

THE NOBLEST PLEASURE

Poems by
Robert H. Deluty



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To
Barbara

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73 winning coach decking
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watching her boyfriend

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76 over chili
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Mom's favorite snack?
Dad's favorite snack?
musician buying

77 Bates College dean
after his last fall
EMT Joyce Day
bringing him soap
chess champion

78 in Central Park
college b-ball fan
her five-year-old son
in Anchorage
anorectic child

79 the electrician
young girl regretting
the OB noting
their three year-old
their eight year-old

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The Noblest Pleasure

The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding.

Leonardo da Vinci

*We are each other's harvest;
we are each other's business;
we are each other's magnitude and bond.*

Gwendolyn Brooks

Getting to Know You . . .

Octogenarian Christopher Wilkinson,
Professor Emeritus of Psychology, recalls
His entry-level job interview at the University
Fifty-seven years earlier.
He first met with the Department chair,
Who shocked and dismayed him by
Conducting the entire interview
In **French**.

During what he considered to be
The most uncomfortable hour of his life,
Wilkinson struggled mightily to understand
And respond to the chair's many queries.
At the very end of the brutal interview,
The chair finally spoke in English:

Dr. Wilkinson,
In your Ph.D. program in psychology,
Was there a foreign language proficiency
Requirement?
Yes, responded Wilkinson.
And in which language, sir,
*Are you **allegedly** proficient?*
French, he replied.

