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ALDEBARAN
EDITORIAL PROCEDURE

The board of ALDEBARAN of Roger Williams College accepts submissions from all students, faculty members, and also from outside contributors who enclose a return address. Submissions are separated and classified as "prose," "poetry," or "art" and then given to a group of readers according to classification. The readers criticize all submissions from a reprint of the material which excludes the author's name. The criticisms and recommendations are then given to either the prose or poetry editor, who then meets with his board to discuss the submissions and reach a decision on acceptances and rejections. All of the accepted material is read by the editor-in-chief and discussed by the editors together. In addition, all submissions are reviewed after the magazine deadline, and the final format is then decided upon.

It is the policy of the board that no submissions are returned unless accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Mail with postage due will be refused. Xeroxes and carbons will be returned unread. We would appreciate receiving appropriate notices and publications.

The Editors
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Creator</th>
<th>Title/Note</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillip J. Szenher</td>
<td>Judy: 1960</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VerKuilen Ager</td>
<td>Sunday Ride</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad Day in Winterhaven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terri Mahler</td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren C. Miller</td>
<td>First Love No. 1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Annaldo</td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. C. Morse</td>
<td>The Liberation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Brafman</td>
<td>“She sags so”</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Atwater Lutman</td>
<td>Dark Mesa Trilogy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Lytle</td>
<td>Painting: Delightfully Decadent Dame</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morse</td>
<td>Allen Ginsberg in Providence — A Long Way From the Beats</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddy Alves</td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa DuBois</td>
<td>“Ferlinghetti”</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Montgomery</td>
<td>Amos n Andy Meet George Wallace at Appomattox</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maggie Red Pie</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David DiMauro</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Allen</td>
<td>Drunken Poet</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Britt</td>
<td>Bartok’s Violin</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Annaldo</td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra G. Grossi</td>
<td>Providence: Under the Rafters</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul B. Roth</td>
<td>Casida for Garcia Lorca</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddy Alves</td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucille Andreozzi</td>
<td>For All The Killing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Dupre</td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contributor’s Notes</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Published by DOCS@RWU, 1974
Leaving the highway
And finding music
On the red Buick’s radio,
We slipped into the back seat
To lie down in the arms
Of trees. Your body
Surrendered to music;
Each time I imagined
You were a woman of the world.
Once in winter
You wanted to know
How it would look
If we were ever found
Dead in each other’s arms.
SUNDAY RIDE

After the war with the bats Chicago was blacked out so we tried to drive to my sister’s in Waukegan but the roads were clogged with the giant fallen corpses so much crumpled tarpaper so far as we could see except for the smell About the time we got back downtown the leathery overcast was finally being undercut by the sunset and we could see where the Prudential Building had been clipped off at about the thirtieth floor Before we got home we stopped to pick up an extra box of shotgun shells

SAD DAY IN WINTERHAVEN

From her eyelids somersaulted two glass clowns
A possum had killed itself in a tangle of barbed wire at the corner of the back pasture fence. The animal's underside was ripped open and the bladder exposed. Mr. Risner the owner said, "I've seen Doughboys torn up worse than that possum on barbed wire." He had been in the Great War. He said to Owen Bennet the sharecropper, "You were lucky," but he did not mean it. The army had refused Owen Bennet. Larry the owner's son poked at the dead animal with a dead branch. Larry was seventeen and played halfback. "You leave that dead thing alone," his father ordered. "Nothing is more disgusting than mutilating the dead." Larry flushed and glared at Walter Lee the sharecropper's son, a knobby boy of eleven.

Mr. Risner had picked up the farm cheap because of the Depression. Owen Bennet the sharecropper, a laid-off oil refinery worker from Lone Star, hadn't farmed since he left home at fifteen. Mr. Risner was proud of his farm and was determined to see it a success. Owen Bennet saw the farm as a last chance. He knew how to be bossed.

