



It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play, Stamford Center for the Arts, Stamford, Connecticut (2005). Photo: Joe Landry.

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY by Joe Landry

(Holiday music plays. We're in a radio studio. On the stage are two microphones and a sound effects table, hanging above all are Applause, On the Air and WBFR illuminated signs [at the moment, only the later is lit]. Maybe there's a window in the background overlooking a skyline, maybe it snows outside. The look and feel of the place is posh, sophisticated, deco. Fifteen minutes prior to curtain time, the voice of a STAGE MANAGER [possibly pre-recorded] comes over the house speakers:)

STAGE MANAGER. Fifteen minutes to air. Mr. Laurents, Mr. Heywood, Miss Applewhite, Miss Sherwood, Mr. Filmore, this is your fifteen minute call. Fifteen minutes to air.

(The holiday music continues. Over the next ten minutes, the ACTORS have enter the auditorium, casually mingling with the audience, checking scripts, props, etc. At five minutes prior to curtain time, the voice of the STAGE MANAGER returns.)

STAGE MANAGER. Five minutes to air. Mr. Laurents, Mr. Heywood, Miss Applewhite, Miss Sherwood, this is your five minute call. Mr. Filmore, places for audience warm-up, please. We're at five minutes to air.

(Over the next couple of minutes, FREDDIE FILMORE [the actor playing The Announcer] makes his way to the stage. When he sees that all is in place for him to begin [the other Actors are in the area, etc], he signals to the STAGE MANAGER. The holiday music fades, a light comes up on FREDDIE FILMORE and his mic is live.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to a live broadcast of WBFR Playhouse of the Air. We thank you for braving the weather this Christmas Eve, and you'll be glad you did when you hear the story we have for you tonight — *It's a Wonderful Life*.

(Applause sign flashes.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Very good, thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Remember, this evening's program is being broadcast live from coast to coast, and our listeners are counting on your reactions as a part of their listening pleasure. So, don't be shy, and feel free to applaud, laugh, swoon or cry just as loudly as the spirit moves. *(Receives a signal from the STAGE MANAGER.)* I'm getting the signal from our stage manager that we will be going live on the air in just less than three minutes, which allows me just enough time to introduce you to the fine acting ensemble who will be performing this evening's entertainment. You know him from *Chick Carter, Boy Detective* and *Cowpoke Romance*, playing George Bailey, the hero of tonight's story, Mr. Jake Laurents.

(Applause sign flashes as JAKE LAURENTS / GEORGE greets the audience.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Having just returned from Los Angeles, having completed filming *Dottie Goes Bananas*, a Technicolor spectacle, as his leading lady, Mary Hatch, we bring you Miss Ohio 1943, Miss Sally Applewhite.

(Applause sign flashes as SALLY APPLEWHITE / MARY greets the audience.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. WBFR Playhouse of the Air listeners have heard our next little lady in roles ranging from Mother Cabrini to Salome, and playing smalltown siren Violet Bick and others in this evening's story, I give you Miss Lana Sherwood.

(Applause sign flashes as LANA SHERWOOD / VIOLET greets the audience.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Soon to be seen co-starring with Margaret Dumont in Paramount Pictures' new comedy, *The Hick Chick*, and playing Clarence the Angel and others in this evening's show, here's Mr. Harry "Jazzbo" Heywood.

(Applause sign flashes as HARRY "JAZZBO" HEYWOOD / CLARENCE greets the audience.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. And, finally, host of *Females Are Fabulous* and here with you every week on Playhouse of the Air, I'm Freddie Filmore.

(Applause sign flashes as FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER greets the audience.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. *(Receives a signal from the STAGE MANAGER.)* I'm getting the signal from our stage manager that we will be on the air in twenty seconds. Thank you all for coming this evening and enjoy the broadcast.

STAGE MANAGER. We are live in 5, 4, 3...

(The "On the Air" sign lights up.)

(MUSIC: WBFR on bells.)

(For notes on music, see the Appendix.)

ALL. *(Sing:)* W-B-F-R IN NEW YORK CITY...

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. This is WBFR Playhouse of the Air!

(Applause sign flashes.)

(MUSIC: Theme Music.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Good evening ladies, gentlemen, boys, girls, young and old, old and new. Greetings from WBFR Studio A in Manhattan, New York, right here in the U.S. of A. I'm your host, Freddie Filmore, and it is my pleasure to bring you your favorite stories this and every week on WBFR Playhouse of the Air. Tonight, we bring you a real feel-good heart warmer perfect for this or any Christmas Eve, *It's a Wonderful Life*. We begin our story in the little town of Bedford Falls, New York, U.S. of A, where a number of people in the town are praying for their dear friend, a typical American dreamer named George Bailey...

(MUSIC: Underscore.)

MARY. Dear God, please look over my husband George.

ROSE. *(Simultaneously with "George:")* George is a good boy, you know that. My son has always gone out of his way to give others a hand. Now it's him who needs the help.

HARRY. *(Simultaneously with "help:")* Help my big brother George. He's done so much for all of us. More for me than I remember.

GOWER. (*Simultaneously with "I remember:"*) I remember all the times he would stay late after work and not ask a cent. The world needs more like George Bailey.

BERT. (*Simultaneously with "George Bailey:"*) George Bailey never thinks about himself. I wouldn't have a roof over my head if it wasn't for him.

VIOLET. (*Simultaneously with "if it...:"*) If it wasn't for him I would have given up long ago. All I think about is myself. I must have taken the last cent he had.

POTTER. (*Simultaneously with "he had:"*) He had no sense of business, that George Bailey— Just like his father. None of the Baileys were ever businessmen. It's his own fault if he wasn't prepared for times like these.

BILLY. (*Simultaneously with "for times...:"*) At times like these, I can't help but think it's all my fault. Help him, Father, it's me who's putting him through all this.

PETE. Something's the matter with Daddy.

ZUZU. Should we pray for him, Mommy?

MARY. Yes, Zuzu. Pray. Pray very hard.

(The praying continues in the background and fades away during the following.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. The voices carry heavenward, and Joseph, the superintendent of angels, summons Clarence, an apprentice angel...

CLARENCE. You sent for me, sir?

JOSEPH. Yes, Clarence. A man down on Earth needs our help.

CLARENCE. Splendid! Is he sick?

JOSEPH. No, worse. He's discouraged. At exactly ten-forty-five P.M. tonight, Earth time, that man will be thinking seriously of throwing away God's greatest gift.

CLARENCE. Oh, dear, dear! His life! Then I've only an hour to dress. What are they wearing now?

JOSEPH. You will spend that hour getting acquainted with George Bailey.

CLARENCE. Sir, if I should accomplish this mission— I mean— might I perhaps win my wings? I've been waiting over two hundred years now— and people are beginning to talk.

JOSEPH. What's that book you've got there?

CLARENCE. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, sir, I was reading it when you sent for me.

JOSEPH. Oh fine book, excellent. Well, you do a good job with George Bailey, and we'll see about your wings.

CLARENCE. Thank you! Thank you!

JOSEPH. Now, if you're going to help George, you'll want to know a little something about him. Look: See the town?

CLARENCE. Why, yes. A group of young boys, sledding down a snow-covered hill and onto the ice... This is amazing!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yippee!!

CLARENCE. Who's that?

JOSEPH. That's your problem: George Bailey.

CLARENCE. A boy?

JOSEPH. That's him when he was twelve, back in 1919. Something happens here you'll have to remember later on.

YOUNG GEORGE. And here comes the scare-baby, my kid brother, Harry Bailey.

YOUNG GEORGE. I'm not scared.

