

Where I found my love for you

In my baba's hands

Callused and rough from a good day's work

From toiling for a family who loved him endlessly

And that he provided for unquestionably

On my mama's table

In the way she preserves and combines what she has learned from years spent cooking

In schools and homes from Dubai to Kuwait to Lebanon

There is no kebbeh neyyeh better than what she serves us on the first day of every Ramadan

In my teita's giggle

When she would shove a crumpled pink five-dollar bill

Into my sweaty small palms and far away from my mother's eye

A secret between us two, sealed with a wink from her wrinkled twinkling eye

In the streets of Lakemba

In the smell and taste of morning manoosh before catching the train

Freshly made zaatar filled with labneh and vegetables

My mother's favourite and now mine

On a cold morning in Beirut

In that first bite of a warm falafel sandwich

An ecstasy I cannot even begin to describe

A taste that lives in my refusing to subside

Where I found my love for you

In the mountains of Al Arzz

Where I make snow angels and sink into the soft ground

All the way up to my knees

And that's where your true beauty comes to me

In the tearful reunion with my mother's sister

In the way she chastises me for calling her 3amema by mistake

Kholto I miss you and I'll return to our village one day

Until then for your continued blessings I'll pray

In the streets of Tripoli

In my mother's childhood home

Where I meet my namesake for the first time

And feel a place where I align

In the tea that we pour

Boiled water mixed with the leaves of my country

And two glass teacups heaped with sugar

because life is short so let every sip be sweeter

In my lovers' stories

In the way she found herself in you

And the hope tends for you

Where I found my love for you

Wrapped in the revolutionary days you both once knew

And in this

In a community that is bound by their love for you

In artists who mourn and hope and cry and laugh for you

In people who cannot (will not) give up on you

And

In here.