

A Child Called It

The book is an autobiography of David Pelzer. He writes about his struggle to stay alive in a home where he is treated like a slave and an animal. The book begins with the people at Dave's school finally report Dave and his condition to the authorities. The whole book is a flashback, except for the very beginning, when a policeman is taking the boy away from his mother, to freedom. His mother was the "perfect" mother, when he was younger than four. She taught them something new every day and took them on many fun family vacations. Then, singled out one of her children to be the family slave, but it didn't stop there. She also played cruel games, with the boy. Some of her favorites were the gas chamber, and the starvation tease. She played "games" with David; these games were sick and twisted. Although David had to learn how to cope and "play" these games in order to survive.

There were three main characters, Dave, (the boy,) his mom, and his dad. The writer makes me believe that these people are real by describing them in very fine detail.

I like Dave, because he seems really kind to everybody that he knows how to be kind to. Also, he tries to be honest, and is almost always hopeful and wishful. He is innocent, and smart. Here is a quote about him thinking about his relationship with his brothers:

"After the boys had carved their pumpkins, I could hear mother, in her soothing voice, telling them a scary story. The more I heard, the more I hated each and every one of them. It was bad enough waiting, like a dog, out in the backyard on the rocks while they enjoyed dinner, but having to lay in a cold bathtub, shivering to keep warm, while they ate popcorn and listened to mothers' tale made me want to scream."

As the book progresses so do the amount of abuse David receives from his mother. David was fortunate enough to remain hopeful throughout his abuse and was eventually taken from the custody of his mother. When talking David speaks calm at some times and with extreme rage at other times. David's mother is the only one who speaks slang in the book; this slang is usually the result of her being drunk.

I don't like Dave's mother because she is the abuser. She is very cruel and frightens her whole family. Here is a quote about her

relationship with Dave, (Dave's mother is talking):

"Well aren't you special...get one thing straight you little [SOB]. There is nothing you can do to impress me! Do you understand me? You are a nobody, and "It!" You are nonexistent! You are a bastard child! I hate you and I wish you were dead! Dead! Do you hear me? Dead!"

I also don't like Dave's father because he won't get the courage to help Dave. He is afraid that his wife will hurt him. He seems like he would be a very kind father, though, if he weren't paired with Dave's mother.

The story of David's childhood is very heartbreaking; he was brutally beaten and starved by his mother. David was forced to sleep in the basement on an old army cot. His mother made him wear the same clothes to bed and back to school the next day, as an effort to embarrass him. The kids at school made fun of him and called him names like "Pelzer-Smellzer" and "David the Food Thief", because David would be so hungry that he would steal things from the other kid's lunches in order to get something to eat, because his mother would not feed him. If David got the luxury to eat he would only be allowed scraps of food, like his brother's left over cereal, or things "even the dog refused to eat."

While David was young, he loved his mother very much, as well as his father. He admired both of them greatly. He described his mother as "...a woman who glowed with love for her children." He described his father as his "hero" and uperman. When David was in his toddler years he was very loved by all of his family.

Then David's mother started to "punish" David instead of discipline. As David said in the book, "My relationship with Mom drastically changed from discipline to punishment that grew out of control. It became so bad at times, I had no strength to crawl away--even if it meant saving my life." David's mother would tell him that he was a "bad boy" and that he couldn't play with his brothers and his punishment would be to sit in a corner of his room for hours. And this was only the beginning. David's mother's behavior began to worsen especially when David's father started to work 24-hour shifts.

She broke bones, stabbed him, starved him, with no apparent reason, and he knew if he ever told, it would only get worse. David went through so much living with his mother. This was only just the beginning. David's mother made him stand in the garage all day, until he was "summoned" to either do chores or go to bed. He was no

longer allowed to eat or play with his brothers. One summer while David and his family went on vacation to a campsite, David was dropped off at his aunt's house. He was not allowed to go on the trip with them. David wanted to be with his family on vacation so he tried to run away and find them-this shows the love that an abused child has for his abuser David's mother forced David to repeat the first grade, even though he had the most "happy face" papers out of the whole class, just so she could have a reason to punish him. When David returned to the first grade, it made him feel good about himself. He was the smartest kid in the class and knew all the answers; it also gave him a chance to be with his younger brother. At school they were friends, but at home they were forbidden to play together or even speak to each other.

