I Saw a Story in the Sun

“The sun is a ball of golden strings, a ball rolling across the sky. Why wouldn’t it roll? It needed to roll for the birds to play around it. The birds could then pull strands out from the sun to glow their nests at night. The miller’s daughter weaves a ball of gold every evening, weaving the gold out of straw. She does it quietly lest someone discover her.”

I used to make up stories about the sun. Stories are real when you see them with your head. Those stories un-story when reasoned with binoculars of science— weaving shards. You have two eyes that can stare at the blank face of air outside, but a hundred fancies are alive inside your mind— that is what you see when you see with your head.

A hint of a shoe from the Nike advertisement can create a story: “Once, a pair of perfect Nike shoes waited for the perfect feet. Then one day they were matched with two large feet with big toes. Little did the celebrity pair foresee the smell of stinking sweat as the glorified feet ran on a treadmill. They ran and ran— not going any further on the reeling path. How perfect could the outcome be?” Story spins around a picture, radiates questions— like planets around the sun. Then you begin to relate. Finally, you see.
It could be a ship — shaped as a cloud,  
It could be a shape that was wiping out the mist,  
If you still did not find a story in the shape,  
It was never there for you.

I do not believe in reasoning as a clarifying force. My eyes need a story. Stories clarify everything that I see. And an absurd story is easier to remember. How many of us can remember realistic stories?

Too impossible to live without, stories light up a nest inside the darkest corner of my brain — inevitable as an egg, waiting to hatch.

While other children believed in homework and football, parties and taking tests, I grew my stories. Everyone must grow something. I had no homework, football, or parties because Autism closes doors. And yet, exactly as it closes doors, it opens a hundred windows made of stories to see through.

In what should one believe? That Autism needs a cure to un-Autism the mind? That getting straight As in school makes a superior student and a smarter being? That knowing how to swim can save you from a shark attack? That Facebook photos of an expensive vacation attest to a happy life? I needed believe in a story; my head can story anything! I can be awake in a story, hear people around — their ridiculous or serious conversations. I may continue that story, inserting the sun, the birds, and anything I can think of to complete the mixture of sensory jazz and imagination. Stories live in my head — they are as real as air. Blow away the air and nothing will change.

When I was little, I watched the story of light and shadows. In one version I saw the sun with grandchildren. Stop me if you can! People saw me but no one could guess
which story had hatched. There was my shadow sketched on sunshine as clear and distinct as black upon white.

I admired my shadow under the sun’s spectacular shine as I walked home from speech therapy in Mysore and Bangalore. To think about it, a story made of lustrous strings pulled out of the sun can actually confuse anyone who knows about the hydrogen–helium nonsense. Can your hydrogen and helium begin somewhere and end somewhere? Strings do! Even the tiniest strings can begin somewhere and end somewhere. Strings began stories — they began, they ended. Perhaps this wasn’t reason enough at all for my stories about the sun and shadows. Perhaps I floated an absurd sun under which I walked home from my therapies. Still it was a wonder-sun! Still there were windows to look through.

I saw stories, as I see the arguing sparrows.

I wasn’t old enough to reason. I wasn’t young enough to forget the different shadows of myself shaping my beliefs. The world was fluid with floating solids that followed their shadows. I would rather dwell in my shadow than open my eyes to science. Wasn’t the cause for Autism a shadow in real people’s heads? Isn’t there a big effort to cage that shadow for study and wipe it away?

One day, when the sun became just a chemical reaction between hydrogen and helium gases, I was devastated. Why does everything turn out to be something else? Even that breathing in and out you thought was life is merely gas and lungs. Don’t count on it. The sun became the wrong kind of sun since then: its fleeting strings the strands of rays that a child learns to draw. The sun of my story was mere nuclear fusion. Shadows seemed beyond my hold.
It’s a familiar problem. When little Johnnie realizes that Saint Nicholas is just the Bishop of Myra from the third century, he is crestfallen.

Everything, including my shadow underneath the sun, looked wrong after that. Daylight kept the earth wide awake, but daylight wasn’t the sort of daylight I wanted. There weren’t any strings in the sun. Stories melted in the pot called sun.

Just a little information and everything changes. Sunlight on windows and the reflections of trees through them were as bright as ever. My shadow and I continued to walk. I continued to look at other shadows, imagining whose shadows they might be, trying to find a beginning to a story that could end without the presence of strings. Who on a casual morning can pull a story out of the nuclear equation? I changed after that between yesterday and tomorrow, as if I had flown out of Moscow.

About five billion years ago, a cloud of gas and dust began to gravitate towards a center. It had a spin. Collapsing made the spinning faster as per science. Because the central region had the most material, density, and heat, it ignited a reaction. Light was born. Maybe the sun will never bother to remember the story of its own dark days.

Mother taught me how to draw and color the sun. I drew as many rays as possible around a circle that wasn’t the sun. Strings of sun rays growing out of the circle, long enough to touch all of the tall buildings and all of the rooftops. The shadows of those buildings confirmed the presence of a sun.

Its light continued to illuminate my head and shoulders from outside when I walked underneath it. But the sun stopped hatching story eggs in my head.
The sun is a science story, one of a man gluing his eyes to a telescope. Joseph von Fraunhofer saw lines in the sun through a spectroscope. He was studying the spectrum of the sun just as Autism experts study the spectrum of Autism. The difference was that Fraunhofer had a spectroscope to see the solar spectrum whereas Autism experts have only their eyes.

*Yes, only their eyes,*  
*Which gives birth to a study.*  
*After lengthy appointments,*  
*My life has a label.*

I heard details of my story from their reports many times. Fraunhofer found that out of two kinds of lines, the sun has absorption lines! People studying these lines can tell the history of the sun. I wonder how the spectral lines of Autism show up on the screen of an Autism expert’s eyes. We don’t get much, but we get a report that we are supposed to keep for the next appointment.

Science grows us. The sun grew with science. Autism can grow in numbers. And that becomes very scary. Be scared of yourself if you are Autistic — scared of your mind, your stories, your life. Even measles are safe! Be scared of your gluten, your ice cream that has dairy and of course be scared of your actions!

Perhaps when a Neanderthal saw the sun, he saw it as the shining eye of a giant blue animal whose blue skin covered everything above the earth; how this animal puffed out the smoke he saw as clouds; how it bellowed louder than a hundred lions when the smoke grew dark; how its forked lightning tongue licked away the distances before it was exhausted; and how when it cried, it wept rain. We would never know how he created ceremonies and sacrifices around the waking eye that rose up every morning
and slid down every evening to sleep below the zenith of the horizon. Neanderthals did not talk or they may have. I have seen their skeletons at a museum. I wondered: could they grow stories without language if they did not have words — stories with fear, joy, and hunger — something worthwhile to believe? Language is nowhere as sophisticated as beliefs. How will you describe the taste of fear or the smell of sleep?

Without language to share a thought, each of us can hold stories of the sun within ourselves untouched by the views of science and opinions, untouched by the real photon impact from the gaseous star. Stories will have no basis, no spectrum.