

GRAPELET

By William Shakesbeer

(as modified for performance at Akron, Ohio 4/4/98)

This play was first presented as part of a Grape-a-Thon in Denver, Colorado by the Grape Nuts Flakes. It is distributed through the courtesy of the writer and of the enthusiastic group of thespians who brought it into being.

Like the Grapevine magazine, this play presents the personal experience, opinions, and humor of individual AA members. Opinions expressed here are not to be attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does performance of this play imply any endorsement by either AA or the AA Grapevine.

GRAPELET
William Shakesbeer
(Co-authored by Adrienne H.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS
ALL MEMBERS OF AA

- CLAUDE: Passionately opposed to the Grapevine and other "book-pounding trash"; he married Gertrude before Grapelet, Sr. was cold in his grave.
- GRAPELET: Claude's nephew and son of the first Grapevine editor; passionately supports AA newspaper.
- GHOST OF GRAPELET, SR.: Grapelet's dead father; first Grapevine editor.
- GERTRUDE: Claude's wife, Grapelet's mother; widow of the Ghost of Grapelet.
- ROSS & GIL: Grapelet's friends and peers.
- PAUL: Semi-senile father of Ophelia and Larry.
- OPHELIA: Attracted to Grapelet; Paul's daughter; Larry's sister.
- LARRY: Paul's son; Ophelia's brother.
- THE DIRECTOR: Sets the stage and runs the whole show; arranges lights, scenery, and rest of the players in his/her own way; basically self-will run riot.

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As originally presented at the first Grape-a-Thon, Denver, Colorado, January 4, 1986 by the Grape Nuts Flakes. [Modified 3/16/98 for current prices and Akron, OH.]

Act 1, Scene 1, Akron, Ohio, Corner of Mill & Grape

Street Sign - Mill & Grape, Purple Sheet for Ghost

ENTER ROSS AND GILL

ROSS No, we can't kick him out of the group. I know he's a slob but the "Twelve and Twelve" says that any alcoholic is a member when he says he is.

GIL Okay, I was just kidding. Anyway, have you seen Grapelet lately? He seems awfully depressed.

ROSS Well, I wouldn't be feeling so hot either if I were in his shoes. He gets home from college and finds out his father, the editor of the Grapevine, died suddenly. And to top it off, within a month of the old man's death, Grapelet's mom married his uncle, that creep, Claude!

GIL What's the Grapevine?

ROSS What's the Grapevine??? I can hardly believe my ears! Gil, you've been clean and sober for over five years and you're asking me what's the Grapevine!!! The Grapevine is the International Monthly Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. The long form of the 9th Tradition calls it our principal newspaper.

GIL OK, OK, OK! Now I know what the Grapevine is! That sure is a bum deal for Grapelet, Gertrude marrying that creep Claude before old Grapelet was hardly in the ground. Well, I've got to get back to work, Ross, so I'll see ya later.

THE GHOST OF OLD GRAPELET WALKS BY

GIL Check it out!!! It's walking off!!!

ROSS Wow, it just faded off down the street. Man, we have to tell Grapelet about this. Wait a minute!!! Are we sober?

GIL Yeah.

ROSS Then we just saw a ghost! Let's see, I'm ten months clean and sober. I can't be hallucinating, can I? This can't be the DT's can it? I can't be seeing things!!!

GIL We can't both be having the same hallucination.

ROSS A sobering thought! I'll see you at the AA meeting tonight and we'll talk to Grapelet about this.

GIL Yeah, sure. Bye.

