

His Laugh is My Yellow (or explaining skin color to a six-year-old boy)

by Yasmin Elaine Waring

Max is the color of burnt caramelized sugar
the sweet crust that decorates our cracked enameled pots.

He pinches his skin between pudgy fingers
looking for a loose lip I think
that can be bent and peeled back
like sticky laminate sheets
to reveal something else.

A little girl in his class
licked his cheek to see
if it, if he tasted of chocolate
he told me once
long after the fact.

She was the color of milk foam
that floats atop fancy coffee drinks.

I wondered whether to complain.
No biting, hitting or kicking is the rule.
But what of sweet licks?

When his eyes ask I say
brown is what happens when freckles collide.
It is the beginning and the end of the rainbow.
It is the earthy scent of my sometimes-too-tight hugs

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and the weight of my kiss on his closed eyelids.

He smiles with pink and brown gums seeding new teeth.
He licks my face and laughs.

His laugh is my yellow
I tell him
and the answer is good enough
for now.

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