

LINDA HOGAN

## The Red Part

When I was a girl  
The old women told me if I were always generous  
I could paint a part in the middle of my hair with red.  
Red ochre. Red paint. Red lipstick.  
But it seemed not right  
to reveal to the world  
that I am generous, because the announcement takes it back.  
So unlike other girls,  
I appeared selfish and ungiving  
although I gave so much away,  
but who would ever know.

I think of the many red parts,  
the parting of the sea  
by Moses who was leading his people  
in a never-ending story, the parting in the red stem  
of the plant for healing bad lungs,  
the parting of the heart  
when one side works with and against the other  
and the veins in their miles  
flow back again and again.

But the red part I recall the most  
had to do with generosity, and then  
our giving up the taken land again and again  
to those who so wanted it. We parted with our  
clothing, our children, and on our way  
we left the red part  
of a blood trail

across the land.  
It looked like writing that would become  
the book coming next  
or after  
us.