

“One thing that I know Stand up for your rights”

by Graham P¹

2



¹ Graham chose to use his real first name in his story.

² Artwork by Graham P himself – collage of two guiter with yellow, blue paints mixed to be green.

My name is Graham P. I was born in Alexandra. Growing up, I lived at home with my Mum and Dad, and my brother and two sisters.

When I was a little boy, I got bowled over by a train in Alexandra. I was trying to chase a kid off the railway track and the train came and bowled me over. I was scared.

I almost drowned in Alexandra. I was at the river with my Mum and Dad. The water went up to my neck. It was deep and I went under. Mum and Dad helped me get out. I was scared. I didn't want to go back in after that.

I went to Dunedin after the train bowled me over. I went to Sarah Cohen School. I remember wearing a black helmet to protect my head from getting hurt because I had turns [seizures]. I spent some time at the IHC Workshop when I left school and then I moved into an IHC house.

I lived in Seacliff too. **I was there right, I said to them I don't like being locked up.** But they did lock me up a lot and for long times. I had to take tablets so I didn't have turns. I had a friend at

Seacliff. Her name is Josie. We used to play Snakes and Ladders together. I was good at Snakes and Ladders and would win. I don't play it anymore but I would like to. We sang songs at Seacliff but I didn't like that because it made me bored and the songs were sad.

I moved to Cherry Farm from Seacliff. I can't remember how old I was. When I got there, my arms were shaking. It was scary and frightening. The tablets for my turns made me all better. They made me feel calm and tired out. I didn't like it there. **They locked me up and I don't like that.** I don't know why they locked me up. It was cold and made me sad. I was falling off the chair. Someone helped me up. She was nice to me. I would have turns and fall onto the floor. The staff didn't help me.

I missed my family. It made me feel sad a bit. **I used to dream about my Mum and Dad a lot.** Mum and Dad are up in Heaven and I was sad about that. I liked them. I treated the staff like family. They didn't treat me like family. Made me sad a bit. No one would comfort me when I was sad.

Some staff bossed me around and I don't like that. Some staff were nice to me, like Ivan, he drove a yellow truck. During the day, I would watch TV and listen to music. I liked listening to music. I had a friend there too, his name was Robert. I miss him.

We recorded a Cherry Farm C.D, I sang on it, everyone did. I liked it a wee bit. The Cherry Farm songs were good. I rode a three-wheeler bike there. I went everywhere on it. There were lots of kids there, people around my age. I was in a Villa with nine other people. I had my own room but I didn't like it. There was just a bed in it. I was happy to get away from Cherry Farm all together. **I was in there, but I was sad there. Don't talk about it. Let's stop talking about it.**

When I left Cherry Farm, I didn't get to choose where I went. I was put into a house. I was scared. It was a strange place. The people weren't nice. **Shoved me in the corner.** I used to walk everywhere. I used to walk around the block there but now I can't. It's not nice. I don't remember what happened. I don't remember how I stopped walking. **I wish I could get that back again. So**

hard. Really hard. It will be good when I get back on my feet again, won't it?

They put me in hospital too. I wanted to get out. The people were nice but I wanted out. I wanted to go for walks and listen to my music but I couldn't do that there.

I don't want to talk about it no more. Time to move on.

I like it here. I like to be in a big house. Saved my life it did. I like it here because it's handy to the shops. Seacliff and Cherry Farm were far away. I live close to everything now. I like to be part of things. Part of the community. People take me for walks but I would like to go more. I feel bad when I can't go. I wish I could go by myself but it's hard. It's so hard.

I like my room here, it's comfortable. I have things in my room, I have a T.V set. I have more control and can be myself, look after myself. I do my dusting. It makes me happy. I can relax in my room. I don't get shoved. If I fall and can't get up, people help me.

Things are better now. It's all gone away.

A good life is going and looking around shops, getting coffee. **I'll tell you a good thing right, if I'm on a radio**

show, you might hear my voice everywhere. I was on a radio show and I can still be on it. There's a song I like. "I'll be home for Christmas, you can count on me". It makes me a bit happy.

One thing that I know, stand up for your rights.

You get together with someone and stand up.

That means rights.

That means rights.