

“I don’t know how I got there...” by Rawiri¹



¹ He chose to use a pseudonym for himself, and for other people he talked about in his story.

I'm 62, but 24 on the inside.
At the moment I live in a house out in the country. We have a big garden, and lots of animals. But I grew up in Dunedin.

We lived in Columba Ave, in the Corstorphine area. There was a dairy on the corner. When I drive around there now I remember some of the houses that my friends used to live in. And we saw Mum's house but I don't think it was really there. It was different! When I go to see mum now it is at the Andersons Bay Cemetery. It says her name on the grave.

Mostly it was just Mum and I in the house at Columba Avenue. Sometimes my

brother was there too. I think he was younger than me.

Mum worked at the Gregg's factory, down by the University. She used to bring jellies. Raro sachets of juice. The powder stuff. She used to bring coffee and instant puddings too.

I don't remember too much about my father. He didn't really live with us but he brought us some pāua once to mum's house. I didn't like seafood though. He never visited me in Cherry Farm. After I came out of Cherry Farm, we met with each other a few times but not for a long time now. Probably 10 years. I haven't seen my brother for a long time either, but I

remember his wife's name, and my nephew and niece's names too. My father, he's Māori, they're both Māori – my father and my brother. I think I am too. I might be half cast, part Māori?

I can't remember what Primary School I went to, but I think I went to Logan Park for High School. I remember some lady there, but not much else. Oh, I had lots of friends. Sandra. She was the longest. Then there were [a lot of others].

For a while I got into a bit of trouble. Yeah, we used to walk around and get in a car and go and visit people. We had lots of drives and lots of beer. And spirits. I used to

have rum and coke. I like my rum and coke. They were good days.

Got in lots of trouble. Got locked in the prison, the one opposite the train station. [It was] an orangey/red brick building. It was horrible and so run down in there. Burglary. Broke someone's window with a hammer. And one of Mum's windows. I had to break my own window once to get in because the key wasn't under the rock by the door outside. I always kept a key under the rock. So, I broke the window and climbed in. But I was lucky I didn't get cut from the glass.

One time mum went away on holiday and we had lots of

crates of beer. I think we left a mess.

I was happy with lots of alcohol. And drugs and Marijuana. In the 80's. Used to have marijuana. Hash oil. You used to get the box of hash about that long and that thick. You used to cut a bit off and put it on the Not the fireplace. You know, element, the ones that you light up? So you'd move it and sniff it. That was nice. We used to take datura. Friends cooked it up and we drank it and got really high.

I was on an invalid's benefit. I used to go on this invalid's benefit. I don't know how much I got. Hmmm, a bit of money. In the Exchange

there was a building there. I don't know if it's in the same area? Umm, it was a place in the Exchange that I used to go to [I think]. Yeah, we got forms and things. Hmmm, see I can't remember any of that part. Someone must have taken me there.

My friends [had] a Ford Galaxy. Left hand drive. It had mag wheels. And it had pinky red inside it. It was a nice car. I put money in to pay for it. I did try to sit [my licence] but it didn't work out. I couldn't drive. I asked to but they said "no - you have to have a licence". Once though, a friend and me we were out driving. He was in the driver's side and I asked if I could steer it. And I steered it from

Logan Park down to the shop at the bottom.

I was in Cherry Farm, sort of at the side. I think I was about 28 years old [when I went there]. I don't know how I got there. I feel like I was born in Cherry Farm. Did you find out how I got there?

I used to have a swastika on my arm. It's covered up now. When I got [to Cherry Farm], I went to sleep in a room and when I woke up and all of a sudden there were tattoos on me. That one was there when I was at Cherry Farm. Yeah it was really scary. They used to put me in lockdown seclusion. It was horrible. My worst memory was seclusion.

I don't remember why I was put into seclusion. In the seclusion room there was a small bed with a mattress on it. There was a small square window that other people could look through. A lady came and checked on me sometimes. Once I got angry in seclusion and threw the sheets around the room. Another time when I went to seclusion, two staff members got hold of me and twisted my arm and broke it. I had to have a sling for that. But finally someone came and opened the seclusion door in the end. I had to take a blue pill while I was in Cherry Farm to calm me down. All my life I've had medication but um these people at Cherry farm

weren't very nice to me. There were two seclusion rooms in my ward. Yeah, everybody would have hated [getting locked up], I should've felt for them more.

I remember some other things about Cherry Farm. One stage in the end, they got the canteen set up. They had drinks and stuff. And smokes that were 25 cents each. And there was a hall and church, and a swimming pool? I think it's still there. I can't remember how long I lived there.

Mum visited me sometimes. And one time she bought me lots of presents. I had a friend who used to come to see me on his motorbike too.

Sometimes I would get to go home. Yeah I used to get the mini bus. So they must have dropped me off. Mainly overnight, or maybe a few days, or the weekend. Yeah, I'd get picked up in a car or a bus.

When I left Cherry Farm I went to Wakari Hospital. They had seclusion there too. The staff were a bit hard to get along with and the patients sort of, patients [were] quite, quiet. Some of them were quite tough. [There was a staff person there] who was really tough, oh he actually hit me one day - I might of told ya - I was at Wakari Hospital 9A and he hit me in the back of the head. Oh, he's ah sort of got upset,

I did something wrong. He also worked at Cherry Farm.

And then I moved into the community. I had some jobs. Yeah. Sherwood - the place that used to do all the wood and stuff. Is it still open? Yeah, I used to work at St Leonard's at this lady's house. There was a wee farm in there. She had dogs and cats and goats and sheep. We did fencing. You know, you dig holes really deep.

I liked heavy metal. I liked Led Zeppelin, Pat Benatar. I had about 12 of the albums. I used to hire videos from video stores. But now they've closed down. I actually have about 110 records. [I love] Purple Rain. It makes me cry.

Not all the time but sometimes. Quite a lot. [The song My Name is] Luca does too. And "Yesterday". I grew up listening to that song.

At the moment I live out in the country. I [can] grow my hair, I don't think I've had it this long, I think this is the longest I have ever had it.

I can have black nail polish, eyeliner and black hair dye.

I've got a tattoo of a tiger now.