Mr. Risner wanted his son Larry to learn to appreciate honest labor by doing it. He set Larry to clearing the undergrowth in his woods just beyond the back pasture. The doubleblade ax was bright and shiny. Mr. Risner said to Owen Bennet, "If that boy of yours has nothing better to do, he can help mine." Owen Bennet nodded and smiled sadly at Walter Lee.

Mr. Risner said, "You boys, I won't be out of earshot of the ax."

Owen Bennet held the wires for Mr. Risner to slip between. The two men moved into the corn field. Mr. Risner talked loudly with expansive gestures. Walter Lee held the wire for Larry.

Larry said, "I'll cut them down and you can trim and chop up." They were to clear and get bean poles. Larry took a stance and gripped the ax handle as if he were playing golf. "Don't get where I can see you," he ordered.
Larry chopped very fast, stepping back and motioning Walter Lee in with a sweep of the hand to clear. Walter Lee noticed that Larry left jagged little stumps treacherous to bare feet. "Aren't you supposed to cut them off even with the ground?" Walter Lee asked more in order to have something to say than otherwise.

Larry stepped back, rubbed an arm up his wide forehead and back across his thick black hair, and said, "You take care of your business, and I'll take care of mine."

Walter Lee turned aside and said, "I didn't mean it that way." His nose had tightened as with a cold.

Larry took off his plaid shirt and spread it across a bush. His chest was broad and deep. The muscles of his body showed like squares on a tortoise shell. His skin was golden. "Here," he said, thrusting the ax on Walter Lee, "your turn."

Walter Lee wished he had not said the stumps should be cut off even with the ground. He felt Larry's eyes on him. The young man's eyes were large and dark under heavy straight brows. They glistened scorn. Walter Lee chopped. His aim was bad. When he got through with them, some branches looked chewed off. Others, he couldn't seem to cut through the strip of bark on the underside. All the while he felt Larry's eyes on him.

"You chop like a woman," Larry said. "Give me the ax and go get me some water." He called after Walter Lee, "Bring a dipper with the bucket."

When Walter Lee got back, he noticed Larry had accomplished a great deal and was sweating heavily. His sweat was not like sweat, but maybe dew in the morning sun. Larry wolfed down the water and then took a leak. "And what are you staring at?" he asked the boy, hosing water in his direction. "Get to work."
Walter Lee wished he were alone, but he knew if he were alone, he'd be wishing to be with Larry. He did nothing but blunder in the presence of the owner's son whom he wanted more than anyone else to please. After awhile, Larry inspected what Walter Lee had done and said sarcastically, "Boy, my father's really going to lap that up." Larry's husky voice ran like knuckles down Walter Lee's spine.

Flourishing the bright-bladed ax, Larry threw himself into chopping with renewed vigor. He paused now and then to drink. "Which one of you keeps house, you or your father?" He repeated the question.

"Neither one," Walter Lee muttered.

"Oh, so you have a maid!"

"No, we both do, my father and me."

The sun filled the little clearing. The two worked in the heat silently until Larry asked, "Why the hell don't you take off that long-sleeved shirt?"

"I'm not hot," the boy lied. Walter Lee would rather be strapped than expose his thin potatoe-white ribs plain as a steam radiator to Larry's dark glistening stare.

"Then why's it stuck to you like adhesive tape? Take it off, like I tell you," the young man ordered.

"No," Walter Lee said, backing away. "I'm afraid of catching cold."

Larry laughed loudly. He took off his trousers, threw them over a bush, and worked in his shorts. When he stopped for a drink, he poured a dipper of the water down his chest, exclaiming, "Man, does that feel good." He tossed the last dipperful over Walter Lee who yelled.

"Know anything about girls?" Larry demanded, adding, "Other than screaming like one?"
Walter Lee turned and walked toward the fence.

"— and tattling like one?" the husky voice called after him.

"Tattling?" the boy repeated miserably. He wondered how anyone so princely looking could be so cruel.

