THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW



THRESHOLD 2

The Light in the Window

For much of my life I believed that a person's worth was measured by what they managed to accomplish.

It was a reasonable conviction.

The world seems built on purpose to confirm it.

They ask us for results.

Numbers.

Objectives.

Performance.

Milestones.

Every system possesses its own indicators.

Every organization possesses its own rankings.

Every era invents a different way to measure success.

And almost always the measure focuses on what appears.

Rarely on what remains.

As the years passed, however, I began to notice a curious phenomenon.

The people I remembered most almost never coincided with those who had obtained the

most impressive results.

I remembered other people.

Those who had stayed close.

Those who had listened.

Those who had found the time.

Those who had been present.

Human memory is less impressionable than it seems.

Decades later it does not remember only what you did.

It remembers how you made others feel.

And this discovery changed many things.

It happened slowly.

As all authentic transformations happen.

There was no sudden revelation.

There were hundreds of episodes.

Small.

Almost invisible.

A friend who shows up when you did not call him.

A person who stays seated beside you during a difficult moment.

A family member who cannot solve the problem but chooses anyway to share the

weight.

In all these cases something happens that numbers cannot measure.

Presence generates strength.

Not because it eliminates the pain.

Because it prevents solitude from becoming absolute.

Many people think that helping means finding solutions.

I am no longer so sure of it.

The people who truly helped me did not always possess the answers.

Often they possessed only the willingness to stay.

And it was enough.

When we are young we believe that worth resides in action.

With time we discover that worth very often resides in remaining.

To be there.

Not to run away.

Not to get distracted.

Not to delegate.

Not to disappear.

To be present.

It seems little.

It is not at all.

We live in a society full of connections and often poor in presence.

We can reach anyone in a few seconds.

We can send messages to any part of the planet.

We can communicate continuously.

Yet many people feel more alone than ever.

Perhaps because presence is not a technological matter.

It is a human matter.

Presence requires attention.

And attention has become one of the rarest resources of our time.

I remember some phases of my life in which I was not seeking advice.

I was not seeking strategies.

I was not seeking answers.

I was seeking company.

Someone willing to share a stretch of road.

Someone willing to say:

"I don't know how it will end, but you won't

cross it alone."

These phrases do not change events.

They change us.

And that is much more important.

For years I worked in environments in which everything was measured.

Performance.

Market share.

Growth.

Productivity.

Yet some of the most precious things I received appeared in no report.

Trust.

Loyalty.

Listening.

Closeness.

None of these things enter easily into a table.

Yet they sustain much of human life.

Presence acts in the same way.

It is invisible when it is there.

It becomes evident when it is missing.

Like the air.

Like health.

Like certain affections.

We notice their value above all in the moment when they are no longer available.

With age I learned a lesson that no book had taught me.

Many problems do not ask to be solved immediately.

They ask to be crossed.

And when a problem must be crossed, presence is worth more than competence.

It may seem a strange phrase.

But anyone who has lived through an important trial understands it immediately.

No explanation eliminates a loss.

No strategy eliminates an illness.

No theory eliminates absence.

There are situations in which the human being does not need to be corrected.

He needs to be accompanied.

This discovery also changed my way of relating to others.

I stopped feeling obligated to find solutions for everything.

I stopped considering silence a failure.

I stopped believing that my worth depended

on my ability to fix the world.

Instead I began to cultivate a different quality.

Availability.

To be available.

For the family.

For friends.

For fragile people.

For whoever was crossing a difficulty.

For whoever needed to be listened to.

It is a less showy skill.

But infinitely more useful.

Looking back, I realize that the most significant moments of my existence have often shared a characteristic.

Someone was present.

Sometimes it was me.

Sometimes it was others.

But there was a presence.

A silent presence.

Discreet.

Not intrusive.

A presence that demanded nothing.

That asked for no recognition.

That sought no applause.

It simply existed.

Like a light on in a window during the night.

Perhaps maturity consists also in this.

To understand that we do not have to be extraordinary every day.

We do not have to save the world.

We do not have to convince everyone.

We do not have to win every battle.

Sometimes we simply have to be there.

For real.

With all our attention.

With all our humanity.

With all our imperfection.

Because people forget many things.

They forget words.

They forget dates.

They forget even important events.

But they rarely forget who stayed beside them in the necessary moment.

In the end, after the work, the travels, the successes, the losses, the transformations

and the time that passed, a surprisingly simple truth remains.

We cannot always change what happens.

We cannot always heal.

We cannot always save.

We cannot always understand.

But we can be there.

And much more often than we imagine, presence is enough.