

“Ebie”

Written by Jeff Wine, Grapevine Non-Trustee Director ca. 1999; minor modifications by Bob McK., NE Ohio

CAST:

Narrator

Ebenezer

Tim

Joe/Marley

Spirit of Grapevine Past/Present/Future

Young Ebenezer

NARRATOR: It was Christmas time and also our last business meeting of the year.

EBENEZER: C'mon, let's get this over with!

NARRATOR: That's Ebenezer. Missing the Christmas spirit. He's our treasurer. Has been for ten years. Missing the spirit of rotation, too.

EBENEZER: I heard that. None of the rest of you can handle being Treasurer. You're either in Debtor's Anonymous, or you should be.

TIM: (Whining to EBENEZER) Can somebody get me something for Christmas? If I don't get anything I'm gonna feel bad.

NARRATOR: That's Whiny Tim.

EBENEZER: Get out of my chair, you pathetic wreck!

TIM: (Whining) You're hurting my feelings.

EBENEZER: Good.

NARRATOR: Ebenezer has a special chair in the corner, where he sits and takes everyone's inventory.

EBENEZER: That's enough out of you. Kissing up to the audience, so they'll like you. People pleaser.

NARRATOR: He makes business meetings so awful, almost no one shows up.

EBENEZER: Well, things go a lot faster without all that interference.

NARRATOR: You mean group conscience?

JOE: Ebenezer!

NARRATOR: That's Joe. He's more patient than I am.

JOE: Give us your Treasurer's report.

EBENEZER: Thanks to all my hard work, we have a prudent reserve of ten thousand dollars.

NARRATOR: That's not prudent, it's paranoid.

JOE: It does seem high. Our rent is only a forty bucks a month.

EBENEZER: I don't think it's enough. In fact, I propose we stop giving away literature to newcomers.

JOE: What?

EBENEZER: Those books cost money. And we can't afford to hand 'em out to every sick puke who walks in the door looking for free coffee.

TIM: Is he talking about me?

EBENEZER: And speaking of coffee, I'm for going back to Styrofoam cups. They're cheaper.

NARRATOR: But they're bad for the environment.

EBENEZER: That's an outside issue, and we're not supposed to have any opinion on outside issues. Maybe we shouldn't have any coffee at all! That'd be even better for the environment. How about that, you tree hugger?

NARRATOR: I give up.

EBENEZER: Good. It's about time you took the third step.

JOE: We should be dispersing some of this money.

EBENEZER: To whom? Those wheeler-dealers in New York? They'd just blow it translating the Big Book into eighty different languages. Let 'em learn English if they want to get sober. Go to any lengths! Ya know what Dr. Bob said: Keep it simple, stupid.

JOE: I don't think he said 'stupid.'

EBENEZER: His last words to Bill were, "Don't screw this up with a lot of your grandiose, extravagant schemes, you New York stockbroker thief."

NARRATOR: That's not what he said.

EBENEZER: I paraphrased. (Wistfully) I wish Dr. Bob were still around. I could use a good proctologist. Who'd treat me for free.

JOE: How about if we do something simple. Like buy some Grapevine subscriptions for a prison?

EBENEZER: Why should we help a bunch of low life criminals? There's a reason those people are in jail.

NARRATOR: Usually it's something they did while they were drinking.

JOE: Or how about Grapevine subscriptions for a hospital?

EBENEZER: If an HMO won't cover it, why should we? Anyway, the Grapevine's not what it used to be.

NARRATOR: Most people think it's better than ever. There are special sections on Spirituality...

EBENEZER: Humbug!

NARRATOR: The Beginner's Meeting.

EBENEZER: Beginners should be seen and not heard.

NARRATOR: The Old Timer's Corner.

EBENEZER: The only Old Timer's corner I need is the one I sit in.

NARRATOR: There are stories from AA's all over the world.

EBENEZER: If they have something to say, let 'em come here and say it.

NARRATOR: And great articles on the Steps and Traditions.

EBENEZER: I know all about the Traditions. And number 7 says we should be self-supporting, declining to make outside contributions.

TIM: I wanna use the money to have a party.

EBENEZER: Humbug!

TIM: A New Year's Eve party!

JOE: It is our group's anniversary.

NARRATOR: And it would be nice for newcomers to have somewhere safe to go.

EBENEZER: A party? What do you think this is, a fellowship? Next thing you'll want is dancing.

TIM: I can't dance sober.

NARRATOR: Just imitate Ebenezer. He's been doing the 2-step for years.

EBENEZER: Dancing is against some Tradition. I'm sure of it.

JOE: Well, let's at least get our group a Grapevine subscription.

EBENEZER: How much does the blasted thing cost?

NARRATOR: A lot less than the price of a round of drinks.

EBENEZER: Not at the joints I drank at. I've been sober longer than any of you, and I say we hide the money away until we need it. Now let's close. Grant me the senility to forget the things I cannot change, the willpower to steamroll the things I can, and the denial to ever see the difference. Amen.

TIM: But what about the party? I wanna have a party!

NARRATOR: None of us could get through to Ebenezer. But later that night...

SPIRIT: Ebeneeeeeeeeeezer!

EBENEZER: Who said that?

SPIRIT: It is I, the spirit of the Grapevine past.

EBENEZER: Well, I'm supposed to stay away from spirits.

SPIRIT: No! You're coming with me.

NARRATOR: The spirit took him back to his days as a newcomer.