"I know what you're going back for — two buckets of water and a towel. Hustle!"

As Walter Lee slipped between the wires, his shirt caught and ripped. He would have been better off shirtless. Skin grows back together. The dead possum attracted flies. The bladder looked like a balloon. When Walter Lee returned with the water, he noticed the bladder had been punctured.

Larry removed shoes, socks, shorts, and poured a bucket of water over his head. He called for the second. Walter Lee had never been so close to anyone who filled the air with music you could feel like from trumpets and drums. The young man leapt about stripping water from his trophy body. And then he rubbed himself dry flourishing and snapping the towel. He shook out his thick black hair in the sun. Walter Lee had never been so close to a person who filled the air like jasmine at sundown. The boy was flooded with a dazed physical wonder as from a fair ground ride. In the sky, a buzzard circled against sailing clouds.

"There, stare your fill," Larry called, turning on the boy and striking an apish pose. "I know what you want," he said, his straight lips ruffling, "but first, you're going to do whatever I say — and without a whimper —" He broke off, grabbed his clothes and jumped behind a tree.

Walter Lee heard the voices of his father and the owner approaching. Walter Lee saw again the calf held down and the red-hot brand applied by the proud owner. He heard the men calling. The owner was red.
Mr. Risner twisted Larry around to face the possum and raised his hand above the young man. "I told you to leave that thing alone. There is nothing lower than mutilating the dead."

Larry tossed back his thick black hair and stared at Walter Lee.

The boy said, "I did it."
THE LIBERATION
from *THE DAVENPORT CODEX*

On the top of the mountain with his feet dangling off the edge of a precipice sits Glen. To himself he says: I have finally climbed this mountain, (even if Neil killed himself on a cycle in Mexico.) A man in the sky and a woman in the river he saw climbing the mountain. On a feathered snake a bird of the ocean flies. The Sailor is swallowing water, the Gypsy air, the Junkie fire. Seeing four horses in the clouds Glen leaps for the pale one. Swallowed by the earth he hears Teexil and Azlitan calling his name. In the limbs of the aspens birds rustle. Impaled by the trunk of a dead tree is Glen. Through the clouds the crows fly screeching. Over the mountain the clouds pass.
She sags so
under her arms
the loose flesh
swings like a hammock.

Her belly once taut
as an elastic loom
is now a bunch of
shredded tendons
that snap and kick
like an unborn babe
with rubber-band legs.

But she pretends her
hair-color is star sapphire
set in an elegant bun,
like the tiers of tierra
and in her dream
She is the crown jewel.
DARK MESA TRILOGY
Parts One and Two

The Dark Mesa waits
standing in its sacred place.
It is eternal.

John Bitter Snow

Sun Dance

Old trails, moccasin wide,
spider up tablelands
Wind Spirit huddles
bruised men and their rifle.
Eagle whistles chatter
sun cracks the clouds.

Father, I come
Mother, I come
Brother, I come
Father, give us back our arrows

Now it has grown.
Lone-tipi.
Earth, buffalo wallows,
grease, wood, sinew,
They are waiting,
deep bowelled,
feathers flaming.
The chill climbs.

I fly with the wild rose
on my head
I fly with the wild rose
on my head
My mouth stuffed with rainbow
My mouth stuffed with rainbow
hesb-ke

Grandfather,
A Voice I am going to send.
Hear me.
I wish to live.
I am poor.
Let good weather come.

I am the one
I am the one
When I moved the earth
When I moved the earth

I want horses.
I will sacrifice.
I will smoke.
All is gone.
I have nothing to eat.
I want horses.

When I moved the earth
When I moved the earth
My children
My children

I will remember
let no enemies surprise me.
Grandfather, I will live,
Grandfather, I will live.

Here it is, I hand it to you
The Earth
The Earth
“A spindly Jewish kid with horn-rimmed glasses and tremendous ears sticking out,” Jack Kerouac wrote upon first meeting Allen Ginsberg.

