

**unicorn**

# unicorn

UNICORN is published quarterly  
by the students of Loyola College.  
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Artists are encouraged to send their poems,  
stories, and artwork for consideration.  
All submissions must be accompanied by a  
self-addressed, stamped envelope, and all  
are eligible for yearly prizes.  
Line drawings are especially sought,  
shorter fiction is preferred, and no more  
than five poems per submission.  
We ask that you also include a brief biography.

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COVER ARTWORK BY KATHLEEN HIGGINS

### Sanctuary

The dull birds return  
like odd normalities  
(ibises, cranes...)  
flapping into place.  
Within these bounds  
they find habitual shelter,  
predictable prey  
and only natural enemies.  
They ignore their wardens  
much as they would their hunters  
were any here  
(no gun's sounded within the preserve  
for fifty years).  
But the birds concede no favor--  
are wary, taut, and constantly  
protect their young.  
Ingratitude is independence,  
And here some lesson's preserved  
for those of us who change  
and for those who would set our limits.

*Phillip McCaffrey*

## The Physicists

We heard rumors  
the night of your  
arrest. They were  
like black threads  
torn from your good  
jacket's sleeve.

We spoke of it  
the next morning,  
amazed that you did  
not struggle more.  
We discuss that  
always, and now

we have a theory:  
that you knew the extent  
of their power, and when  
the knock came you had just  
begun to study the light  
in your cell.

*Dan Johnson*



### Threading the Needle

Arms like sleep's pajamas  
Embrace me in a buttoning of  
Flannel skin.  
Under the blankets we pillow ourselves  
As two scraps sown,  
Until the Dawn's tear sounds with  
The rippling static of  
Bodies wrenched from Slumber's pocket.  
We dangle like threads until the  
New night's mending.

*Katie McGrath*

**Mrs. Giannini**

Oh Lord, I'm sick at heart.  
When he became a vegetable,  
I dreamt the banjo clock stopped  
and the expansion trivet slapped itself  
shut in the kitchen.  
It was so bad I sat bolt upright in the bed,  
sweating—

God!  
Do you hear me?  
Will you take him peacefully, quietly?  
No more falls into the tub,  
no more damned spells.  
Listen to me!  
Will you shit or get off the pot?

Wednesdays, he still works in the store beside me.  
He sets out candy and takes the pennies  
from the Kiddies' Bullseye Box.  
But he mealy-mouths the customers  
and he can't fix nothing,  
can't fix nothing,  
let alone himself.

*Mike Reis*

## The Trains

D. R. Belz

The first day of the new year is a bright, boisterous morning in Freespring Wood. The birds hold congress over croutons and leftover pumpkin pie. Members of the raccoon community dine on half-eaten hors d'oeuvres, and drizzle remaining champagne on each other's heads and muzzles. The deer come down to the backsides of the large white houses and lick the driveway stones clean of rock salt. Snowfall hides their tracks as they return to the trees.

At one home, in one yard, the birds scatter. An Irish setter runs in the yard, scattering them. The back door opens. Blair Westbrook, prominent attorney in the Wood, throws ice cubes to the dog, who gobbles them, beats the air with its tail.

Upstairs, wife Chastity Westbrook has made a startling discovery: Emmett, seven year old son, is amazingly worm-ridden.

Emmett descends the stairs slowly, then bolts across the living room, through the dining room, to the kitchen, where he disappears down a flight of stairs. He makes a howling noise much like a train whistle. His small footprints in the thick pile of the living room carpet begin to vanish as Chastity comes down the stairs. She moves towards the phone, stops, and resumes a course towards the kitchen. Blair is heard at the back door.

The lights in the kitchen dim as she enters. A dull thrashing sound comes up from the basement.

"There he goes again, right under your nose," she says. "I thought we decided there would be no trains before breakfast."

Blair is standing in the doorway, lobbing ice cubes to Arno, the flaming red setter. His breath forms a white cloud around his head. He is wearing pajamas and a rubber sailing jacket.

"Good boy, Arno, Arno, Arno! Fetch!" He overhands a piece of ice into the middle of the yard.

Chastity puts a kettle on to boil. Blair enters the kitchen with a highball glass in his hand. His thick black hair is matted with snow. Water droplets bang from successful moustache.

"What's wrong?"

"He's running those trains again, and he hasn't had breakfast."

Blair takes an icetray from the freezer, bangs it out on the table, and refills the glass.

"And why must you keep feeding that dog ice?"

