

Malcolm

Malcolm is mysterious.
Autism does that
when the “cures” don't work.
He talks
to himself
a lot,
to me,
only occasionally.
He answers
where, what, when,
not why or how.
His smile,
luminous;
his laugh,
irresistible;
reasons for his hilarity
(in bed each night
or randomly, inappropriately)
obscure:
“What's so funny, Malcolm?”
He won't say.
Or can't.

I pray.

Malcolm is bound
by misunderstandings.
Autism does that
when the “cures” don't work.
How to explain
not waving at men
when he's been taught
to greet everyone?
“It doesn't make sense, but...”
So he doesn't listen.
Will he get a job?
Will he fall in love?
I pray he has the chance
for willing surrender,
to a woman.
I pray the police never ask
for his unwilling surrender

or mistake his autistic behavior
for noncompliance.

I pray.

Malcolm is free.
Autism does that, too.
Free
to immerse
in his favorite virtual reality,
no glasses needed.
Free
to like
any music at all
without worrying
if he's cool enough
or black enough.
Free
to do
zumba and tap,
no matter who sees.
Free
to be
gentle.
Free
to be
sweet.
Free
from having to impress
with a. stone cold, rigid mask
of masculinity.
Free
to be
Malcolm.

And because
Malcolm
feels free,

I pray.

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