

## A GRAPEVINE CHRISTMAS CAROL

### CAST:

Narrator  
Bob Cratch-it  
Whiny Tim  
Alex  
Ebenezer  
Marley  
Spirit Past/Spirit Present/Spirit Future

**(The Narrator is at a podium off to the side. Tim, Bob, and Alex are seated at a rectangular table that can later be used as the bed and the casket.)**

NARRATOR: Welcome to “A Grapevine Christmas Carol” brought to you by the Rule 62 Players. You may recognize some of these characters from the Dickens classic, but hopefully *not* from your home group. It’s the night before Christmas. An AA group called “Mixed Nuts” is about to have their year-end business meeting. They’re just waiting for their Treasurer: Ebenezer.

TIM: (Whining) How much longer do we have to wait?

NARRATOR: That’s Tim. He’s new, but he’s already earned an AA nickname: “Whiny Tim.”

TIM: And why do we have to have a business meeting on Christmas Eve?

BOB: Ebenezer scheduled it hoping no one would show up.

NARRATOR: That’s Bob Cratch-it.

BOB: It’s pronounced Cratch-it.

NARRATOR: Bob puts up with Ebenezer because the guy’s been sober since the earth cooled. But Bob does *not* want what Ebenezer has and he’s willing to go to any length to avoid it.

TIM: (Still whining). Well I’m tired of waiting. Not that I have anything else to do. I’m all alone on Christmas Eve.

ALEX: Sounds like the makings of a pity party.

NARRATOR: That's Alex. She just moved to the area and is looking for a good home group. Probably not this one.

ALEX: Where I *used* to live we'd hold Alkathons during the holidays so new folks would have a place to go.

BOB: There's one tonight, a few towns over. And our group is having a pot luck tomorrow.

TIM: Except no one has signed up to bring anything.

ALEX: (rubbing her hands together). Is it always so cold in here? You should change your name to The Shivering Denizens.

TIM: It's because our Treasurer doesn't want to pay for heat.

**(Ebenezer enters)**

BOB: Here he is now. Merry Christmas, Ebenezer.

EB: Bah! Humbug! (To Alex). Who are you?

ALEX: My name's Alex. I just moved here.

EB: Well you'll have to move again, over there. You're in my chair.

ALEX: I didn't know there were reserved seats.

**(Alex moves to another seat. Ebenezer settles into his chair, then tosses a single page onto the table)**

EB: Here's my Treasurer's report. Motion to approve.

ALEX: Can we read it first?

BOB: (Reading) I'm glad to see you finally sent out our contributions to the District, Area, and New York.

EB: I have a hard time writing checks because of my arthritis.

TIM: Because of your stinginess.

EB: Newcomers should be seen and not heard.

NARRATOR: Ebenezer's version of Tradition 7 is, "Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining to make outside contributions."

ALEX: It looks like you still have two hundred dollars over your prudent reserve.

EB: (Grabbing the report back). Never you mind.

TIM: Two hundred dollars? We could have a New Year's Party!

EB: Over my dead body.

TIM: Okay. (Tim mimes blowing a noisemaker). Happy New Year!

ALEX: You don't use basket money for parties - at least not where I'm from.

EB: Finally something sensible.

ALEX: But you could use that surplus to help support Grapevine.

EB: We already sent money to New York.

ALEX: That money doesn't go to Grapevine. They're a separate corporation. The only way to support Grapevine and La Vina is by purchasing subscriptions, books, and other items.

BOB: I didn't know that.

EB: If they need money they should sell ad space like every other magazine.

TIM: Yeah! If I was a liquor brand I'd want to talk to the drunks!

BOB: Selling ads is against at least half the Traditions.

ALEX: My group supported Grapevine by getting a bunch of subscriptions and having a lending library of magazines for members.

EB: We've got Grapevines around if someone wants one.

**(Alex picks up an old issue that's on the table and checks the date)**

ALEX: It's from 1980.

EB: Give me that. It could be worth something.

BOB: Old Grapevines are great. But it's important we have the latest issues for newcomers. They may relate better to *current* AA experience.

ALEX: Yeah, I love the stories in the back of the Big Book, but they only get updated every 25 years. Grapevine shares new stories every month.

EB: That's enough sharing out of you.

TIM: But come on - who reads magazines anymore? Not me.

ALEX: Then subscribe to the Grapevine App. You can read the stories or make a playlist and listen to them. And the App's just \$2.99 a month.

TIM: Well I can't even afford that.

ALEX: Grapevine has "Carry the Message" gift certificates. Maybe the group could give you one.

EB: Absolutely not! I make a motion to adjourn. And I second it.

BOB: You can't do that.

EB: I just did!

**(Ebenezer exits.)**

BOB: (To Alex). I'm sorry...

ALEX: No worries. I've got to get home anyway. See you tomorrow. **(Alex exits)**

BOB: I need to get home, too.

TIM: But what about me? It's Christmas Eve and I'm all alone.

BOB: I'll drive you to that Alkathon.