Act 1, Scene 2, The Home of Claude and Gertrude

Poster - Do Unto Others Before they Do Unto You. Purple Tie for Grapelet, Chairs and Table

ENTER CLAUDE AND GERTRUDE, ARM IN ARM

CLAUDE Even though the memory of our "dear" departed brother Grapelet's death is still fresh let's not grieve too much. We had a sad funeral, a joyous wedding (Claude winks at Gertrude) but now all is normal. So, let's get down to business. I'm sick and tired of those damn Grapevine Representatives trying to shove the Grapevine down my throat. It's a bundle of trash! Fifteen dollars for one year, \$28.25 for two, \$41.00 for three; and now those special items! Yuk! The Best of the Grapevine Volume I or II-- eight bucks, what a rip off! And BOG3 coming out soon. All those crummy cartoons for four bucks, those lousy cassettes for five dollars and fifty cents, two bucks for The Best of Bill, four bucks for the Co-Founders' Memorial Issues -- The list goes on and on! It makes me want to throw up just thinking about it. Now that Old Grapelet has gone to his higher power, we can get rid of the whole damn mess!

ENTER GRAPELET

Claude ...And now my nephew, and my son, Grapelet, how are you today?

GRAPELET (aside) We may be related, but we're not the same kind. You make me sick. (aloud) I heard what you said and it's a disgrace! My dear old dad worked hard to support the Grapevine. He made sure that groups everywhere knew about it -- "Our Meeting In Print." He encouraged AA's to give subscriptions to their pigeons and friends. He suggested its valuable uses in the community to doctors, ministers, lawyers, and the like. He never missed publishing an issue from 1944 'til the day he died. Now I want to go back to New York and help keep the Grapevine going.

CLAUDE Oh no! Your mother and I want you to stay here and help around the house.

GERTRUDE That's right, dear. We need you here. . . but why do you seem so resentful?

GRAPELET Seem resentful? Seem? Listen lady (aside) --for I won't call you "mother"-- (aloud) I am resentful! Dad was barely cold when you married Claude, and the Grapevine "Our Forum for Debate" is on the verge of collapse. I'm on the verge of collapse!

CLAUDE You're a reasonable boy. Write an inventory; take it through the Steps. Do your duty in grieving for your father, but don't take up his silly magazine. Think of me as your father now and support my position against such Big Book-pounding trash like the Grapevine.

GRAPELET I'll do no such thing! I'll stay here for my mother's sake, but I don't have to like it, and that's all!

CLAUDE This is love and tolerance? (to all) Let's go to the Indians game

EXIT ALL, EXCEPT GRAPELET

GRAPELET I wish I could melt into morning dew. Oh, God, how could you take from me a Saint like dad and give me such a low-life like Claude? Dad protected mom with such loving care. But this slime-bag Claude only likes her for her body. Oh how soon my mother left the funeral for incestuous sheets! I must carry on dad's work with the Grapevine. I am responsible to help carry AA's message of hope to the alcoholic who still suffers. I'm going to try to see to it that every group in every city, town, and hamlet has a Grapevine Representative. I'll share helpful ideas that I've read about in the Grapevine at closed discussion meetings and at open meetings, too. I'll encourage Gil and Ross to write articles, letters and humorous quips for our magazine. I'll do all I can for AA and the Grapevine, but I need your help, one day at a time...and I know I haven't taken out a pencil, paper and ruler yet, but please help me to be willing to let go of all these resentments.

ENTER GIL AND ROSS

GIL Hey Grapelet, why weren't you at the meeting?

GRAPELET I'm sure glad to see you! I had to listen to Claude putting down my dad.

ROSS Speaking of your dad, we saw him this morning.

GRAPELET Have you been drinking?

ROSS No.

GRAPELET Have you been smoking those funny little cigarettes from Columbia again?

GIL No. Really, Grapelet. He walked right down the street and disappeared!

GRAPELET What street?

GIL Mill Street.

ROSS No, it was Grape Street!

GRAPELET Great, you're both drunk!

ROSS No we aren't!

GRAPELET All right, what did he look like?

ROSS Just like when he was alive. Gray hair, nice physique and kind of an ethereal pallor.

GRAPELET Did he say anything?

ROSS No, but tomorrow we can all go to Grape Street and watch for him together.

GRAPELET Good plan. Let's meet in the morning for coffee at the Club right after the 9 AM meeting of the Flame Group.