EBENEZER: That's Marley, my sponsor! But he's been dead for years.

SPIRIT: And you never got a new sponsor, did you?

EBENEZER: Didn't need one.~' (The Spirit nods ironically to the audience)

EBENEZER: That's me! I look like a wreck.

SPIRIT: As bad as Whiny Tim.

EBENEZER: Marley's giving me coffee...and a Big Book. I still have that copy. It's in mint condition.

SPIRIT: Sure, you haven't opened it in years.

EBENEZER: What's that he's giving me?

SPIRIT: A Grapevine.

EBENEZER: That's right, he gave me a subscription. (Laughing) The Grapevine kept coming, even when I didn't. There were some good stories back then.

SPIRIT: And now! Most people think it's better now than ever.

EBENEZER: Have you been talking to that Narrator?

SPIRIT: No. But there are special sections on...

EBENEZER: Hey! I think you're crossing the line, from attraction to promotion.

SPIRIT: Okaaaaaaay...

NARRATOR: But Ebenezer's dark night of the soul wasn't over yet.

SPIRIT: I am the spirit of Grapevine present.

EBENEZER: Well I'm not making a present of the Grapevine to anyone.

SPIRIT: I'm going to show you what other people say about you.

EBENEZER: It's none of my business what other people say about me.

SPIRIT: Have you been going to Al-Anon?

EBENEZER: No, I just use the phrases when it's convenient.

SPIRIT: Come, Ebenezer. (They watch JOE & NARRATOR)

JOE: Look what the Grapevine sent me for free?

NARRATOR: *The Homegroup: The heartbeat of AA.*

JOE: I'm gonna give it to Ebenezer for Christmas

EBENEZER: Give it? To me?

NARRATOR: He wouldn't read it.

EBENEZER: She's right about that.

JOE: I just wish Ebenezer knew what he means to us.

NARRATOR: I'll tell you what he means to me. If the home group is the heart of AA, he's the plaque in our arteries. And we need an angioplasty.

JOE: You don't mean that.

NARRATOR: I guess not.¹. But I'll go to any length to not have what he has.

TIM: (Enters whining) What am I going to do? No one wants to be my sponsor.

JOE: Who'd you ask?

TIM: Oh, you have to ask? Maybe I should ask Ebenezer.

NARRATOR: Definitely.

JOE: Yeah. But don't be disappointed if he says no.

EBENEZER: This is kind of like doing a fourth and fifth step.

SPIRIT: How would you know?

NARRATOR: Then the Spirit of Grapevine Future got hold of him, and showed him the things to come.

(The SPIRIT points to a body that's covered by a sheet)

EBENEZER: Who is it?

JOE: Poor guy.

NARRATOR: Yes.

EBENEZER: Who?

NARRATOR: Not only did he die, but he died drunk.

EBENEZER: Who? Whiny Tim?

JOE: Poor Ebenezer.

EBENEZER: Me?

JOE: He was just too proud to admit to the group that he drank again.

EBENEZER: I'm going to drink again?

JOE: For all his faults, I really liked him.

NARRATOR: Yeah. For a stubborn, pompous pain in the ass he was all right. I was thinking of writing an article about him for the Grapevine.

EBENEZER: Good idea!

JOE: I didn't think the Grapevine published tributes to individual members.

NARRATOR: It wouldn't be a tribute.

JOE: Should we have a memorial service?

EBENEZER: Yes! Rent a church — no a cathedral!

NARRATOR: Who would come? Nobody but us.

WHINY TIM: (Stumbling in, drunk) I'll come. If you serve wine.

JOE: Tim, let me get you a cup of coffee.

TIM: Only if it's Starbucks. I can't stand coffee shop coffee.

EBENEZER: Spirit, is this the way it has to be? Or can I change? Please! Tell me I can change!

(Lights blink, the SPIRIT exits, it's back to where we were at the beginning. EBENEZER sees the NARRATOR)

EBENEZER: I'm alive. Am I sober?

NARRATOR: That's a matter of opinion.

EBENEZER: What meeting is this?

JOE: The Beginner's.

EBENEZER: So we still haven't had the business meeting?

JOE: Not yet

EBENEZER: Yippee! Oh, I can't wait.

NARRATOR: What's he planning?

EBENEZER: I'm going to propose we get a group subscription to the Grapevine. No, ten group subscriptions! And we send ten to a prison...

NARRATOR (To JOE) Call the psych ward.

EBENEZER: And ten there, too.

(TIM enters. Ebenezer hugs him)

EBENEZER: Tim! How are you?

TIM: Lousy. I'm not getting anything for Christmas, I don't know what to do for New Year's, and I put my picture on an online dating service, but they took it off!

EBENEZER: How about the Grapevine website? Have you been there? It's www.aagrapevine.org.

TIM: Can they find me a date?

EBENEZER: No, but I bet it's worth a visit. And I'd like to get you a Christmas present: a subscription to the Grapevine. And a copy of their new booklet: *AA Around the World!*

TIM: You? The biggest cheapskate in AA?

EBIE: Not anymore. (Passing out subscription cards to the audience) From now on, I'm buying subscriptions as anniversary gifts, as holiday gifts, as housewarming gifts... There are 2 million sober alcoholics, but only a hundred twenty thousand Grapevine subscribers! That's got to change!

JOE: What happened to Ebenezer?

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

(CURTAIN. THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. NUMEROUS SUBSCRIPTIONS)