

Tony Gloegler

October 31

The only sign it's Halloween is this one little girl wearing a ballerina costume who hides behind her mother's leg when I wave, smile. Her mom pulls her closer, the tilt of her head apologizing for her daughter's shyness. No one is knocking on doors, forming lines at store counter tops, carrying shopping bags, plastic pumpkins, collecting candy on this perfect, hoodie-wearing weather day for racing up, down blocks, taking stairs two at a time hoping for Milky Ways, Chuckles, Turkish Taffy bars, groaning anytime anyone drops a banana, candy corn, a handful of pennies into the loot.

If hard rain, threats of gale force winds hadn't delayed, eventually cancelled my connecting flight last night, I'd be walking Portland streets with Jesse toward breakfast: one dry pancake, four strips of bacon, extra crispy for him, pancakes drowning in syrup and butter, a spinach omelet for me and then down to the nearby falls to throw rocks into the water.

As a kid Jesse never tolerated a mask, a costume and the only candy he ever ate was Skittles. I guess he never wanted to be Davy Crockett, Robin Hood, a pirate, Elgin Baylor, anybody but himself. Back in my apartment I'm disappointed, missing him badly-it's been a year and a half with Covid-wondering what Jesse felt after they showed him his calendar and erased my name, printed PLANE TROUBLE to explain,

help ease his anxiety over
this change in plan, replaced
it with AIDEN the counselor
who takes him hiking, bike
riding, and posts photos
of Jesse's wide, exaggerated
smiles. Not certain but semi-
convinced he's vanished me
from his thoughts until the next
time he finds TONY slotted
in a box on next month's schedule,
but always wanting to believe
in feelings he's too autistic
to articulate: he thinks of me,
wishes I lived nearer, spent
more time with him. I feel
relieved, selfishly better
when his service coordinator
sends an email saying staff
reported and I quote,, *Jess
seemed upset, bummed out
all weekend about not seeing
Tony.*

Tony Gloegler is a life-long resident of New York City who managed group homes for the mentally challenged in Brooklyn for years. His work has appeared in *Rattle*, *New Ohio Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, *BODY & Pittsburgh Poetry Review* . His most recent book *What Kind Of Man* (NYQ Books 2020) which was named a finalist in the 2021 Patterson Poetry Prize.