

Too Old To Know Everything

Poems by
Robert H. Deluty



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To

Barbara



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Too Old To Know Everything



I am not young enough to know everything.

Oscar Wilde



concerned parents
pondering when *different*
becomes *disturbed*

on her deathbed
Mom whispering, *Be kinder*
than necessary

busting a dance move
on the New Jersey Turnpike
while doing eighty

his revered great aunt
detailing why he'll never
amount to something

the new Ph.D.
telling her children she **is**
a real doctor

her beloved
proposing marriage
at *Arby's*

struggling grocer
bringing rats and spiders
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the rabbi's daughter
making sure to call by phone
Saturday morning

Stella Shouting Contest . . .
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her dieting spouse
notes that being called *Fats*
fails to motivate

his blind date
offering him a laugh
akin to a honk

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hearing the word *Mass*

wheelchair-bound elder
teaching her great-granddaughter
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watching on TV
an old film he directed,
seeing only flaws

eating out . . . asking
the waitress for a can
of whipped cream

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did not find sarcasm
such a turn-on

wishing her husband
did not view Judge Judy
as a hot babe

dying agnostic
hoping for a miracle:
I love surprises

their Italian Mom
regarding a guest's *I'm full*
as a challenge

his attorney
noting the thief's love of God,
country, family

asking her sixth
of eleven grandchildren
Which one are you?

asking his ninth
of fourteen grandchildren
Are we related?

injured arsonist
in a burning building
calling 9-1-1

imagining
Gramps and Grandma having sex ~
shrieking awake

the dean requesting
students not rate courses
they haven't taken

informing
his colleague *mensch* and *nudnik*
are not synonyms

twelfth-grade truant
blaming his folks for being
out of town

Denny's waitress
turning apologizing
into an art form

enemies list . . .
paranoid patient adding
China, Scotland

requesting
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from Dov to Doug

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seeing red

Mom explicating
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a psychotic man
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Ashley Christmas

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entering *Wendy's* . . .
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while walking two dogs

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a chalk eraser

pointing out why
he had sex with her roommate:
You weren't home

Mardi Gras . . . choking
on the small, plastic baby
inside the king cake

a child pondering
the shop signs *Beauty Parlor,*
Hair Studio

the poem
of a seventh grade student
containing footnotes

associating
his grandparents' faces
with catchers' mitts

young actress reading
her first newspaper review . . .
both names misspelled

calmly explaining
why her son can't use the car:
You'll crash it and die

calmly explaining
why his son can't use the van:
I said so, pinhead

ornithologists
named Wren christening their twins
Robin and Jay

two OCD men
comparing how many hours
they spend washing

two paranoid men
comparing their numbers
of tormentors

a four year-old
assuring God he'll never
swear again

married fifty years,
still calling her husband
Groom

shocking the Yalies . . .
a dean noting her teachers
smoked as they lectured

introducing
the homicide detective
Beatrice Love

mistaking
his date's ankle tattoo
for a dog bite

mistaking
her date's upper arm tattoos
for third degree burns

on St. Patrick's Day
typing the President's name
as O'Bama

mass murderer's Mom
describing how beautiful
he was as a child

a bulimic girl
worrying about the food
in the hereafter

American colleagues
of Professor Dong-An Wang
seeking the best pun

rereading
the textbook she wrote,
recalling the pain

Auschwitz survivor
enraged her late son chose
to be cremated

on her resume
noting as hobbies quilting,
belly-dancing

on his resume
noting as hobbies sculpting,
sword-swallowing

asking their son
if he typed the book report
with his elbows

teen, Mom, Grandma
swapping horror stories
of seeking Mr. Right

for Christmas, her child
requesting a black eye patch
and a monocle

a Duke professor
noting Coach K's salary
is sixty times hers

Grandpa's date
describing herself
as his last resort

film critic claiming
he's spent three-fourths of his life
in the dark

an eighteen year-old
changing the ones to nines
on her Dad's check

grossly obese teen
noting that his funnel cake
is trans fat-free

incorporating
his thundering snores
into her nightmare

the old actor
reading the scathing critique,
admitting it's true

anorectic teen
stepping on her bathroom scale
post-pedicure

Jew with celiac
making believe he's eating
ham on rye

a Bio major
fears her fingers are too fat
for dentistry

the tyrant,
between atrocities,
getting a massage

bringing her poodle
to the pet grooming shop
The Golden Hydrant

asking Great-Granddad
whether his beard weighs
more than ten pounds

the Type A swimmer
forced to share her lap lane
with an obese teen

the dean pondering
which professor possesses
the phoniest laugh

a Dartmouth scholar
claiming his arcane knowledge
makes him sexy

two young lovers
on a crowded New York bus
tickling each other

an eight year-old
certain he'll win *Powerball*
if he's good

an eight year-old's Dad
certain he'll win *Powerball*
if he's good

Vatican City . . .
a Queens boy asking to see
Christine's Chapel

400-pound man
by the outdoor pool, screaming
Cannonball!