his granddaughter
demonstrating a teen's 'tude
at the age of five

church collection box . . .
finding a hand-written note:
You should be ashamed

the communist
playing golf, refusing
to hire a caddie

short-fused music prof
stating her favorite note
is B sharp

laid-back music prof
stating his favorite note
is B natural

psychic Zelda Bahl
naming her newborn daughter
Krystal

a smiling dentist
learning walruses' tusks
are canine teeth

Belgium's capital? . . .
her student responding
The euro

man with OCD
inspecting his front lawn,
holding tweezers

in Kentucky
trick-or-treating toddlers dressed
as Colonel Sanders

intern Bambi Deere
begging co-workers to look
beyond her name

his Mom noting
he has self-actualized
as a douchebag

Classics tutor,
overhearing *Sci-Fi*,
thinking *Psi Phi*

for her next birthday,
their eight year-old demanding
a rotary phone

hating his rich aunt
for using the word *summer*
as a verb

boxer Carl McCoy
learning his next opponent
is James Hatfield

the two year-old
clutching a cupcake, stating
Me ever not share

the old nun
asserting that her life
is in order

chief psychiatrist
diagnosing his in-laws
as *mega-schmucks*

chief psychologist
diagnosing her parents
as *quite pointless*

post-sneeze . . .
wiping the sundae's whipped cream
off his date's dress

on a park bench
two homeless men solving
the world's problems

Civil War scholar
noting that Southerners were
on the *Lee-ward side*

the grammarian
showing off her license plate
4WHOM

Lou Costello fan
learns her team's second baseman
is surnamed Watt

Wilbur Gates,
a poor dishwasher, asking
to be called Bill

Children's Hospital . . .
three window washers dressed
as superheroes

pilot Irene Kirk
opting to name her son
James Tiberius

first session . . .
insisting that his shrink
not address feelings

first session . . .
insisting that her shrink
take no notes

all out of candy,
giving the trick-or-treaters
slices of corned beef

Classics student
assuming *Greek chorus* means
peanut gallery

a seven year-old
hating his Mom for serving
raisins for dessert

Where's San Juan? . . .
an Irish youngster writing
Port O'Rico

poor Miami boys
requesting for Christmas
a two-humped camel

asking the rabbi
if doo-rags can substitute
for yarmulkes

a teen praying
boys will focus on her smile,
not her scars

agnostic server
choosing as his user name
HeathenCanWait

with her last breath,
Grandma telling the doctor
Less fiber, more cake

with his last breath,
Grandpa telling the nurse
Hubba hubba

prudent Yvette Rush
requesting that her colleagues
call her *Y*

flock of starlings
flying into cars, drunk on
fermented berries

group of wallabies
hopping in circles, stoned on
opium poppies

Your favorite foods? . . .
his two-year-old granddaughter
responding *Blue*

Your favorite foods? . . .
his five-year-old grandson
stating *Stuff on sticks*

the sole *A* student
in the math class feeling
outnumbered

the ex-sprinter
recalls his records, noting
the best of times

April Fool's Day . . .
her son getting *Chip* tattooed
on his shoulder

urging the freshman
planning to drop Physics
to stay the course

their teen taping
the john's *Out of Order* sign
to his forehead

hoping, in heaven,
he'll reconnect with Grandpa
pre-dementia

hoping, in heaven,
she'll meet her Mom
pre-parenthood

What is hard water? . . .
the high school freshman
answering *Ice*

Warner Buffett
transposing on purpose
his first name's letters

shoe store . . . a Mom cries
learning she and her youngest
have the same size

the Brooklyn baker
christening his brown, white pups
Pumpernickel, Rye

asking the waitress
to remove the larvae
from his linguini

her seven year-old
responding to *How are you?*
with *Sub-optimal*

young Quinn Quigley
rejoicing that she's moving
to Albuquerque

Jewish wedding . . .
a Baptist guest shouting
Molotov!

his father-in-law
shooting a house guest
for staying too long

manicurist
describing herself
as a *pro-filer*

GRE proctor
describing himself
as a *pro-tester*

physicians
describing themselves
as *pro-curers*

Jacqueline Turner,
an aspiring young writer,
naming her child, Paige

editors praising
the young headline writer
for his *punmanship*

eyeing the groom,
at the altar, caressing
the bride's rear end

trying to converse
with the former Harvard dean,
now deeply senile

trying to connect
with the former Yale provost,
now blind and deaf

the deer hunter
defining *antlers* as
two for a buck

Thanksgiving '16 . . .
leftist nephews struggling
not to choke Aunt Bev

explaining
to the third grader it's not
human beans

explaining
to the fifth grader it's not
cereal killer

explaining
to the sixth grader it's not
flex your mussel

explaining
to the eighth grader it's not
whore of plenty

oceanographer
referring to ebb tides
as *rollback events*

asked to print
his last name first, first name last . . .
Kent Clark smiles

asked to print
his last name first, first name last . . .
Peter Salt frowns

the old waiter
describing patrons' tips as
his bread and butter

Hawaiian prof
noting that *Hilo* looks like
an oxymoron

Notre Dame point guards . . .
two nineteen-year-old black men
named Murphy, O'Neill

caffeine junkie
displaying his license plate
JAVAHHH

British Lit class . . .
a Yale freshman confusing
strumpet with *crumpet*

Bronx boy assuming
all Canadians come from
Canadia

Mom of four preteens
slugging her spouse for saying
she does not *work*

discovering
their grandson on the website
World's Worst Tattoos

discovering
their great-niece on the website
Most Extreme Piercings

the test crammer
referring to himself
as a *quick learner*

the two comics
referring to themselves
as *shtick figures*

dying musician
hoping heaven has Armstrong,
Coltrane, Bach jamming

on Christmas morning
old, frail Sam Goldberg singing
Oy to the world . . .

