though he'd won the Kentucky Derby. Now he was somewhere down in the cellar of a Convent watching out for awful women.

When they came, one by one, it was obvious they were not real nuns, no, but novices, they thought, or lay workers. Nobody knew, but it wasn't important to know because all of them in their turn, like the mother superior and the servant who used to, still sold honey, good bread and the hottest peppers in the world. For a pricey price you could buy ^{either} the ~~whole~~ purple black pepper ^s or a relish made from ^{them} it. Either took the cake for pure burning power. The relish lasted years with proper attention, and though many customers tried planting the seeds, the pepper grew nowhere outside the Convent's garden.

Strag^gle neighbors they were, but harmless. More than harmless, helpful even on occasion. They took people in--lost folk or folks who needed a rest. Guests reported kindness, profound silence and very good food. But now everybody knew it was all a lie, a front, a carefully planned disguise for what was really going on. ONce the emergency was plain, representatives from all thre^e churches met at the oven

because they couldn't agree on which if any church should host a meeting to decide on what to do about the Convent.

It was a secret meeting, but the rumors had been whispered for more than a year. Outrages that had been accumulating all along took shape as evidence. A mother was knocked down the stairs by her cold-eyed son. Three damaged infants born in one family. Daughters refused to get out of bed. Brides disappeared on their honeymoons. Two brothers shot each other dead on New Year's Eve. Trips to Middleton for vd shots increasingly common. And what went on at the oven was not to be believed. So when nine of the New Fathers decided to meet there, they had to run everybody off the place with shotguns before they could sit in the beams of their flashlights to take matters into their own hands. The proof they had been collecting ^{SINCE} ~~since~~ the spring could not be denied: the one thing that connected all these catastrophes was the Convent.

Harper and Sharktooth both were at the meeting and waved flashlights over the worn down words on the oven's iron lip:

THE FURROW OF HIS BROW

That much was clear. What was less so were the missing words, or,

(according to some) the ^{one} word, that began the original complete sentence.

The letters had broken off and ~~had~~ been lost either when the oven was

disassembled or on the journey west. The oldest woman in ^{Ruby} Fairly said

Fleet's mother-in-law, said that when she was a girl in Haven, she had

traced the whole sentence with her finger, and she knew from ^{bore finger (finger tip)} memory

that the sentence was:

BEWARE THE FURROW OF HIS BROW

For a few years there was no argument about her recollection.

Then, in 1955 someone said the sentence was actually:

BE THE FURROW OF HIS BROW

Ten years later another revelation was insisted upon. There had never been the letter B at the beginning and the W was in the wrong place. The true sentence was:

WE ARE THE FURROW OF HIS BROW

Harper + dust desize in chapel (dry fonts - gum wrapper in one)
stick of gum

The Morgan brothers were once identical. Although

they are twins, ^{now} their wives are more alike than they are. One,

Deek MOrgan, is tough, loud and smokes Te Amo cigars. The other

MOrgan hides his face when he prays. But both have money and both

are as singleminded now as they were in 1942 when they enlisted together.
^{at a locked door leading down to the cellar steps}

^{there} They ^{have known} battles in Berlin where arms flew off like branches

in a ^{windstorm} tornado. They ^{were} born to a man who knew ^{earlier} other battles. They

built ^{Polly} ~~Fairly~~ on this knowing, nurtured ^{it} her from the beginning when

isolation was not always protection. When lost or aimless strangers did

not just drive through hardly glancing at a sleepy town with three churches

within one hundred feet of each other but nothing to serve a traveler:

no diner, no police, no gas station, no public phone, no movie house,

no hospital. Sometimes, if they were young and drunk or old and sober,

the strangers might spot three or four colored girls walk-dawdling along

the side of the road. Walking a few yards, stopping as their talk required;

skipping on, stopping to laugh or slap ^{another's} an arm in play. The men get

interested in them, perhaps. Three cars, say a '55 Buick, green with

cream colored interior, license number 085 B; a '39 Chevvy, black, cracked

rear window, and the '53 Oldsmobile with Arkansas plates. The drivers

slow down, put their heads out the windows and holler over the fenders.

looked
down

There,

Then \equiv they were looking for
~~an exit~~ ^{an} ~~a way~~ out of ~~boredom~~

~~an exit~~ - | a ~~way to~~ break,

away from a life where all was owed, nothing
owned. Now they want in. Then they had ^{in the 40's}
nothing to lose. Now everything needs their
protection. ~~if it has~~ From the beginning when the town
was founded they knew isolation did not guarantee
safety. ~~it was~~ ^{need} ~~the~~ strong men

Men, strong and X were needed when

Their eyes crinkled in mischief they drive around the girls making U
turns and K's, churning up lawn in front of the houses, ^{flushing cats} ~~dust~~ in front
of Ace's Grocery Store. Circling. The girls' eyes freeze as they back
into one another. Then, one at a time, the ^{NEW} Fathers come out of the
houses, the store, the back yards, off the scaffold of the bank, out
of the barber shop. One of the passengers has opened the front of

his trousers and hung himself out the window to scare the girls. The
girls ^{hearts stand up and they can not close their eyes fast enough so they jerk their heads aside} ~~are scared~~, But a few of the Fathers look at it and, in spite of
themselves, smile ^{Smile and in spite of themselves} reluctantly because they know that ~~now~~ this man,
till his final illness, will do as much serious damage to colored folks
as he can.

More men come out, and more. Their guns are not pointing at
anything, just held slackly against their thighs. Twenty men, now.;
twenty-five. Circling the circling cars. Seventeen miles from the nearest
O for operator and ninety from the nearest badge. *

Now Deek, the leader ^{is everything} ~~as always~~, smashes the cellar door with the
butt of his rifle. The other Morgan waits a few feet back with K.D.,
their nephew. All three descend the steps ready and excited to know.

* If the day had been dry the dust ^{thrown up by [spinning behind]} of the tires would have
sprayed ~~by them~~ ^{there was} spinned. As it was not, just a little gravel
and discolored them all. Kicking ~~behind~~ ^{up} ~~up~~ ^{is the breeze} their wheels

brutal
gesture

mild

both mild and military

militant gesture
vulnerable

They are not disappointed. What they see is the devil's bedroom,
bathroom and his nasty play pen.

tk tk tk

Track. That's all K.D. could think of. Five hundred yard dashers
or even the ~~long~~³ mile runners. The heads of two of them are thrown
back as far as their necks will allow; fists tight as their arms pump
and stretch for distance. ONE has her hairy head down, butting air
and time wide open, one hand reaching for a winner's wire nowhere
in her future. Their mouths are open, pulling in breath, giving up
none. The legs of all are off the ground, split wide above the clover.

They are like panicked doe leaping blindly toward a sun that has
finih²sed burning off the mist and now pours its holy oil over the dark
skin of its prey.

("He's wonderful. So good....")
God at their side, right?
^ The men take aim.