describing her ex
as collecting fine wines
and au pair girls

a sixth grader
assumes *precipitously*
means *with rain*

first time in the Bronx . . .
the old German telling all
he's Swiss

first time in Berlin . . .
the old Bronx man telling all
he's Jewish

her father-in-law
not wanting to be derailed
by the facts

while shoplifting
a ten year-old hoping God
is preoccupied

at the opera
observing her sons, husband
texting

his grandmother
inquires if he likes using
the intranet

elderly provost
missing the smell of pipe smoke
in his office

On the Road to Immortality

A high school physics student,
Dreaming of a Harvard Ph.D.,
An endowed professorship,
A Nobel Prize, and of joining
Newton, Gauss, Curie,
Joule, Tesla, Weber, Ohm,
Hertz, Kelvin, Coulomb,
Maxwell, Gray, Pascal
Ampère, Volta, and Watt
With an eponym in his honor,
Fears it will never happen
As he was cursed with
The last name, McGillicuddy

their Dad requesting
the maitre d' assign them
the tersest waiter

Milton Percy
wishing he had the last name
Outlaw

a freshman
buying four Greek grandparents
Princeton sweatshirts

painting the kitchen,
their mother giving her hair
pearl white highlights

the convict's daughter
notes as his occupation
retired broker

asking her teacher
what's the state capital
of West Dakota

their teen revealing
why earning is much less fun
than stealing

homeless . . . using
a torn, discarded *Dior*
as a pillow

homeless . . . using
today's *Wall Street Journal*
as a blanket

college president
hoping not to be dismissed
by the football coach

his fifteen year-old
describing why cybersex
is easy, harmless

elder on a bus
elbowing the immense man
snoring on her

out of nickels, dimes . . .
the shop owner giving out
hard candy for change

Hilton Head resort . . .
a Haitian busboy looking
at his Mom's photo

three Pitt linemen,
one mascot suspended
for drunkenness

midterm exam . . .
a teen's essays resembling
text messages

watching *Psycho*
with his four grandchildren . . .
they laugh, he cringes

asking the sales clerk
if her mumbled *Hep yuh?* means
May I help you?

telling politely
their son's visitors that sinks
are not for peeing

learning too late
his new Japanese tattoo
means *easily duped*



Humor is the affectionate communication of insight.

Leo Rosten

*If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh,
otherwise they'll kill you.*

Oscar Wilde



newlyweds
coming to blows over
a vase's placement

research colleagues
coming to blows over
a finding's value

a Tufts senior
boasting of the *A* paper
he wrote while drunk

a Tufts professor
boasting of the thesis
he wrote stoned

under duress
attending the fourth wedding
of a first cousin

dimly lit room . . .
mistaking glue stick
for *ChapStick*

mid-sermon, her teen
making obscene anagrams
out of Bible names

end of the party . . .
her sloshed parents sprawled beneath
separate tables

geography class . . .
debating which country's name
is the most macho

geography class . . .
debating which U.S. state
has the coolest shape

after eating beef
a vegan girl awaiting
misfortune

the seven year-old
begging Dad to buy her
a padded bra

two Civil War buffs
fight over which Southern state
suffered the most

English professor
fearing memos are killing
his muse

the old man . . . unsure
if the creaking is coming
from hardwood or knees

'50s Senate aide
recalling her main duty:
pouring bourbon

'60s Senate aide
recalling his main duty:
lighting cigarettes

two Jews in Vail
debating which couple
looks most Goyish

a preschooler
proudly showing Grandpa
her time-out chair

immigrant cabbie
insisting his Phoenix fares
speak only English

a blocked writer
terrified of a reader
misunderstanding

her spouse viewing
networking, socializing
as one and the same

collection plate . . .
a parishioner leaving
four postage stamps

collection plate . . .
a parishioner leaving
two *Lotto* tickets

his daughter's boyfriend . . .
red-haired, green-eyed, freckle-faced,
wearing a turban

