

## 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.*