"He likes it. He's crazy about ice."

Blair opens the door. "Arno, Arno, Arno.' Fetch boy!"

Chastity's auburn hair has fallen across her face. She sweeps it back, and covers her eyes with a hand.

Blair comes back to the ice on the table.

"What's wrong, Chas? Chassie?"

He tries to put his arms around her.

Arno runs on the door and impacts like a load of wet rags.

"Arno! Wait a minute old boy--don't break the door down!" He fills the icetray with cubes from the table and places it outside the door. Arno snaps at the offering.

"Get it, boy!"

Chastity is crying over the sink.

"Chas? Chas, what in God's name has got you all upset?"

I thought we talked all about last night--"

From the basement comes a high, piercing whistle.

She bangs the edge of the sink with her palms.

"Can't you stop those damned trains?"

Blair stares at her in amazement. Arno has finished his ice. The kettle has begun a wet, feeble song.

"What is it, for God's sake?"

"If it had been something else--we could cope with anything else--"

"What are you saying?"

"Emmett--he has--some-sort of-parasite." She spits the last word.

Blair studies the brickwork on the floor.

"You mean, he's wormy?" He half-chuckles.

"You can stand there and talk about him like he's some kind of animal? Yes, he's got worms! Why don't I just call all the neighbors right now to see how they're going to react?"

Arno lams into the door again. Blair goes to the porch, makes a huge snowball, and hurls it out to the edge of the woods. Arno dutifully pursues and begins devouring the windfall.

"So what if he's got a touch of the roundworm? You make it sound like he's got leprosy or something."

"God knows where he picked it up. I wouldn't be surprised if he took it from the McBride twins. You saw how she was all over those men last night. I wouldn't be surprised what comes into that house!"

"Now let's not start about last night again--"

"I don't want to discuss it!" She covers her ears and runs into the living room. She puts her head into an arm of the sofa and quakes. Blair watches her go, his mouth open. The basement door moves. Emmett pokes his head through. "Hey dad! Got somethin' neat to show ya. Come on down!" "In a minute, son. I'll be down in a minute." "It's really neat."

Blair follows Chastity into the living room. Emmett returns below. Arno peeps up over the doorsill and eyes the empty icetray on the table.

"I don't understand you, Chas, I really don't." He waits for a response. She continues to cry into the sofa. He watches the grill on the fireplace, as though her answer were to somehow appear written there. He walks to the kitchen and begins feeding Arno more ice.

Emmett pulls the cuff of his jacket.

"Dad! Come on down--I gotta show ya somethin'!"

Emmett rushes back downstairs. As Blair reaches the top of the stairs, Chastity walks into the kitchen.

"You just don't care that's your problem. If it's not that boat, it's your practice. If it's not that, it's Emmett and his trains. If it's not that, it's that damned dog!"

Blair turns to speak. Emmett beckons from the basement.

"O.K. Emmett, coming."

He reaches for Chastity's arm. She backs away, wiping her face.

"Don't try to touch me. I've thought long and hard about it, and I think last night affected me more than I care to realize. I'm fed up, Blair."

"He begins to speak.

"Dad!"

He moves down the stairs.

"Just walk away?--is that it? Just ignore her--she'll go away--is that it? It's all right if the neighbors' wives fall over me getting to you--I'm just a fixture in this house! I just complete this goddamned fairy tale you've got going here--hundred thousand dollar house, a dog, a son with worms, and a wife, in that order. I'm through Blair, through!"

Blair looks into the golden warmth of the paneled basement. Emmett sits at the controls of the railroad. Several trains hurtle around the tracks, on intersecting paths.

"Emmett, don't play with the trains like that--"

"But dad, just watch!" He trips a switch.

"Chassie, I--you're being completely unreasonable--I thought we talked it over and--"

Emmett nudges a master throttle. The trains whip through the pattern, converging. Blair takes a step down.

"Emmett--don't!"

"I'm through with this charade, Blair. My mother has a room for me--"

"Chassie, wait, let me explain something to you--"  
The kettle on the stove is blasting a jet of steam  
in the kitchen, howling.

Emmett takes his hand from the fully depressed  
throttle.

"Chassie!"

"Watch, dad, watch!"

"Emmett!"

A loud, resonant crash fills the house. The steps  
vibrate beneath Blair's feet.

