

By Jennifer Maddy

(Based on a true story)

Let thy heart be full of thanks unto God (Alma 37:37).

Liza stared out the window as the rain drizzled against the glass. She felt as glum as the dark clouds outside. She pictured the warm beach near her grandparents' house and how she and her cousins always went swimming in the ocean on Thanksgiving—it was their tradition. She thought about her aunts' pies lined up on the kitchen counter, ready to be eaten. She thought about her grandparents' big smiles when her family pulled into the driveway.

Liza squeezed her eyes shut tight, trying not to cry. This year there wouldn't be any of those fun things.

Dad had been out of work, and even though he had just started a new job, they couldn't afford to make the drive to Grandma and Grandpa's. Liza's family would be spending Thanksgiving on their own.

"Time for dinner, everyone!" Mom's cheerful voice called out.

Liza turned away from the window and trudged to the dining room. She got there as Dad set a bowl of mashed potatoes on the table. Her brothers, Mike and Justin, slid into their chairs.

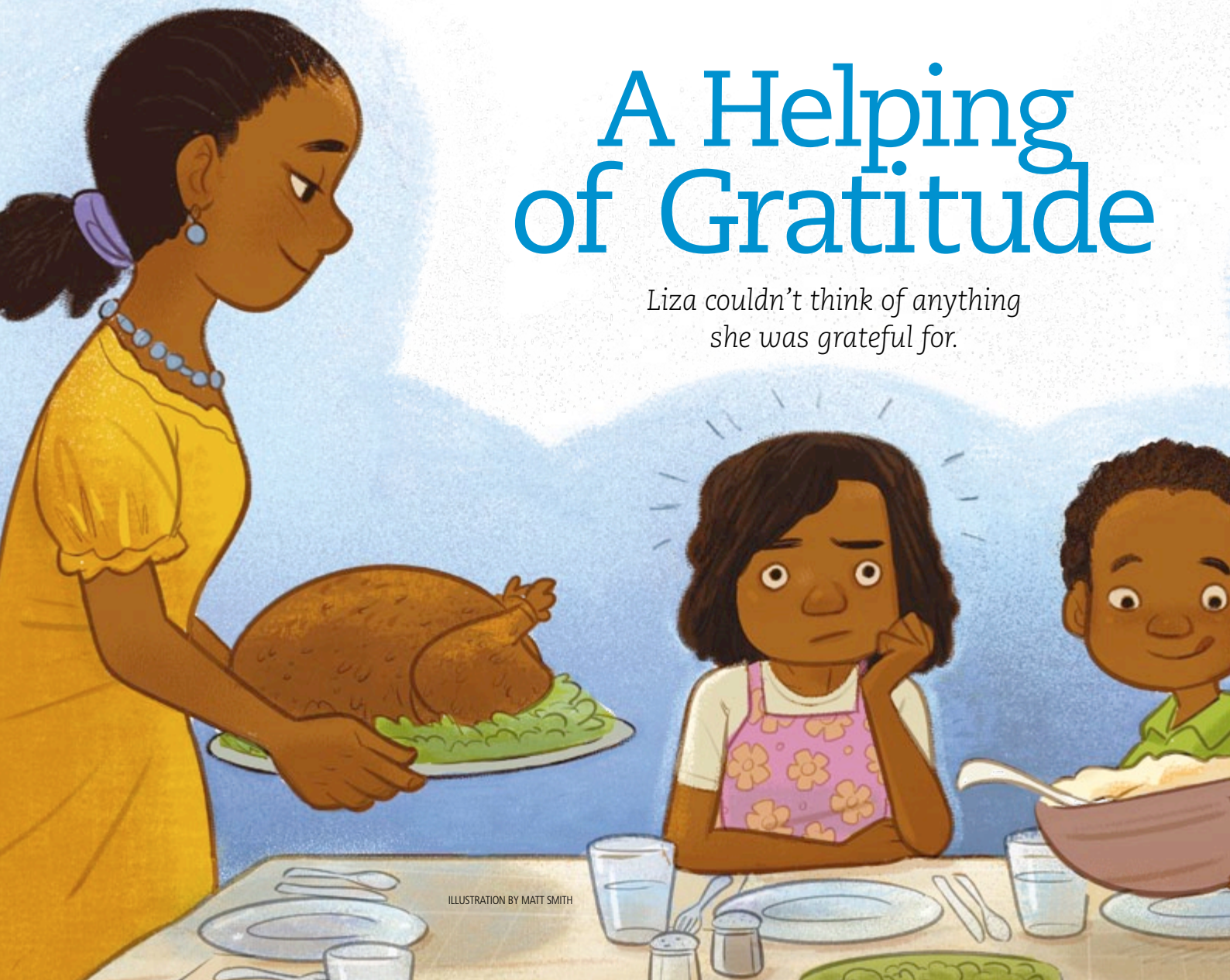
"Smells great!" Mike said.

"Yeah, those potatoes look awesome!" Justin added.

The delicious smells of Thanksgiving dinner didn't tempt Liza's nose. "I don't see what they have to be so happy about," she grumbled to herself.

A Helping of Gratitude

Liza couldn't think of anything she was grateful for.



“Liza, are you all right?” Mom asked.

Liza shrugged. “Sure.”

“Even though we can’t be at Grandma and Grandpa’s this year, I’m grateful we can still be together as a family,” Dad said.

Everyone smiled—everyone except Liza.

Dad said a prayer, and they passed the food. Justin and Mike eagerly began eating the turkey, potatoes, and stuffing they had piled onto their plates, but Liza nibbled at her yams and thought about her cousins having fun without her.

Dad cleared his throat. “I’ve been thinking we should start a new tradition, since it’s just us this year,” he said.

I bet it’s not as good a tradition as swimming in the ocean, Liza thought.

“Let’s go around the table and each say something we’re thankful for,” Dad continued.

Liza couldn’t think of anything she was thankful for right then.

“I’m thankful I was able to find a new job,” Dad said. “I’m glad I can provide for our family. How about you, Justin?”

Justin stopped eating his mashed potatoes long enough to say, “I’m thankful for good food!”

Everyone laughed, and even Liza managed a small smile.

Mom said, “I’m grateful that we all have healthy bodies and that we are able to do so many things.”

Liza started to feel a little less gloomy, but she still couldn’t think of anything to say.

“I’m glad I can go to college next year,” Mike said.

Now it was Liza’s turn. She squirmed in her chair. “I don’t know. I’ll think about it.”

During dinner Liza thought about what everyone had said. She was glad that Dad had found a new job and didn’t look worried anymore. She was grateful for the good food Mom cooked for them. She was happy that her body could run and dance and swim. And even though she would miss Mike when he went to college, she was glad he could go. Liza’s heart felt lighter. She missed being with her grandparents and cousins, and she missed the traditions they had together. But maybe new traditions were good too.

“I’m thankful for all of you,” Liza finally said.

“We all have wonderful things to be thankful for,” Dad said.

“Maybe we could go around the table again,” Justin said, spooning up some more mashed potatoes. “We can always have seconds on gratitude!” ◆



Mandy, have I ever told you I'm grateful for you?



I was just about to say the same thing!



“When you walk with gratitude . . . you walk with a spirit of thanksgiving that is becoming to you and will bless your lives.”³

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)