

THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT

by Nicole Kubilus

Parents, teachers, therapists
Their praise were plaques and trophies

Most cured of autism

Most deceiving of autism

The pictures on my plaques
Were open mouths talking
Smiling, laughing, making eye contact
With the people behind the camera

The cheap gold trophy bust
Was of me dressed as a teacher
Standing in front of a drawing demo
Facing enraptured student gazes

I also had framed certificates
Two college degrees
Multiple coaching certifications
On leadership, equity, and inclusion

The whole wall was covered
But it wasn't enough
Savants have more accolades
At least shown on the TV

Because that's the only way
To gain respect in a neurotypical world:

Copious amounts

Of plaques and trophies

If I had enough gold in my house
It'd boost my resumé and social clout

I wouldn't be alone anymore

Heck, I could *choose* to be alone

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But there wasn't enough prizes
To fill an empty room
And there wasn't enough energy
To earn eternal respect

At some point, I had
More cuts and bite marks
On my wrists
Than awards

And they didn't
Replace a person's hug
When I was having a panic attack
And wanted to kill myself

Part of me died that day
The part of me that knew
When it was my time to go
That none of the trophies mattered

I threw away everything
Nothing shimmered in my room
Except for a note
Written in gold Sharpie

*The greatest achievement
You will ever have
Is making the choice
To stay alive*