ALL. (*As BOYS, Ad lib, ala:*) Come on, Harry! Attaboy, Harry!

HARRY. YIPPEE!!!

(SFX: Ice cracks, followed by water sloshing.)

YOUNG GEORGE. Help! Help!

CLARENCE. Oh, dear— Harry's fallen through the ice!

YOUNG GEORGE. I'm coming, Harry. Make a chain, gang! A chain!

CLARENCE. So his brother fell through the ice. But George saved him.

JOSEPH. Yes, Clarence. And ever since George has had a bad ear. All that icy water, you understand...

CLARENCE. Bad ear, yes sir.

JOSEPH. The other event came a few months later. George took an after school job at Old Man Gower's drug store.

(SFX: Door with bell opens and shuts.)

YOUNG GEORGE. It's me, Mr. Gower. George Bailey.

GOWER. You're late.

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir.

YOUNG VIOLET. Hello, George. 'Lo, Mary.

YOUNG MARY. Hello, Violet.

YOUNG GEORGE. Two cents worth of shoelaces, Violet?

YOUNG VIOLET. Mary was here first.

YOUNG MARY. I'm still thinking.

YOUNG GEORGE. Shoelaces?

YOUNG VIOLET. Please, Georgie. *(To MARY:)* I like him.

YOUNG MARY. You like every boy.

YOUNG VIOLET. What's wrong with that?

YOUNG GEORGE. Here you are.

YOUNG VIOLET. Bye, Georgie. See ya later, Mary.

(SFX: Door with bell opens and shuts.)

YOUNG GEORGE. Made up your mind yet, Mary?

YOUNG MARY. I'll take chocolate.

YOUNG GEORGE. With coconuts?

YOUNG MARY. I don't like coconuts.

YOUNG GEORGE. You don't like coconuts! Say, brainless, don't you know where coconuts come from? Lookit here—from Tahiti—Fiji Islands, the Coral Sea!

YOUNG MARY. What's that you've got there? A new magazine! I never saw it before.

YOUNG GEORGE. Of course you never. Only us explorers can get it. I've been nominated for membership in the National Geographic Society. Let me get your ice cream.

(SFX: Ice cream noises.)

YOUNG MARY. Is this the ear you can't hear on? George Bailey, I'll love you till the day I die.

YOUNG GEORGE. I'm going out exploring some day, you watch. And I'm going to have a couple of harems, and maybe three or four wives. Wait and see.

(YOUNG GEORGE whistles "Buffalo Gals.")

GOWER. George! George!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir.

GOWER. You're not paid to be a canary!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir.

YOUNG MARY. Goodbye, George.

YOUNG GEORGE. Goodbye, Mary.

(SFX: Door with bell opens and shuts.)

(SFX: Opening up telegram.)

CLARENCE. What was that piece of paper George just picked up?

JOSEPH. It's a telegram for Mr. Gower. He found out this morning that his son died of influenza.

CLARENCE. Oh, awful.

JOSEPH. Yes, and he's spent the afternoon drowning his grief in whiskey.

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, do you want something... Anything?

GOWER. No.

YOUNG GEORGE. Anything I can do back here?

(SFX: Capsules falling to the floor.)

GOWER. No.

YOUNG GEORGE. I'll get them, sir. *(Pause.)* What's this bottle, Mr. Gower?

(SFX: Capsules being put back into glass bottle.)

GOWER. Never mind that, take those capsules over to Mrs. Blaine's.

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir. They have the diphtheria there, haven't they, sir?

GOWER. Ummmm...

YOUNG GEORGE. Is it a charge, sir?

GOWER. Yes—charge.

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, I think...

GOWER. Aw, get going!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir... Mr. Gower...?

GOWER. What is it?!

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, you...that bottle you used...you put something wrong in those capsules.

GOWER. Who do you think you're talking to?!

(SFX: GOWER slapping YOUNG GEORGE.)

YOUNG GEORGE. You're hurting my sore ear.

GOWER. Did you hear what I said?! Get out of here!

(SFX: GOWER slaps YOUNG GEORGE again.)

YOUNG GEORGE. *(Whimpering:)* Mr. Gower, you don't know what you're doing. You put something wrong in those capsules. I know you're unhappy. You got that telegram, and you're upset. It wasn't your fault, Mr. Gower. But look Mr. Gower look, look. This bottle, you used this bottle to make up the capsules. It's poison!

GOWER. Poison!

YOUNG GEORGE. *(Overlapping:)* Don't hit my sore ear again.

GOWER. Poison, oh George, George!

GEORGE. All I wanted was to make sure. Mr. Gower, I won't tell anyone. I know what you're feeling. I won't ever tell a soul. Hope to die, I won't.

GOWER. Oh, George.

(MUSIC: Transition.)

CLARENCE. Did he ever tell anyone about those pills?

JOSEPH. Not a soul.

CLARENCE. Did he ever marry the girl? Did he ever go exploring?

JOSEPH. We'll get there soon enough, Clarence. When George Bailey grew up he wanted to go to college, but there just wasn't the money. So he worked four years in the Building and Loan Association.

CLARENCE. Building and Loan Association?

JOSEPH. George's father was in the Building and Loan business, along with George's Uncle Billy...

BILLY. George, what's the combination to the safe?

YOUNG GEORGE. We wrote it down so you wouldn't forget it.

BILLY. That's right... Where?

YOUNG GEORGE. Your wallet, Uncle Billy.

BILLY. Thanks.

JOSEPH. Lovable fellow, just forgetful is all.

(SFX: Door [without bell] opens and shuts.)

CLARENCE. Who's that?

JOSEPH. That's Henry F. Potter: The richest and meanest man in all the county.

BILLY. Peter! Potter's here.

POTTER. Mr. Bailey, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Bailey. There is nothing quite so loathsome as a family business. Now, Peter, you know what I'm here for. I'm on a very tight schedule—a family to evict at three.

PETER. Okay, then, Mr. Potter, here's the thing: I just need a little more time. Just thirty short days. I'll dig up that five thousand somehow.

POTTER. Have you put any real pressure on those people of yours to pay their mortgages?

PETER. Times are hard, Mr. Potter. A lot of people are out of work.

POTTER. Then foreclose.

PETER. I can't do that. These families have children.

POTTER. They're not my children.

PETER. But they're somebody's children, Mr. Potter.

POTTER. Are you running a business or a charity ward?

PETER. Well, all right...

POTTER. *(Simultaneously with "all right:")* Not with my money!

PETER. Mr. Potter, what makes you such a hard-skulled character? You have no family—no children. You can't begin to spend all the money you've got.

POTTER. So I suppose I should give it to miserable failures like you and that idiot brother of yours to spend for me.

YOUNG GEORGE. He's not a failure! You can't say that about my father!

PETER. *(Simultaneously with "father:")* George, George...

YOUNG GEORGE. *(With 2nd "George:")* You're not! You're the biggest man in town!

PETER. *(Simultaneously with "anybody:")* All right, Son, thanks. I'll talk to you tonight.

YOUNG GEORGE. Don't let him say that about you, Pop.

PETER. Tonight!

POTTER. What kind of business are you running here? Good God, man!

(SFX: Door [without bell] opens and shuts.)

(MUSIC: Transition.)

JOSEPH. George worked for his father, saving enough to see him through the University. That summer though he was going to Europe. George got a job on a cattle boat and was ready do a little traveling before college. Old man Gower surprised him with a gift of a great big suitcase. On his way home from the store he ran into his friends Ernie, the cab driver, and Bert, the cop.

(SFX: Car horn.)

GEORGE. Hey, Ernie!

