



## "DuPres and nephew"

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DuPres and nephew to the famous Juvenal DuPres, was her first choice. Like the Morgans and Blackhorses they were <sup>pleased</sup> proud to be descendents of men who had governed in state houses, but unlike them they were <sup>prouder of earlier generations (insert)</sup> more keenly pleased by righteousness. They did not always know what it was, but they spent a lot of time trying to find out. <sup>Long before Juvenal's time, before</sup> Supper conversation focussed on the problems each member was having, how each and all could handle or help. And always the turn was on the morality of a deed, the clarity of motives, <sup>what</sup> the benefit to His glory and His trust. <sup>None liked or approved of the C. women</sup> The actions of Brood and Apollo had stunned <sup>but that was beside the point and the point was righteousness.</sup> and outraged them; Wisdom Poole was brother to their daughter-in-law and in his <sup>sacrilegious</sup> presence in a group intent on hurting women--for whatever reason--they would quickly see the monster's handiwork. And so they did. When Lone told them all she had heard and what she knew, Pious wasted no time. He instructed his wife Melinda to get over to the Beauchamps place; tell Ren and Luther to meet him. He himself would get to Deed Sands and Aaron Poole. Melinda said they ought to notify Dovey but they could not agree on how to do that if Steward was there. Lone didn't know if they had already started for the convent or were waiting for sunrise but said she would risk it and inform Dovey who could, if she wanted to, let Soane know what was

going on. served more than deterioration, intimidation or comfort. They

were meant. The men separate?

tk Women make bread; men leave for convent; vegetable chopping;

The three women in the kitchen were silent. A pause. And then

Sunlight was yearning for brilliance when the men arrived. The stone-washed blue of the sky was hard to break but by the time the men had parked behind shin oak and were starting for the Convent the sun had cracked through. Glorious blue. The water of the night rose as mist from puddles and sodden crevices in the road's shoulder. When they reached the Convent, they avoided gravel crunch by walking through tall grass and occasional rainbows to the front door. The claws, perhaps, snatched Steward over the top. Black and cracked they flanked the steps. Steward raised his rifle and shot open a door that had never been locked or even used in years. Sunlight followed him in when the door slanted inward on its hinges. ~~And~~ <sup>thereon</sup> the walls of the alcove, emerging from flaking paint, sexualized infants played with one another. A woman appeared and all he needed to see were her sensual appraising eyes to pull the trigger again. The other men were startled but not deterred from stepping over her and waiting for Deek's orders. Fondling their weapons they <sup>called</sup> remembered



Energized(?) by the dance, the  
women returned to the house, ~~to~~ some  
to nap others to prepare for tomorrow  
X mixed dough and set the loaves to  
rise on the stove hood.

that guns served more than decoration, intimidation or comfort. They were meant. The men separate.

The three women in the kitchen heard a shot. A pause. another shot. Cautiously they look<sup>ed</sup> through the swinging door. Light from the slanted door ~~let them see~~<sup>to</sup> shadows of armed men looming<sup>ed</sup> into the hallway. ~~They~~<sup>The women</sup> raced into the game room and closed the door seconds before the men positioned themselves in the hall. ~~Footsteps passed~~<sup>They heard</sup> and entered the kitchen they had just left. No windows in the game room--the women were trapped and knew it. Minutes passed. Arnold and Jeff Fleetwood leaving the kitchen, noticed, then opened the game room door. An alabaster ashtry slammed into Arnold's temple, exhilarating the women<sup>a</sup> wielding it. She continued to smash until he was down on all fours. ~~Taken off guard, Jeff~~<sup>While, Jeff</sup> aimed his gun a tick too late. It flew from his hand when a cue stick cracked his wrist and then, on ~~its~~<sup>its</sup> upswing, rammed into his jaw. He had raised his arm first for protection then to snatch the point of the cue when ~~the frame of~~<sup>'s frame</sup> St. Elizabeth of Sienna broke over his head.

The women ran into the hall, but froze when they saw two figures exit the chapel. <sup>As</sup> They raced back to the kitchen, Harper and



The stock that drenched his face  
was so hot he couldn't yell

Menu<sup>more</sup> close behind. Harper grabbed the waist and arm of one. She  
was a handful and he did not see the skillet that swung into his skull.  
He fell. Menu<sup>struggling to hold</sup>, ~~hooking~~ the wrists of another, turned when his father  
went down <sup>and when he did</sup> not stock <sup>drenched</sup> washed over his face so quickly  
he couldn't yell. <sup>while</sup> When he dropped to one knee <sup>hard</sup> a woman reached for  
his gun spinning on the floor. He yanked her left ankle. She kicked at  
his head with her right foot. Behind him a women lifted a kitchen  
knife and brought it down <sup>shoulder</sup> into his shoulder so deep in the bone she  
could not remove it. She left it there and escaped into the yard with  
the other two.

Descending the stairs Wisdom Poole and Sargeant Person saw no  
one. They entered the school room where light poured through the  
windows. They searched behind the desks pushed to the wall even  
though it was clear nobody was small enough to hide there.

Down below Deek, Steward and K.D. observed in long, slow  
beams of flashlight perversions and violence beyond imagination. Evil  
lovingly drawn carpeted the stone floor. K.D. fingered his palm cross.  
Deek tapped his shirt pocket where sunglasses were tucked. He had  
thought he might use them for other purposes, but he wondered if he  
needed them now to shield from his sight a sea of depravity

beckoning below. None dared step onto it. More than justified in their expectations, they turned back and climbed the stairs. The schoolroom door was wide open; Sargent and Wisdom motioned for them to enter. Bunched at the windows, all five understood: the women were not hiding. They were loose.

Shortly after the men left Sargeant's place, the citizens of Ruby arrived at the Oven. The rain had stopped. The trash barrel swirled with debris. The stream had crested but didn't overflow its banks. Instead it ran underground. Where the rain had cascaded off the Oven's head it met glistening mud speckled with grout flakes washed away from bricks. The Oven shifts<sup>ed</sup> on one side as its concrete base sank into the soaked earth. The impacted ground on which it rests<sup>ed</sup> can no longer support its weight. In trucks and cars the citizens go to meet the men.