

Russell (I was a Deputy Juvenile Officer for a time)

He was just 16,
his 27th arrest,
All armed robberies,
His life, a total mess.

But he never had a weapon –
Nor ever denied what he had done.
Robbing older women, alone at night,
using only a stick as a gun.

The family lived on welfare –
Him, two younger sisters, their mom.
The checks meant to keep them alive,
Never enough to live on.

They had no bad habits ...
No drug use, alcohol, or similar expense,
It was just too little for a family of four -
The cost of food, utilities, clothing and rent.

He told me his mom had given thought
To turning one of his sisters out,
But, appalled, he cried 'NO' ...
You can't turn a 14-year-old into a whore!

So, she turned to him,
'round the 1st of each month,
Saying 'we need more - you're the man of the house –
get out there and do what has to be done.'

So, he did what he needed to do
Stuck up old ladies to ensure they had food
Each time he'd been caught
The cops knew his MO, and where he hung out ...

So at 16, certified an adult,
Sent up for 5 years - might never make it out.
This innocent, loving, brother and son ...
now confined in a living hell.

A tragedy ... not a film,
no, a slice of real life.
I begged the judge, who said 'ENOUGH'
He did the deed, he'll do the time.

Me, his DJO – my first case,
I couldn't make it right.
I failed this kid – and he paid the price.