ERNIE. Hiya, George!

GEORGE. Hi, Bert.

BERT. Hey, George. What's the suitcase for?

GEORGE. I'm a rich tourist today. How about driving me home in style?

ERNIE. Sure, your highness, hop in the cab. And, for the carriage trade, I puts on my hat.

VIOLET. Good afternoon, Mr. Bailey. Looks like you're ready to get out of here.

GEORGE. Hello, Violet. Hey, you look good. That's some dress you got on there.

VIOLET. Oh, this old thing? Why, I only wear it when I don't care how I look. See you later!

(SFX: High heeled footsteps.)

ERNIE. How would you like...

(SFX: Car horn.)

GEORGE. Yes...

ERNIE. Want to come along, Bert? We'll show you the town.

BERT. No thanks. Think I'll go home and see what the wife's doing.

ERNIE & GEORGE. Family man.

(SFX: Car horn, car door closes, car drives away.)

JOSEPH. George saved up money to go away to college. His bags were packed and he was all set to go.

(SFX: Dinner plates and silverware.)

GEORGE. Boy, oh boy, oh boy, it's hard to realize it's the last night in the Bailey Boarding House.

PETER. We're sure going to miss you, George.

GEORGE. I'm going to miss you too, Pop. What's the matter? You look tired.

PETER. Oh, I had another tussle with old Henry Potter today.

GEORGE. Oh...

PETER. I thought when we put him on the Board of Directors, he'd ease up on us.

GEORGE. I wonder what's eating that old money-grubbing buzzard anyway?

PETER. Oh, he's a sick man. Frustrated and sick. Sick in his mind, sick in his soul, if he has one. Hates everybody that has anything he can't have. Hates us mostly, I guess.

(SFX: Running footsteps.)

HARRY. Hey George, can I borrow your tuxedo studs?

GEORGE. Yeah, help yourself Harry.

HARRY. Well, where are they? In your suitcase?

GEORGE. I'm not taking a tuxedo on a cattle boat you know.

HARRY. Say, where'd you get that fine piece of luggage, anyway?

GEORGE. Ah, Mr. Gower. A going away present. And one of these days you're going to see that bag all covered with travel labels. Italy, Baghdad...

HARRY. Hey, why don't you come to the dance tonight?

GEORGE. What, and be bored to death?

HARRY. Well, you couldn't want a better death. Lots of pretty girls. Hey, hey, I've got to hurry!!

(SFX: Running footsteps.)

PETER. I wish we could send Harry to college with you George.

GEORGE. We have that all figured out. You see, Harry'll take my job at the Building and Loan, work there four years, then he'll go.

PETER. He's pretty young for that job.

GEORGE. Well, no younger than I was.

PETER. You were born older, George. I suppose you've decided what you're going to do when you get out of college.

GEORGE. Oh, well, you know, what I've always talked about—building things...design new buildings—plan modern cities...

PETER. Still after that first million before you're thirty?

GEORGE. No, I'll settle for half that in cash.

PETER. Of course, it's just a hope, but you wouldn't consider coming back to the Building and Loan, would you? I know it's early to talk about it.

GEORGE. Oh, I couldn't face being cooped up for the rest of my life in that shabby little office. Oh, I'm sorry Pop, I didn't mean that remark, but this business of nickels and dimes and spending all your life trying to figure out how to save three cents on a length of

pipe—I'd go crazy. I want to do something big and something important.

PETER. You know, George, I feel that in a small way we are doing something important. Satisfying a fundamental urge: It's not too much for a man to want his own roof and walls and fireplace—and we're helping him get those things in our shabby little office.

GEORGE. I know, Dad. I wish I felt...But I've been hoarding pennies like a miser in order to— Most of my friends have already finished college. I just feel like if I don't get away, I'd bust.

PETER. Yes... Yes, you're right, boy. This town's no place to live if you aren't willing to crawl to Potter. You get yourself an education. Then get out of here.

GEORGE. I'm glad you see what I'm talking about. *(Beat.)* Say, I think I'm going to go down on old Main Street, last night in town and all.

PETER. Have a good time, son.

(MUSIC: Transition.)

CLARENCE. Who's that?

JOSEPH. Why, that's Violet Bick.

CLARENCE. The little girl from the candy counter?

JOSEPH. That's right.

VIOLET. Hello, Georgie-Porgie.

GEORGE. Hello, Vi.

VIOLET. What gives?

GEORGE. Nothing.

VIOLET. Where are you going?

GEORGE. Oh, I'll probably end up at the library.

VIOLET. Georgie, don't you ever get tired of just reading about things?

GEORGE. Yes. What are you doing tonight?

VIOLET. Not a thing.

GEORGE. Are you game, Vi? What do you say we make a night of it?

VIOLET. Oh, I'd love it, Georgie. What'll we do?

GEORGE. Let's go out in the fields and take off our shoes and walk in the grass.

VIOLET. Huh?!

GEORGE. Then we can go up to Stewart Lake. It's beautiful up there in the moonlight, and we can swim. Then we can climb Mount Bedford, and smell the pines, and watch the sunrise against the peaks, and we'll stay up there the whole night, and everybody'll be talking and there'll be a terrific scandal!

VIOLET. George! Have you gone crazy?! Walk in the grass in my bare feet?! Why it's ten miles up there to Mount Bedford! You think just because you— Oh!

(SFX: High heels walking away.)

GEORGE. Okay, just forget about the whole thing!

(SAM and MARY are there.)

SAM. Forget about what, George?

GEORGE. Oh, nothing, Sam.

SAM. You remember Mary, don't you?

MARY. Hi George.

GEORGE. Hi Mary.

SAM. Say, you wouldn't mind walking Mary home, would you, George?

GEORGE. Of course not. Is that okay with you, Mary?

MARY. Fine by me.

SAM. Great! Thanks.

(MUSIC: Transition.)

CLARENCE. So, George walked Mary home. Is that important, Joseph?

JOSEPH. I'd say it is. Because even though Mary lived only four blocks away, it took them two hours to get there.

GEORGE & MARY. *(Singing:)* BUFFALO GALS WON'T YOU
COME OUT TONIGHT,
COME OUT TONIGHT, COME OUT TONIGHT
BUFFALO GALS WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT
AND DANCE BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

(They laugh.)

GEORGE. Hot Dog, oh boy, just like an organ, gee whiz!

MARY. Beautiful!

GEORGE. You know something, if it wasn't me talking, I'd say you were the prettiest girl in town.

MARY. Well, why don't you say it?

GEORGE. I don't know. Maybe I will. How old are you anyway?

MARY. Eighteen.

GEORGE. Eighteen?!

MARY. Too young or too old?

GEORGE. Oh, no. Just right. Your age fits you... Hey, look where we are.

MARY. Oh, the old Granville house.

GEORGE. Yeah, I got to throw a rock.

MARY. Oh, no, don't. I love that old house.

GEORGE. Well no, don't you know about deserted houses, you make a wish and then throw a rock.

MARY. But George, it's such a lovely old place. I wish I lived there.

GEORGE. In there? I wouldn't live there if I was a ghost. Now watch, watch this.

(SFX: Glass breaks.)

GEORGE. How 'bout it, huh? Pretty good shot, huh? Broke a window, huh!

MARY. What's your wish, George?

GEORGE. Well, not just one wish. A whole hatful, Mary. I'm shaking the dust of this crummy little town off my feet and I'm going to see the world. Italy, Greece, the Parthenon, the Colosseum. Then I'm coming back here and go to college and see what they know...and then I'm going to build things. I'm gonna build air fields. I'm going to build skyscrapers a hundred stories high. I'm gonna build bridges a mile long... And then I'm gonna... Hey, what...are you gonna throw a rock too?

