

David Clewell

an excerpt from

Albert Einstein Held Me in His Arms

although my parents didn't know it at the time.
And if I knew anything, even on some vaguely molecular level,
I surely wasn't talking. No one was the wiser, except
for Einstein, of course, taken with my small charms.
He was crazy about how I couldn't stop smiling,
drooling in my carriage on a Sunday afternoon in Princeton—
the town my mother loved just driving to and getting out and
losing herself in, absolutely smitten. And my pedestrian father
was crazy about my mother, so even if that meant
another goddamn trip to Highfalutinsville, New Jersey,
he'd be there without fail, forever along for the ride.

The way I finally heard it, Einstein was on his knees
in a sweatshirt, rumpled chinos, and sneakers, pulling weeds—
Merely being himself, my father would say later, utterly impressed.
Einstein had that down to a science at 112 Mercer, the unassuming
white frame house where he cultivated flowers, where he played violin
precisely in sync with his favorite recordings late into the night.
Where he famously met with Bertrand Russell, Kurt Gödel, and
Wolfgang Pauli
for philosophic forays into the schnapps, then inevitably higher mathematics.
But on that one historic Sunday in the spring of my first year,
Einstein himself welcomed the unrenowned likes of my mother and father.
This twentieth-century giant picked me up with some easy peekaboo
small talk
in the last of the afternoon's fading light until, eventually, genius
or no genius, I couldn't take it anymore, and I made a tiny grab
for his wildly theoretical hair . . .