

A MINGLED YARN

Poems by
Robert H. Deluty



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too poor to afford

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suggesting her son
suggesting her spouse
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nixing travel
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her advisee
his advisee
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Chem prof reading
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*The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,
good and ill together.*

William Shakespeare

Quinn Bickel
asking office co-workers
to call her *Q*

old, unmarried clerk
wishing he had pursued
gynecology

neo-Nazi teen
planning to change his surname
from Brown to White

ecofriendly teen
planning to change her surname
from Gray to Green

the lounge pianist
noting his tip jar's the place
singles congregate

Assuaging Guilt

Born in Mumbai,
The young woman explains
To her sixth grade students
Why she chose to teach at
A Navajo Nation school:
*If Christopher Columbus
Hadn't been looking for India,
Your folks would not have
Experienced so much suffering*

on-line student
asking her retired Dad
to take the midterm

preschoolers treating
the Sunday crossword puzzles
as mazes

Bronx homeowner
adorning her garden gnomes
in pinstripes

Pittsburgh homeowner
painting his pink flamingoes
black and gold

dumping her beau
after his folks call each other
Mommy and Daddy

asking the chemist
how much sugar does it take
to cool hot coffee

80th birthday . . .
the old woman wishing
she had a sibling

immigrant plumber
confounding *log train*
and *clogged drain*

immigrant barber
confusing *come over*
with *comb-over*

watching her blind date
attempt to remove ear wax
with a steak knife

Cubs Win It All! . . .

a Chicago inpatient
hallucinating

a teacher reading
his eighth grader's test answer,

Silas Mariner

a teacher reading
her twelfth grader's test answer,

Oedipus Wrecks

third day of work . . .
their son asking his boss
for a raise

Army-Navy game . . .
a sergeant and an ensign
playing *Stratego*

neurotic Aunt Rae
explaining she's different,
not disordered

psychotic Aunt Rose
explaining she's enlightened,
not deranged

the umpire's son
noting that his father
works at home

a prof attempting
to make up for weak teaching
by serving donuts

pack-a-day smoker,
aged eighty-four, attending
his doctor's wake

telling young Barbie
her name has the same root
as *barbarian*

sprawled on the sidewalk,
Grandpa regrets attempting
his first ollie

informing
her nephew he smells
very athletic

two sloshed Santas
in front of St. Paul's Church
duking it out

a thief meeting
his former attorney
in the prison mess

In Buffalo

The first-year graduate student,
Born and raised in the Bronx,
Goes ice skating for the first time.
After taking his twelfth spill
In under seven minutes,
He turns to the young children
Pointing and laughing at him and
Explains he's a clown with
Disney on Ice attempting
To perfect his pratfalls.

his mother
noting she's jealous of folks
who don't know him

2:00 a.m. . . . spotting
their drunk Dad in the backyard
playing croquet, nude

assuming the man
with the face and neck tattoos
is not a lawyer

assuming the man
with the face and neck tattoos
has a lawyer

a young professor
wishing he could educate,
not just entertain

Egyptian elder
in Boston, mid-March, building
her first snowman

Norwegian elder
in Maui, mid-June, riding
his first breaker

young Dominique
learning a breed of chickens
shares her name

deranged rabbi
wearing a prayer shawl
and a Batman cowl

deranged priest
wearing a cassock
and tefillin

a grad student
describing her advisor
as *soul-shrinking*

US 1 . . . Grandma
doing eighty on her way
to the racetrack

ESL teacher
defining *are* as
is for two

based on Dad's tirades,
a boy assumes his neighbors
are surnamed Pinhead

his Sikh R.A.
reminding Dr. Goldstein
today's Yom Kippur

senior diplomat
tutoring young colleagues
on euphemisms

a Bangor girl
inquiring why their state has
but one syllable

a Biloxi boy
questioning why their state
needs four s's

Describe your son . . .
the teen's mother replying
Unsavory

telling the student
her grade of *D-minus*
was a huge gift

a linguist loving
Clint Eastwood's anagram,
old west action

a film buff hating
Clint Eastwood's anagram,
a twisted colon

cut from the team . . .
the coach offering him
the scorekeeper job

wedding night . . .
trying to be romantic
despite E. coli

history exam . . .
a Jewish seventh grader
writing *Genghis Cohn*

their ten year-old
envisioning the statues
built in his honor

imagining
their rabbi as a pirate
shouting *Ahoy vey!*

Waco twelfth grader
noting he plans to apply
to *Old Miss*

Dallas twelfth grader
asking if Rhode Island
has an *A&M*

Austin twelfth grader
questioning whether it is
Princeton State

post-commencement . . .