(SFX: Glass breaks.)

GEORGE. Hey that's pretty good. What'd you wish for Mary?

MARY. Oh no. If I tell you, it may not come true.

GEORGE. Hey, hey Mary... C'mon, what do you want huh? Do you want the moon? All you gotta do just say the word now...

MARY. Okay, the moon. I'll take it. And then what?

GEORGE. Then what? I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down. Then you could swallow it and it'd all dissolve, see? And the moonbeams'd shoot out of your fingers and toes, and the ends of your hair and the... — Am I talking too much?

OLD MAN COLLINS. Yes!! Why don't you kiss her instead of talking her to death?

GEORGE. Who's that?

MARY. Old Man Collins on his front porch.

OLD MAN COLLINS. Aw, youth is wasted on the wrong people!

(SFX: A door opens and slams.)

GEORGE. Hey, hey, hold on. Hey, mister, come back out here and I'll show you some kissing that'll put hair back on your head! You come back out here and —

(SFX: Car horn, a car approaches.)

BILLY. George! George!

GEORGE. Uncle Billy?

BILLY. George, get in the car quick! Your father's had a stroke!

GEORGE. I'm sorry. I've got to go Mary.

(SFX: Car door opens and closes, then drives off.)

(MUSIC: Transition.)

JOSEPH. George's father died that night, Clarence. So of course, George couldn't go to Europe, but that fall, just as he was ready to leave for college, the directors of the Building and Loan held a meeting. They were going to appoint a successor...

ALL. (As BOARD MEMBERS, Meeting ad-libs underscore following scene.)

DR. CAMPBELL. I want the Board to know that George gave up his trip to Europe to help straighten things out here these past few months, and it was greatly appreciated. I think that's all we'll need you for, George. Good luck to you at school. I know you're anxious to make a train.

GEORGE. Yes, I have a taxi waiting downstairs.

POTTER. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to get to my real purpose. I claim this institution is not necessary to this town. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I make a motion to dissolve the Building and Loan and turn its assets and liabilities over to the receiver.

ALL. (As BOARD MEMBERS, Crowd hubbub ad-libs.)

DR. CAMPBELL. It's too soon after Peter Bailey's death to discuss chloroforming the Building and Loan. It was his faith and devotion that are responsible for this organization.

POTTER. I'll go further than that. I'll say that to the public Peter Bailey was the Building and Loan.

UNCLE BILLY. Oh, that's fine, Potter, coming from you, considering that you probably drove him to his grave.

POTTER. Peter Bailey was not a business man. That's what killed him. Oh, I don't mean any disrespect to him, God rest his soul. He was a man of high ideals, so-called, but ideals without common sense can ruin this town. What does that get us? A discontented, lazy rabble instead of a thrifty working class. And all because a few starry-eyed dreamers like Peter Bailey stir them up and fill their heads with a lot of impossible hooey. Now, I say...

GEORGE. Just a minute. Now, hold on, Mr. Potter. You're right when you say my father was no business man. I know that. Why he ever started this cheap, penny-ante Building and Loan, I'll never know. But neither you nor anybody else can say anything against his character, because his whole life was... Why, in the twenty-five years since he and Uncle Billy started this thing, he never once thought of himself. Isn't that right, Uncle Billy?

BILLY. You got that right!

GEORGE. He didn't save enough money to send Harry to school, let alone me. But he did help a few people get out of your slums, Mr. Potter. And what's wrong with that? Why... Here, you're all businessmen here. Doesn't it make them better citizens? Doesn't it make them better customers? You...you said... What'd you say just a minute ago? ...They had to wait and save their money before they even ought to think of a decent home. Wait! Wait for what? Until their children grow up and leave them? Until they're so old and broken-down that they... Do you know how long it takes a working man to save five thousand dollars? Just remember this, Mr. Potter, that this rabble you're talking about...they do most of the working and paying and living and dying in this community. Well, is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms and a bath? Anyway, my father didn't think so. People were human beings to him, but to you, a warped, frustrated old man, they're cattle. Well, in my book he died a much richer man than you'll ever be!

POTTER. I'm not interested in your book. I'm talking about the Building and Loan.

GEORGE. I know very well what you're talking about. You're talking about something you can't get your fingers on, and it's

galling you. That's what you're talking about. Well, I've said too much— You're the Board here. You do what you want with this thing. Just one thing more, though. This town needs this measly one-horse institution if only to have some place where people can come without crawling to Potter. Come on, Uncle Billy.

POTTER. Sentimental Hogwash!!! I want my motion...

(SFX: Door slams and meeting adlibs stop instantly.)

MATILDA. *(On phone:)* ...they're just coming out of the board meeting. I'll have to call you back.

(SFX: Phone hangs up.)

MATILDA. What happened, George? All we heard was a lot of yelling.

BILLY. Boy oh boy, Matilda, you should have heard George!

GEORGE. Yeah, they're voting us down in there.

BILLY. George get outta here. You missed your boat trip, do you want to miss college, too? Don't worry about the board. They're putting us out of business. So what? I can get another job, I'm only fifty-five!

MATILDA. You're fifty-eight.

(SFX: Door opens.)

ALL. *(As BOARD MEMBERS, Meeting ad-libs.)*

(SFX: Door slams.)

DR. CAMPBELL. George! George! They voted Potter down! We're still in business.

BILLY. Whoopee! We're still in business! We're still in business!

DR. CAMPBELL. But there's one condition George. They've appointed you to take your father's place.

GEORGE. Appoint me? But I'm going to college. Uncle Billy here, he's your man.

DR. CAMPBELL. You can keep him on, that's alright.

GEORGE. Now let's get this thing straight. I'm leaving, I'm leaving right now. I'm going to school. This is my last chance.

DR. CAMPBELL. But, George, you've got to take it. They'll vote with Potter otherwise.

(MUSIC: Transition.)

CLARENCE. So George Bailey didn't go to college.

JOSEPH. That's right Clarence, he gave his college money to his brother Harry, and Harry went instead.

CLARENCE. But what happened to that good looking girl? You know, Mary.

JOSEPH. Oh, George saw her now and then. Not very often though, because Mary went away to school too. Anyway, George waited four years more for Harry to come back and take over the Building and Loan. Then he could still see the world. He planned to work in the oil fields of Venezuela.

(SFX: A train whistle.)

GEORGE. Thar she blows. Say, Uncle Billy, you know what the three most wonderful sounds on earth are?

BILLY. "Breakfast is served," "lunch is served," "dinner is served."

GEORGE. *(Simultaneously with "dinner:")* No, no, no— Anchor chains, plane motors, and train whistles. Here's the professor now!

HARRY. *(Simultaneously with "professor:")* Well, if it isn't George Geographic Explorer Bailey! Uncle Billy, you haven't changed a bit!

BILLY. Nobody ever changes around here, you know that.

GEORGE. Oh, am I glad to see you.

HARRY. Say, where's Mother?

GEORGE. She's home cooking the fatted calf. C'mon, let's go.

HARRY. *(Simultaneously with "let's:")* Oh, wait. Wait... This is Ruth Dakin.

RUTH. Ruth Dakin Bailey, if you don't mind.

BILLY. Huh?

HARRY. Well, I wired you I had a surprise. Here she is. Meet the wife.

BILLY. Well, what do you know – wife.

GEORGE. Well, how do you do? What am I doing? Congratulations, congratulations! Harry, why didn't you tell somebody? What's a pretty girl like you doing marrying this two-headed brother of mine?