The next summer David's mother set time limits for David. If he didn't finish his chores on time, he would get no food. "If you don't finish on time, I'm going to kill you!" His mother would say. Then one day she had given David dinner and said that he had 20 minutes to eat it, and if he went a second over, then he wouldn't eat for days. His mother stood there, over his shoulder while he shoved his food in his face. She was so drunk that she was rocking back and forth. "Out of the corner of my eye I saw a blurred object fly from her hand. A sharp pain erupted from just above my stomach. David's mother had stabbed him. I found this so horrifying that tears came to my eyes. This is one of the hardest books that I have ever had to read, being a mother myself; I just don't understand how someone can do this to her child. He tried to tell his father what his mother had done. "I stood before Father waiting for him to turn his page and see me. When he did, I stuttered, 'Father . . . Mo . . . Mo . . . Mother stabbed me.' He didn't even raise an eyebrow. 'Why'" he asked. ...Time stood still. From behind the paper I could hear Father's labored breathing. He cleared his throat before saying, 'Well... you ah...you better go back in there and do the dishes.' My head leaned forward as if to catch his words. I couldn't believe what I had just heard." So not only did David have to go through the pain that his mother stabbed him, he also had to go through the pain that his father didn't seem to care much, or at least didn't have the courage to defend his son.

After being stabbed, David's mother went back to her usual ways. She began to think up even more creative "games" for David to play. Like when David would clean the bathroom she would do very cruel things, like the gas chamber? I think that this is so horrible, because David couldn't breathe, his throat felt as if it was on fire and all he was worried about was if he could get the bathroom done on time. I know that he just didn't want to make his mother madder, but it still seems crazy to me. But in relation to what I have learned about dysfunctional families it makes sense.

After winning a school wide contest in Fifth grade and receiving a letter from the teacher she was more emotionally abusive than ever before, and for him it was worse, because she was sober, so it hurt more. "You are a nobody! An It! You are nonexistent! You are a bastard child! I hate you and I wish you were dead! Dead! Do you hear me? Dead!" This is the first time in the book that David's mother tells him she hates him, and she told him that she wanted him dead. I found this to be the saddest part of the book. And after this David describes his feelings toward what his mother had said. "My heart sank lower than ever before. Mother's words were no longer coming from the booze; they were coming from her heart. I would have been relieved if she had returned with a knife and ended it all."

David described that he wished that his mother would kill him. He began to purposely irritate his mother in hopes that she would at some point be driven enough to kill him, so it would all be over for David and he will no longer have to worry about what sick 'game' his mother would think up next. David was in the grocery store with his brothers and his mother. When his mother would make orders he would disobey her and then his brothers would make comments and David would snap back. So when they all got back to the car, David was ordered to lay on the floor of the back seat so his brothers could take turns stomping on his back for "mouthing off" to them. And when David and his family got home, David's mother made up the mixture of Clorox and ammonia again. This time she threw the rag in the bucket so David couldn't use it to cover his face, and she didn't turn the vents on either, so he couldn't breathe, and then she left him in there for hours.

David had learned at the end of that year, that his father and mother were getting separated. David was scared for his life; he knew that now that his father was leaving, there is no possible way for him surviving. David was very scared, and the book ends with his saying "...deliver me from evil" "Amen."

I thought that this book was really sad, and it showed so much emotion and drama, it makes you appreciate everything that you have. It shows you that even though sometimes you make think that you have it bad, you could just be over exaggerating, because other people could have it worse.

This book was set in Dave's house and school in California. He savored his time at school, because it was away from his mom. Also, sometimes he was able to steal food from other kids, the school cafeteria, and the household trash when he could, wherever he could find it.

Pelzer was lucky that the school nurse documented his wounds for such a long time and so well because in that day and age no charges would have been brought against the parents, or at least very little done. It is a shame that the abuse had to go on for so long. I feel like there is a piece of the story missing from the last chapter to where the authorities took him from the home. I hope he will cover that somewhere.

The thing that I liked best about this book is that wherever you started reading it, it hooks you in. It made me feel much better about my parenting skills. It makes me want to make my children read it and tell them, "see THAT is what a terrible mother is like?" It took me awhile to read, only because I found it a bit overwhelming and had to keep putting it down and taking a break from it because the subject matter was a bit disturbing as a parent. I think that anybody thirteen years or older that can stand a very unfair and sad book would like to read this book.