the world-class chef
cutting his renowned cheesecake
with cheap dental floss

Describe your spouse . . .
his wife stating *A huge dick*
with a small penis

on the carousel . . .
three rambunctious children
horsing around

turning fifty,
Rose Gould choosing to drop
the *u* from her name

Muslim heretic
eating devil's food cake
on a fast day

the ninety year-old
fantasizing about sex
as he did at twelve

in Paris . . . Lee Kurtz
asking folks to say her name
with a French accent

shoe store owners
describing themselves as
sole proprietors

experiencing
the retirement speeches
as his eulogies

Valentine's Day . . .
mother of five waking up
to an empty sink

four Jewish gamblers
playing the dreidel game
with C-notes

run-down diner . . .
asking if the chicken soup
is kosher

the elder calling
her psychotic granddaughter
intensely quirky

Argentine nightclub . . .
watching the cowboy/comic
known as Gaucho Marx

provost candidate
ordering for her dinner
Broiled liver, bloody

lawyer's child asking
whether the *sanity clause*
says *Ho Ho Ho*

new immigrant
addressing the judge
as *Your Honesty*

an eight year-old
bringing to the wishing well
her Dad's rare coins

on 1/1, his wife
describing 12/31
as *so last year*

in Grandpa's closet,
finding a French maid's outfit
and black leather chaps

the Arkansan
noting Boulder is smaller
than Little Rock

six-year-old Lloyd
wishing that all L words
began like his

Aunt Fran fuming
her grandkids know of Sidney,
but not Bing, Crosby

Uncle Saul seething
his grandkids know of Pharrell,
but not Ted, Williams

NRA member
characterizing himself
as a *piece keeper*

a young boy playing
with square stickers, unaware
they are postage stamps

informing
their child Buster he was named
in anger

informing
their child Hortense she was named
while drunk

the well-read warden
defining prison cells as
sentence structures

Study the science of art. Study the art of science.
Develop your senses - especially learn how to see.
Realize that everything connects to everything else.

Leonardo da Vinci

old Kenyan dreaming
of winning Olympic gold
in figure skating

Harry Potter fan
describing Rowling's books
as *spellbinding*

Easter dinner . . .
their grandfather lecturing
about his prostate

Christmas dinner . . .
their grandmother discussing
her G-spot

Swiss tour guide
referring to *yodels*
as *peak calls*

Maternity Ward

Their daughter --
Born in South Korea,
Adopted as an infant
By two Marylanders --
Holds her newborn baby
And begins to weep,
Exclaiming, *I finally*
Get to meet a relative
Biologically related!

five star restaurant . . .

a man and his great-grandson

thumb-wrestling

old trumpet player

hoping, in the afterlife,

he'll still have lips

trying to warm up

after their cross-country run . . .

in the ski lodge

four-year-old judge

banging her *Tootsie Pop*

on *LEGO* bricks

Mom eyes their son,

her husband's clone, while cursing

Damn my weak genes

after her first day
of pre-K, their child stating
Learning is nice

after his first day
of pre-K, their child noting
School sucks

an elder scouring
the chic restaurant's menu
for applesauce

newspaperman
calling his salary
Daily bread

lumbar surgeon
calling her salary
Back pay

as Mom drives, three tongues --
two black Labs' and Grandpa's --
hang out the windows

their three year-old
assuming the Swiss cheese
is damaged

their twelve year-old
assuming the Limburger
is lethal

Describe your parents . . .
her new patient responding
Mommy and Daddy

Describe your parents . . .
his new patient answering
Zero, minus one

dining out . . . a girl
glaring at her Mom asking
for a kids' menu

young prof informing
her boyfriend that *tenured*
is her safe word

Good morning, Rosie . . .
his three year-old replying
Thanks. Sweet dreams.

the elder teaching
her granddaughters it's real cool
to wear mismatched socks

head coach trying
to calm his placekicker with
a knock-knock joke

his wife explaining
why she won't join a gym:

Other people smell

suppertime . . . Grandpa,
grandsons placing Brussels sprouts
in their pockets

wishing his mother
would end her letters to him

Love, not Sincerely

asking her rabbi
if she can dream of muffins
during Passover

mystery writer
referring to attics
as *ghost stories*

old prof reading
a student's evaluation:
Fair, given his age

new prof reading
a student's evaluation:
*Should retire **now***

characterizing
her thirty-pound toddler as
a cute cinderblock

at the mound . . .
pitcher, catcher discussing
the first baseman's wife

her English teacher
calling Santa's aunts, uncles
Relative Clauses

Role Models

Progressive parents
Explaining to their children
Why it's perfectly acceptable,
In the days preceding
Election Day,
To deface all
Donald Trump placards
With bumper stickers stating
Choose Civility

