

Kelly Delaronde

Caught in Between

The town

You get out of the car. Every aspect of this environment is new. The smell was rich; the scent of morning dew on the grass. The sun had just rose over the neighborhood houses. Even the vibe of the school was a whole new level. It all meant *better*. This was better, you say to yourself. It's safer.

You walk towards your new school. The students next to you wear their new and probably expensive first day clothes. You don't even remember when you bought the clothes your wearing now. You feel underdressed. They laugh and talk to each other, enjoying their reunion after the long summer. The school seems so big compared to you. You suddenly feel small and insignificant.

You walk into your morning class. Luckily it's the right one, grade nine math. You had trouble finding it in this big school. It was fairly big compared to the school you were at before. You sit in the first front desk. The students behind you whisper at your arrival. They're probably confused. This is the first time they've seen you. The res was so small, it made this small town feel like a city. But, it wasn't. It was small enough to know every one in school. Every one in class had sat in their groups of friends. Here you are, sitting alone, and the only thing you can do is to listen to their happy conversations, feeling awkward. They throw paper in your hair, laughing cruelly. You ignore them, but it hurts that you feel like an outcast already. You're used to this, but it doesn't make it easier.

The class goes by and you follow along. You don't really understand what the teacher is saying. The previous school you attended had books that were out dated and in disrepair. It also didn't follow the provincial school curriculum, which means you don't know the basics. Every one seems to know this. So you sit there, feeling stupid. You stay silent to avoid embarrassment.

Its lunch and everyone is at their tables. You wonder if it's true that people label their tables. The jocks, the preps, the art kids, the band kids, all of them, have their own tables. The empty tables are for the loners. That's where you sit.

You're in social studies. You and the class had just gotten your text books. The teacher writes the questions on the board. The topic was Europeans and the Aboriginal People. This you understood. There were simple questions like define Aboriginal, which time period did Europeans arrive in North America. Simple right? You finish your questions and at the end of the class, the class corrects it.

"Alright, did any one get the question, 'What are Aboriginal People's beliefs?'"

The class went silent. After awhile, the teacher continued.

"Okay, Aboriginal people believe that they are the true people of the land, that they were *magically* put on this land to take care of it." The more she talked the more she offended me. "They believed in the creator."

The class room laughed and the teacher smirked with them. One of the students put their hand to their mouth and made an Indian call.

"The Europeans arrived centuries ago. They believed the logical theories, such as the continental drift. They believed in science." She smiled. "Europeans tried to teach Indians science. But the Indians were stubborn and continued to live believing that a muskrat made the earth."

The children laughed again.

You sit there, defeated. You thought this town was better. Maybe, you thought, maybe, if they didn't accept you in the res, they'd accept you in a town. You were wrong. It felt that no one wanted you here. You had no home.

The Res

When you arrived here, you were only 10. You were that age where you had never had any independence, and you were to start having and learning independence some time soon. You had wide childlike eyes. You thought the kids would be interested in you, since your home town was a city 8 miles away. Your parents had money.

At first it was okay. The kids at the school were curious, welcoming. But realize you have 3 years more of living here. A lot of things can change.

The res was so small it had no stores or gas stations. The only community building was the school and the mail office.

Your parents took care of you before you moved here. There was no need to talk to a store clerk or approaching people for directions, since the town was so small and had no stores. Interactions with strangers gave you some sort of anxiety. You'd have to adapt to it later in life.

The kids that were once curious about you and welcomed you were taught what the white people did to their families. These things involved the awful residential schools and the unfair treaties. Yes, white people were to blame. But times had changed. Generations moved on. But people still had hatred in their hearts. Those kids picked fights with you, teased you for wearing anything that showed your legs. White chicken legs, they called you.

It was odd to you. People always said never, ever, be racist against African Americans or Aboriginal People. You've only seen racism towards those races a couple of times. People don't realize that white people were discriminated too.

But you're not white. You're Metis. You've got your mothers white skin. But still they treat you the same, and it gets worse when those innocent kids get older. The fights become more violent, the glares more deadly. Eventually you are scared to even go to school. The safest place in the school is the class room. The teachers would protect you while you were there. But you're palms would become sweaty when walking the halls. The bad kids usually wander them.

You could stay home. The school was a mess. No curriculum and your teacher had disappeared. The substitute had been there for 4 months now, teaching as a teacher. Things were awful. You were depressed. You were only 13.

You beg your parents to move. High school is right around the corner. You have to travel 20 minutes on a bus every morning and after school. You know the kids will start something on the bus. They've done it before. Usually if things got too bad, you'd simply walk home. That option was there, but not while in high school. Your best friend seems to be happy, out of town. She goes to a high school in a town close by. She has loving friends. Maybe you can join them. You don't want to spend another second in the res. It's too much.

Your mom can see what this town has done to you. It's brought dark lines under your eyes from crying at night, you wear darker clothes and you close yourself away from other people. She agrees. Your dad is a little more stubborn with this situation. He was born here. This was his home. He loved the fact that his brother was only a walk away from here.

Six months later, your dad finally agrees and you move.

You get out of the car. Every aspect of this environment is new. The smell was rich; the scent of morning dew on the grass. The sun had just risen over the neighborhood houses, making a warming feeling. Even the vibe of the school was a whole new level. It all meant better. This was better, you say to yourself. It's safer.

Authors Statement:

I based this story from my experiences of living in an Aboriginal community and a normal town, while being Metis. It's about the emotional and physical difficulties of a society judging you on only half of your being. This is the first time I've had to write down the hardest time of my life. This is a true story. I decided to write it in second person, so the reader could understand how it felt to be someone caught in between. A lot of people think that African Americans and aboriginals are the only ones being discriminated on. But what about the people that share both cultures? Where do they go in a world filled with hatred? Where is their home? In this case the story is about being both cassation and aboriginal. It's also about the effects that can unfold if a child is put in depressing and isolated environments. Especially if the child is just learning of the world and their surroundings. Although both white and aboriginal people have caused me grief, I still have hope the best for both of them. I think we have beautiful cultures. I'm lucky to share both. I hope people out there know after reading this that no matter what, it's ok to be different. Be who you are. There have been wars and residential schools. But the people that did those things are long gone. We're a new generation, and the only thing left to do is forgive and move on.

~Kelly Delaronde