The trains--what seems like half a dozen locomotives  
with full complements of cars--bulldoze each other into  
oblivion. Some of the locomotives run off the platform  
and onto the floor. Another plows a papier-mache mountain  
into the waterfall. Houses, automobiles, telephone poles,  
and people sprawl in the buzzing wreckage.

"I'm leaving!" Chastity's voice pierces the whistle  
of the steam kettle.

Emmett giggles, dancing around the platform, observing  
the tableau from every possible angle.

Blair stands in the stairwell, watching Emmett assess  
the damage, listening to doors slam upstairs.

"See, dad, isn't that neat?"

Blair signs when he hears the front door slam. He  
waits, holding his breath. He releases it when he hears  
the car start, hears the whine of the starter being held  
too long.

Arno lays into the back door again, and the kettle in  
the kitchen strains its blowhole and sputters boiling water.

Blair searches the walls of the stairwell absently.  
His eyes finally stop on a stack of plastic beverage holders  
on a shelf. "For home, car, and boat," the happy label  
reads.



**"Once..."**

once  
when the night was a bowl of dark glass  
overflowing with dreams  
like rich fruit  
we imagined  
a huge black animal hunched  
over the earth  
like a mountain.

when he breathed  
his tired body moved like the tides  
    spawning a thousand tiny white flowers.

we trudged through his thick fur  
    (missing in places, in places a little worn)  
matted it with our sweat and tears  
stung his sagging flesh with our hands and feet  
    awakened his heavy eyes.

in his ear we found another land  
crossed a tiny mountain range  
through which  
some ripple  
of a river runs  
who knows  
where

now  
dreamless  
we grope under the moon  
trying to recover what we have abandoned  
and banished to the night,  
on this sandy plain.

but only the battered halves of clams  
have been forgotten by the tide  
& the glimmering fish.

soon  
we will glimpse  
out of the corners of our eyes  
a little black dog  
poised  
shivering in the wind  
who has legs like matchsticks  
& when he turns his little box  
of a head  
his bright eyes shine.

*Vicki Aversa*

### Ideal Love

Boucher knew how to paint about love:  
take one goddess from above,  
put nearby one turtledove  
with a wing half-dipped in water  
and his own dove-mate a shorter  
distance away from the pond,  
    as she should be;  
have the Venus lie diagonally  
across some satin spread so softly  
on the rocks and reeds of the pond bank, and,  
to save the rocks from total sin,  
throw a little Cupid in—  
with a fat little face and a fat little penis,  
and, for variety, show him pointing to Venus,  
and let him have some curly hair  
so another cherub can rub him there  
while he hides his pudgy derriere  
behind some conveniently placed flowers.  
And, just imagine, they sit there forever,  
ideally placed in that scene—  
it's almost enough to make one give up  
the real love on which one was weaned  
all one's busy life.

*William Bates*

### Beaux Arts

They are cutting the fortunate lawns  
of Roland Park.  
Hounded matrons  
with brown hair  
walk  
wearing yellow sweaters  
among the smell of grass.  
Everywhere whiteness  
transfigures their children  
and everything is Renoir.

The magnolias are running fever  
in Roland Park,  
cannot hold still,  
are twisted  
by  
their restless pink heads  
among the cries of grass.  
Their necks are bright wire  
unbearably tightened  
and everything is Van Gogh.

They are cutting the fortunate lawns  
of Roland Park.  
Necks of girls  
fly from mowers.  
Heads  
and arms of red women  
drenched by serums of grass  
are hung everywhere  
like scalded cats in trees.  
Everything is Guernica  
in Roland Park.

*Lyn Stefenhagens*



## Simon Called Peter

Simon called Peter,  
blundering bull of God,  
was more farmer  
than fisherman.

In him,  
loving and hating  
were as close as hay and straw,  
dissimilar  
cousin grasses  
of country uses.

Peter, husbandman,  
rock articulated  
into God's wall,  
put down his net  
his sword  
his over-statements  
and even his great despair  
to feed the lambs,  
harangue the sheep,  
escape his wife's mother

and die  
on a cross  
upside down,  
with the blood in his eyes  
triumphant as roosters,  
fragrant as roses.

*Lyn Stefenhagens*



## The First Time

Carol Gesser

It was a cold, cloudy day, as he remembered later, when they came and told him that his Uncle Paul had died. They pulled him out of the middle of math class--for that much Marty was grateful, that it was math and not recess--and broke the news to him in what they must have considered a gentle manner. Marty, fortunately, was a tough eleven-year-old who was not prone to emotional outbursts, so their kindness didn't overwhelm him completely.

