

THE TALK

Another one was in the news last night,
so Dad decides it's time we had the Talk,
the one about fitting the description
and how to survive a routine traffic stop.
It isn't fair, but that's the way it is—
I'd better learn to cope: tone down my voice,
my clothes, my posture; don't be in the wrong
neighborhoods, especially late at night.
He says he hates how good he's gotten at it,
the manner that's become second nature
through practice and stories shared by family
and friends at cookouts, weddings, funerals.
"But, Dad," I finally said, "we're not black."
"Oh," he said. "Then never mind."

ONCE UPON A TIME

She let him peek inside
her fairy tale: the cottage
on Apple Orchard Lane,
its ivy-covered chimney
and kitchen garden, its
cricket-chirping hedges
under a half-moon cradle
ready to be rocked.

He asked if she had room
for one more character.

Perhaps a troubadour
who wanders by and stays,
happily a while,
if not ever after.

WAVER

The surfers bob and wait, waver between
boredom and a ride like never before:
wetsuits barely sealing the shiver below
that wants to rock and awe, hover above

under the influence of salted tide,
blood thumping in water-blocked ears beneath
the crash of foaming liquid avalanche.

INSANITY

Einstein said insanity is doing
the same thing over and over again
but expecting different results.

That doesn't mean you can do
the same thing over and over again
and get the same results;
that doesn't mean you can do
different things over and over again
and get the same results.

You might think you're doing
different things over and over again
and getting the same result;

you might think you're doing
pretty much the same thing
and getting the same result
or getting nowhere at all—

pretty much the same thing
Einstein said insanity is doing
or getting: nowhere at all,
but expecting different results.

WILDEBEEST BLUES

We'd better hurry up and join the stampede
so we don't get left behind.

Never mind.

Let them go, charging ahead as if
they're on some kind of mission, and not just stuck
in the middle of the herd, trying to keep up.

Even if you made it to the front,
what would that get you? First one over
the cliff? Let's stay here, take a look
around, enjoy the long grass for a while.

I know the lions will come in silence
and can't be outrun or thrown off the scent.
I'd rather their teeth find my softest flesh
than be trampled by my own kind.