RUTH. Well, I'll tell you. It's purely mercenary. My father offered him a job.

BILLY. Oh, he gets you and a job? Harry's cup runneth over! C'mon, Ruth. Let's start ahead and leave the bags for the fellas.

RUTH. All right.

HARRY. George... About that job... Ruth spoke out of turn. I never said I'd take it. You've been holding the bag here for four years, and...well, I won't let you down.

GEORGE. It's alright, Harry, it's alright...

(MUSIC: Underscoring / Period song at party.)

JOSEPH. And that night, the homecoming for Harry became his wedding party. Uncle Billy familiarized himself with the spirits.

BILLY. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy. I feel so good I could spit in Potter's eye! I think I will. What do you say? Maybe I should go home. If you'd just point me in the right direction...

GEORGE. Right down there.

BILLY. That way, huh? Okay, old Building and Loan pal. See you later.

(SFX: Trash cans knocked over.)

BILLY. I'm all right... I'm all right!

MRS. ROSE BAILEY. George?!

GEORGE. Yeah, I'm out here on the porch, Mother. I just thought I would get some air.

(SFX: Door open and close.)

ROSE. Well, how do you like the new sister-in-law?

GEORGE. She's swell.

ROSE. Looks like she'll keep Harry on his toes.

GEORGE. Yeah, keep him out of Bedford Falls, anyway.

ROSE. George, um... Do you know that Mary Hatch is back from school?

GEORGE. Yeah, Yeah...

ROSE. Nice girl, Mary.

GEORGE. Uh huh...

ROSE. Oh, stop grumbling! Give me one good reason you shouldn't call on Mary.

GEORGE. Well, Sam Wainwright. Sam's crazy about her.

ROSE. Well, she's not crazy about him.

GEORGE. Well, now how do you know that? Did she discuss it with you?

ROSE. Besides, Sam is away in New York, and you're here in Bedford Falls.

GEORGE. And all's fair in love and war?

ROSE. I don't know about war.

GEORGE. All right, Mother, I think I'll go out and find the girl and do a little passionate necking.

ROSE. Oh, George!

GEORGE. Bye, Mrs. Bailey. By the way, do you want any books at the library?

ROSE. "The library?!" George! George, you go and see Mary, you hear.

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

(SFX: Crickets chirp.)

MARY. Hello, George.

GEORGE. Hello, Mary. I just happened to be passing by.

MARY. Your mother just phoned and said you were on your way over to pay me a visit.

GEORGE. My mother just called you? Well, how did she know?

MARY. Well...

GEORGE. I didn't tell anybody. I just went for a walk and happened to be passing by... What do you... Went for a walk, that's all. When did you get back?

MARY. Tuesday... Would you like to come in?

GEORGE. Well, I guess, since I'm here.

(SFX: Door opens, closes.)

GEORGE. Say, where'd you get that dress?

MARY. Do you like it?

GEORGE. It's all right. I thought you'd go back to New York with Sam and Francie and the rest of them.

MARY. Oh, I worked there a couple of vacations, but I don't know... I guess I was homesick.

GEORGE. Homesick for Bedford Falls?

MARY. Yes, and my family and...oh, everything. Would you like to sit down?

GEORGE. All right, for a minute. I still can't understand it though. You know I didn't tell anybody I was coming here.

MARY. Would you rather leave?

GEORGE. No, I don't want to be rude.

MARY. It was nice about Harry and Ruth, wasn't it?

GEORGE. Oh...yeah, yeah. That's all right.

MARY. Don't you like her?

GEORGE. Well, of course I like her. She's a peach.

MARY. Ohhh. It's just marriage in general you're not enthusiastic about, huh?

GEORGE. No. Marriage is okay for Harry, and Sam Wainwright, and you.

MRS. HATCH. Mary! Mary! Who's out there with you?

MARY. It's George Bailey, mother.

MRS. HATCH. George Bailey! What does he want?!

MARY. I don't know. What do you want, George?

GEORGE. Me? Not a thing. I just came in to get warm.

MARY. (To MRS. HATCH:) He's making violent love to me, Mother!

MRS. HATCH. You tell him to go right back home, and don't you leave the house, Sam Wainwright promised to call from New York tonight, didn't he?

GEORGE. Your mother needn't— You know I didn't come here for—to...to...

MARY. What did you come here for?

GEORGE. I don't know. You tell me. You're supposed to be the one who has all the answers. You tell me!

MARY. Oh, why don't you go home?!

GEORGE. That's where I'm going! I don't know why I came here in the first place!

(SFX: Telephone ring.)

MRS. HATCH. Mary! The telephone! It's Sam!

MARY. I'll get it. (On phone:) Hee-haw! Hello, Sam, how are you?

SAM. Aw, great. Gee, it's good to hear your voice again.

MARY. Oh, well, that's awfully sweet of you, Sam. There's an old friend of yours here, George Bailey.

SAM. You mean old moss-back George?

MARY. Yes, old moss-back George.

SAM. Hee-haw! Put him on.

MARY. Wait a minute, I'll call him. George!

MRS. HATCH. He doesn't want to speak to George, you idiot!

MARY. He does so. He asked for him. George, Sam wants to speak to you.

GEORGE. Hello, Sam.

SAM. Hey, a fine pal you are. What're you trying to do? Steal my girl?

GEORGE. What do you mean? Nobody's trying to steal your girl...

SAM. No, wait a minute. I want to talk to both of you. Tell Mary to get on the extension.

MARY. Mother's on the extension.

MRS. HATCH. *(Covering mouth as if on phone:)* I am not!

(SFX: Phone receiver slamming down – other room.)

MARY. We can both hear you. George, just put your head a little closer.

GEORGE. Okay.

MARY. There, that's better. We're listening, Sam.

SAM. I have a big deal coming up that's going to make us all rich. George, you remember that night at Martini's Bar when you told me about making plastics out of soybeans?

GEORGE. Huh? Yeah-yeah-yeah...soybeans. Yeah.

SAM. Well, my father's checked into it, George, see, and now he's going to build a factory outside of Rochester. How do you like that?

GEORGE. Rochester? Well, why Rochester?

SAM. Well, why not? Can you think of anything better?

GEORGE. Oh, I don't know...why not right here in Bedford Falls? You remember that old tool and machinery works? You tell your father he can get that for a song. And all the labor he wants, too. Half the town was thrown out of work when they closed down.

SAM. That so? Well, I'll tell him. Hey, that sounds great. Oh, baby, I knew you'd come through. Now, here's the point, George. I may have a job for you, that is, unless you are still married to the old broken down Building and Loan... Oh, Mary?

MARY. I'm here.

SAM. You tell that guy I'm giving him a chance of a lifetime, you hear?

MARY. *(To GEORGE:)* He says it's the chance of a lifetime.

GEORGE. Give me that phone.

(SFX: Phone receiver slamming down.)

GEORGE. Now you listen to me, Mary! I don't want any plastics! And I don't want any job. I don't want to get married—ever—to anyone! You understand that?

(MARY crying.)

GEORGE. I want to do what I want to do and you're... you're not going to... Oh, Mary...

MARY. George...

GEORGE. Oh, Mary...I love you...

MARY. George, I love you, too...

(MUSIC: Crescendo / Transition.)

(The "Applause" light is illuminated.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. We will return to WBFR Playhouse of the Air's presentation of *It's a Wonderful Life* in just a few moments. But, first... Gentlemen: Does your hair resemble a dried out bird's nest full of dandruff flakes?

WOMEN. *(Make tweety bird calls.)*

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Do you plaster your hair down like a cheap gigolo—smelling to high heaven?