"Marty--son--there's something I'm afraid we have to tell you," said the principal, Mother Mary.

"We don't want to have to do this," the vice-principal broke in. "But please try and take it like a man."

"You may cry if you want to, Marty," said the nun.

"Just go ahead and cry."

"And you don't have to finish out the day, or the week either, if you don't want to," said Father Horn.

"Please try and understand," said Mother Mary, and then she and the priest, having both run out of comforting things to say, stopped walking with the boy and turned to look at each other over his head. One of them had to actually tell him, but neither one quite knew how.

Marty looked up at each of them quizzically, first at the nun on his left, then at the priest on his right. It was fun getting out of class, but he began to tire of this game of strolling the school grounds with the two administrators, trying to figure out what they were talking about.

"Marty," they both began at the same time. And then they both stopped, each convinced that the other would continue. When neither one did, they shot each other meaningful glances again. The nun seemed to say, "You're a man. This is your duty," while the priest's eyes answered back, "But a woman's gentleness would make it easier to take." Finally, the priest won out, and a shaking Mother began to try to explain death to the boy.

"Marty, there's something that happens to all of us some time."

"I'm not in trouble, am I?" the boy began to look panicky. Perhaps he had done something terrible, and they were going to suspend him. Maybe that's what all that talk about not finishing the week meant. Had they found out what he had done to Susie Wakener's lunch box?

"No, it's nothing you've done. It's not your fault," said Mother, putting her arm around his shoulder.

"No--no--you had nothing to do with it. Don't blame yourself," chimed in Father Horn.

The sky grew heavier and darker by the minute, and from far away on the horizon all three could hear a low rumble. Mother Mary knew she had to tell the boy quickly or go inside.

"It's something that no one can help, Marty. It's something God decides."

Marty thought a minute, then looked up at her, "Is it Uncle Paul? Did he die?"

The priest and nun, both slightly shocked, looked at each other. They hardly knew whether to be taken aback by the boy's response, or relieved that the burden of telling him had been lifted from their shoulders.

"Yes, I'm afraid so, Marty. Your uncle passed away very early this morning."

The boy looked down at his feet pensively, but showed no signs of crying. "I saw him once. He was awful sick. I bet he's happier now."

"Yes, Marty; that's right. He's with his Father, now, in heaven. He's not in pain anymore."

"But he can't be with his father in heaven," the boy protested. "Mom always said that Grandpa was an old sinner and he'd never make it to heaven. Does that mean Uncle Paul didn't make it either?"

"No, Marty, I mean his real Father--God--he's with the Lord in heaven," explained Mother Mary. She felt that the theological implications were getting a bit deep. Perhaps it would be best to let his parents explain all this to him.

"He's with all the angels and saints. Let's go inside, now, and you can wait in my office until your parents come to pick you up."

Sitting in the principal's office was something no student much desired, since it usually meant that the child in question was being grilled on some infraction of the rules he had committed. Marty had only been there once, the time two years old he had thrown a girl's beanie out the third-floor window (it flew just like a frisbee); but the memory was still fresh in his mind.

"Uh--can't I go back to class? Isn't it lunch time yet?"

When his parents picked Marty up from school, neither one seemed to think it was necessary to explain theological implications to the boy, and he certainly didn't ask. Theological implications were something you avoided as long as you could, though they were bound to hit you with stuff like that sooner or later at a Catholic grade school.

Mom and Dad were obviously too busy trying to work out all the details of the funeral for poor Aunt Sharon, who

certainly couldn't tackle it all by herself. They went around saying, "Poor Sharon--poor Sharon" so much that Marty started wondering how poor his Aunt Sharon would be. Maybe she'd be so poor now, she'd have to come and live with them. Marty wouldn't mind, because his Aunt Sharon wasn't a bad sort; but he sure didn't want to give up his room to her. His mother only let him keep his frog collection because he stored it in his room, out of sight. If he had to go live in the basement, poor Croaker and Warty and Mudpuddle would have to move out; Aunt Sharon probably wouldn't want them under her bed. He hoped she wasn't really as poor as his parents kept saying.

Marty spent the afternoon with his frogs (possibly their last day together), while his parents called relatives, went grocery shopping, and ordered flowers. His aunt had made a request that instead of flowers, everyone should make a donation to some charity; but his father said that was ridiculous. The close family, he said, had to send flowers, or there wouldn't be any. And what would the others think if they were the only ones who didn't send flowers? So the family sent flowers, a big basket of red-white-and-blue ones, to sit by Uncle Paul in parlour "C."