ROSS OK.

Act 1, Scene 3, Paul's Home

LARRY AND OPHELIA

POSTER - Easy Does It, Chairs and Table

LARRY So sis, what's the deal?

OPHELIA Grapelet says he loves me!

LARRY Love?? He sees you only as a toy, a fad. He's a swine!

OPHELIA Really?

LARRY Don't believe him. He's nothing more than his father's son. Without his dad he'd be nothing at all. He only cares about himself, his sobriety and that silly old Grapevine. He always gives a brief talk on the new issue at meetings and it just bores me to tears!

OPHELIA I enjoy his comments. He highlights important features and attractively displays our magazine.

LARRY Well, don't ever go out with him again, ok?

Act 2, Scene 1, Corner of Grape & Colfax

ROSS, GIL AND GRAPELET

Street Sign - Mill & Grape, Purple Tie for Grapelet, Purple Sheet for Ghost, Photos

ROSS Pretty cold, eh?

GIL Mighty nippy!

GRAPELET What time is it?

ROSS Eleven o'clock - same time we saw him yesterday morning.

GRAPELET Oh, I'm so ashamed that Claude is my stepfather. I have such bad feelings about him. Sometimes, I even think he killed my dad.

ENTER GHOST

ROSS Look!!!

GRAPELET Oh, is it a blessing from heaven? Father, it's you! Have you come back from the dead?

GHOST BECKONS GRAPELET AWAY FROM ROSS AND GIL

ROSS He wants you to follow him, but don't. It may not be safe.

GRAPELET Why should I be afraid of my own father? (GRAPELET follows the ghost to the corner).

GRAPELET Speak! I'll go no further.

GHOST I have to leave soon. I just need to talk to you a little. I am your father's spirit, damned to walk this earth until my murder has been revenged and the Grapevine is safe. Revenge my murder, Grapelet, my son! Save the Grapevine - our Meeting in Print!

GRAPELET Murder???

GHOST Yes, a murder most foul. Claude and Gertrude killed me. They poisoned my coffee. As quick as mercury, the poison ran through my body. Like curds in my veins it hardened; a crust encompassed my body and I fell to my death!

GRAPELET Gross me out, dad!

GHOST Well, I have to leave now. Remember! Here's some pictures - evidence. (fading out)
Remember what I told you, my son.

GRAPELET (Taking the pictures) I will, father, I will.

Act 2, Scene 2, Paul's Home

Poster - Easy Does It, Money, Plane Ticket

PAUL Here's some money and a plane ticket.

LARRY Thanks dad.

PAUL Be wise, my son. I know your tendency to stay out and carouse all night.

LARRY I will be wise, father.

PAUL While you're in Vegas, my son, don't go wild - don't drink, don't gamble, don't drug. Don't dishonor our family name, and be careful about social diseases!

LARRY Yes, father. No drinking, fighting, drugging, gambling or sex with street people.

PAUL Ah, you say the right words so easily, but I'll never stop worrying about my wayward son.

EXIT PAUL

LARRY What an enabler! In his senility, dad has given me a thousand bucks and a ticket to Vegas! I'm ready to party hearty! But other business to attend to first. Grapelet must never be happy! (Larry calls) Ophelia!!! Come here, wench!

ENTER OPHELIA

OPHELIA Huh?

LARRY Ha, ha! (Larry grabs her) I'm locking you up in the attic until I get back from Vegas! You and Grapelet will never be happy!

EXIT LARRY AND OPHELIA (she's screaming)

Act 2, Scene 3, AA Meeting at 20 W. Waterloo Rd.

ROSS, GIL, CLAUDE, GERTRUDE AND GRAPELET

POSTER - Serenity Prayer, Big Book, Basket, Lots of Grapevines, Yellow Grapevine Poster, Table And Chairs

ROSS Hey, I read this great article, "Love and Cooperation" in the December, 1984 Grapevine. I'd like to share a little from it.

