

## Those Thanksgiving Pie-Makers

-by Linda Hasselstrom

All over America today, women search  
for their grandmother's pumpkin pie recipe.  
Some rush to the store for condensed milk,  
or whipping cream. Or stir up powdered milk  
if they are poor, or on a diet,  
or live too far from town.

In a Wisconsin farm house a red-haired woman  
measures salt in a dented spoon.  
In California, a thin girl stirs and puffs a cigarette,  
puffs and stirs. In Wyoming,  
I dust clove powder over my grandmother's  
green glass bowl and reach for the nutmeg grater.  
In New Mexico, a brown-eyed woman  
sprinkles cayenne. In Iowa, a man beats eggs,  
recalling for his children how their mother looked.

Grandma always left me to measure  
dry ingredients while she walked down  
to her hen house. She came back holding four  
warm brown eggs in her open hands  
just as I licked brown sugar off my lips,  
thinking she wouldn't notice.

So today, twenty-five years after she died,  
I lap brown sugar from a spoon just  
so I'll remember how she grinned at me.  
While I stir, my oven beeps. Hers  
was fired with wood she chopped. To test  
the heat, she'd dip her fingers  
in the water bucket she'd pumped full  
that morning, flick spattering drops, and nod.

All over America, families are studying  
gratitude. Some women slip  
a pie into the oven, and hide  
the cardboard box in the garbage.  
Others light pumpkin-scented candles,  
thankful anyway—though my grandmother  
might not think they have good reason.

I crimp the rim of each pie crust  
with three fingers, just the way  
she taught me; make a salad  
while the fragrance surges out  
the open kitchen window. Next door,  
perhaps the drug dealers open their eyes,  
inhale, and almost remember.

Grandmother, may this pumpkin perfume  
rise up to whatever heaven you inhabit,  
sanctifying all my love and memories.  
Listen: countless voices chant together  
an infinity of thankful hymns.