TIM: I'd rather go to a movie.

BOB: I thought you didn't have any money.

TIM: I thought you'd treat me.

BOB: It's the Alkathon or nothing.

TIM: Okay, fine...

**(Bob and Tim exit. The Narrator continues)**

NARRATOR: When he got home, Ebenezer changed into his night clothes.

**(Ebenezer enters wearing an old fashioned night shirt and stocking cap.)**

NARRATOR: Then Ebenezer did his version of a nightly inventory.

EB: I was right. They were wrong. Time for bed.

NARRATOR: Suddenly he heard something that sounded like chains rattling.

EB: Who's there? Show yourself.

**(Marley enters wearing chains).**

MARLEY: It is I, Jacob Marley.

EB: Marley. You look terrible.

MARLEY: Well I've been dead for 7 years. Have you gotten a new sponsor yet?

EB: No one is good enough.

MARLEY: Anyone would be better than the idiot you've got for a sponsor now - you.

EB: What's with the chains?

MARLEY: The bondage of self. In life, I was too focused on money, property, and prestige to help the suffering alcoholic. Now in death I must wear these chains. But you can avoid my fate.

EB: How?

MARLEY: You will be visited by three spirits. Pay attention to what they say, Ebenezer. Or you'll be cursed like me.

**(Marley exits. Ebenezer makes up his bed.)**

EB: I have *got* to stop going to business meetings - they make me crazy.

NARRATOR: As soon as Ebenezer started to fall asleep he was awakened by a spirit, just as Marley had predicted.

**(The Spirit of Christmas Past enters.)**

SPIRIT PAST: I am the spirit of Christmas Past.

EB: Well I'm not spiritual so go away.

SPIRIT PAST: Close your eyes, Ebenezer, and think of Christmas past. When you were a child.

EB: All right. (Closing his eyes). There's my dad, stumbling drunk, knocking over the Christmas tree. And now he's setting our stockings on fire with the Yule log.

SPIRIT PAST: You must have some happier memories.

EB: There I am, helping clear the table and drinking up all the leftover booze.

SPIRIT PAST: Enough with your dysfunctional childhood. Didn't you propose to a young woman one Christmas?

EB: Yes,. I drank a bottle of liquid courage, got down on one knee and asked her to marry me. Then I puked all over her shoes. She said no.

SPIRIT PAST: I don't blame her. What about your first *sober* Christmas?

EB: I was a wreck. Marley took me under his wing. I still have that Big Book he gave me - it's in mint condition.

SPIRIT PAST: Because you never open it.

EB: Now that I think of it, Marley also got me a Grapevine subscription. He said, "*This* will keep coming even if *you* don't."

SPIRIT PAST: Maybe you should get Whiny Tim a subscription.

EB: I can't afford that.

SPIRIT PAST: It's only \$36 for a year. You spent that much on booze every week.

EB; Not me. I drank the cheap stuff.

SPIRIT PAST: Why am I not surprised?

EB: Thanks for the nostalgia tour but I'm going back to bed.

**(The Spirit of Christmas Past exits).**

NARRATOR: Ebenezer tried to fall asleep again, but his dark night of the soul was only beginning.

**(The Spirit of Christmas Present enters)**

SPIRIT PRESENT: I am the Spirit of Christmas Present.

EB: You look just like the last one.

SPIRIT PRESENT: Different hat. Listen to me, because I'm about to say the most spiritual words ever spoken in A.A. "Get in the car."

**(The Spirit takes Ebenezer for a short loop in a pretend car)**

EB: Where are we going?

SPIRIT PRESENT: To a district where groups were generous enough to support an Alkathon.

**(As the Spirit & Ebenezer pull up they see Bob holding two books behind his back and approaching Tim.)**

EB: What's Bob doing at the Alkathon? He should be home with his family.

SPIRIT PRESENT: He'd like to be. But he was concerned Tim might drink if he was all alone. It's called helping others. Looks like Bob bought Tim some gifts.

**(Bob presents Tim with copies of two Grapevine books. Tim is thrilled.)**

EB: Look at Tim. He's certainly not whining now.

TIM: Wow! *Beginner's Book*. And *Emotional Sobriety!*

EB: Wait, I could *buy* emotional sobriety.

SPIRIT PRESENT: No, you have to earn it.

NARRATOR: Tim was having the time of his life, laughing, dancing, and singing.

(Tim is dancing and singing the words to "Heard It Through the Grapevine".)

TIM: Ooo-Ooo, I heard it through the grapevine!

BOB: (sung/spoken). And I'm just about to lose my mind...

TIM: (Still singing). Honey, honey, yeah!

**(Tim dances off stage and Bob exits after him)**

EB: Tim is going to make it, right?

SPIRIT PRESENT: He'll stay sober tonight. But not on New Year's Eve.

EB: What?

SPIRIT PRESENT: Unless you help him.

EB: Me? No, I'm...too, uh...

SPIRIT PRESENT: Too what? Selfish? Self-centered?

EB: Take me home, Spirit.

