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### **A Bible Story**

It took less than two minutes to know  
Sharif would never be offered  
coffee or tea in my parents' house.

Mama wore her apron  
like an Orthodox robe,  
refusing to sit at the kitchen table.

Your daughter has told me  
so much about you.

Words pegged and hung  
dripping with the sweat  
of Sharif's bravado.

Baba raised his finger like a slap  
then turned it into a gun  
pointed at the door.

Mama's fingers fidgeted  
like captured birds  
inside the deep pocket of her apron.

Under the table, my hand  
gripped Sharif's thigh  
to steady our fall.

Unlike the shrewd wise men

who planned their travel  
and their gifts,  
I ignored the cross  
made from dried grass,  
threaded through the bars  
of their screen door;  
their makeshift scarecrow.

I delivered to them  
a Muslim  
wrapped in a love  
torn  
by conquerors and wars,  
by words in a birth-marked book,  
by years of stab or run.

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Angela Costi studied Law/Arts at Melbourne University and completed the Professional Writing and Editing course at RMIT. She is the author of four poetry collections. *Honey and Salt* (Five Islands Press) was shortlisted for the Mary Gilmore national prize 2008. Her poetry, essays and reviews have been published in a number of peer-reviewed journals, most recently an essay for [Cordite Poetry Review](#) and a poem for [Backstory – history journal](#).