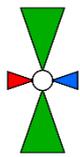


1492 FC

bncdoc.id	GUK
bncdoc.author	Roberts, Michele
bncdoc.year	1993
bncdoc.title	Daughters of the house.
bncdoc.info	Daughters of the house. Sample containing about 43324 words from a book (domain: imaginative)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_fict_prose

<1492/c>	stood close together on the wooden floor. Carpet and bits of furniture were gone. Sunlight fell across the windowsill, on to their feet. There was a closed smell. Stuffiness and dust. My parents hid the Jews in their apple loft for two months, Baptiste said: then when the Germans found them they locked them up in here. On the night before they took them out to be shot. They did it on purpose, Maman says. To make people think someone in the Martin family was the informer. They chose this room because it's the nearest the backstairs. They weren't going to have Jews using the front ones. Somewhere a massive pendulum swung to and fro. It counted the minutes before the dawn. There was no escape from it. So heavy it would crush you as it pushed from side to side. It was the blood in Léonie's chest. Her heart pumped so strongly she felt she'd burst. There was a heartbeat in her neck, in her head, on her tongue. The Jews, the Jews, she said: didn't they have names then? Some foreign name, Baptiste said: Maman told it me but I can't remember. She said she always used their false name anyway, never their real one. They weren't from round here. They were refugees from Rouen. He struck a heroic attitude. Like one of the soldiers on the war memorial rallying La République with fixed bayonets. Those pigs of Germans shot my father. Vive la France! Léonie pointed her toe and wrote an imaginary signature in the dust. Then she looked at Baptiste. Her blood was slowing down, but her head still felt strange. Full of something thick. Dizzy with the memory of bad dreams. Did they keep your father in here too? she asked: before he was shot? Baptiste nodded. You know what, he said in a rush: at the funeral the Monday before last, they buried my father and the Jews all together in the same grave in the cemetery, they couldn't tell whose bones were whose. He sounded ashamed. Monsieur le Curé said the sooner we buried them properly the better, he's not going to tell anyone. So no one can make a fuss. Jews might if they found out. So we're just going to have a plain headstone, with my father's names and dates. Monsieur le Curé said he'd pay for it. Léonie frowned. Something was wrong with this rattled-off speech. Too much of it, perhaps. A pile of leftover words. Scraps of words,
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	
	<p>old bones of words</p> <p>. Like the sawed bloodied pieces of shin and gristle in the butcher's, shoved into a sacking bag and taken home to feed the dogs. That's what a grave was: a dump for torn flesh, broken bones. The Jews were back in the ground again. Mixed up more than ever before. She wanted to laugh. She felt sick. She leaned on the handle of the door. Coldness of brass, that was solid, refreshing. Grown-ups' secrets. She was sick of them. She shouldn't have to be bothered. She was only a girl, she was too young. I'll show you how to juggle if you like, she told Baptiste: come downstairs and we'll get some potatoes off Victorine and I'll show you how to juggle. Magic tricks. To make things vanish you threw them in the air then cooked and ate them. You could do it with bones too. Léonie left the Jews behind her in the room. She closed the door on them. They could not escape, but she could. She was a mongrel, only half-French, but she wasn't Jewish. She had a larder with baskets of</p>

potatoes, she would not starve, she would not burn. Victorine was in the kitchen, ripping the silvery-blue skin off mackerel. The air was warm with the scent of hot fish stock, bouquet garni. The biscuit tin supported the open recipe book. Where's Thérèse? Victorine cried out as soon as she saw them: that wretched child, I knew it would be hopeless letting her help, it's too much, I'll never be done in time. She swivelled her eyes to the potatoes Léonie was fetching from their earthy resting-place on the larder floor. Good idea. You get on with them. Baptiste, run and ask your mother to come and give me a hand, would you? Léonie felt comfortable again. Back with what she knew. She watched Victorine lay the cooling fillets one by one on a flat dish. The bones lifted off easily, a spiky white all-in-one. Victorine tossed them into the plastic waste bowl that stood by the side of the sink. She ladled a little of the court bouillon over the fat bits of mackerel. Peppercorns and parsley, a good fish and white wine stink. She threw her ladle down. It clanged against the biscuit tin. What on earth is that box of biscuits doing out at this time of day? Victorine shouted: go on, put it away will you? Hurry up. Then come back and we'll make a