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## Cleaning House

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CLEANING HOUSE

There is a moment in her life when my Aunt curses and rants in the name of God, uses her hands and knees to abandon prayer, and turns to scrubbing boards for salvation. My Uncle, her husband, covetous fool that he was, has been taking up with Ms. Karen, a married woman who lives in the cul-de-sac just two streets away. Karen has watched my Aunt's children, brought her paper to the door, pledged friendship, fine print in hand. After she has entered my Uncle fiercely, sliced through his stomach with a blunt kitchen knife, we find my Aunt, clutching a kitchen sponge and old bucket, on her knees, scrubbing the carpet like she is bringing sandpaper to rough wood. *There's blood on the floor*, she says, and doesn't rise, though we explain the police are waiting and the children have been loaded into a safe woman's car. *I been to her house*, she says, the brillo from the sponge cutting into her hands, her blood mixing with his blood, the bleach from the bucketwater clearing her knuckles of meat. *She keeps a nasty house and, Lord knows*, she says, leaning closer to the faded stain until her lips nearly touch the ground, *no woman should live that way*.