Yale grad pouring gasoline
on her Econ texts

post-commencement . . .

Tufts grad placing in the trash
his beer-soaked class notes

post-commencement . . .

retiring Duke professor
shredding his necktie

a child answering

What'll you be when grown up?
with *I hope happy*

doctoral defense . . .

striving to remain focused
despite shingles

ex baseball player
noting why he loves swimming:
No groin injuries

ex football player
noting why he loves bowling:
No concussions

struggling to read
the sign with nine bullet holes:
No Target Shooting

a man greeting
the luggage Delta misplaced
sixteen years ago

the old accountant
wishing he could embrace
chaos

Vietnam vet
still harboring anger
toward LBJ

Vietnam vet
still harboring outrage
toward Jane Fonda

their new neighbor
mentioning that he has set
Christmas lights records

Maine restaurateur
urging patrons to eat, drink,
and be crabby

algebra teacher
wishing he could give a grade
lower than F

The Babe

Utterly unfazed
At being a centenarian,
The family patriarch
Feels depressed and disoriented,
Struggling with the realization that
His beloved kid sister
Is about to turn
Ninety-eight

under *Religion?*
the applicant writing
Orthodox Pagan

Aunt Lil swearing
she spotted Pope Francis
at Bernstein's Deli

in a bar, the sot
glimpsing *Drink Canada Dry*,
shouts *Impossible!*

their child arguing
second grade created
his ADHD

their teen asserting
Sesame Street gave him
false hope

while meditating,
his wife using the mantra
cashmere

while meditating
her spouse using the mantra
billionaire

portraying her teen
as all mouth, stomach,
and glands

comics debating
what's funnier to the face:
cream pie or seltzer

comics debating
what's funnier to the butt:
pudding or fire

Bonfila Bello
naming her firstborn son
Alexander Graham

dour Joplinite
pronouncing *Missouri*
as *Misery*

a sixteen year-old
babysitting her uncle
aged three

after defeating
her great-grandmother at jacks,
screaming *Booya!*

after defeating
his great-grandson at checkers,
shouting *In your face!*

identical twin
referring to herself
as the kind one

identical twin
referring to himself
as one of a kind

countdown to Christmas . . .
a depressed man viewing it
as a doomsday clock

the shirtmakers
christening their daughter
Polly Esther

intending to write
public forum, leaving out
the *l*

after Mom's death,
the sixty-year-old man
washing his first plate

explaining
to his Grandpa why Conan
is funny

explaining
to her grandson why Leno
is hysterical

meeting the parents
of the troubled fourth grader . . .
smelling Scotch, weed

a child believing
the angels have decided
he's on his own

overhearing
the gangsta rapper humming
Nessun Dorma

asking his shrink
if there's a diagnosis,
nincompoop

asking her shrink
who are more pathetic:
schlemiels or nudniks

their grandmother
calling her knees *joints where*
children are welcome

a girl questioning
if eyesight can be so sharp
you see through your lids

Grandpa Earl
confiding he's not had sex
since Quayle was V.P.

heavyweight boxer
blaming his first round knockout
on Mom's corned beef hash

obese, acned teen
dreaming being mistaken
for Tom Brady

her fifth grader
explaining why fire
brings him joy

his ninth grader
explaining why success
brings her despair

*Expecting life to treat you well because
you are a good person is like expecting
an angry bull not to charge because
you are a vegetarian.*

Shari R. Barr

wishing his students
had as much motivation
as self-centeredness

wishing her teachers
had as much compassion
as book-smarts

Nobelists recalls
trying to kill himself
as a teenager

struggling comic
insisting on characters
above laughs

post-bender . . .
a woman wondering if
she shot her spouse

a Greek in Macon
hoping someday to move
north to Athens

in the mailbox
finding her lost wallet
with extra cash

inner-city boy
defining success as
not going to jail

inner-city girl
interpreting success as
not getting pregnant

in the hospice . . .
a child bringing his great-aunt
a whoopee cushion

teaching his kids
the nature of good lies . . .
when playing golf

the English teacher
wishing *sanction* were not
its own opposite

the English teacher
wishing *synonym* had
a synonym

the English teacher
wishing *abbreviation*
were shorter

his young son
assuming *seersucker*
is pornographic

April 1st morning . . .
waking up his folks screaming
Freeze! FBI!