at the bank
an extremely shy woman
trying to withdraw

upon waking up,
the blind-since-birth elder
hoping, today, she'll see

theater ushers
referring to themselves
as *leading men*

ogling physician
performing on his patient
a full-body scan

nine-months-pregnant teen,
her three beer-bellied uncles,
standing in profile

baby's mother
realizing she's got oatmeal
in her cleavage

baby's father
realizing he's got strained prunes
on his toupee

the Texas rancher
designating cows, sheep, pigs
stockholders' assets

film-loving florist
christening his new store
Back to the Fuchsia

the illustrator
hearing again from the bank:
Overdrawn

nude model gouging
the eye of the painter
calling her *Fleshy*

dubbing his daughters,
born a few minutes apart,
The Twincesses

Ever eat pork? . . .
young Jewish boy responding
From a pig?

a child fearing
if she becomes depressed,
she'll turn blue

Ancient Studies prof
asking the teen with torn jeans
Euripides?

before church, telling
their hyperactive daughter
*Get your zip out **now!***

a boy inquiring
whether hell is filled
with hand baskets

a girl inquiring
whether hell ever comes
before high water

deaf educator
describing sign language
as *really handy*

summer school . . . learning
his student has no clothes on,
only body paint

long-retired QB
shouting out signals
from a deep sleep

the sated scholar
referring to himself as
Too Full Professor

Uncle Earl
naming his pit bull
Fifi

Uncle Fred
naming his scorpion
Cuddles

the new dentists
trying their best to make
good first impressions

Family Dinner

Upon hearing
Her great-uncle,
A former Marine,
Mention that he served
In both Korea and Vietnam,
The seven year-old inquires
Which war did you enjoy more?

bullied, spastic teen
wishing he had the power
to intimidate

obese, pimpled teen
wishing she had the power
to captivate

five year-old calling
the *Barbie* Pop-Pop gave her
his *granddoll*

first session ends . . .
his patient leaving behind
her hat, glasses, purse

father of young sons
replaying his Dad's old tape:
Go ask your mother

telling
his profoundly depressed niece
Join a gym

telling
her profoundly depressed niece
Go out, find a man

little Faye Ullman
wishing that her initials
were not obscene

the wordsmith
designating *marriage* as
an *altared state*

the linguist
defining *processed food*
as *ate*

the dentist
offering his poor patient
a bridge loan

a young girl staring
at a *Twix*, wondering where
are the calories

her cat on the desk
and his Great Dane ~ finally
seeing eye to eye

surprised three year-old
learning that a steak costs more
than a *Snickers*

World Lit student
asking if *Dickensian*
means *penile*

Great-Grandma
confusing *sycophant*
with *psychopath*

Great-Grandpa
confusing *galleria*
with *gonorrhea*

a firefighter
describing the heat
he took at work

his sister-in-law
assuming the word *blowhole*
is dirty

his mother-in-law
assuming the word *coccyx*
is filthy

the surgeon telling
his son with the Ph.D.
I'm the true doctor

mistaking
his daughter's new hairdo for
a fright wig

mistaking
her son's new tattoo for
an infected wound

the anorectic
weighing herself after
a pedicure

channeling his Mom
as he attempts to comfort
his fearful daughter

rookie catcher
dreaming his first *Topps* card
describes his father

rookie shortstop
dreaming his first *Topps* card
pictures his mother

five year-old giggling
upon hearing the sailor
say *poop deck*

ten year-old gasping
upon hearing the dentist
say *masticate*

watching Uncle Gus
cook the Porterhouse steak
with a blowtorch

hundred-year-old man
boasting to complete strangers
he's got his own teeth

Grandma noting
her most favorite word
is *mellifluous*

Grandpa noting
his most favorite word
is *pubic*

telling her twin sons
two half-wits do not equal
one wit

dirt road by his house . . .
ill man putting up the sign
Cancer Sucks Lane

Aunt Louise
calling Uncle Stan's hairpiece
a top secret

tourists in Sydney
discovering that *dead horse*
means *tomato sauce*

four-year-old boy
asking whether sun tattoos
make you sweat more

four-year-old girl
asking whether hawk tattoos
make you less frightened

an Italian
awed by friends talking without
using their hands

*A man may imagine things that are false,
but he can only understand things that
are true, for if the things be false, the
apprehension of them is not understanding.*

