

At 19, I am diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder

I'd like to believe nothing is easier than this life. I'd like to believe
everything is. The truth – that I'll never know otherwise – is something worse, so I lie,
choke it,
spend days after the appointment
imagining how a brain transplant might feel. If it were ever viable,
it'd be long after I'm alive, or long after I'd really want to be,

& anyway some part of me still wonders if
this is it: no other way to watch a crow but the way
that I've learned to. What I'm sure of is
what my body tells me, & before my therapist named it trauma,
it was self-preservation, recompense,
apology:

be small so you're forgotten,
tie your hands, halve your voice,
only rock when you're alone,
when he fucks you let him do whatever he wants,
& when you scream,
snare the spit so there is no mess. Try very hard
not to be dirty. Try very hard not to be wrong.
(You want to be loved, don't you? *Don't you?*)

Some nights, I tear an opening in my cerebrum. I measure
the exact dimensions of
things that should come easy:
my friend who is not like me, who,
when she steps into a busy place,
knows not
to unhinge her scalp –
not all bodies, I've learned,
are secretly terrariums for house spiders.

What I really mean is this:
to believe I could've been different
is the saddest truth I might tell myself,
so instead I have started telling myself that
I'm weak – never meant to find my way here or, at least, not to last.
I play repentance in a dozen

different ways: all the wrongs written in utero
another reason for letting men take, for fastening grooved palms as one
so I can christen them wellsprings.

Eve bit the apple, then childbirth became agony,
& I learn from her that everything and nothing
I have ever loved would lead to this, like how I told myself
I could never try dying
because it would hurt my mom too much,
& I don't want her to wonder what she could've changed.
Could she have? Certain mathematical questions
have answers no one can find, which is the same as being unsolvable

even when the mathematicians are hopeful. I think the stories we tell ourselves
are unsolvable all the same. I just know
I tell this one
because it means
I might live with myself some day.