

## **Sobriety**

A Graphic Novel

### **Character Briefing**

*“Larry”*

Summary: Larry is the book’s main character, the “old-timer” in the group, and the connection the story makes to AA’s past. His story is also the longest, the details to which the other characters relate their own stories, and thereby address the Twelve Steps. Larry is sixty-four-years old and has been both a blue-collar and white-collar worker.

Rationale: Since Larry’s story is the initial gateway that readers enter the content of the book, I made his history the longest and most detailed. It is important that we portray him as three-dimensionally as possible. That isn’t to suggest that the other characters are cardboard cutouts. Instead, the rationale behind this strategy is to allow readers to identify him, to move them to understand the “old” language and concepts of the Big Book – to see that the old traditions address the human condition and what it means to become a new person in recovery.

Much of his portion of the book pertains to his sharing his back-story in an institutional setting, the details of which I cover more extensively in the in storyboard section. He also facilitates clarification to the different steps.

Traits: Addictions: Alcohol, Marijuana; often impatient; has long-term sobriety; recently lost his wife; does not share his emotions easily, but does so for the sake of sharing his story.

*“Alex”*

Summary: Alex is living a life of sobriety, but he’s still early in his recovery. He has six months of sober living behind him. He is twenty-nine years old, is of African descent, and he is from London. He is gay and out and he’s an actor. He’s in recovery for painkillers and alcohol, yet still deals with the pain he has in his left knee, which he got while climbing in British Columbia. Alex is the only atheist out of the bunch; this is a point of contention that he has with the others, although he is far less angry with this topic than Matt or Hannah seem to be (they are believers, but are struggling.) He has in a stable relationship with his partner, who strongly supports his recovery.

Rationale: Alex is a balancing force between the other characters and their conflicts. Whereas Larry tends to get easily frustrated, Alex is more levelheaded. He believes in the Twelve Steps, not because they offer him purpose or meaning, but because they work. His pragmatism comes at a cost, though: often he might seem aloof or arrogant. His British accent and colloquialisms don’t help on that front, either with the others’ perceptions of him. Alex introduces **Step One (and 6 & 7)** when sharing his story. Alex sells luxury cars near London.

Traits: Addictions: Painkillers & Herion, “Molly” (pure MDMA), Alcohol; of African descent; aloof, levelheaded; from the UK; listens well; strongly atheist; pragmatic. Somewhat narcissistic.

### *“Matt”*

Summary: Matt is a nineteen-year-old Hispanic male. He is a methamphetamine addict from San Diego, California although he has used many other drugs; this is his first inpatient treatment. He doesn't want to be there. He knows his abuse has caused problems in his life, but the “Twelve-Steps-thing” seems alien to him. Drug abuse has not affected him physically (on the outside, at least). Matt challenges authority continually. With his peers, he is cynical of the effectiveness of the Twelve Steps. He also has cut off any ties with his family. Matt has a co-occurring disorder – anxiety.

Rationale: Matt is a troublemaker. He is highly asocial and is resisting this treatment, his first. He finds Debby's optimism fake and disingenuous. His family has evidently rejected him. Because of this, he has created a hard, outward shell to protect his ego. Inside, he is deeply lonely and afraid. His gift to the story (and his rationale for existence in the story) is that he takes the **greatest turn** by the end of the book. I'm portraying him as experiencing a breakthrough. The readers then see that he has a capacity for empathy and compassion. He is highly creative and seems intelligent. Matt introduces **Steps Two & Three (and Twelve)** through the sharing of his story and the resulting drama that ensues between Matt and Debby (and the others.) Matt is a hard worker, when he wants to be. Matt has legal troubles. Also, his character and Alex serve as the book's NA connection.

Traits: Addictions: Methamphetamine, Poly-drug abuse; Anxiety disorder; asocial; lonely & afraid; great capacity to care and love buried deeply behind a defensive façade; skeptical; from California; of Hispanic descent.

### *“Debby”*

Summary: Debby is a twenty-four year old, white woman. She is in treatment for benzodiazepines and alcohol. Although she has a three-year old son from a previous abusive relationship, she currently is a single parent. Her family has been supportive of her. She is from Florida and hates her job as a service rep for a telemarketing company. This is her third inpatient treatment and she has finally accepted that she is an alcoholic. However, she tends to be overly optimistic and highly emotional. She wants to work the steps and live a life of sobriety, but does not realize how much real work that takes. She is the character who balances out (and has conflict with) Matt and Alex.

Rationale: I needed a character who has a dependent. Since the target audience for our work is primarily composed of young adults and teens, the one demographic that is missing (that is, from that which exists in the “real world”) is the group of people who have their own extended families. However, many young adults may have young children they will return to within their re-entry into life. Debby's story is full of drama and histrionics, both traits that many addicts share. Debby's story introduces **Steps 4 & 5**. Although she wants sobriety, there is something still missing in her recovery plan.

Traits: Addictions: Alcohol, Benzodiazepines; co-occurring disorder of depression (suicidal); history of sexual abuse; cares deeply for her child; has a sponsor who has stuck with her throughout the years (her greatest gift – one for which she only just is beginning to become grateful.)

## *"Hannah"*

Summary: Hannah is eighteen-years-old and the youngest member of the group. She is of Vietnamese descent and is adopted. Like many addicts, she is prone to drama. She is highly intelligent and a high-achiever. Recently, though, her grades have begun to suffer as a result of her addiction. Although she is legally an adult, she only recently graduated from High School and her parents pressured her to enter treatment after it became apparent to them that her college career was going off the rails. She has a history of bulimia. She is sexually attracted to Alex. However, this proves to be embarrassing for her when she finds out that he is gay.

Rationale: Hannah significantly changes the general audience for the book. I intend her to be a bridge to an audience to the demographic of people in recovery 18 years and younger. Her rebellious attitude was a surprise for her parents and her initial promise to them as a high-achiever, and her rejection of her gifts is an obvious letdown. Her parents are overly controlling with her, an obstacle she hopes to overcome – the answer she finds comes through the Twelve Steps and it will become apparent that this is her only out. Hannah introduces **Steps Two & Three and Ten & Eleven** through sharing her story. However, she has not yet worked on them herself and has of yet to find a sponsor.

Traits: Addictions: Mainly Painkillers & Alcohol (she "shocked" her parents when she told them she injected heroin several times); high achieving, oldest in family (adopted); has one younger brother and one younger sister; hedonistic and wild; had one close call with a near pregnancy; 1st year in college in Chicago; from small-town Wisconsin.

### **Additional Characters:**

### **Artist and Author**

As I shared with you earlier, the purpose for the Artist and the Author is to introduce the other characters and the comic format. Also, the meta layer is a tool to propel the reader into the story they experience themselves in the real world. The other bonus to using this device is that it serves both as a comic relief and also as a reality check for the readers.