And there he sat at Rhode Island College, middle-aged fat curling over his jeans, hair receding still, eyes more hollow, more lined, the same man who once “put his puny shoulder to the wheel” and changed the America I had always known.

Braving a brisk wind and a typical rainy Providence night, I had made my pilgrimage with great expectations. For the first hour of gazing upon his round, bearded, beaked face, I did not see him as he was. Instead I saw the early Ginsberg, the naive, repressed intellectual who taught philosophy and poetry to Neal Cassady, then fell madly in love with him. I saw the bright-eyed Ginsberg posing on the deck of a freighter to Africa, his initiation into the outside world. I saw the ambitious Ginsberg running around trying to get his friend Kerouac’s first novel published. I saw the Ginsberg who did a million things that I can only dream of doing.

And then I woke up and realized what was happening. In a deep baritone voice, Ginsberg was trying to sing a childish ditty, “Merrily, Merrily to Welcome in the Year,” to the tune of, “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” It was horrifying. The highlight, using the term loosely, was “Merrily, merrily Nixon goes to hell/ Merrily, merrily John Mitchell drunk as well.”

This sugary piece followed on the heels of Hindu and Tibetan chanting, which had been carried off with singular self-congratulation and accompaniment of a monotonously grinding sound from his harmonium. Almost expectedly, a “Keep on Truckin’” sign graced the instrument. Things became more laughable when Ginsberg referred to himself and his guitar-playing partner, Jay Bolotin of Providence, as “we musicians.”
As the evening wore on, I came to realize that Ginsberg offers no answers, no direction. He seems to mirror every fear and every possibility we have, yet the effect is terrifying. He is a man who has been browbeaten by every intellectual movement and fad for the past several decades, and he looks it. He is brilliantly perceptive at times, pathetically superficial at others, and almost always infuriating to somebody.

During his “reading and chanting,” as it was billed, he somehow managed to please political radicals with denunciations of Nixon and Rockefeller, titillate gay libbers with his customary avowal of homosexuality, surprise Jesus freaks with lavish praise of the so-called Son of God, reinforce the superiority of Buddhists by sprinkling in words such as dharma and satsang (that we’re all supposed to know these days), and placate nostalgic Beats with references to Kerouac, Cassidy, and Gregory Corso.

After putting everyone, save the most self-conscious, to sleep with his interminably long, and often obnoxious chants, Ginsberg must have felt the coast was clear to unveil some of his new poems. To set the stage, and maybe prove there was only one way to go and that was up, he offered tidbits of the obscenity for which he is famous with prudes. In “Stay Away, Stay Away,” he said, “Stay away from fucking broomsticks/ You’ll only get syphilis.” He followed this cute observation with “Stay away from fourteen year old boys/ Fuck ‘em once, they call it quits.”

While the crowd of about 100 people maintained stoic, I’ve-heard-this-all-before expressions, Ginsberg added, “Stay away from Nixon/ He’ll get you all in jail/ He’ll pinch you and push you/ He’ll make your vision fail.” At this point I wondered why I didn’t stay home and catch “Toma” on the tube. Certainly, it would have been as edi-
fying. And here I had come with the hope of sharing some wine and solving the riddle of the universe with him.

But I'm being too harsh, too vindictive at being disappointed. Ginsberg's Rockefeller put-down was well-done. Entitled “A Curse and Exorcism,” the poem pictured Nelson Rockefeller on his death-bed, “worse off than lonely, empty charwoman.” “Remember the pain, suffering you cause others, Matter-head . . . you worship petroleum, banks, monopolies with your brothers . . . no guards protect you, no Presidents protect you, you die blind . . . Energy-junkie, be reborn in your image.”

The poem that moved me the most had to do with imagining a zephyr blowing around the world from the Grand Tetons, where Ginsberg spent several months last summer involved in a meditation society. The title escapes me, as do the individual lines, since I was too busy being overwhelmed to write them down. Several images were of psilocybin mushrooms growing wild in Australia, opium smokers in India, and windmills turning century after century in Europe.