deeply depressed man
holding his newborn, hoping
she has better genes

opening night . . .
watching the play he scripted,
cursing the actors

San Diego Zoo . . .
her toddler mimicking
a flamingo

San Diego Zoo . . .
her husband mimicking
an orangutan

a struggling poet
praying at bedtime
for Oprah to call

job interview . . .
sporting a tweed jacket,
gray sweat pants

her mother
trying to block thoughts of death
by singing show tunes

in the ICU
a breathing tube down his throat,
longing for a *Kool*

asking the prof
whether she still uses
her dictionary

post-earthquake . . .
a dog limping on rubble,
seeking his owner

the fourth grader
mixing vodka and rum
with *Bosco*

a D.C. cop
giving a speeding ticket
to the Chief Justice

with their toddler's blocks
spelling out for her husband
I HATE YOU

in his course six weeks,
a student requests a letter
of recommendation

describing
her departing co-worker
as *leaving tough shoes*

a mid-manager
telling his receptionist
to smile less broadly

their nine year-old
seeking to buy on eBay
quicksand

the newlywed
learning his in-laws' jobs
involve graft and fraud

her date
noting he manufactures
urinal cakes

his date
noting she's a sales rep
for spermicides

heroic fireman
stating he deserves no praise
for doing his job

third grade teacher
paying her teen to grade
her students' quizzes

an alcoholic
arguing that light beer
does not count

husband/wife farmers
wishing they could write
best-selling memoirs

2:00 a.m. . . .
a professor in his den
juggling hatchets

The Right Moniker

Informing his son and
Pregnant daughter-in-law
Of his wish that they and
Their forthcoming child
Not call him
Grandfather, Grandpa,
Granddad, Gramps, Poppi,
Pappy, Pop-Pop, Paw,
Pepop, Grampy, Papa Ed,
Grandsire or Big Daddy,
But, instead, Señor

post-tsunami . . .
a child survivor moving
in slow motion

School of Pharmacy . . .
the former high school pot head
becoming dean

by heart
reciting the SSNs
of six grandkids

a hungry boy
eating a dropped corn chip
off the clinic's floor

after the murder
the young thrill-seeker claiming
it wasn't worth it

their father
desiring to be feared
more than respected

Mrs. Barzini
asks the hand-waving speaker
if he's Italian

renaming
their short, sweet, bluish-haired aunt
The Smurf

old prof's office . . .
inquiring if Freud's photo
is that of her Dad

old prof's office . . .
asking if her Rorschach cards
are the originals

ADHD spouse
finding it impossible
to hide his affair

middle school catcher
dreaming of being honored
on *Bobblehead Night*

out-of-work couple
eyeing the five-dollar tip
at the next table

asserting
her grandson's greatest gift
is demolition

the anti-Semite
learns his grandchild is wedding
a Jewish banker

faculty party . . .
untenured colleague wearing
a see-through blouse

her brother seeking
to join the Masons solely
to learn the handshake

two straight women
discussing whether they'd like
to be gay icons

Med School dean
admitting he got an *F*
in college Phys. Ed.

