Teaching Myself To See

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I once saw half a face in a group photograph on the mantle of a fireplace. I’ve spent a considerable amount of time creating the other half in my head. I’ve even placed an imaginary mirror on the edge of the visible part, but the complete face eluded me.

I found it bisected by chance. I had no intention of looking at a photograph of total strangers in someone else’s house.

It was a perfect half-afternoon. We’d been invited for lunch, and it was over. I was lingering in the living room where there was a stack of magazines. I like the smell of such stacks.

I had moved close enough to the photograph because the window was reflecting on its glass, and I could see a rocking chair in the reflection outside the window. I like seeing what reflections show. The black-and-white half-centimeter-wide face popped out of the photograph, peeping behind complete faces—like a single fish in water needing to get an unrefracted view of the sun! How do we choose to look if chance has its way? It’s pure chance sometimes.

How would you choose to live if chance made you Autistic? The complete life of an Autistic person has a different definition. Here, one has to hold one’s own mirror and see through all the myths people talk about.
The surroundings of that half-face were like ripples in a slow motion, frame after frame. They revealed a gradual logic — the systematic erasing of the reflections of the rocking chair, which expanded to the faces of the other members of that group photograph. My task was to complete the other half of the face while the afternoon completed itself.

I can’t remember whether I later sat on the rocking chair. I just know that I was completing a task.