

Claudette Bass

this red sea

We step over the bodies
like children playing hop scotch,
my point, yours, oops, foul, taking turns
recounting indiscretions and mistakes:
tarnished passionate heirlooms.
You divulge, recant, rebound;
I question contradictions.
We talk bawdy, joke, laugh
between rounds of painful memories.
Our game of chicken: truth or dare.
Which came first, the attraction or the promise?

They litter our history,
we think we cannot get past the remains
unless we skewer them like shisk kebab,
line them up and eat them whole,
insist each lover, loss is more
than the sum of who we are,
what we can offer.
And until this hour, there was agreement.
Aren't we brave to scramble over
all those ancient body parts?
Isn't it a shame they couldn't love us as they should?

It's like a movie: she betrayed, he coerced,
he neglected, she abandoned.
Of course, what we did in return,
labelled curiosity or reality acceptance
is explained with a relish: honesty our shiny badge.
Perhaps it's a crock. Have we considered
that the only limbs which matter
are these two hearts, these hands,
these souls that struggled to attain
whatever balance we balance between us,
this red sea we fear to cross.