

When I Am Brown by Tiffany J Herron

When I am brown,
I cuddle the stain of
ultraviolet light
The tint of wood and soil
lingers on my body
like fur loves
a flying fox.

I dip my feet in golden
puddles of salt
and my fingers knead
the turquoise oceans
My mouth handles
the flesh of an egg,
its amber yolk pops as
brightly as the
alofa to a lover.

But when I am white,
my thick coral
frame chips
and I stutter over
my curly
coffee bean hair.

My puffs of words are eaten
by ice on celadon trees, my
breath reveals nothing and
yet so much that I keep
my big ivory teeth clenched.

When I am white,
I retreat,
quietly crying
over the smell
of coconuts.

Yet, when I am brown,
my muscles flex
as if they are the boulders
my forefathers moved,
trembling within
me, their long boats
run relays through
my purple veins.

Sea stars adorn
my path, the
giant orange octopus
caresses my face,
and I can swim
to the root
of Mauna Loa,
when I am brown