

“When I Was Small”

David’s poem¹



¹ David chose to use his real name in his story.

When I was small
Everything was my fault
But mum knew it wasn't
Drink, drunk, punk, dunk

I called out for help when mum and dad were argueing
I got blamed for getting dad taken away
But mum knew I wasn't to blame
The lady across the road rang the police not me

When I was small
I did a lot of talking
Some talking got me into trouble
Chatter, natter, jabber, blabber.

I just wanted to be heard
Even my brothers didn't like my talking
I would nag my mum for money so I could buy something
Mum would give me some
My brothers didn't think that was fair
I said to them, "I told mum I was poor and she would hand me
some money"
Mum knew I was being cheeky

I would take off across the road to the petrol station and spend
it all
on...lollies and coffee.
Sweet, treat, caffeine, kick.

When I was small
With a big attitude
Never shy to speak up
Boast, brag, bellow, boom.

I would protect girls from being hurt by boys
Some didn't think I was protecting them
Some didn't think it was protection
Some thought I was in the wrong
I was taken away from my family to give mum a break ,they
said.

Let her have a rest from me "I was a handful", they said.
I went to Cholmondeley Home when I was around 10 years old
Then I went to Nazareth House at 12 years old.
The nuns would take me to church and sit either side of me
I would be wedged in between them so I didn't run out.
But my mouth was free and I yelled out, "God is the devil!"
Nun, shun, spun, no fun.

When I was small

I went to Campbell Park School in Waitaki Valley.

I was 13 years old and I went to learn how to put the right shoe on the right foot, and to tie my shoe laces.

But I actually learnt a lot more.

I got taught woodwork, how to fix a bike and we went camping.

They had a BMX track and I had a BMX bike.

There were lots of things to do

The food was really nice.

No girls just boys.

I left when I managed to put the right shoe on the right foot and tie my laces.

Left, right, left, right.

When I was a little bigger

I came home and got into trouble again.

I did the wrong thing.

They took me away to Templeton.

I didn't know what Templeton was.

When I arrived I looked around the place and eventually...

I found a garden beside Beech Villa.

I love gardening.

Soil, toil, ground, found.

I call Templeton “The Dump” and I called the villa I stayed in “Beach Bunny”.

I had my friend J in there too who lives with me now.

I did athletics and won the 200 metres.

I had my 21st in Templeton.

Got a key that everyone signed.

Someone wrote “xxooxx” – yuck, scrub that out!

Kiss, kiss, hug, hug.

I had girlfriends at Templeton.

I talked to lots of girls actually.

I worked at the printers in Templeton, not paid though.

I didn’t really like my job.

The ink stunk and it made my hands dirty.

The food at Templeton was not good.

It came from the kitchens at Sunnyside kitchens.

I went swimming and to the hall for activities.

I was allowed to roam around Templeton on my BMX or I walked.

I got put in a laundry bag once by staff and hung up high.

I told the big boss of Templeton on him – he got a warning.

I got strangled by another and that staff member got a warning also.

He later left Templeton cos he didn't like the big boss.
I saw a staff member slapping a resident's face.
He kept slapping him. I rang the police. They came.
They saw marks on his face and knew I was right.
The police gave the staff member a warning.

Mum would come and see me.
She took me line dancing.
She also took me to a rock and roll club.
I won 3rd place and got a medal.
Mum danced until she got breast cancer.
Step, clap, forward, back.

Then she died – she's up there now. In heaven.
My brother is here in Christchurch and I see him sometimes
My other brother he took me for a ride on his Harley once
I loved that.
And my sister is where the Kangaroos live.

It's bloody hard to describe me as a child.
Sometimes I would be easy and sometimes people didn't like
me.
I'm used to being in care. I don't mind it.

I shifted out of Templeton when the big boss said it was closing down.

Came to Halswell with my friends.

Been here since Templeton shut.

I can do a lot of things now and can get out and about with staff.

I like being busy. Making car models, playing x-box, playstation, going to the men's shed, making things for me and selling things, and cleaning cars for money. I work at Horizons and get paid.

I write up the menus here in my house.

Fish and chips tonight. Yum.

I do the gardening here.

This year I grew sunflowers.

Sunflowers grow tall – taller than me!

And the flowers are huge.

They look real good.

Big, bright, see, me.