



A NEW LEAF

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Hamlet and Mary Jane by Jim

For my depression, I see a male figure that I will call Hamlet, for this epitome of melancholia. For pot, I see her as sweet Mary Jane.

Hamlet came into my life at an early age. I recall teenage years marked by many long periods when he and I hung out together, just the two of us. I quickly learned that, when I was with Hamlet, no one could hurt my feelings any further. We started a deep relationship that was familiar, comfortable and easy – kind of like sitting in a nice warm tub of crap, except that it didn't smell too bad. Looking back, I think that I almost relished my times with Hamlet; blues songs had so much meaning, relationships with others were not important, and our little world together seemed so safe.

The difficulty was that periods of happiness were infrequent and incomplete. My self-esteem, goals and aspirations were placed on a shelf. Friendships were with people who had their own "Hamlets." The result was a young man with little vision, hope or desire.

During my teens, Hamlet also introduced me to a beautiful woman named Mary Jane. I immediately became enamored with her charm and started a long-term love affair that lasted over 30 years.

Mary Jane helped me to feel comfortable with my relationship

with Hamlet. Even though Hamlet and I were close, he still left me feeling uncomfortable and restless. I often wanted to leave him and venture out. Mary Jane made it all OK. Hamlet had no jealousy or problems with her; he actually liked having her around. She seemed to make his position more stable. Together, the three of us formed a strong bond, which was stable and non-threatening.

As I became an adult, my relationship with Hamlet became inconsistent. When he came to visit it was constant and encompassing. When he left, my ambitions, desires and hopes flooded back in. It was difficult to handle them, because Hamlet had kept them away for so long. I also knew that Hamlet would eventually return to take me back to that comfortable place where it didn't matter.

It took me many years to get to know who Hamlet really was. It seems like our relationship was so prominent in my life that it should have been obvious to me. But, for me, the relationship with Hamlet was simply what it was. We had grown together, of course I knew him well, but why did it matter? I did not have a realization that anything should be different. The only clue was that I was frequently unhappy, but this was usually attributed to the many things in life that

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Humility Opened the Door

by Bill W.

Bill from Ithaca, NY here. Pothead in recovery.

When I first got clean and sober (almost three years ago), I went to counseling. They kept telling me that willpower would not keep me from smoking or drinking. But in America, I was raised to believe that willpower is all it takes to be successful! So what does that make me? A loser? Well, it turns out that there's nothing wrong with willpower by itself. The only thing wrong was that I have a disease, and my disease sometimes uses "willpower" as a disguise.

Humility (and the second and third step) for me mean that I have to keep an open mind, stop saying "no," and listen to other people's suggestions. To a large extent, the door to my recovery opened when I stopped saying "you're wrong" and I started saying "maybe."

One of the ways I practice humility is by going to meetings. If the meeting is big enough and I don't have anything to say, I shut my mouth and listen. And for an hour I listen to OTHER people talk. Lis-

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A NEW LEAF

The purpose of A New Leaf is to carry the message of recovery from marijuana addiction. It is through the written experiences of recovering addicts and their stories that we may find experience, strength and hope.

Articles submitted should reflect recovery, unity, and service. The articles contained in A New Leaf are the sole opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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Hamlet and Mary Jane

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I had fallen victim to, not to Hamlet.

Over time, I began to realize that Hamlet might not be my friend. He was extremely jealous of anyone, except Mary Jane. When I began to take a step back and look at myself, I realized that, whenever we were together, we would walk off into a fog, and my relationships with others would break down. He also would leave me with little hope or self-esteem. I started to realize that he was actually controlling me in a very identifiable way. As my awareness advanced, I started feeling that it might be time for the two of us to go our separate ways.

But deciding to separate and actually doing it were two different things. I learned very quickly that Hamlet had woven a very intricate and complicated web between us. My first efforts to leave him were attempted solely with my own self-will. I learned that Hamlet was very clever and had no intentions of leaving. I started to become angry with him, because I could see through his games and schemes. But his power seemed to be stronger than my self-will. As my realization of his true nature increased, our battles continued; but somehow he was able to win most of the time.

I also gained the misconception that Mary Jane was on my side. She seemed to help me with my frustrations about Hamlet, and she was always so soothing and understanding. But our love affair was drawing me back to my relationship with Hamlet.

Eventually, I had some life changing events occur that made me realize that I could not get rid of Hamlet on my own. My self-

will had failed me in this regard, and I needed some help. My wonderful wife put me in touch with a wizard, who had a magic pill that could cause Hamlet to leave. I was skeptical, but desperate, so I tried his potion. Over time, Hamlet started to fade from my life. In many ways, it was like stepping out of a fog into the sunlight. My self-esteem started to grow, relationships improved and life started to feel like it was worth living again.

Well, Hamlet was smarter than the wizard. He secretly kept his relationship with Mary Jane, behind my back. He also sent another friend calling my way, Mr. Gin. Mr. Gin & I had known each other casually over the years, but had never been close. I always preferred Mary Jane, and he took a distant second place in these sorts of relationships. But somehow he, Mary Jane and I started to hang out together. I think that Hamlet, working in the background, had something to do with it.

Anyway, as the old saying goes, "three's a crowd." But instead of cutting out one, we allowed Hamlet to come back, to even things out. The three of us had somehow diminished the wizard's potion, and without it Hamlet came right back into the picture. I didn't see him coming, clever guy that he is. Unfortunately, the four of us caused my most important relationship in life to unravel. It was inevitable; she was outnumbered.

Hamlet had deceived me once again. This time, he found his way around the wizard's potion back into my life. The potion wasn't working anymore, and I lost faith in the wizard. I was angry and scared. I knew that I would not get another chance to get rid of Hamlet and save my relationship too. I may have another chance to get rid

of Hamlet, but my relationship would be lost in the meantime. Hamlet had to go.