SPIRIT PRESENT: (Transporting him back to his bedroom). There you go. But get ready, Ebenezer. The future is coming.

NARRATOR: As Ebenezer waited for the Spirit of Christmas Future he was filled with - you guessed it - pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization.

**(The Spirit of Christmas Future enters & points to where they need to go)**

EB: (Fearfully). I know you want to show me the future but...can't I just wait until it comes?

**(The Spirit points again and Ebenezer goes to where he's directed. Together they watch as Bob and Alex enter and stand by a corpse that's under a sheet.)**

EB: Who is it that's died? (The Spirit gestures to Ebenezer to hush)

ALEX: It's true what they say. Alcoholics either get sobered up, locked up, or covered up.

EB: Oh no. It's Whiny Tim.

BOB: Who would've thought after so many years he'd drink again. Poor Ebenezer.

EB: It's me?

ALEX: He was so focused on money, property, and prestige that he forgot about helping others. He had no defense against the first drink.

BOB: He's got no family so...should we try to put together a memorial service?

EB: Yes, rent the biggest church you can find.

ALEX: No. He wouldn't have wanted us to spend the money.

EB: Yes he would.

BOB: And besides, who would come?

EB: If you serve food, AA people will come to anything.

**(Tim comes stumbling in, drunk.)**

TIM: I'll come...if there's wine. (Making a mock toast) To Ebenezer. A crabby, crusty old fart who I will miss.

BOB: C'mon Tim. Let's get you a cup of coffee.

TIM: Only if it's a Latte. **(Bob and Alex lead Tim out)**.

EB: Spirit, tell me: Is this what *might* be or what *must* be?

**(The Spirit makes a 'who knows' gesture. Ebenezer falls to his knees)**

EB: Oh please! Give me a chance to change things.

SPIRIT FUTURE: (Clears throat). That's not my department. But while you're down there say the Third Step prayer.

**(Ebenezer begins mumbling the prayer. The Spirit exits.)**

NARRATOR: As he prayed, Ebenezer felt the strong wind of a mountain top blow through and through him.

**(Ebenezer stands and places his hand over his heart).**

EB: I think I just had a spiritual experience. Or was it a spiritual awakening? (To Narrator) You there. What day is it?

NARRATOR: Christmas morning.

EB: Oh thank goodness! I'm not too late! **(Ebenezer pulls out a wad of cash and gives it to the Narrator)**. Go and buy the biggest turkey you can find and deliver it to Bob Cratch-it.

NARRATOR: I'm in the middle of something here...

EB: (Exiting). Tell him, "Merry Christmas - from the biggest turkey in AA." Ha Ha!

**(Ebenezer exits. The Narrator looks at the money not knowing what to do.)**

NARRATOR: Great. He has a hot flash and suddenly I gotta buy a turkey. Okay, we're gonna pretend I wake Bob up and hand him a giant raw bird. And now let's fast forward to the noon meeting. Ebenezer, who's usually sitting back in inventory row, in his special chair, is standing at the door being a greeter.

**(Ebenezer enters wearing a Christmas sweater and greets Alex at the door)**

EB: Alex! Welcome! I am so glad you moved here and that you're now part of our AA family.

ALEX: Do I know you?

EB: Ebenezer.

ALEX: No...

**(Alex wanders ahead, confused. Tim enters.)**

EB: Tim! Merry Christmas! I have a gift for you!

**(Ebenezer hands Tim a “Carry the Message” gift certificate).**

TIM: A subscription to the Grapevine App?

EB: Yes! It has all these great features, and you get access to the Grapevine Archives - every article that’s appeared in Grapevine since 1944! You can search by topic like “Acceptance” or “Gratitude”...(he sees Tim frowning) Or Dating in Sobriety...

TIM: I can’t use this. I don’t have a smart phone.

EB: Oh I got you one of those, too. **(He hands Tim a phone)**. I loaded it with the App and all seven seasons of the Grapevine podcast.

TIM: Did you, like, eat some gummies or something?

**(Bob enters)**

EB: There he is! Bobbie!

BOB: Why did you send me a giant turkey?

EB: For the potluck. **(Pulls out a wad of cash)**. And here - in case we need more side dishes.

BOB: Have you been drinking?

EB: No. But I did indulge in a few spirits. (He laughs, Bob doesn’t). Do you think we could we have a quick business meeting after this? I’d like to vote on using that \$200 to buy Grapevine back-issue packs.

BOB: I think we need to go to the psych ward.

EB: Yes! We’ll bring some there. And to the jails. And treatment centers...

BOB: Okay...uh...whatever you say.

**(Ebenezer moves to Tim who’s looking at the phone)**

EB: Let me show you how to create a daily spiritual checklist on the App.

ALEX: (to Bob). What happened to Ebenezer?

BOB: I don't know. But I hope he hangs onto it. Anything is better than the way he was.

NARRATOR: We hope you've enjoyed our Grapevine Christmas Carol. And as Whiny Tim likes to say...

TIM: God bless us, every one.

**(THE END)**