

HALF CASTE ONE

by Bruce McClain

He squints his eyes. He curls his lips. His head jerks back as his mother rough combs through his coarse black hair, preparing him for school. She packs his lunch with a red apple and pulls him to her with her white hands for a kiss.

On the school bus he's called out by a new name, "Hey Swirly." He comes home teary eyed. He's colored but not black. He's creamy but not white. He's not one. He's not the other, but another. His mother tells him he lives in the best of two worlds. This only makes him feel worse.

He dreads what tomorrow might bring. The dodging of slurs, "Graham Cracker," "Half Baked." Will they cease? "Half Cast," "Two Tone." Or Continue? Must he live in the shadow of a question mark? Mother hasn't prepared him for this.