Law School dean
admitting he got a *D*
in college Ethics

asking her teacher
which burns more calories:
screaming or shouting

delineating
to Mom, Pop why Keith Richards
is his role model

a psychiatrist
showing off his new tags
LIV2LAF

an oncologist
showing off her new tags
LAF2LIV

portraying her boss
as an agent of Satan
with nice hair

the linguist asking
to be buried holding
Roget's Thesaurus

Dachau survivor
raging at his grandchild
for buying a Ford

informing students
their ignorance evokes
utterly no bliss

his mother-in-law
tutoring her neighbors in
extreme couponing

a pregnant woman
on the interstate's shoulder . . .
doing ninety, high

Harvard men's room wall . . .
a prof sees his phone number
next to *For Hot Sex*

a girl's brothers
using her baby dolls' heads
in lieu of softballs

at the Wailing Wall
spotting a childhood friend
from Salt Lake City

on safari
bumping into his butcher
from Omaha

a narcissist
changing her first name
to Tifini

old psychiatrist
wanting to tell everyone
he sees the mayor

in the ER
the April Fool's toilet seat
glued to his rear end

the dictator
hoping to have a dessert
named after him

depicting
Tina Louise's outburst
as *Ginger snaps*

their six year-old
trying to impress a girl
with his lint sculptures

an elder
wishing she loved the grandkids
as much as her cats

retired Marine
meeting his future wife . . .
V.A. Hospital

retired sailor
meeting his future wife . . .
tattoo convention

proud podiatrist
showing off her commercial
for fungus treatment

on his deathbed
wondering which relatives
he'll see in hell

the pastor's wife
worrying that her husband
curses in his sleep

the rabbi's wife
worrying that her husband
yodels in his sleep

their daughter
portraying her new boyfriend
as droolworthy

mid-lecture . . .
the prof scratching her scalp
as dandruff cascades

post-lecture . . .
the prof scratching his beard
as breadcrumbs cascade

stalled elevator . . .
the claustrophobic woman
writing her will

Passover seder . . .
ADHD child asking
only two questions

before the first cut . . .
losing their dachshund puppy
in the tall grass

a nine year-old
placing his pet rabbits in
Mom's bunny slippers

considering
asking his new therapist
out dancing

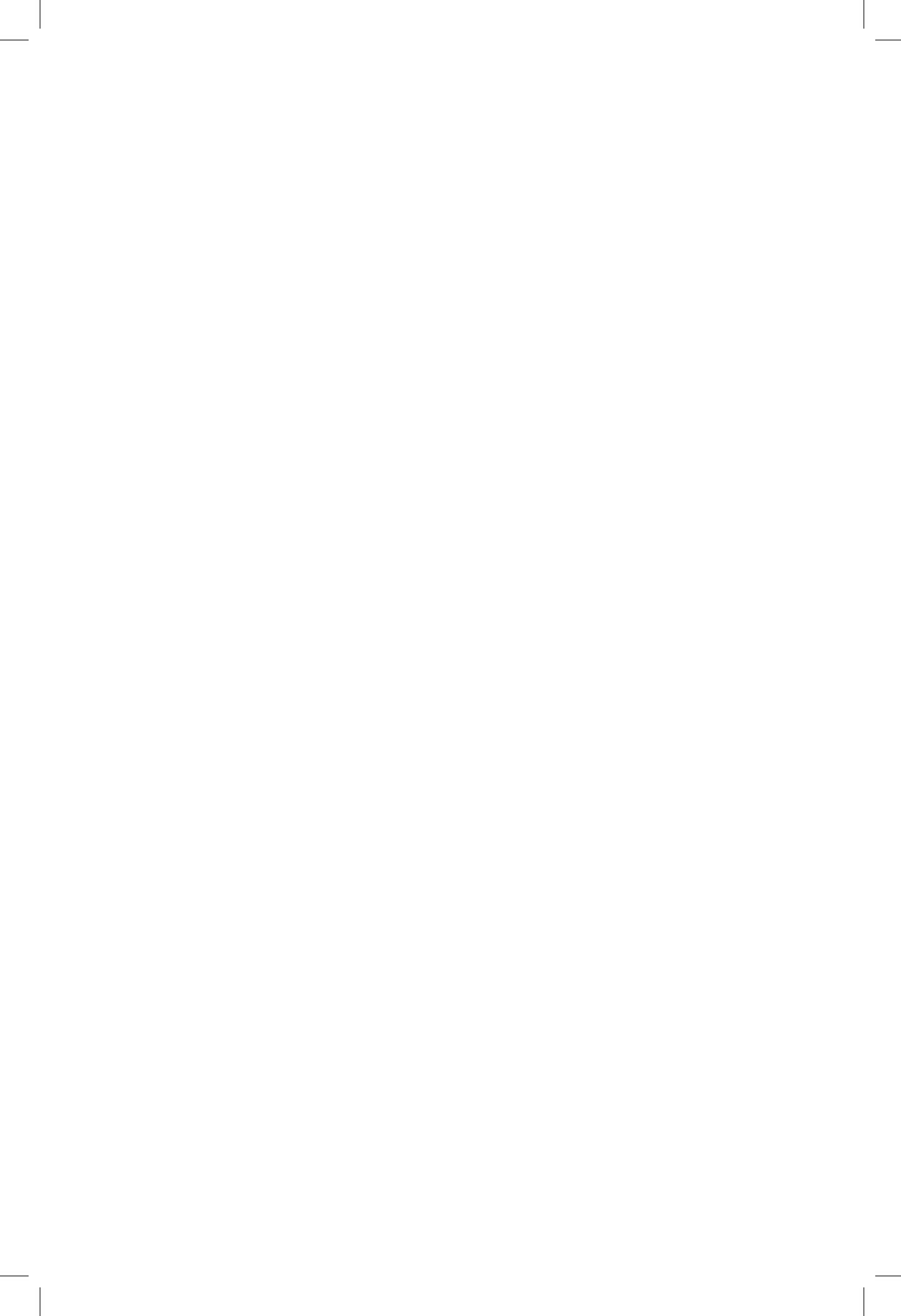
asking God
to deliver a few plagues
to Capitol Hill

