



The Gateway

By Tom Doolittle

It was the spring of my eighth grade year when I would walk into my garage coming home from school to have my older brother blow a cloud of pot into my face. At this point I didn't think much of it because I was so used to it. So many people were smoking marijuana it seemed that someday I would end up doing it too. My older brother, however, changed that for me. I learned so much that year at the cost of my older brother's mistakes. Most of all I learned that marijuana can be a gateway drug.

I remember him trying to argue with my mom about it. She had caught him twice and had told him that if she caught him doing it at her house three times then he'd be kicked out. As we drove home from the grocery store their heated debate went on as my brother argued that just because someone smokes weed it doesn't mean they're going to end up as some kind of homeless meth junkie. He was right. If someone smokes weed that doesn't mean they will become a homeless meth junkie. But the point that evaded him was that some homeless meth junkies started by smoking weed. Not many people that have died or gone to rehab because of meth abuse started

doing meth by just walking down their street and suddenly deciding "Hey meth sounds fun!" There's a process about it. They work their way up from one drug to the next—each getting more extreme—and that whole long line of drugs often starts with marijuana.

Not long after that my mom caught my brother smoking at home three more times. Lucky for him she was determined to make sure he graduated high school so instead of kicking him out she waited for his graduation. But as soon as that was over she broke the news to him. He packed his things and moved into a house with his friends in Boise. Soon after his drug problem got much worse and you could say my mom was to blame for kicking him out, but he didn't really leave her any other choice. Pretty soon he was smoking, snorting, and ingesting every drug you could find in Boise. He spent over a year being on the brink of homelessness spending all of his money on different drugs. I think deep down my family and I had all given up on him and accepted the fact that he wouldn't be moving on in life anytime soon. We were all worried and unsure of what was going to happen to him

not knowing just what drugs he was using. The thought of him overdosing on meth or heroin was slowing growing in the back of my mind.

I remember late in the summer of 2015 when I came home from a day with my friends. My mom was sitting inside waiting to tell me he'd been arrested. It was the best news I'd heard in months. I felt bad for him but I hoped that being arrested would turn him around and set him in the right direction. He was arrested on five felony charges of distribution of LSD. The police thought they'd found some kind of drug lord running the business in Boise but when they busted into his house all they found was some broke twenty year old kid who really loved LSD. Nonetheless he was facing a sentence of three years to life.

His friends managed to pull some money together and bail him out a few days later and he moved back in at my house. That December his sentencing came and he was put in for just three months and a three year parole. If he's ever caught again tied up in any of that stuff he'll serve the rest of his life in prison. Since then my brother has turned his life back around. Eventually he moved back out on his own and is now a student at BSU. If you ask me, he's lucky to be alive or still have his freedom.

The mistakes my brother made in his life taught me so much. Just because a drug seems harmless and normal doesn't mean that it is. One morning in class I was talking to one of my friends about hanging out sometime. "We should hangout this Friday, I wanna smoke you out" he said. I just chuckled and agreed. But then I thought about it. I considered all of the mistakes my brother made, and all the drugs he did. That's when I realized that the biggest mistake he ever made was smoking weed. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Tom Doolittle is a high school senior from Idaho. *Alert Magazine* congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.