That night, when they went to the funeral home, Marty's Mom and Dad said he didn't have to go if he didn't want to; but that he was getting to be a big boy now, and that he had more responsibilities to live up to. So he went with his parents; and the only part he really minded was having to get dressed up. He told his mother Uncle Paul wouldn't care what he wore, but she said to hush up, that wasn't respectful.

It was a little funny going to the place, but all his cousins and aunts and uncles were there, walking around and talking, so it wasn't too bad. He was told five times what a big boy he was becoming, and twice that he looked just like his father. Marty didn't walk over to the coffin till almost the end of the night. He watched it from across the room, paying special attention to his uncle's white hands. They looked like they had funny brown bumps on them, and Marty wondered if he'd had some kind of disease that did that to your hands. When he finally got close enough to see what they were (his mother told him to go say goodnight to his Uncle Paul), he realized that they were just rosary beads. Someone had tied a rosary all around his hands. Marty wondered how much his uncle had used one when he was alive. Marty himself didn't use one, even though he received a nice one for his first holy communion. The nuns at school all had them hanging from their belts, but he never saw them use one either. Maybe they were really more for dead people.

The next day they had viewing at the funeral home again, but Marty didn't go this time. His parents said once was

enough, and Marty agreed. They went, though; and his mother told him about a nice prayer service they'd had when she got home, and how it was good to see everyone after all this time.

Marty had been excused from school for two days, so he went to the funeral with his parents the following day. It was raining and cold and dark again, just like it had been all week. His Dad said it was such a shame it had to rain; and Mom said it always seemed to rain for funerals. It didn't make much difference while they were in church, but it made the cemetery ground all muddy to walk through.

They took about fourteen cars to the cemetery, all with their headlights on. Marty's father told him that was so the funeral train could all stay together and no other drivers would split them up, but Marty really didn't see why this was necessary, since they were only driving three blocks. He also thought that if more people got in each car they wouldn't have to take so many, but his mother explained that it was the principle of the thing.

When they got to the cemetery, they trudged through the wet grass, his mother complaining a little that her high heels were sinking in the mud, and they stood underneath a little green tent over a big rectangular hole in the ground. The coffin was poised on stretchers and suspended by metal chains over the hole, which was so square Marty wondered how they got it that way. While the priest read a service out of his little black missal, Marty looked at the fuzzy grey outside of the coffin. He wondered how it would look when mud was ground into all that soft fuzz. One of his older, wiser cousins told him it was silly to wonder that. Coffins were too expensive to ruin that way, she said. When everyone left the cemetery, they took the body out of the fancy box and put it in a plain one and no one ever knew the difference. You never actually saw them lower the fancy one into the hole or shovel any dirt on it, did you? she asked.

When they were heading back to Aunt Sharon's home for a reception, Marty's Mom and Dad didn't say too much, except to go over the checklist and make sure that they had brought all the rolls and bread they were supposed to. Something must have occurred to his mother, because she almost shouted, "The rosary." His father asked, "What rosary?"; and she explained that they hadn't had one to put on Uncle Paul when they had first arrived at the funeral home, so she lent them hers.

"But it was eighty years old. That was an heirloom," she said.

"Hush, Isabel; it doesn't matter."

"Well, they didn't have to bury him with it, did they?"

"It's really too late to think of that now," he said, and it was, because they had arrived at Aunt Sharon's home.

When Marty went back to school, one of his friends asked him why he had missed two days. Marty had missed all the fun, he said, when Fred Hopper got in big trouble for going around and pulling up the girls' skirts at recess.

"You don't look sick," he said, "Did you fake it?"

"Nah, I didn't have to. My Uncle Paul died."

"Oh. So they planted your Uncle Paul, huh?"

"Well, I guess so; except we didn't see them do that," said Marty.

"No? Oh, I'd have waited around to see them do that."

