



Fierce Pajamas: An Anthology of Humor Writing from The New Yorker

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When Harold Ross founded *The New Yorker* in 1925, he described it as a “comic weekly.” And although it has become much more than that, it has remained true in its irreverent heart to the founder’s description, publishing the most illustrious literary humorists of the modern era—among them Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker, Groucho Marx, George S. Kaufman, James Thurber, S. J. Perelman, Peter De Vries, Mike Nichols, Marshall Brickman, Woody Allen, Donald Barthelme, Calvin Trillin, George W. S. Trow, Veronica Geng, Garrison Keillor, Ian Frazier, Roy Blount, Jr., Bruce McCall, Steve Martin, Christopher Buckley, and Paul Rudnick.

This anthology gathers together, for the first time, the funniest work of more than seventy *New Yorker* contributors. Parodists take on not only writers like Hemingway and Kerouac, but TV documentaries, Italian cinema, and etiquette books. (Enough have been published, Robert Benchley maintains, “that there should be no danger of toppling over forward into the wrong soup, or getting into arguments as to which elbow belongs on which arm.”) Other pieces offer perspectives on the heights of fame, the depths of social embarrassment, and the ups and downs of love and sex. Such well-loved sketches as Thurber’s “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” take their place alongside light-hearted essays on food, tennis, and taxis, and flights of fancy that follow an apparently simple premise to the point of no return, and sometimes well beyond. Here you will find large insights (Woody Allen: “Why does man kill? He kills for food. And not only food: frequently there must be a beverage”) and hard-earned wisdom (Ian Frazier on dating your mom: “Here is a grown, experienced, loving woman—one you do not have to go to a party or a singles bar to meet, one you do not have to go to great lengths to know”). And, not least, a great deal of helpful advice, including Steve Martin’s on memory and middle age: “Bored? Here’s a way the over-fifty set can easily kill a good half hour: 1. Place your car keys in your right hand. 2. With your left hand, call a friend and confirm a lunch or dinner date. 3. Hang up the phone. 4. Now look for your car keys.”

A rich selection of humorous verse includes caustic gems by Dorothy Parker, the effortless whimsy of Phyllis McGinley, and Ogden Nash’s unforgettable slapstick prosody, as well as forays by luminaries who ought to have known better, like Robert Graves, Elizabeth Bishop, and W. H. Auden.

A wonderful gift for others, or a delightful treat for oneself, **Fierce Pajamas** is a treasury of laughter from a publication described by Auden as “the best comic magazine in existence.”

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