This Is How I Remember It  
by Betsy Kemper

Watching Joey pop the red berries into his mouth like Ju-Ju Bees and Mags only licking them at first, then chewing, so both of their smiles look bloody and I laugh though I don’t eat even one…then suddenly our moms are all around us (although mine doesn’t panic until she looks at the others and screams along with them things like *dammit did you eat these?* And shakes me so my “No” sounds like “oh-ohoh”) and then we’re being yanked toward the house, me for once not resisting as my mother scoops me up into her arms, and inside the moms shove medicine, thick and purple, down our throats in the bathroom; Joey in the toilet, Mags in the sink, me staring at the hair in the tub drain as my mom pushed my head down and there is red vomit everywhere, splashing on the mirror and powder-blue rugs, everywhere except the tub where mine is coming out yellow, the color of corn muffins from lunch, not a speck of red, *I told you*, I want to scream and then it is over and I turn to my mother for a touch or a stroke on the head like the other moms (but she has moved to the doorway and lights a cigarette, pushed her hair out of her eyes) and there is only her smeared lips saying, *This will teach you anyway.*

Word count: 233

1. What is the memory presented here?
2. What do we learn about the narrator’s relationship with her mother?
3. How does the author manage to write the entire piece in one sentence?
4. What is the effect of writing in first person, present tense, all one sentence?
Due Wednesday 11/14: Memory Micro-story – 10 points if all criteria met

Assignment:

Write a story that presents a memory from the narrator’s deep past (childhood). The memory can be true (or based in truth) or invented, but in either case, I suggest that you begin with a strong, vivid image and focus on imagery and immediacy throughout the piece. (Kemper, for example, may have started with the image of the kids throwing up in the bathroom, or perhaps eating the berries.) You have succeeded in generating a strong “source image” if we can guess what it is when we read your story.

Your goal is to show us something significant about the narrator through this memory. Perhaps he realizes something that shapes his worldview. Perhaps something happens that will mean her life will never be quite the same afterwards. Perhaps he sees a person close to him in a new light. Perhaps she does something out of character and is woefully misunderstood. In any case, the discovery or change should be clear without the narrator having to say something like “After that, my life was never the same” or “That’s why, to this day, I don’t trust organ grinders.” Or whatever.

Requirements (deduct one point for each requirement not met):

1. 250 words max – please include word count!
2. Title: "This Is How I Remember It"
3. First person
4. Present tense
5. All one sentence! Be creative with punctuation and syntax to make this happen – free modifiers, parenthetical phrases, compound sentence – just limit yourself to one ellipsis (you know, the three periods in a row like this: …).
6. Typed, double-spaced. Please share in Google Docs and bring 4 hard copies to class.