Isaac Newton

*How many things have to happen to you
before something occurs to you?*

Robert Frost

med school professor
writing on a student's test
Consider plumbing

law school professor
writing on a student's test
Don't have children

the old hippie
defining the word *seed* as
a flower child

obese Uncle Burt
fighting hard to escape
from the buffet

writing to a friend
I have Lou Gehrig's disease . . .
beside that, I'm fine

post-grace . . . all saying
Amen, except for her spouse
whispering *Oh, man*

Lubbock teen,
visiting Brooklyn, missing
barnyard sounds

Brooklyn teen,
visiting Lubbock, missing
graffiti

Aunt Fern explaining
to her six-year-old niece how
Scotch and rye differ

mid heat wave . . . asking
why Grandma said they're skating
on thin ice

on Halloween . . .

Dad, Mom, four sons at *Walmart*
all dressed as Batman

elderly dean
wishing her snowsuit had
mitten attachments

his child arguing
light should always be spelled
l-i-t-e

her child arguing
play should not have
so many meanings

wondering if
Taiwanese New Yorkers call
fine dishes *china*

post-chemo, asking
the tattoo artist to dot
a full head of hair

bedtime . . . following
Can I just say one more thing?
with four paragraphs

formerly poor heir
thanking his late Aunt Celeste
for her good will

the biologist
describing *cocoons* as
changing rooms

300-pound man
telling his colleagues to stop
picturing him nude

autistic child
fretting that the round pizza
came in a square box

dental surgeon,
pedicurist arguing
tooth and nail

touring Gainesville . . .
assuming Spanish moss
are oak tree cobwebs

card shark's daughter
winning her school's spelling bee
with *pinochle*

asked to spell *Muenster*,
the sixth grader querying
The city or cheese?

Filial Fraud

Her 18-year-old son,
still living at home,
drops his wallet and
out flies a driver's license
which, to her shock and
dismay, indicates that
he's three years older and
resides in a state
she's never visited

the scholar speaking
to his four year-old as if
she were a colleague

birthday girl takes out
the expensive doll house,
plays in the gift box

the old man
explaining when honesty
is bad policy

married two weeks,
sporting the tee shirt
Game Over

married six decades,
wearing the sweatshirt
Porn Star

teaching
his three year-old addition
by shooting dice

teaching
his twelve year-old physics
by playing pool

post Game Seven win,
buying the vanity plates
OMGCUBS

teased by classmates,
Myron Mann daydreaming
he's Iron Man

bullied by classmates,
Todd Sweeney daydreaming
he's Sweeney Todd

Great-Grandpa noting
why ketchup and crackers
used to be dinner

denoting the cash
she pays neighbors to shovel
melting snow *slush funds*

James and Karen Ho
opting to name their daughter
Heidi

a second grader
ponders could he outwrestle
an old lion

the chef teaching
his students how to chop
without mincing words

turning down pizza,
their child noting she's afraid
of triangles

drag rap artist
adopting as his stage name
Feminem

tearing up
watching her child disappear
into his laptop

teenaged Ann Ng
praying to wed a kind man
with a long last name

failing math student
completing on the ice
perfect figure eights

Judge Malcolm Larkey
urging his friends not to use
the nickname Mal

Nurse Cassandra Strait
begging her friends not to use
the nickname Cass

young boy mistaking
the Egyptian pyramids
for huge pup tents

the three year-old
screaming at the chopped onion
for making Mom cry

the Harvard prof
preferring *coastal elite*
to *urban snob*

at dinner . . . telling
his great-niece there's a law
against sharing pie

their vet calling
the newborn puppies' photos
pics of the litter

Mafia boss
imagining his life as
a pre-K teacher

upscale restaurant . . .
watching his four year-old
buttering her hand

upscale restaurant . . .
placing his teen's cell phone
in the ice water

her spouse refusing
to use the plush new towel:

