

It was the week after Christmas,  
the smell of pine hung only in corners  
and stray needles remained in the carpet.  
Being the first day ~~at~~<sup>of</sup> school

I woke excited, vacation over.

The blue tiles at my homeroom  
welcomed my familiar sneakers.

I sat down next to Lynn  
who had her new box of crayons—  
like little candles, fruits—

from far away Christmas morning.

She was coloring a paper  
and I took her crayons and looked.

I found weird colors—

Mackerel, peach, brick red—  
but one weird in particular.

It was brownie-black with specks  
of khaki or earth

with a neat texture and unique depth:

I couldn't figure it out.

The label was ripped illegible.

(over)

When asked Lynn simply said:

"I forgot" and colored more,

her lightly freckled hand sweetly touching,

kissing her desk softly.

I puzzled at the strange Crayola<sup>®</sup>

and must've said so, out loud

Jim came over - you know,

the little negro boy from West Street,

his little sneakers muddy with dirt,

his red pants pulled to high and his

brother's crucifix glittering brightly against his skin -

anyway, so Jim comes over,

and I go: "what color's this?"

and Jim simply says:

"Well, that's easy, that's skin-color."

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