Another touching poem, at least from the standpoint of idea, had to do with Nixon's nightmarish bombing of Cambodia. For example, “When Jesus woke up this morning, Cambodia was bombed again/ When Yahweh woke up this morning, Cambodia was bombed again/ When Buddha woke up this morning, Cambodia was bombed again.”

The loudest applause of the evening, coming perhaps out of respect, came when Ginsberg said, “Everybody's a little bit of a homosexual/ Everybody's born a little bit fairy . . . If you're in trouble and you don't like your double/ Why don't you come and
In “Ah,” meant as a universal sigh for matters good and bad, Ginsberg showed he is just as prone to nostalgia as the rest of us. “Ah, for the garden . . . Ah, to rejoice again . . . Ah, for our loves dead and gone . . . Ah, for miseries that we’ve caused . . . Ah, to all soles . . . Ah, to the great robot state above us that dominates our news . . . Ah, for the hell we have made in America/ Ah, for the heaven we see around us.”

After more poems, both read and chanted (one disaster of which resembled “Twas the Night Before Christmas” put to song), and Eastern mantras, Ginsberg paused to gauge his audience’s reaction. “Do you want me to continue?” he asked. Pleased to see most heads nod in the affirmative, he said, “I can go on for hours, you know.” I liked that. He flashed a timeless smile, perhaps the same one he flashed to Cassady when he traveled to see him in Denver for the first time, and lived in his basement writing the “Denver Doldrums” poems.

When the three-hour long evening ended, Ginsberg slowly lifted his aging legs from a yoga position, as spectators religiously approached and embraced him. But somehow I felt they were hugging a dream more than a man. Being helplessly shy, I could only watch distantly from a corner and wonder.
Looking for food and my father I passed my third birthday in a deserted kitchen scanning cookbooks written by men.

Ferlinghetti

wouldn’t mind me tearing out a page from his book

Back Roads to far Places.

Such an appropriate page it was and I filled it in with my hand back in the book.

Only I’ve looked further past a kitchen and cookbooks.

So far far beyond my own third birthday that now I am half starved, a semi-orphan because of it.
AMOS n ANDY MEET GEORGE WALLACE AT APPOMATTOX

You hafta stop all this crap
said Amos
and then Andy took out his harmonica
and played America, The Beautiful.
George Wallace turned his white sheets
and hood in
and replaced them with bell-bottoms
and was able to dance again.
Bullets went through King
and through Bobby
and through Abraham.
Even George Lincoln Rockwell
got it.
But with Wallace crippled
his dancing was only in his dreams
and yes
bell-bottoms are much nicer
than white sheets coming over a hill
and all that cross-burning.
MAGGIE RED PIE

Always liking me to sniff
up yer dress.
You carry flowers at all hours
even dance like it’s the last day
on Earth
and maybe you’re
right.
Theme

Andante Moderato

P legato

David R. DiMauro

RHOJE ISLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
DRUNKEN POET

for Lisa

Tonight, a crystal
haze creeps in, again
you wander away
from me, cursive,
into barroom smoke.

Already the kilted
farmer tills your
determined brow:
fertile, virgin rows
sown with seed
or salt ...

A flash: rows erode,
wash upstream,
returning to your
swirling, amnesic
source, and I,

I trickle back
like so many birds,
pecking
the trail of the plow.
BARTOK'S VIOLIN

A stone sings

... as two lips break apart
the drinker of the lip is a piano
playing a song against the skin
of the other Lover

Hands reach
into the granite's black eyes
and become birds that splash
in the side of a raindrop
rolling on a lime

The lime
tells of a violin
that falls from moss tangled eyelashes
The violin once was the pulse
that ran across the fingertips
of two lovers
One lover
became a black stone
buried in roots
the other
a raindrop
drank by a bluebird