WOMEN. (*Ad-libs to the effect of:*) P.U! What a stink!

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. When girls get a gander at the tip-top of your noggin, do they go...

WOMEN. E-u-u-u-u-u...

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Well, here's a friendly hint that may just help you out in the romance department.

WOMEN. (*Swooning:*) Ah-h-h-h...

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Starting tomorrow, why not try Bremel Hair Tonic. Yessiree, you'll be headin' for success with Bremel-groomed hair! A success with the gals and on the job. Bremel always keeps hair looking mighty attractive—always in place. A real sex-appealer!

WOMEN. (*Tiger growls, etc.*)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Bremel Hair Tonic— Does lots more than keep your hair handsome looking!

ALL. (*Sing to the tune of "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer":*)

BREMEL, THE SWANK HAIR TONIC,
MAKES YOUR FILTHY BIRDSNEST GLEEM,
A LITTLE DAB WILL DO YA,
ALL THE PRETTY GALS WILL SCREAM.

NOT ONLY WILL DAMES LOVE IT,
YOUR BARBER WILL SHOUT OUT WITH GLEE,
BREMEL, THE SWANK HAIR TONIC,
YOUR DANDRUFF WILL BE HISTORY.

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Buy some Bremel today—your hair will thank you.

(*Applause sign flashes.*)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. And now, back to *It's a Wonderful Life*...

(*MUSIC: Transition.*)

JOSEPH. George and Mary were married. And following the wedding and reception, George's old pal Ernie, the cab driver, drove the happy couple to the train station...

(*SFX: Car door slam, car horn, car driving throughout following scene.*)

ERNIE. Hey, where you two going on this here now honeymoon?

GEORGE. We're going to shoot the works, Ernie. A whole week in New York. A whole week in Bermuda. The highest hotels—the oldest champagne—the richest caviar—the hottest music and the prettiest wife!

MARY. Here's the kitty Ernie, two thousand dollars, I feel like a bootlegger's wife.

ERNIE. Ha, ha. So, you're finally getting out of Bedford Falls, huh? Then what?

GEORGE. (*To MARY:*) Then what, honey?

MARY. After that, who cares?!

GEORGE. That does it! Hey, Mrs. Bailey, I haven't kissed you since...

ERNIE. (*Interrupting:*) Hey George, there's something funny going on over there. Look, look over there at the bank! It looks like a run!

GEORGE. Huh? Pull over there a minute, will you Ernie.

MARY. George, let's not stop, please let's go straight to the station.

GEORGE. Now wait a minute. I...I better see what it is. I'll be right back.

MARY. George, Please! George!!!

(*SFX: Door opens, crowd ruckus, door closes.*)

GEORGE. What is this, Uncle Billy, a holiday? Why are the doors locked? There's a crowd out front.

BILLY. This is a pickle, George.

GEORGE. All right now, what happened?

BILLY. All I know is the bank called our loan. I had to hand out all our cash.

GEORGE. All of it?

BILLY. Every last cent of it.

GEORGE. Holy Mackerell!

BILLY. And then I got scared, George, and I closed the doors.

GEORGE. Our charter says we need to stay open until six o'clock or we'll lose our license!

(SFX: Telephone rings.)

BILLY. *(On phone:)* Bailey Brother Building and—

POTTER. Get me George.

BILLY. George... It's Potter.

GEORGE. *(On phone:)* Hello?

POTTER. George, there's a rumor around town that you've closed your doors. Is that true?

GEORGE. No it isn't.

POTTER. Do you need any police? Mobs get pretty ugly sometimes, you know.

GEORGE. We're fine.

POTTER. We'll see. *(Beat.)* Now, George, I'm going all out to help in this crisis. I've just guaranteed the bank sufficient funds to meet their needs. They'll close for a week, and then reopen. I may lose a fortune, but I'm willing to guarantee your people too. Just tell them to bring their shares over here and I will pay fifty cents on the dollar.

GEORGE. Aw, you don't miss a trick, do you, Potter? Well you're going to miss this one!

POTTER. If you close your doors before six P.M. you will never reopen!

(SFX: Telephone receiver slammed.)

GEORGE. He just took over the bank, Billy.

(SFX: Crowd pounding on door.)

GEORGE. Open the doors, let them in.

(CROWD ad-libs as entering.)

GEORGE. Now, just remember that this thing isn't as black as it appears. I have some news for you folks. I've just talked to old man Potter, and he's guaranteed cash payments at the bank.

ED. How about our money, George. Where's our money?

GEORGE. Now please, now please. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Listen to me. You're thinking of this place all wrong. The money's not here.

GEORGE. Now wait a minute! Let me tell you, let me tell you. Your money's in people's houses. In the Kennedy house, and the McClaren house, and in your house, and a hundred others. Now, what are you going to do, foreclose on them?

CHARLIE. I got two hundred and forty-two dollars in here, and two hundred and forty-two dollars isn't going to break anybody.

GEORGE. All right, Charlie, all right, now you'll get your money in sixty days.

CHARLIE. Sixty days?!

GEORGE. Well, now that's what you agreed to when you bought your shares.

MAN. I got my money! Old Man Potter's taking over the bank. He'll pay you fifty cents on every dollar.

ALL. *(Crowd Uproar.)*

GEORGE. Now wait a minute, wait a minute, please folks! Please don't leave. I beg of you not to do this. If Potter gets a hold of your shares, he'll be owning this Building and Loan. He's got the bank, he's got the bus line, he's got the department stores. And now he's after us, 'cause he wants to keep you living in his shacks and paying the kind of rent he decides to charge. Now we can get through

this all right, but we've got to stick together. We've got to have faith in each other.

MRS. THOMPSON. My husband's out of work. We need money.

ED. I got doctor bills to pay!

MRS. THOMPSON. Can't feed my kids with faith!

MARY. How much do you need? We've still got some money. We've got two thousand dollars from the wedding.

GEORGE. Hey, Mary! (*To ALL:*) I got two thousand dollars here! This'll tide us over until the bank reopens. All right, Charlie, how much do you need?

CHARLIE. Two hundred and forty-two dollars.

GEORGE. Aw, Charlie, just enough to tide you over until the bank reopens.

CHARLIE. I'll take two hundred and forty-two dollars.

GEORGE. Okay, okay, Uncle Billy, give Charlie two hundred and forty-two dollars. Okay, all right, Ed, now, how much just to get by?

ED. Twenty dollars, I suppose.

GEORGE. Now we're talking. Now Mrs. Thompson, how 'bout you?

MRS. THOMPSON. But it's your own money George.

GEORGE. Never mind that, how much do you want, Mrs. Thompson?

MRS. THOMPSON. Could I have \$17.50?

GEORGE. Seven... Bless your heart. Of course you can have it. Uncle Billy, give her \$17.50... Pay it back when you can now. Pay it back when you can. All right, all right, who's next...?

(*MUSIC: Transition.*)

BILLY. Look at the clock. Look!

(*SFX: Tick tock of clock.*)

GEORGE. Five seconds...four seconds...three...two...one... Six o'clock we made it!

(*SFX: Cuckoo clock cuckoos six times.*)

(*GEORGE and UNCLE BILLY cheer.*)

GEORGE. Lock that door, Uncle Billy!

(*SFX: Door slam, telephone rings.*)

GEORGE. Boy, we're still in business and we've even got two bucks left!

BILLY. (*On phone:*) Bailey Brothers Building and— Just a minute. George, there's a call for you.

GEORGE. Look, will you get my wife on the phone? She's probably over at her mother's.

BILLY. Mrs. Bailey is on the phone.