a fan writing
the star she has no right
to feel depressed

Queens kosher deli . . .
the Maine tourist requesting
a wine list

Queens kosher deli . . .
the Kansas tourist asking
for buttered white toast

the old lady,
carried by a fireman, cries
Watch it, I'm fragile!



*Perhaps one has to be very old before one learns to be
amused rather than shocked.*

Pearl S. Buck

*There's no pleasure on earth that's worth sacrificing
for the sake of an extra five years in the geriatric ward
of the Sunset Old People's Home*

Horace Rumpole



Antidote

Whenever depression strikes,
She removes from her wallet
A forty-year-old photograph
Of her conservative father as a
Chubby, acne-covered teen
At his high school prom
Sporting a wide, goofy grin,
Shoulder-length hair, sideburns,
Braces, black horn-rimmed glasses,
A polka dot bowtie, and
An eggshell-blue tuxedo

Yom Kippur service . . .
wishing the goddess in front
had more clothes on

infirm old man
deciding to root only
for underdogs

on their honeymoon
the newlyweds attending
a Gun and Knife Show

his maiden aunt
regarding the word *jutting*
as pornographic

ninety-fifth birthday . . .
Great-Grandpa considering
a face-lift

visiting
her son's *YouTube* clip hourly
to boost posted *hits*

grandmother of ten
displaying in her house
no photographs

demented elder
asking his twelve-year-old niece
about her children

the debtor
wincing as the waiter
says *garnish*

new hotline worker
disconnecting by mistake
a hopeless caller

in *The Star*, reading
her body described as one
of the ten worst

a Muslim teen
questioning God's judgment
regarding BLTs

the terrier,
observing his owners kiss,
begins snarling

her brother-in-law
asserting that butter
is his best friend

Honolulu Zoo . . .
an elephant's trunk twirling
a pink hula hoop

the gang leader
viewing *conscience, cowardice*
as synonymous

make-up exam . . .
the freshman arriving
forty minutes late

Cornell professor
writing the year as
2,011

Jewish boys debate
how long to sit Shiva
for a dead turtle

on his vita
noting his first and fourth jobs
bussing tables

Uncle Murray
treasuring his brown birthmark
shaped like Dick Nixon

the retired teacher
screaming at her grandchildren
for using Spell Check

a bored child
at the symphony
making music

a teenaged driver
regarding Stop and Yield signs
as mere suggestions

the dying man
requesting to be carried
in a bright red hearse

Hunan House . . .

counting the menu's errors
in grammar, usage

offshore driller
misunderstanding the teen
who said she oil-paints

the florist
introducing her daughters
Iris, Lily, Rose

the jeweler
introducing his daughters
Jade, Pearl, Ruby

the vets
introducing their sons
Rex, Rusty, Buster

Election Day . . .
choosing between a thief
and a racist

their first date . . .
displaying during dinner
his webbed toes

six-year-old twins
utilizing lamp shades
as football helmets

doctor's office . . .
arguing she's not fat,
just thick

doctor's office . . .
arguing he's not fat,
just too short

a young professor,
denied tenure, egging
the dean's sports car

ejecting
the bouillabaisse she swooned at
two hours earlier

the defendant
claiming he did not know
it was a tip jar

their neighbor
describing her new diet
as a *great journey*

the scholar
bringing his CV
on vacation

her young son
willing to eat all things green
except vegetables

longing for decades
for a married name with spark,
Jill Smith weds Fred Jones

atop Dad's truck,
a gun rack . . . on the bumper,
Choose Civility

starting to plan
extramarital affairs
on his honeymoon

over lunch, her date
sharing his fears of rainstorms,
car washes

a Jewish man
asserting he's Orthodox
one day a year

a Jewish woman
asserting she's Orthodox
but for prayer, shrimp

their teen faking
symptoms of ADHD
for the stimulants

the oncologist
serving as a pallbearer
for his child patient

post-binge,
making a donation
to MADD

mid-thunderstorm . . .

