

The Shape Memory Takes

Memory is not a photograph.

It does not stay
where we left it.

It moves.

A face becomes
a voice.

A voice becomes
a phrase
you find yourself saying
without knowing
where you learned it.

A kitchen becomes
the smell of toast
on a Sunday morning.

A summer becomes
the particular sound
of a screen door closing.

We like to think
remembering means
keeping something whole.

As if somewhere
inside us
there is a perfect room
where everything
is exactly as it was.

But memory
doesn't work that way.

It loses things.

It changes things.

It puts one afternoon
beside another

until you aren't sure
which one happened first.

Sometimes it gives you
the colour of the sky
but not the words
that were spoken.

Sometimes you remember
the words perfectly
and forget
the face that said them.

And sometimes
you remember something
you haven't thought about
in thirty years
and wonder
why it waited
until now.

We tell ourselves
that memory belongs
to the past.

But memory is made
in the present.

Every time we return
to something,
we bring ourselves
with us.

The person we were
when it happened
is not the person
remembering it now.

So the story changes.

Not because it was false.

Because we have changed.

A thing that once hurt
can become tender.

A moment we barely noticed
can become precious.

Someone's ordinary gesture
can become,
years later,
the thing we miss most.

And sometimes
we discover
that what we thought
we remembered
was never the whole truth.

There were things
we could not see then.

Things we were too young
to understand.
Things we were too hurt
to hear.

Things we only recognize
because time
has finally given us
a place to stand.

Maybe that is
what memory does.

It does not preserve
the past.

It keeps us
in conversation with it.

We return.
We look again.

We notice something
we missed.

And then,
sometimes,
we forgive
the person we were.

Not because
they knew better.

Because now
we do.

The past does not
stay behind us.
It travels with us.

Not intact.
Not unchanged.
But carried.

And perhaps
that is the shape
memory takes:

not a record
of where we have been,
but a reminder
of who we were,

who we became,

and all the ways
we are still becoming.

~ Tim Hogue