biology class . . .
a student asking how long
armpit hair can grow

spelling bee . . .
a Quaker boy losing
with *blitzkrieg*

spelling bee . . .
a vegan girl winning
with *prosciutto*

hundred-year-old man
roaring with his great-grandsons
at Harpo Marx

contented toddler
sucking her pacifier,
holding two others

covetous young man
dining with a goddess,
eyeing another

Morgan Smith
wishing his girlfriend's name
were not Morgan Smith

the army cook
referring to potatoes
as MASH units

a teen purchasing
a copy of *Mein Kampf*
to set on fire

twelve-year-old girl
fighting off embarrassment
saying *titular*

twelve-year-old boy
fighting off the giggles
saying *Dick Van Dyke*

telling her shrink
she dreams about him
consumed by ants

Storrs high school senior
fuming that UConn is not
in the Ivy League

heartbroken Grandpa
reading *White Castle* now sells
veggie sliders

the prisoner
whispering to the hangman
Where's my stunt double?

young anarchist
uncertain which system
he's railing against

the prof suggesting
her children say *wet missile*
rather than *spitball*

a Topeka man
describing Kansas as
crops + tornadoes

on her deathbed,
aged ninety-seven, moaning
I've so much to learn

Rose Casanova
naming her newborn son
Romeo

ornithologists
wishing one pro team were named
the Nightingales

ichthyologists
wishing one pro team were named
the Guppies

felinologists
wishing one pro team were named
the Kittens

her Dad explaining
why he hates the concept
of egg white omelets

the six year-old
pleasing Uncle Irv, choosing
seltzer over *Coke*

the nine year-old
elating Aunt Ruth, choosing
lox over bacon

a dean informing
the coach *physicaler*
is not a word

retired pro QB
boasting of his record:
most times sacked

neo-Nazi thug
proclaiming he is now
a fruitarian

young actress
learning she's been voted
Most overrated

veteran actor
learning he's been judged
Creepiest celeb

inpatient unit . . .
three abused teenagers
comparing damage

knife-wielding chef
foiling the armed robbery
of her restaurant

fifth grade students
emulating wild geese,
head home honking

Delawareans
declaring *We're the first state . . .*
and that's about all

grade school principal
deeming the new math teacher
a great addition

wishing their daughter
did not have mixed martial arts
as a passion

wishing their son
had not picked pornography
as a career

James Ivey III
praying in church for a son,
the IV

his sister
refusing to date men
who own galoshes

her brother
refusing to date women
who own skorts

in Warsaw, Li Yan
asking if any Poles have
one-syllable names

watching T.V.,
hearing a film actress say
Go freak yourself

watching T.V.,
hearing a film actor say
Motherfleck

Granddad insisting
children older than twelve months
should not be babied

rundown diner's wall . . .
staring at thirteen versions
of the Last Supper

Uncle Sid claiming
he married Aunt Beatrice
because she irons

Aunt Martha claiming
she married Uncle Randolph
because he's neat, prompt

ten past midnight . . .
a homeless teen singing
a lullaby

new Holy Cross prof,
a Jew, wishing the teams
were not Crusaders

new Rutgers prof,
a Muslim, wishing the teams
were not Scarlet Knights

four-year-old cousins
concluding burps are much less
funner than farts

post subway crash . . .
the conductor announcing
Something went wrong

asking Nana
if she'll go with her to see
Fifty Shades of Grey

Your job? . . . the stripper
answering her boyfriend's Mom,
Ecdysiast

two three year-olds
debating which are faster:
tigers or airplanes

two six year-olds
debating which are smarter:
roaches or houseflies

cops discovering
the perp in their high-speed chase
is an attorney

his date describing
her two great loves: opera
and pro wrestling

a father finding
his four year-old's fearlessness
frightening

a mother finding
her eight year-old's heartlessness
terrifying

on location . . .
informing the movie star
she has head lice

new congressman
learning *My good friend*
precedes an insult

new congressman
learning nothing kind follows
With all due respect

pro basketball game . . .
his girlfriend rooting against
guys with fanned mohawks

