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Candle from the Dark Past

I was in the realms of grief after losing, through death, my infant son. Since I was not strong in my spirituality at that time, a conflict developed between the AA principle of contact with a higher power and my anger and hatred toward God. I was trying to control situations, people, and even God's will. I had looked into the future and planned the results of life with my son. However, the true result was not what I had expected. I felt cheated out of love and happiness.

When I first entered the program, there was a joyous confusion, there were obstacles to overcome, and I was learning how to live sober. I looked forward to the promises of the Big Book. Some I felt were already coming true. Yet when my son died, I reached an emotional bottom, sober. I put down the Big Book almost entirely, refusing to receive its messages.

Whenever I brought my misery to the meetings, I was told to read the Big Book. "All the answers are there." Like a true, miserable alcoholic, I argued, saying that I had read it and nowhere — absolutely nowhere — did it mention how to go through grief and misery in sobriety.

All these feelings festered until that spring night. I was regretting the past and wallowing in self-pity.

Some time before, another AA member had told me "When you're

miserable enough, you'll do something about it"; and finally I did. After months of not praying, I cried out to my God. I felt my sobriety slipping. My talk with God was more like complaining. "Why me, God? Why has my life ended up this way? What am I to learn?" This continued for close to an hour.

Exhausted from not knowing the answers, I picked up the Big Book again. I was determined to show you people that the answers weren't in it after all.

Earlier in my sobriety, I had often picked up the Big Book and flipped through the pages. Wherever the pages landed, I would read that chapter. I did it that night. Somehow, I landed on and began to read the chapter "The Family Afterward." The title seemed to indicate a chapter for Al-Anon, so I had never bothered reading it before.

Within the first two pages, I came across a paragraph dealing with the alcoholic's past. Then I found the message that probably saved my life that night: "Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have — the key to life and happiness for others. With it, you can avert death and misery for them."

That sentence jumped off the page and became part of my life. If the dark past is the greatest possession I have, I must give it away to keep it. If I continued to live with the negative, there would be no key to life and

happiness for others. I also became convinced that the answers *are* in the Big Book; they are there if I'm open-minded and willing to find them.

Since that night, I have become an avid reader of the Big Book, using the many tools I find in it for everyday situations. Yet, I must admit that there are times when I become very bored with the stories. One day, while browsing through the local library's book sale, I found the second edition of the Big Book. It had belonged to an old-timer who gave it to a newcomer years ago, and somehow it landed at the sale over fifteen years later. I hungrily bought it and took it home, eager to study the new stories — new to me, at least.

Again, one night, I was feeling too lonely and a little tired. My son's death was again on my mind. I knew the Big Book would give me comfort.

Once more, I flipped through the pages of the treasured Big Book and found the story "Joe's Woes." Great, I thought, a new story. I was surprised, as I came to the end of the story, that Joe had lost his son in his sixth year of sobriety, and that he had been ready to go on a suicide drunk. I cried when I read, "If I didn't have AA on my right and AA on my left I wouldn't be alive today." With this sentence came the realization that I am not alone.

I am grateful that my God brought me the love and fellowship of the AA program. I now *thoroughly* believe the answers are in the Big Book.

M.G., Bloomington, Ind.



ONE NIGHT, EARLY IN SPRING, I became very disturbed over my past, not only my drinking past, but also my experiences since entering the AA program. There was a heavy thunderstorm that night, which gave me a good excuse to stay home, away from a meeting.