TV weatherman noting
there's a chance of rain

dumped
by the man of her dreams
via text message

a grieving pastor
seeking a positive spin
for the tornado

eighty-year-old prof
begging students to study
dead languages

New York City bar . . .
three sots watching on TV
The Lost Weekend

explaining to Gramps
that Maypole dancing
is not dirty

an actor wishing
there were an audience
in his apartment

Mom's van smashing
the FedEx truck bringing
their Christmas gifts

old-time comic
bequeathing to his grandsons
seltzer, meringue pies

Bellevue inpatient
begging to stay on the ward
until flowers bloom

their son insisting
he did not intend to type
boobs for *books*

on a diet . . .
eating just the cream filling
of her *Oreo*

at the altar
the groom leans toward the bride,
sharing his doubts

seeing the student
who e-mailed she had the flu
at *Dunkin' Donuts*

dreaming
of three bananas in bed,
their peels on the floor

Grandma wishing
she were thinning somewhere
other than her hair

angry at his folks
for refusing to forgive
his wife's child abuse

the old seamstress
hoping that, in heaven,
she can fit wings

the old tailor
hoping that, in heaven,
souls wear clothes

a Yeshiva boy
asking if any branches
have polygamy

Charlie Sheen boasting . . .
the Mom of a dead addict
watching, raging

ticketed driver
telling the speeding cop
he's a hypocrite

Stanford professor
permitting figs and dates
but no prunes in class

24th mile . . .
a marathoner stopping
to give CPR

post-suicide . . .
forbidding the children
to utter his name

a boy pondering
why folks in slums don't build homes
in the country

abusive parents
telling their teenager's judge
his peers are to blame

96th birthday . . .
riding a roller coaster
for the first time

kosher restaurant . . .
the man takes from his pocket
a bag of pork rinds

MIT freshman
likening criticism
to rape

Civil War scholar
winning *Lotto* by choosing
1865

absent for the quiz . . .
e-mailing the instructor
her aunt's cat is ill

grinning ear-to-ear
hearing Grandpa Moishe say
Gut . . . How's youself?

Kansas tornado . . .
churchyard tombstones flying
down the interstate

trying to impress
his dinner date, ordering
in French a monkey

The Truth

The old professor
Explains to his young colleague
Why he so despises
Committee meetings:
They prevent me from doing
What I love the most and
Do the best -
Sitting in my lab,
In peace and quiet,
Playing solitaire

bipolar teens
deciding to call their band
Moody Blues & Pinks

Granddad inquiring
whether the No Smoking sign
pertains to cigars

Tulane test-taker
claiming a classmate's spiked hair
is distracting her

the neo-Nazi
learning too late Rabbi Katz
has a black belt

single Mom of four
on May's second Sunday
working at *IHOP*

out of the window
of the stretch limousine . . .
a St. Bernard's tongue

naming their triplets
born on Christmas morning
Noel, Noelle, Hope

naming her twins
born on Arbor Day
Fern, Magnolia

naming his son
born on Labor Day
Job

informing her spouse
his stomach's growling is not
conversation



Index of Poems' Original Sources

Some of the poems presented in this volume have been published or are “in press” elsewhere. Listed below are the journals in which they have appeared or soon will appear:

In **Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem:** *mid-thunderstorm; out of the window*

In **The Pegasus Review:** *San Diego Zoo (I); San Diego Zoo (II); Vatican City*

In **Timber Creek Review:** *Antidote; concerned parents; the oncologist*



Author's Note

Dr. Robert H. Deluty is the Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He has been a psychology professor at UMBC since 1980, and was named Presidential Teaching Professor in 2002. He and his wife, Barbara (a clinical psychologist), live in Ellicott City, Maryland and have two adult children, Laura and David. Dr. Deluty's poems and essays have been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *Modern Haiku*, *Voices: The Art and Science of Psychotherapy*, *Psychiatric Times*, *the Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Welcome Home*, *Muse of Fire*, *Maryland Family Magazine*, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, and many other newspapers, journals, and anthologies. *Too Old To Know Everything* is his thirty-second book.

