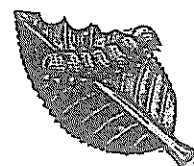


The Brown Bottle

By Penny Jones



Once there was a caterpillar named Charlie who lived in the Valley of Promises.

There was nothing observably special about Charlie. He was an average looking caterpillar amidst thousands of others. Like them, he spent the majority of his time crawling from leaf to leaf, eating as much as he pleases and dozing in the warm sunlight. Life was good and Charlie was happy

As you know, there is something very special about caterpillars. From the time they are born, there are aware that something beautiful beyond imagination will one day occur. It was called The Promise.

Charlie was a believer. For as long as he could remember, he had loved The Promise. Its mystery filled his days and nights with dreams of anticipation.

In this way, Charlie was special, for his love of The Promise by far exceeded that of any normal caterpillar. He grew more and more impatient in his intense desire to receive its gift.

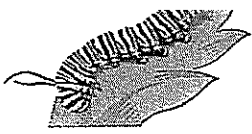
One day, as Charlie was exploring the valley, he was attracted by a bright shiny object lying in the meadow. It was a brown bottle. The sun's rays danced on the glass. It seemed to call to Charlie. Filled with excitement, he hurried as fast as he could go.

Charlie was a bit scared when he reached the bottle for it was something new and frightening. As he explored it, curiosity soon overcame his fear. He traveled its surface from end to end and top to bottom.

When Charlie entered the bottle, something magical seemed to happen. A soft mellow glow wrapped him in the warmth of a false protection. After a time, he was soothed to sleep by the gentle voice of the bottle whispering of pleasure yet to come.

At first, Charlie spent most of his time leading the normal life of a caterpillar with only occasional trips into the brown bottle. But as the days passed, he longed more and more for the mellow glow it offered and his trips became frequent. He began to venture deeper and deeper into the bottle to find the protection he sought.

Sometimes, Charlie's friends came to visit while he was in the bottle. As he moved about within its glass walls, he appeared to be different than he really was. Pleased with all the attention he received, he would do silly things to make his friends laugh. Charlie loved being the center of attention and his friend's laughter made him feel important.



Then, the bottle seemed to whisper, "Charlie when you are with me, you are a very, very special caterpillar. " And Charlie felt indeed, what the bottle had said was true.

By the end of summer, Charlie seldom left the bottle. It had become more important to him than the warmth of the sunlight, more important than the companionship of his friends, even more important than the Valley of Promises itself. He began to depend on the bottle for all of his needs. It had become his home.

With the coming of fall, the world outside the bottle began to change. Cold winds swept down from the north. Green plants turned brown and died. There was a rush of activity among the caterpillars for they knew that they too, must change with the seasons and prepare for the winter to come.

On the final day of preparation, Charlie's friends went to the bottle and called to him. "Charlie please, come out before it is too late. We must get ready to receive the Promise."

Surrounded by the warm glow, Charlie gazed out upon the barren valley. "I would be foolish to leave this warm place and go out into the cold with you. I could leave if I wanted to, but I would rather stay here." Laden with sorrow, Charlie's friends turned away from him in hopelessness and returned to their tasks.

One day, Charlie gazed out upon the snow covered valley the bottle again spoke to him, "Charlie you have seen your friends suffer from the cold in their quest for The Promise, while you have remained here with me. Surely by now, you know that I am better for you than an empty promise."

And Charlie knew that indeed, what the bottle had said was true. On that day, Charlie deserted his belief in The Promise and surrendered his dreams to the control of the brown bottle.

Winter passed slowly and Charlie lived in a hazy world within his glass confines. During his long stay, he had not eaten or taken care of himself. He began to grow frail and thin. The warm glow was slowly fading. The bottles walls were becoming cold and uncaring.

On occasion, Charlie tried to reach the bottle's opening in an attempt to find the outside world. But now the voice of the bottle was cruel and commanding, "Charlie, you cannot leave!" Weak from hunger and filled with despair, Charlie would slide feebly back into the depths of the bottle. At these times, he would utter quietly to himself, "I could leave if I wanted to, but I would rather stay here."

The mellow glow was completely gone now and there was nothing special about Charlie anymore. His good feelings about himself had gradually been replaced with

guilt and hatred. He had become nothing more than a sad, frightened, little caterpillar, trapped in a brown bottle.

Spring came. The valley was filled with beauty beyond compare. The sky was a rainbow of color as thousands of butterflies tested their wings for the first time in a never ending flight of freedom.

...THE PROMISE HAD BEEN FULFILLED

On the day of The Promise, Charlie died....Alone, in silent desperation. No one knew, nor even cared. Least of all, the brown bottle.

The Promise

Alcoholism, if not controlled, is a deadly disease. It is the silent thief of hopes and dreams, the destroyer of families and love. It robs its victim of pride and dignity, offering guilt and self-hatred in return.

Hope does exist for the alcoholic. With proper treatment and sobriety, alcoholism can be controlled. The alcoholic is then free to live a rich and rewarding life. Achievement of one's greatest potential is once again possible...The Promise can be fulfilled.

The Brown Bottle

(Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper)

1. What was Charlie's Promise:
 - a) In the beginning?
 - b) At the end?
2. What attracted Charlie to the brown Bottle?
3. What did the brown bottle offer Charlie?
 - a) In the beginning?
 - b) At the end?
4. What did Charlie give up to stay with the brown bottle?
5. What did the story teach you about substance abuse/alcoholism?



For more information about alcohol and substance abuse:

www.health.org
<http://www.dea.gov/resources/students.html>
Suffolk County Department of Health
Alcoholics Anonymous - <http://www.suffolkny-aa.org/>