It's got lettering

the new director
overhearing choir members
singing her praises

psychology prof
having no clue what to say
to the distraught child

behind the plate,
the umpire confiding
he loves *home work*

praising their teen
for raising surliness
to a high art

their daughter asking
which is more fattening:
dill or parsley

horseman Edgar Young
begging kids not to call him
Mr. Ed

on her birthday
dry eye sufferer wishing
she could weep

the executive
describing *dieting* as
middle management

casting interview . . .
old actress taking Oscars
out of her handbag

third grader asking
if Julius Caesar was named
after the salad

fourth grader asking
which Clinton was born first:
Bill or DeWitt

the barber
introducing his daughter
Delilah

St. Patrick's Day . . .
Rabbi Benjamin Bernstein
adopting a brogue

noting *bikinis*
are tops and bottoms with
nothing in between

football season . . .
deranged Quaker asserting
Bryn Mawr beat Clemson

basketball season . . .
psychotic Jew believing
Yeshiva drubbed Duke

convincing
his young son that Cap'n Crunch
served in World War II

physics tutor
pointing out an *ohm* is just
a bit of resistance

demented elder
recalling all the words to
Rock Around the Clock

winning coach decking
the player who doused him
with *Gatorade*

a child, asked
What's a quarter of a half?,
responding *h*

wishing
her husband had a hobby
other than scowling

beside the duck pond,
Grandpa describing *daybreak*
as the *quack of dawn*

watching porn . . .
realizing the film's co-star
is his nephew's wife

young Ben Arnold
punching the peer who called him
Benedict

the two year-old
wondering if juice comes out
when apples cry

ESL student
assuming *gut feelings*
are stomach aches

watching his girlfriend
sucking spilled Chardonnay
off her shirt sleeve

watching her boyfriend
licking dripped grape jelly
off his kitchen floor

Waco tenth grader
assuming that UMass
is for Catholics

masquerade party . . .
two-year-old ninjas holding
swords, pacifiers

urging his daughters
not to be sports cheerleaders:
Play . . . let fans cheer you

post bank robbery . . .
in the getaway van,
a toddler crying

Gramps calling the birds
shunning his gift of matzo
anti-Semites

over chili,
two SMU professors
chatting in Hindi

over clam chowder,
two Holy Cross professors
joking in Yiddish

Mom's favorite snack? . . .
the four year-old answering
Tic Tacs

Dad's favorite snack? . . .
the five year-old responding
Michelob

musician buying
a first-class airplane seat
for his double bass

Bates College dean
wishing Norman from *Psycho*
were surnamed Colby

after his last fall,
the tightrope walker noting
My job's on the line

EMT Joyce Day
opting to give her newborn
the first name Mae

bringing him soap
when her half-drunk grandfather
asked for more *suds*

chess champion
stating why she loves pawns:
They can become queens

in Central Park
a kindergartner searching
for T. Rex bones

college b-ball fan
asking how bobcats, bearcats
and wildcats differ

her five-year-old son,
asked *What do you like to play?*,
stating *By myself*

in Anchorage,
a high schooler confusing
Yukon and UConn

anorectic child
wondering how much
eyebrows weigh

the electrician
describing an *outage*
as *delighting*

young girl regretting
putting *Skittles* in the ears
of her sleeping Dad

the OB noting
he delivered quintuplets
Labor Day '05

their three year-old
confusing Thanksgiving
with Groundhog Day

their eight year-old
confusing bagpipers in kilts
with Gay Pride marchers

Author's Note

Dr. Robert H. Deluty is Associate Dean Emeritus of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. A psychology professor at UMBC from 1980 to 2016, he was named Presidential Teaching Professor in 2002. He and his wife, Barbara (a clinical psychologist), live in Ellicott City, Maryland and have two children, Laura and David, and two granddaughters, Ava and Claire. Dr. Deluty's poems and essays have been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Pegasus Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Voices: The Art and Science of Psychotherapy*, *Psychiatric Times*, *Jewish Currents*, the *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Welcome Home*, *Muse of Fire*, *Maryland Family Magazine*, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, *The Faculty Voice*, and many other newspapers, journals, and anthologies. *The Noblest Pleasure* is his fifty-third book.