A star
inside a violin's string;
a red flicker
in the string's darkness
turns to pale blue
in nothingness
... rock flies away
a brown yellow cat
emerges from a leaf
to walk on the hands
of an old man
in a dark bedroom

rain falls against the earth

arms load
the cut tree's body
into wagons

A voice flies
from the purple spot on a fern
a purple voice
windblown voice
a speck of green
on a blue hand

the lips drink a faint body
from the lake
they drink leaves
and hyacinths;
a dark spot in leaf's river
they fly in caterpillar's awakened wings
PROVIDENCE: UNDER THE RAFTERS

On John Street
Our windows are like skylights shifting
morning to late afternoon: The carpenters
have been here again all day.
-- All the torn down plaster,
the damned tools, the grit and dust.

In the city we make love in the loft;
The pigeons cuckoo-cuckoo in the eaves and
scratch their feet on the rain-pipes.

You make love with me.

It is late.
We sleep. Our chests thrust
rhythm, rest as
we regulate our agony during these hours.

One of us turns in our sleep.

I reach for you.
The pigeons comment,
take advantage of my quaking voice, and then,
our quaking voices.
CASIDA FOR GARCIA LORCA

Barely naked
splashing green in a water drop
above a dawn wave
they woke you while lifting
your green skirts
of foam
over barefooted waves
Federico
they woke you
as a crucifying glance
of sea light
pinned the sights
of their leveled rifles
on the fleeing
iguanas
of your green heart
FOR ALL THE KILLING

Damn her and that candle. Day and night. Lighting it like a torch. Mumbling prayers while peppers roast in the oven turning a moist red until they burst. “Our Father, Holy Flesh into flesh until death and then stillness.” For twenty five years my mother has been roasting under damp sheets. Alone. Now she is chanting incessantly.

“It was my flesh and I, inside me, and I chose to kill. Not you. Me. Flesh inside me, so shut up.” I said amid all her praying.

She never looked up. The room smelled of ointments and dead flowers.

“I think I’d like a handful of peppers.” Her voice was growing out of a whisper. “Yes, I would. Hurry!” Now she wasn’t kneeling but standing in the doorway, her hair pulled into a tight gray bun, her face flushed.

I followed the light into the cellar to the crates filled with cabbages and figs and dried parsley. Today she wanted peppers. She had been talking about them since breakfast, chattering endlessly in a feverish voice, wishing to taste, to bake and broil all soft sweet things, today. I scooped an armful into my apron and folded it against my belly. Then I started up the stairs. “Leave me alone!” I shouted.

If the moon is as round as a platter, that fullness is a boy. A son!

I dropped my apronful in front of her cutting board. She picked up her knife and began to slice.

“No, no, I told you no meat today. Just the fruits and vegetables
that melt into warm honey. No meat. Please! For the Madonna’s sake.”
She cut the peppers in half, resting them in neat rows like a string of
half moons.

“We’ll eat them plain.”

“Yes. All right.”

A broken circle, when hands don’t touch, that’s a girl. Ah, your
hips are full. You will carry nicely. Sympatico. You are as ripe as
plums. Eat!

“Is the candle still burning?” She turned quickly, dropping her
knife.

“Yes, yes.” I rested my hand on her shoulder. She was drenched
with sweat.

“For the soul of my baby, my Anna.” She peered into the bed­
room, squinting her eyes to see the flame.

“Will you pray tomorrow? Yes? For your sister?” She began
slicing again. “Ah, but when your baby comes, she will be beautiful.
Ay?”

If you touch the plastic fruit that is waxed and hollow, your
baby will be born dead. Now eat the plums, the strawberries. Eat!

I kept watching her; her neck was bent; her arms fell from her
body like thick axes chopping. Yet she wasn’t as full and hard as the
day she caught me up and held my squirming body in a tangle of arms,
lifting me higher, pushing me close. Very close. Until my lips
touched. Until she made me kiss Anna’s thin face.
"I need more light — and heat. Push up the heat. She was poking me with her elbow.