My fears seemed to strengthen my resolve and somehow, by the grace of God, my self-realization started to increase. I had caused the potion to become ineffective. Also, the wizard was not the best, so I found a better one. The new wizard started to help me learn more about Hamlet, rather than just give me a potion to make him go away.

As I learned more about Hamlet, I started to realize how Mary Jane actually helped him come back. This was a very difficult thing to accept, since my loyalty to her had been constant and strong. But with this realization came another. Mary Jane had also deceived me. I had my suspicions about this before, but she always was able to calm them and take control of my self-will, so my suspicions were never fully explored. As it turns out, she was sheltering me from my life, in many ways, which prevented me from living life in a fulfilling way. She helped me to avoid the pain, but in so doing she also made me avoid joy.

With determination, and help from others, I am learning how to keep Hamlet and Mary Jane out of my life. I have just started on this path, and I know that I cannot stay there with my self-will alone. I must rely on my Higher Power to keep me there, and I am learning how to allow him to show me the way.

I believe that Hamlet and Mary Jane will always follow me throughout my life. They will be there, hiding in the shadows or blowing in the wind. Waiting for the time when I fall back on my self-will as the only protection that I have from them. When that occurs, they will come back. I can see them and feel them, as I yearn for Mary Jane and still feel like Hamlet is a part of me. I will never be able to let my guard down. The only way that I can keep them in the shadows is to learn more about how they got there in the first place, how they could re-enter my life, and how my Higher Power can guide me on a path that doesn't let them back in.

Strictly Business

SUMMARY OF THE 12/1/01 MEETING OF THE MAWS TRUSTEES

- It was clarified by the MAWS Treasurer that the 2001 Convention Committee was approved to use the MAWS Tax ID number; therefore, their profit of approximately \$2,600.00 has been forwarded to MAWS as a donation
- Ron H. suggested that including poetry, etc. could lighten up A New Leaf. It was noted that the final decision for inclusion lies with the A New Leaf Publications Board.
- The Trustees approved contracting with an outside payroll service for the processing of payroll checks for the MAWS Office Manager, in the amount of \$30.00 per month.
- The Trustees discussed the continuation of the MAWS web page development. Access to a "New Meeting Starter Kit" via the web page was also discussed. Further discussion was tabled until the February 2002 Trustees meeting.
- The Trustees discussed a request from a member for the possible publishing of a MAWS "business news letter." Brandon R. stated that he felt that a "business newsletter" may be ahead of its time, but could be revisited in the future.
- Donations from the districts are lower than the budgeted amount, which may be due to low intake in general in the individual districts.
- Brandon is working on the purchase of Directors & Officers insurance, which has been a difficult task, as most brokers do not understand the concept of a twelve step fellowship, i.e. how many members there are, etc.
- It was decided that MAWS would not enter into the business of chip production and distribution.
- It was noted that the Life With Hope II hard cover fundraiser would likely begin in 2002, with orders and payments to be collected in advance of the printing.
- It was noted that a suggested revision/clarification to the current Third Legacy Procedure would be included on the Conference Agenda, as prepared by Alan B

Humility Opened the Door

concluded

tening to other people talk, without cross-talking them, really gets me out of the center of the universe. And when that happens, I no longer have to know everything! What a relief!

I often wonder what makes this program work. And it seems to me that my "toolbox" of recovery requires hundreds of tools, built up over time. As I build up the tools in my toolbox, I gain freedom and the promises begin to come true for me. I finally realized that the only way to build up my toolbox was to go to hundreds of meetings and listen to hundreds of people. Each person sharing may be only one thing. And so the answer to what makes this program work, for me, is to go to as many meetings as I can! When there were no MA meetings in my area, I went to AA and translated "alcohol" to "pot" every time I heard it. I didn't introduce myself as a pothead; I introduced myself as an alcoholic. To me, that translated to "pothead," and I was accepted. Instead of looking for the differences, I looked for the similarities. And it WORKED, and it continues to WORK!

Thanks for "listening."



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★
★ Congratulations to Our Members ★
★ Celebrating their Sober Birthdays! ★

District 2

Meredith	3/23/97	5 Years
Mike E.	3/5/99	3 Years
Liz A.	3/12/01	1 Year!
Suki	5/26/95	7 Years
Clif R.	5/5/97	5 Years
Racquel	5/26/99	3 Years
Amy C.	5/10/01	1 Year!
Amy S.	5/17/01	1 Year!

District 3

Steve W.	5/3/96	6 Years
Bob E.	5/17/96	6 Years
Lily	5/17/96	6 Years

District 5

Norm B.	5/30/83	19 Years
John R.	5/7/87	15 Years

District 7

Ron H.	3/6/99	3 Years
Scott L.	3/3/01	1 Year!
Mike F.	4/1/94	8 Years

District 7 cont'd

Nate	4/1/97	5 Years
Kat	4/13/97	5 Years

District 10

Boot Joe H.	3/1/99	3 Years
Anthony	3/27/01	1 Year!
Mike M.	4/1/95	7 Years
Allen W.	4/14/97	5 Years

District 11

Craig S.	5/27/87	15 Years
Rocco	5/29/95	7 Years
Sharlene D.	5/1/97	5 Years
Dannie D.	5/23/98	4 Years
Warren W.	5/22/00	2 Years
Danno O.	5/31/01	1 Year!

Texas

Susan S.	3/31/97	5 Years
Sara A.	5/25/00	2 Years

Nevada

Cat	4/13/96	6 Years
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Celebrating 169 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!