ZARA SULEMAN

Kitch and Talk

Four generations of women sitting in the kitchen
the smells of cumin
mustard seeds, onions
turmeric, and saffron
simmer in the background
the cozy feeling of warmth rises from
the hot cups of tea
before them
they are talking about
how it used
to be how it was
and what would happen?
In my day says one woman in kuchi
when we were young
says one woman in gujrati
my daughter doesn’t understand says one
woman in urdu
I do understand says the woman in english
blends of spices and scents
flavours in the air mix
with the ages of conversation
poetic almost memorable
moments forgotten times
thoughtful comments hopeful
futures.

Zara Suleman is an East African, South Asian, Muslim, twenty-something, cultural activist, artist, writer, feminist of colour, rape crisis worker, and full-time student at Simon Fraser University.

LISA SCHMIDT

I have known women

I have known women
who learned to kill chickens
with a quick snap of the wrist
who smile lovingly
as they pluck feathers
and thank the heavens for food

I have known women
who left the mainland
searching for soft breezes
and the love of men
and finding them,
live pruned and ensnared
like rose bushes
behind white picket fences
only nodding sadly
in the sudden gusts
of late afternoon wind

I have known women
who plant seeds in the earth
and in the hearts of children
children who go on to love with hearts as big as stars
as deep as night

I have known women
who danced barefoot
in candlelight
on dusty persian rugs
who bared their souls to me
over wine
over lunch
over and over again

And women
who, like myself
are quiet
seem uncertain
who love life
and friends and apricots and cats
but who stay off the stage
out of spotlights
and conversations just to be safe
wounded so deeply at so young an age
that the scars have become dimples
others mistake for laughlines

Lisa Schmidt is a poet, freelance book reviewer and editor. Her work has appeared in Paragraph, and Our Times.