The Obligatory Future Child Poem

Autistic women are sometimes collectively referred to as the ‘Lost Girls’. This is due to our often being misdiagnosed with other conditions, or undiagnosed entirely, as a consequence of sexist ideas and stereotypes surrounding Autism.

If I were to have one, I’d call her Adelaide after the Australian city because it’s where, if I could, I’d fly south every year for my winter hit of kindling-wild summer – she’d lie in her pram, at the starts of birches and utility poles, enraptured at their branches’ and cables’ flickering before the sky, and later she’d hate hair brushing time, and just as my parents, devoid of the vernacular, always knew, I’d know there was something wrong different – we’re known as the Lost Girls because they lose us between the party table and the water feature, between the taunt/pinch and the teacher’s averted eye, between the unzipped fly and the bed, and to be a Lost Girl is to reach through smoke for a rung that isn’t there, to lick a climbing frame’s steel limb as other children play Grandma’s footsteps, this loss so whole and irredeemable, us like iPhones dropped from research vessels above the Challenger Deep, that I could never bear to let love surge in over me: please let me tell you this, you ask me don’t you want your own family and I see July, diesel-thick and cloying, and me at the table with the other mothers, drinking gin-infused Pimm’s and diligently nodding, while my little Addie – she’s five now – the outlier on the grass’s scatter graph of children, murmurs her universe to herself, flickering her spring-white fingers at the wind, and one of the little boys pushes her and smears Iceland chocolate gateau on her new tiny lilac dress and his mother fails to stop her eyes laughing and another mother looks at me, clears her throat and says, have you ever thought she might be, and quite apart from this, at sleep’s first slow swallow, I listen as her mewl fractures the walls, I in a locked room, lying in a bath of my own blood and screaming Addie! Adelaide! – I call on the things I’ve been unable to do to the people I love – as in high-speed trains, as in the Clifton Suspension Bridge at high tide – I call on Addie’s face, thumb in mouth, the switchblades of her cheekbones, and fuck, I couldn’t, I couldn’t.
Mistress of Arts

My nicest psychiatrist said it was a developmental delay. As most men would, he said I was stranded – snow-globed – in a long winter; he thought he could hear the ice thinning, that maybe there’d be blossom soon enough. This guy I met at a conference last month swore that Autistic people think only in images. But I explain it like this, Clover:

desire was like heating, once – too indulgent a luxury. All I could do was hold myself against this light, the gaping trap of it, the blunt force trauma. You say

that makes sense, and would it be socially unacceptable of me to tell you I’d love to give you a love bite now, here? That you keep me feral, that you keep me awake

and desperate to press my breastbone to yours? As always, I swallow the urge, condemn it to forever in the dark with the urges to stim, to scream. I’ve been a mistress of arts, of disguise, my whole life – I’ve spent it shadowing my eyes, and furling. I tell you I’m thawing, far too quickly, at your feet; my skin fluorescent, my hot retinae

going hush-hush as my mind’s stuffy laboratory develops thousands of images of your hands: pale satin; in sharp focus, yet blurred around your glass.