I left the table and began to close the windows. The kitchen was brimming with heat—a stiff, smoky heat.

"More light. Hurry!" She worked faster, mixing bread and eggs and cheese to make a stuffing.

"I'll turn on all the lights this time."

"No, no just the candle. Wait! Bring the candle into the kitchen."

No, don't look. Bless yourself. Quickly. Don't look at their tails or eyes or teeth. And... Oh never! Don't touch your face for your fingers will mark the skin of the unborn with what you have seen.

I lifted the candle from her bureau and carried it through the narrow hall into the kitchen. She was stooped over, pressing and salting, with a towel knotted around her hair, looped over her ears like a coarse white turban.

"Ah, I can see. Better. Much better." She grabbed my wrist, her fingers spreading like wire around my hand. "Help me cut. Hurry!"

I pulled the knife from her hand and made slow deep strokes.

"Your sister, she was pretty. Wasn't she? Eh?"

"She was fragile." Breaking apart inside you even before she was
born. “She . . .”

“Ah, your baby will be a girl and we will call her Anna. Will you pray?”

She was stretching out her hands. Her face twisted; her lips moved slowly. I turned away.

But I remember when her belly was full, pulled taut as a leather skin.

Her legs pushing forward through the kitchen. I followed her, tugging at her skirts, clinging to her apron. My fingers thick with jelly running onto her dress. She was leaving me.

I watched her push through the kitchen — from the sink to the stove — her hands dripping with water. I thought she would explode with the ripeness. She talked of it with the women. On the porch. In the slow summer afternoons. While meat simmered in the pans and vegetables bubbled and they laughed sipping lemonade and . . .

Then all the shades were drawn and papa was leading me from the car into a room cluttered with flowers and stale smells and it was hot . . .

“She was so pretty and pink.” Pulling the knife from my hands. “Easy. Go easy! Watch what you’re doing.”

I raised my finger to my lips and sucked out a trickle of blood.

“But your baby will be even prettier. Sympatico. Chubby. Here, put them in the oven.”
I took the tray of peppers from her hands and walked toward the stove. I heard the steam gurgling in the radiators, pushing out hard and fast like hot frantic breath, I slid the tray into the oven, then slammed the door.

"Now stop it," I trembled. "It was my flesh, not yours. Yours is dead. Dead! Dead like mine. In the ground! Do you hear?"

"She'll have eyes like your sister's -- big and gray. Eyes like water."

She sank into a chair and began to peel away the soaked towel. Her hair fell like steel brushes about her neck, her face wrinkled into shadows around her eyes and mouth.

She had pulled me from the yard and held me over that small burning face. Always sweating. Breathing shallow. And then when it was finished, when the sweating had stopped, made me come out from my room and that flesh that felt like stone. And then the smell of food rotting, turning old and soft in the cellar. All those dark coats and heavy voices crowding me and her, saying that it was in her, and it was in Anna's blood to die, that she was frail in her mother's stomach from the moment of conception.

"Come on eat. You look thin." Handing me a chunk of bread. "For your baby. Come on."

The bread tasted damp like yeast rising. Growing. But it was flat. My stomach. It had to be. It was done and I was here. Inside crumbling walls. Me and her and chairs and tables and trunks filled with heavy shawls and photographs wrinkled and curling. A house crammed with vases and pots whose great green plants grew up and out over ceramics rims, then shrivelled into a dryness in all the heat and dust and plastics. Me and her. And her bed always unmade, un-
raveling like a sweaty towel. And a chanting in the middle of the night. Endlessly.

There was never any chill, any cold; just windows latched and covered with muslin. Her winter drapes, that’s what she called them, for each of the twenty five years she’d been hanging them as soon as there was the first draft, as soon as she felt the first gust of wind slicing. Thick muslin smelling worn and infectious.