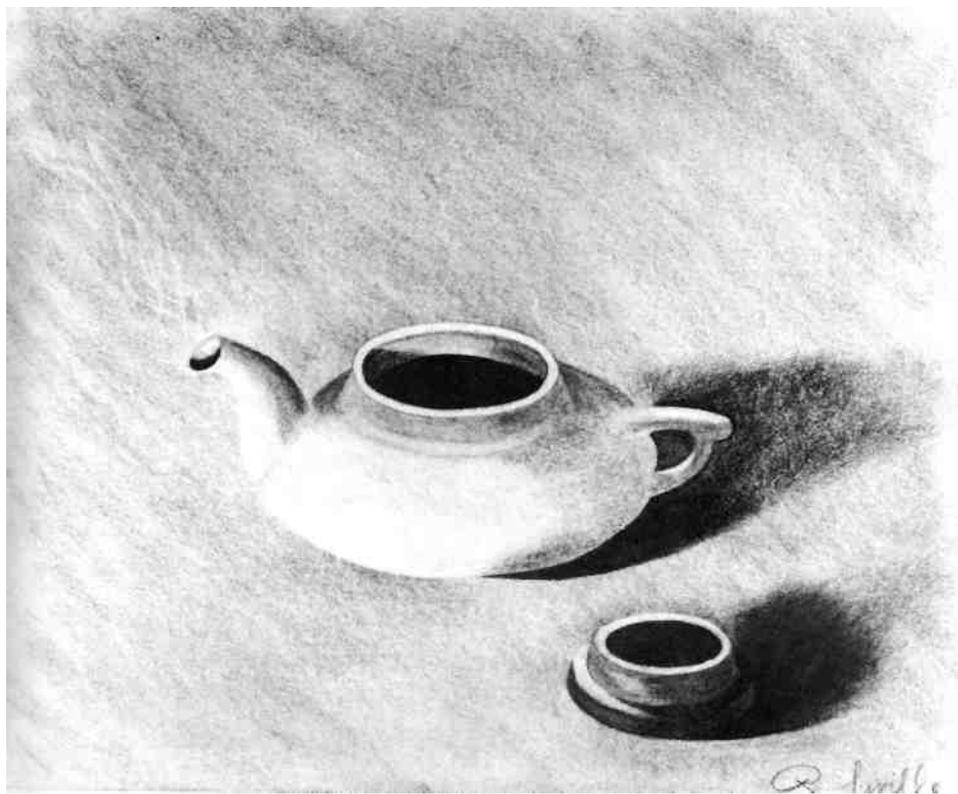
"No you wouldn't have."

"Yes I would, too." The two boys started to fight each other, until one of the recess moderators came to pull them apart, and tell them if they didn't stop fighting they'd wind up in the principal's office, for sure.

**"You study your crow's feet..."**

You study your crow's-feet  
in the morning  
hating the mirror for being there.  
Your cheeks suddenly  
sag heavier with  
the reflection's weight.  
In the empty kitchen  
the coffee tastes old.  
The dishes call you names  
for leaving them dirty  
in the sink.  
Later, the phone rings  
unanswered.

*Jan Johnson*



**"When she twists..."**

When she twists  
to sun and sky  
her curves  
as a rose  
open up  
to my eye.

*Michael Gutowski*

**Observation from the Stern**

a progression of sight

The shell fish have not  
been evicted,  
their coral eyes have homes:  
so ducks are built,  
chip by chip,  
from the taut tissue of the evening's sea:  
immaculate chaos!  
tide  
a liquid marble,  
galactic cameo, floating ducks,  
carved from lucid stone themselves.  
The sea  
has no philosophy,  
forever undoing  
the faith in its forms.  
Clearly,  
it is the impossible  
in all resolution, all fact  
that is beyond itself,  
as appearance is  
the wake that disappears.

*V. B. Price*

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VICKI AVERSA *wants to ride a porcupine off into the sunset.*

WILLIAM BATES *has never found ideal love. For years now, he has settled for flip-flops.*

D.R. BELZ, *alias "Lionel", is a hit man for Bon Vivant Soups. He books into worms and infects little kids.*

CATHERINE CONNOR *has pink satin toes. She writes her poems with the aid of a book of dots.*

CAROL GESSER *is the marbles champ of Woodlawn.*

MIKE GUTOWSKI *twists flowers in secret.*

KATHLEEN HIGGINS *is a legend for all times.*

DAN JOHNSON *is a wonderful fellow, gang.*

JAN JOHNSON *has penned a monograph prepared for publication by talking dishes.*

PHILLIP MCCAFFREY *submits—wildly.*

KATIE MCGRATH *hails from Slumber's Pocket, Maryland. It is not on any map. It is imaginary.*

V.B. PRICE *has a stern countenance, chortling once every hundred years or so.*

MIKE REIS *has written an epic poem entitled "Paradise Cauterized". Oh, sure.*

RUSS SAVILLE *is a pretender to the throne of Abu Dhabi.*

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