ladies golf tourney . . .
her boyfriend rooting for
slim women in skirts

Mom insisting
he ditch the four lawn chairs
in his living room

Dad insisting
he ditch the picnic table
in his kitchen

Grandma insisting
he ditch the ottoman
in his bathroom

her husband
blaming his bulges on
ill-fitting clothes

a child assuming
Christian Scientists work
in religious labs

describing to friends
her spring break in Florida
as five flu-filled nights

physics grad student
telling the preschoolers
he studies black holes

psych grad student
telling the preschoolers
she studies sadness

the doctor trying
not to laugh at her rash
shaped like a penis

Paula Irene Glass
raging at her parents
for the monogram

Christmas eve . . .
watching their priest on T.V.
taking a perp walk

her boyfriend's kitchen . . .
after dinner, watching him
scrub the paper plates

seven-year-old girl
whispering in her aunt's ear
Mom says you're a slut

on Rosh Hashanah
watching the Jewish bowler
getting his eighth split

shocking his teen
by knowing whom Swaggy P
is dating now

in the locker room,
staring at the nipple rings
of his grandfather

a friend responding
to his twenty-four senryu
with *I liked your poem*

a prof responding
to her sixty-five haiku
with *I liked three*

the bakers naming
their daughter Eve Clarinda,
E Clair for short

When were you born? . . .
her blind date responding
During the winter

Where do you work? . . .
his blind date answering
That's too personal

Thai adoptee
believing babies arrive
via airplanes

Penny Cade loving
that her middle initial
is an R

his son replying
to *My Dad's smarter than yours*
with *I agree*

acupuncturist
admitting he's terrified
of vaccinations

his wife refusing
to dine at the steakhouse:
Portions are too big

an elder
explaining why she resides
at *Walmart*

in rainy Stockholm,
three Nobel winners sharing
one small umbrella

tenth grader learning
the guy who crushed him at squash
is seventy-two

college dean learning
the guy who crushed him at chess
dropped out of grade school

two morticians
composing for their business
an upbeat jingle

her child questioning
if an outlaw's opposite
is an in-law

young Jo Katz noting
she's a person of color:
I'm kind of pinkish

*In the game of life it's a good idea to
have a few early losses, which relieves
you of the pressure of trying to maintain
an undefeated season.*

Bill Vaughan

asked to complete

Don't bite the hand . . . a six year-old

replying *That hits*

asked to complete

Love all, trust . . . an eight year-old

answering *My Mom*

asked to complete

No news is . . . a nine year-old

responding *Ancient*

asked to complete

A penny saved . . . a ten year-old

stating *Is worthless*

asked to complete

Strike while the . . . a twelve year-old

noting *Flies are near*

her teen believing
a two-dollar bill must be
counterfeit

telling his doctor
the precise day and time
he became possessed

Great-Grandpa
uttering his last words:
Buy American

Great-Grandma
uttering her last words:
Knock, knock

informing his wife
a long sigh means *Yes*,
an eye roll *No*

family of five
coming down with the measles
at Disneyland

a Wisconsin boy
explains the Packers' colors:
Ripe and unripe cheese

old man . . . unable
to recall how to boil eggs,
calling 9-1-1

Naples-born Scotsman
naming his bulldog puppies
Winston and Guido

Pisa-born Asian
naming her beagle puppies
Lee and Ning

ailing track star,
in bed, waiting for the flu
to run its course

a chemist calling
The Time Machine's writer
Mercury Wells

a chemist calling
A Taste for Death's author
Palladium James

wondering
at what point his daughter
went beyond *quirky*

an eight-year-old Jew
asking can she sit shiva
for her dead hamster

nicknaming their sons
Albert, Alvin and Alphonse
Alb, Alv and Alf

walking down the aisle
the bride's father whispering
It's not too late

in the front row
the groom's mother whispering
He could do better

beside the altar
the best man whispering
I give it one year

State of the Union . . .
focusing on Boehner's tan
instead of the speech

in his bedroom
the seventh grader listing
his enemies

in her wheelchair
the blind, deaf elder counting
her blessings

their Dad admitting
investing ninety grand in
XFL Football

their Great-Granddad
confessing he helped design
the Edsel

too poor to afford
a shrink, discussing his dream
with a pharmacist

the coach enjoying
mangling his students' names,
Fuqua and Tucci

suggesting her son
change his PIN number
from *1234*

suggesting her spouse
change his computer password
from *password*

describing his Mom
as committing suicide
over four decades

learning her grandson
is the chief sponsor for
Porn Expo '15

half-French, half-Greek . . .
calling her two matriarchs
Grand-mère and Yaya

half-Russian, half-Brit . . .
calling his two grandfathers
Dedushka and Chief

exhausted plumber
explaining to the children
his job is draining

at the funeral
her Dad treating tears as if
they were enemies

Great-Gram calling
the hundred-year-old man's death
a great tragedy

Beware

Rather than purchase
A home security system,
Their father puts up a sign
On their apartment door
In New York City
Warning intruders of
Surveillance cameras,
Armed guards,
Attacks dogs, and
Poison ivy