GEORGE. I don't want Mrs. Bailey, I want my wife. Oh! Mrs. Bailey! Oh, that's my wife! (*On phone:*) Mary? Hello. Listen, dear, I'm sorry... What? Come home? What home? 320 Sycamore? Well, what...whose home is that? The Waldorf Hotel, huh?

(*MUSIC: Underscore [Romantic].*)

CLARENCE. That doesn't look like the Waldorf...

JOSEPH. Oh, no. Number 320 Sycamore was the old Granville house. The one George and Mary threw rocks at and made wishes. Mary had prepared the house, including a turkey dinner, romantic decorations and even a marriage bed.

MARY. Welcome home, Mr. Bailey.

GEORGE. Well, I'll be...

MARY. Remember the night we broke the windows in this old house? This is what I wished for.

GEORGE. Darling, you're wonderful.

JOSEPH. Yes sir, that's where they spent their honeymoon, that's where they started their lives together. Mary made the leaky old

house a home, while George toiled away at the Building and Loan office, providing houses for people like Giuseppe Martini.

SCHULTZ. Hey, Martini, you renting a new house?

MARTINI. Rent? Ha! You hear that, Mr. Bailey? *(To SCHULTZ:)* I own this house. Me, Giuseppe Martini, I own my own house. No more we live like pigs in Potter's Field.

MARY. We have something for you and your family, Mr. Martini. George and I bring something for all the new owners.

MARTINI. For the Martini's? Maria, come quick! Our first house-warming gifts! Bring the kids!

(SFX: Baby cries.)

MARY. Bread: so that this house may never know hunger. Salt: that life may always have flavor.

GEORGE. And wine! That joy and prosperity may reign forever. Enter the Martini castle!

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

JOSEPH. Bailey houses were popping up all over the place—mostly owned by people that used to live in Potter's Field. And Potter had had just about enough of that. So after a couple of years, Old Man Potter decided to call our George into his office.

POTTER. Sit down, George, sit down. Have a cigar?

GEORGE. Thank you, sir.

(SFX: A Zippo lighter strikes, followed by puffing on a cigar.)

GEORGE. Quite a cigar, Mr. Potter.

POTTER. You like it? I'll send you a box.

GEORGE. Well, I...I suppose I'll find out sooner or later, but just what exactly did you want to see me about?

POTTER. George, now that's just what I like so much about you. George, I'm an old man, and most people hate me. But I don't like them either, so that makes it all even. You know just as well as I do that I run practically everything in this town but the Bailey Building

and Loan. You know, also, that for a number of years I've been trying to get control of it...or kill it. But I haven't been able to do it. You have been stopping me. In fact, you have beaten me, George, and that takes some doing. Take during the depression, for instance. You and I were the only ones that kept our heads. You saved the Building and Loan, and I saved all the rest.

GEORGE. Yes. Well, most people say you stole all the rest.

POTTER. The envious ones say that, George, the suckers. Now, let's look at your side. Young man, twenty-seven, twenty-eight...married, making, say...forty a week.

GEORGE. Forty-five!

POTTER. Forty-five.

GEORGE. Forty-five...

POTTER. Now if you were some ordinary yokel, I would say you were doing fine. But George Bailey is intelligent, ambitious. He hates the Building and Loan almost much as I do. He's been dying to get out of town ever since he was born. A young man...the smartest one of the crowd, mind you, who has to sit by and watch his friends go places, because he's trapped. Trapped into frittering his life away playing nursemaid to a lot of garlic eaters. Do I paint a correct picture George, or do I exaggerate?

GEORGE. What's your point, Mr. Potter?

POTTER. My point is you're the only man in town who's licked me. I want to hire you. Manage my affairs, I'll start you out at twenty thousand dollars a year.

GEORGE. Twenty thousand...twenty thousand dollars a year?!

POTTER. You wouldn't mind living in the nicest house in town, buying your wife a lot of fine clothes, a couple of business trips to New York a year, maybe once in a while Europe. You wouldn't mind that, would you, George?

GEORGE. Would I? You're not talking to somebody else around here, are you? Are you sure you're talking to me? I'm George Bailey, don't you remember me, the Building and Loan, remember?

POTTER. Yes, George Bailey. Whose ship has just come in, providing he has brains enough to climb aboard.

GEORGE. Well, what about the Building and Loan?

POTTER. Oh, confound it man! I'm offering you a three year contract at twenty thousand dollars a year. Is it a deal or isn't it?

GEORGE. Mr. Potter, I know I ought to jump at the chance but I wonder if you might give me twenty-four hours to think about it.

POTTER. Sure, sure, sure. You go home and talk to your wife.

GEORGE. Yeah, I'd like that.

POTTER. In the meantime I'll draw up the papers and soon you'll be managing my affairs.

GEORGE. Your affairs... No...no... The answer's no, dog gone it! You sit around here and you spin your little webs and you think the whole world revolves around you and your money. Well, it doesn't, Mr. Potter! In the whole vast configuration of things, I'd say you were nothing but a scurvy little spider!

(SFX: Shoes storm out of the room, a door opens and slams.)

(MUSIC: Transition.)

MARY. What did Mr. Potter want, George?

GEORGE. Nothing, nothing. Just talk, talk...nothing. Oh gee. Mary Hatch, why in the world would you ever marry a guy like me anyway?

MARY. To keep from being an old maid.

GEORGE. I was going to see the world. I was going to build things. I was going to give you the moon. What have I given you, what have I given you, not even a new dress, not for months. You could have married Sam Wainwright. Anybody else in town.

MARY. I didn't want to marry anybody else in town. I want my baby to look like you.

GEORGE. You didn't even have a honeymoon. I promised you...you... Your what?

MARY. My baby.

GEORGE. You mean... Mary, you're on the nest?

MARY. George Bailey lassos stork!

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

JOSEPH. Well, Mary had her baby — a boy.

CLARENCE. You don't say!

JOSEPH. Then she had a girl.

CLARENCE. Well, what do you know.

JOSEPH. Night after night George would come home late from the office. Things weren't good with the Building and Loan. Potter was really bearing down hard. Then came the war. Mary had another baby by then but still had time to run the USO. Gower and Uncle Billy sold war bonds. Violet entertained the troops. Bert the cop was wounded in North Africa. Got the Silver Star. Ernie, the taxi driver, parachuted into France. Harry...Harry Bailey topped them all. A Navy flier, he shot down fifteen planes...two of them as they were about to crash into a transport full of soldiers.

CLARENCE. Yes, but George, what about George...

JOSEPH. George? Four-F on account of his ear, George fought the battle of Bedford Falls. Air raid Warden ...paper drives... Scrap drives ...Rubber drives... On V-E Day he wept and prayed. V-J Day he wept and prayed again.

CLARENCE. We're getting pretty close to today aren't we, sir?

JOSEPH. Yes, Clarence. You know now almost everything you have to know about George Bailey. Except what happened that finds him down there at this moment wanting to die.

CLARENCE. Well, sir. Well?

JOSEPH. Well, today's the day before Christmas, and Billy is at the bank to make a deposit when he ran into Old Man Potter.

BILLY. Well, well, well, Mr. Henry F. Potter. Come to the bank to deposit some more loot, huh?

POTTER. Sure, you old fool.

BILLY. How do you like the news in the paper, Mr. Potter? "Harry Bailey Wins Congressional Medal of Honor!" Just can't keep those Bailey boys down now can you?

POTTER. Let me see that newspaper.

BILLY. Here ya go.

(SFX: Newspaper thwack.)

BILLY. Sorry I can't chat you old thief. Gotta make a deposit.

