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## Remembering Thanksgiving

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# Remembering Thanksgiving

## **Cover Page Footnote**

"Second Prize" Appeared in the issue: April 2001.

Second Prize  
Gillian Scruton

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## Remembering Thanksgiving

This house  
I know it well,  
The cracked toilet seat, the blue water  
The smell of Darling's fancy powder,  
The dentures in your designated ceramic bowls  
The bath tub that never looked inviting,  
The narrow staircase that led to my father's room  
Where he grew  
And where his brothers fought  
And where the sisters thought they were queens.  
I played up there too, maybe twice  
I slept there,  
Only once  
And I looked at the tiny rooms,  
The big family that lived there  
Darling's bedroom had a rosary  
Too big for a neck, too big for the palm of a hand  
Just right for the brown-papered wall  
The silk pillowcases were smothered with winter coats  
And the picture of Jesus had nothing else to look at  
The dresser had a mirror and I don't know who looked in it  
Or when or what the images said  
The kitchen where I dried the dishes on Thanksgiving  
Grudgingly  
And the closet where the vacuum sat for a rest  
And the table with those place mats  
Plastic place mats that I could indent with my finger nail  
And brush off the crumbs to reveal the flowers on the white  
Plastic surface.  
There was the TV guide, there was an Avon catalog  
There was a cracked mug, cold coffee inside,  
And lipstick on the edge.  
There was a leather seat I had sat in before with the crack in the corner  
The table could grow bigger and yet it never did,  
I looked out the window, a big window,  
Where the garden lay lifelessly and the hummingbird  
Came to the feeder  
And returned and returned and returned

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I never frequented that much  
I just looked at the corner cabinet  
Where there was candy  
There were bottles of prescription pills,  
There was a photo of my cousin standing by his motorcycle,  
And another- a black and white one  
Recovered from the attic,  
The porch, too cold to go to, kept itself from the outside with a single sheet of plastic,  
There were games out there.  
There was a long table, mis-matched chairs,  
a Thanksgiving dinner  
And Jell-O salad  
And green stuff I was always too afraid to try.  
My brother sat close at hand,  
And neither of us said a word—  
After all these memories, after going into the laundry room time and time again to visit,  
And look at the extravagant collection of magnets on the fridge,  
We still never said a word  
We didn't know what to say  
We just sat there  
And learned the house  
And learned about the house  
And learned nothing about what happened in there  
In the house  
We never knew what was in the basement,  
Nor who lived in the house for too long  
Who was born there  
Who died there  
We were not there for any of that  
We were there time and time again  
And yet all we know is where everything lay, where the doily was on the back of papa's  
Chair  
And tea towel rested on the arms.  
I wish I could go back there now, take one last look,  
Play one more time in the screened-in porch,  
Have one more barbecue  
And look around and not look at the house  
The house, the house  
I want to look at who was there  
And breathe it in  
And still sit at the table and not say a word.  
And maybe try that green stuff-dad always liked it.

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