Swiss mountain climber
conducting research on what
Sherpa guides eat

James and Sheila Barr
opting to name their twins
Gabe and Candy

the bride's Muslim Dad
asking the priest to tone down
the Jesus stuff

at the mall, watching
two therapists reasoning
with their shrieking son

her young nephew
questioning if she's pregnant
or just tubby

post-wake . . . older sibs
of the dead eighty year-old
smoking cigars

high school parking lot . . .
driver's ed student striking
her physics teacher

turning forty-five,
sitting beside his Grandma,
holding his grandson

hospital breakfast . . .
three interns gobbling down
scrapple, hash browns

her child explaining
If there's no punishment,
there's no crime

mid-eulogy . . .
the deceased's niece completing
a crossword puzzle

mid-eulogy . . .
the deceased's demented aunt
shouting *Who died?*

a boy inquiring
whether mad cows are brought
to shrinks or vets

pregnant teen
noting she prefers *knocked up*
to *with child*

bitterly cold night . . .
a deeply depressed elder
drinking antifreeze

asking his father,
a minor league catcher,
whether he's famous

asking her mother,
a shot put champion, if
she does commercials

ninety-year-old man
telling his dearest friends
he fears dying young

Harvard professor
confessing that he loved

Hee Haw

their teen announcing
he'd gladly choose *infamous*
over *commonplace*

racing down
the beltway's center lane:
two unicyclists

the physician
hoping that, in heaven,
he'll be called *Doctor*

asking Grandpa Lou
whether his given name
is Lucifer

her child mistaking
the Statue of Liberty
for Mt. Rushmore

after their break-up,
the college QB trying
to court her back

a student writing
why his assignment is late:
I've been real busy

young Bronx mobster
framing the first C-note
he extorted

Eat a square meal! . . .
their twelve year-old suggesting
ravioli

nixing travel,
her computer geek/husband
opts for site-seeing

first grader singing
as loud as she can, muffling
her parents' screaming

after wedding
Fred Zucker, Jane Cox choosing
not to hyphenate

their teen averring
that she is developing,
but they've stopped

Don't you feel ashamed? . . .
pie-stealing boy responding
No, it was sooooo good

Granddad admitting
he loves the new iPhone
more than his children

showing an awed boy
that solitaire can be played
with actual cards

Rough Road Ahead

Towards the end of the first session
With a highly anxious and depressed
Seven-year-old girl, the psychologist
Requests that her father,
Sitting in the waiting room,
Come join them for a few minutes
To offer his support and perspective.
No thank you, says the father.
I'm here only as the chauffeur.

Aunt Syl explaining
why eating pickled tongue
always brings good luck

Aunt Gert explaining
why eating canned squid
led to her divorce

a nine year-old
requesting the optician
bring him monocles

chef Alfred Poe
asking his acquaintances
not to call him Al

observing
the old rabbi tearing up
during *Danny Boy*

via e-mail

a student asking *Which genes*
make you look fat?

Navy captain
referring to his wife
as the Admiral

the perfume seller
clarifying for a child
toilet water

Sol Goldman giving
fifty dollars to *Goodwill*
after eating pork

cloudless June morning . . .
OCD child packs a scarf,
noting *Just in case*

telling the grandkids
that, in her home, cheesecake
makes a great breakfast

telling the grandkids
that, in his home, cheese fries
make a great dinner

boxer Nick Olsen
naming his son Travis Keith
for the initials

a movie star
asking whether her mug shot
can be photoshopped

mid-blizzard . . .
an old mortician cursing
the dead of winter

Dad demonstrating
the **only** correct way
to eat *Oreos*

wedding reception . . .
Aunt Elizabeth trimming
Uncle Ed's eyebrow

man with celiac
fainting as he walks past
the French bakery

trying to control
his rage at the slowpoke
in the far left lane

a triplet
referring to her sibs as
former wombmates

farmer's market . . .
a five-year-old boy searching
for *Skittles*

Berkeley prof
excoriating Israel,
ignoring ISIS

the geneticist
calling his mixed-race grandkids
the hybrids

her advisee
seeking a statistics course
that's *hugely fun*

his advisee
seeking a biochem course
that's *a sure A*

their child sneezing
on purpose so that others
will say *Bless you*

Stockholm café . . .
young lovers speaking
Sweetish

Helsinki café . . .
divorcing couple speaking
Finnish

Psych prof reading
the eval, *I learned nothing*
but had a great time

Chem prof reading
the eval, *The teacher should*
try taxidermy

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 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. *A Mingled Yarn* is his forty-ninth book.