“The wine, drink the wine. Your baby will be strong. Eat the bread. The wine. Come and eat.” Motioning me to the table. Her hands moving fast, tilting a large straw bottle. Tonight it was burgundy. “Maybe a son – yes?” She smiled.

Just a slow, steamy roasting under damp sheets with one small candle burning incessantly and the room filled with smells I could see and touch.

*Eat honey and the child will have a voice soft and clear; drink milk and her skin will be white and smooth; drink wine and she’ll be strong.*

“The candle, is it here? Is it?” She sprang forward, throwing her hands into the air.

“Yes, it’s here.”

She slid into her chair, her body falling loosely. She was almost asleep. “She will look like your sister – yes?” Her eyelids were heavy, barely shut.

Cleaning and cutting the chicken, boiling and frying and seasoning the heart and liver and blood. Waiting and watching and stirring inside all the steam. Eating and washing it down with wine. There
were always rags in her hair to catch the sweat. I had to cut it loose before the flesh like stone and all the swelling and blood and chanting, before . . .

How her ankles puffed until she ached for rest from all the slicing and chopping. The house was cluttered with squealing voices, before the slow roasting death and all the ointments when papa left her to the shaded window and the one red candle she lights, before her hands became chafed from a thousand different animal bloods and all that cleaning. Before the muslin drapes . . .

She was moving her head, nodding forward. “The candle for Anna, will you pray?”

“Yes, yes.” I stretched out my hands. “I pray for all the killing and all the . . . ”

“Slowly, drink slowly.” She snatched at my arm. “The baby! For the soul of your sister, drink slow!” She grabbed the glass from my fingers and slammed it onto the table so that the wine shook up and down spilling over my fingers.

“I said it was mine, do you hear! Mine!”

“Yes, now I think I’ll need a basketful. Yes, we’ll boil them, then squeeze them into puree. We’ll wax them up nice and tight. Ah! For the winter and your baby. Pick the sweetest, fullest tomatoes. Hurry!”
CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

Philip J. Szenher is the Coordinator of the Humanities Division at RWC.

VerKuilen Ager is a student at RWC. This is his first appearance in Aldebaran.

Terri Mahler is a political studies major at RWC. She lives in East Providence.

Warren C. Miller writes to us from Winter Park, Florida. His stories have been widely published.

Donald Annaldo is a senior art major at RWC where he teaches ceramics. He is presently preparing for the Southern New England Potter's Festival.

R. C. Morse is a creative writing major at Emerson College in Boston. He is a staff member of The Emerson Review.

Cindy Brafman is from Paramus, N. J. She is a creative writing major at RWC. She has great legs.

Richard Atwater Lutman is from Newport, R. I. He will be attending the University of Tulsa graduate program in writing and rhetoric.

Joe Lytle is Artist-in-Residence at RWC. His work is on permanent display on the walls of the residence halls. Joe plans to teach painting this summer.

Morse sent his story to us from Providence, R. I.

Buddy Alves is presently working on an exhibit of his photographs for the RWC student center and various New England shows.

Lisa DuBois is a student at RWC. She writes fiction and poetry.

George Montgomery is from Bloomington, New York.
David DiMauro is a senior sociology major at RWC. “Theme” is a composition for piano.

Bruce Allen is a student at RWC. He owns a Boy Howdy! t-shirt.

Alan Britt is a frequent contributor to *Aldebaran* from Tampa, Florida. He edited *Mantras, An Anthology of Immanentist Poetry*.

Sandra G. Grossi is a creative major at RWC. She works in the library.

Dyan Houston is a junior art major at RWC, residing in Newport, R.I. She is presently involved in weaving and silk screen printing.

Paul B. Roth is also from Tampa, Florida. Two of his poems were included in *Aldebaran 3/1*.

Lucille Andreozzi sent us a delightful labor pain from Providence, R. I.

David Dupre flies handmade kites when he isn’t working as RWC’s staff photographer. His talents include teaching silk screen and photography.