CLAUDE Oh, no!

ROSS It was written by a young guy in Atlanta, Georgia, when he was only ten months clean and sober.

CLAUDE Spare us!

ROSS "I am now an AA among AAs and an NA among NAs, with home groups and sponsors in both."

CLAUDE I don't want to hear any more of that boring trash!!!

ROSS You jerk. When it comes to the program, you don't talk it or walk it!

GIL Hey, spiritual wimp. I just don't have any use for this garbage!

ROSS Listen here you spiritual thug! Any resemblance between the noise that comes out of your face and the AA program is purely coincidental!

GIL Yeah, what do you think - that you're cured or something?

CLAUDE I don't need to take this from you knothead! C'mon, Gertrude, let's go!

EXIT CLAUDE AND GERTRUDE

ROSS He can not or will not be completely honest with himself. It will be his own downfall.

EXIT ROSS AND GIL

GRAPELET I am the scum of the earth. I am restless, irritable and discontented. I have not avenged my father's dearest beliefs about the Grapevine. Oh, I would just like to die! -- And Ophelia, why won't she see me? I love her so. Does she see me as just another 13th stepper? She could inspire me to live up to my father's request.

GRAPELET PAUSES AND THEN LOOKS UP AT THE SERENITY PRAYER ON THE WALL

GRAPELET To drink or not to drink. That is the question! Whether it is nobler in the mind to be drunk as a skunk or to have the Ninth Step promises -- to die as a back alley wino, to sleep -- the heartache, the hideous four horsemen, terror, bewilderment, frustration and despair -- we cannot do it alone. Personal recovery depends upon AA unity. This is what the Grapevine stands for.

Act 3, Scene 1, The Home of Claude And Gertrude

GRAPELET AND GERTRUDE

Poster - Do Unto Others before They Do Unto You, Purple Tie For GRAPELET, Photos, Handcuffs, Table And Chairs

GRAPELET Mother, you are despicable! How could you marry Claude so soon after dad's death? I know you and Claude poisoned dad and I have the evidence to prove it! (shows her the photos)

GERTRUDE Aggghh!!

ENTER CLAUDE

CLAUDE What is it, my sweet? (sees photos) AGGHH!!

GRAPELET You slimy, murdering, incestuous pigs! There's a police car waiting outside for you!

OFFICER (voice from off stage) You're busted, dog breath! Come out with your hands up! Book 'em, Danno!

EXIT CLAUDE AND GERTRUDE

Act 3, Scene 2, The Grapevine Office in New York

LARRY AND GRAPELET

LARGE POSTER - Skyline of New York seen through a big window with purple curtains, lots of Grapevine Posters on the walls. piles of Grapevines and various special items, desktop sign - Editor (In purple ink), purple tie for GRAPELET, purple bow for OPHELIA, phone, cassette player with cassette of phone ringing, and LARRY'S poem.

LARRY You can't turn down my poem! Publish it or I'll take it to Cosmopolitan, Mr. Goody, Goody!

GRAPELET The Grapevine will not publish your poem on the beauty of bars in Las Vegas. It isn't Grapevine material. We don't even publish good poems -- or personal prayers, dramas or tributes to individual AA members.

EXIT LARRY

ENTER OPHELIA

GRAPELET Oh, I'm so glad that I found you in the attic! Now that we're married we can have lots of children -- little grape seeds growing up into Grapelets and Grapelettes -- and we have saved the Grapevine!

EVERYBODY CHEERS OFF STAGE

OPHELIA Oh, Grapelet, I love you!

GRAPELET And Grapevine, we love you!

PHONE RINGS

OPHELIA (Answers then hands the phone to GRAPELET) Honey, it's for you.

GRAPELET Hi Charlie! Yeah...I bought some paper last week...yeah, I found the ruler yesterday...yeah, I sharpened my pencil this morning... I'm gonna write that article for the Grapevine.

END