(SFX: Footsteps.)

HORACE THE TELLER. Good morning, Mr. Bailey.

BILLY. Good morning, Horace. Here you are...deposit slip, bank book, and a very merry Christmas to you.

HORACE THE TELLER. You too, Mr. Bailey. Say, you've forgotten something, haven't you?

BILLY. What's that?

HORACE THE TELLER. You want to make a deposit?

BILLY. Well, certainly...

HORACE THE TELLER. Well it's customary to bring the money with you.

BILLY. It's gone! Where'd I put it! Where'd I put that money!!!

(MUSIC: Transition.)

JOSEPH. A terrible thing, Clarence, terrible. Uncle Billy couldn't find the money because the envelope with the eight thousand dollars was folded up in that newspaper he gave to old man Potter. At the same time as Billy started looking for the deposit, Violet came to visit George at the Building and Loan.

GEORGE. Oh, hello, Vi.

VIOLET. Suppose you're getting things set back at the house for the party tonight.

GEORGE. You know you're invited. What's wrong?

VIOLET. You see right through me, don't you?

GEORGE. How much do you need?

VIOLET. I hate doing this to you, George. But I won't be asking for any more after this.

GEORGE. You planning on robbing a bank, Vi?

VIOLET. I'm going to Manhattan.

GEORGE. What's in Manhattan?

VIOLET. Why, everything's in Manhattan... A new start, at least.

GEORGE. That's a big step, Vi. What's the matter with starting a new life right here in Bedford Falls?

VIOLET. Well, I'll be. Never thought I'd hear that from you, George Bailey. I thought you hated this place.

GEORGE. I did. But this town has a charm of its own.

VIOLET. You should give tours, maybe.

GEORGE. I'm just thinking of you, Violet. Manhattan's a big place to take on your own.

VIOLET. I've made a decision: There's a midnight train tonight, and I plan to be on it.

GEORGE. It takes a lot of character to leave your home town and start all over again. Here, here's some dough.

VIOLET. No, George, don't...

GEORGE. What do you want to do, hock your furs, and that hat? Want to walk to New York? You know they charge for meals and rent up there just the same as they do in Bedford Falls.

VIOLET. Yeah, sure...

GEORGE. It's a loan. That's my business. Building and Loan. Besides, you'll get a job. Good luck to you.

VIOLET. I'm glad I know you, George Bailey.

GEORGE. Say hello to New York for me.

VIOLET. Merry Christmas, George.

(SFX: High heels walking away.)

BILLY. George! George!

(SFX: Uncle Billy running in.)

GEORGE. Uncle... What's going on? The bank examiner's coming today, and I...

BILLY. "Today"?!

GEORGE. Yeah, yeah—wants the accounts payable... What's the matter with you?

BILLY. The money! The eight thousand! I—I—

GEORGE. What, Uncle Billy? What happened to it?

BILLY. I don't know! I was going to deposit it, and when I went to the bank—I didn't have it.

GEORGE. Eight thousand dollars, Uncle Billy, the bank examiner's in town and it's not our money—it belongs to the depositors!

BILLY. I'm so sorry, George, I just don't know what happened!

GEORGE. Well, the first place you look is in your coat pocket. I told you to put it there when you left.

BILLY. Oh, I'm no good to you George, I'm no good!

GEORGE. Let's go then, we have to retrace your steps—we'll leave no stone unturned!

(MUSIC: Transition music.)

JOSEPH. And as George and Billy went looking for the deposit, Potter had a meeting with the state bank examiner, a Miss Sadie Vance.

SADIE. The whole town's turned upside down with the Bailey boy's homecoming: Congressional Medal and all.

POTTER. I guess they do things like that.

SADIE. May I look at your paper?

POTTER. Go ahead.

(SFX: A newspaper opening, an envelope falling to the ground.)

SADIE. This is a deposit from Bailey.

POTTER. That old fool Billy Bailey gave me that newspaper.

SADIE. Well, you're going to deposit it for him, right? Potter?

POTTER. To think he would make such a foolish mistake. Look at how much it is.

(SFX: SADIE flipping through a pile of cash.)

SADIE. There's eight thousand dollars here.

POTTER. What a Christmas present—and he doesn't even know it!

SADIE. Just a minute here, Potter. I know you've been giving the Baileys a hard time far back as I can remember. Why?

POTTER. I don't have to give answers to you. You're just a state examiner.

SADIE. Yes I am. But I am unimpressed by your buying off everyone in town. Oh! That's it. You could never buy the Baileys.

POTTER. What?!

SADIE. You heard what I said. The Baileys have always stood for something you always wanted and are so jealous of: They're honest.

POTTER. You're fired!

SADIE. You can't fire me. I'm state appointed. And, what's more, I am not going to turn my back. This is stealing from the Baileys. Something like this would certainly cause them to fold.

POTTER. Yes, and after twenty-five years... Finder's keepers, you know that. He gave me the money, it was his own fault. Besides, there's not a court in the county that would find me guilty.

SADIE. And we all know why.

POTTER. How's your family, Sadie?

SADIE. My family?

POTTER. I know how little state positions pay. What would you say to a little Christmas bonus?

SADIE. I want no part of this.

POTTER. That's not what I've heard.

SADIE. What are you insinuating, Potter?

POTTER. I will not be turned down.

SADIE. What do you want me to do?

POTTER. I want you to pay the Baileys a surprise visit. You'll see the records, they'll be short, you know the rest. At last, the Baileys will be where they belong: Down for good!

SADIE. I know just what to do.

(SFX: Door opens and shuts.)

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

GEORGE. And did you put the envelope in your pocket?

BILLY. Yeah... maybe...

GEORGE. Uncle Billy, we've got to find that money!

BILLY. I'm no good to you, George. I...

GEORGE. Do you have any secret hiding place here in the house?

BILLY. *(Whimpering:)* I've gone over the whole house, even in rooms that have been locked ever since I lost your Aunt Laura.

GEORGE. Listen to me! Think!

BILLY. I can't think anymore, George. It hurts...

GEORGE. Where's that money, you stupid, silly old fool? Do you realize what this means? It means bankruptcy and scandal, and prison! One of us is going to jail! Well, it's not going to be me!

(SFX: Door opens and slams.)

(MUSIC: "Silent Night" on the piano [poorly, with wrong notes, etc.])

(SFX: Door opens and shuts.)

MARY. Hello, darling.

CHILDREN. Hello Daddy!!!

PETE. Daddy, did you bring the wreath?

GEORGE. What wreath?

MARY. The Merry Christmas wreath for the window.

GEORGE. I left it at the office.

MARY. Is it snowing?

GEORGE. Yeah, just started.

MARY. Where's your coat and hat?

GEORGE. Left them at the office.

MARY. What's the matter?

GEORGE. Nothing's the matter. Everything's all right.

MARY. Isn't it wonderful about Harry? We're famous, George. I'll bet I had fifty calls today about the parade, the banquet. Your mother's so excited, she...

GEORGE. Must she keep playing that?

JANIE. I have to practice for the party tonight, Daddy.

PETE. Mommy says we can stay up until midnight and sing Christmas carols.

TOMMY. Can you sing, Daddy?

MARY. Better hurry and shave, George. The families will be here soon.

GEORGE. Families?! I don't want the families over here!

TOMMY. Excuse me...excuse me...

MARY. Have a hectic day?

GEORGE. Oh, yeah, another big red letter day for the Baileys.

PETE. Daddy, the Browns next door have a new car. You should see it.

GEORGE. Well, what's the matter with our car? Isn't it good enough for you?

PETE. Yes, Daddy.

TOMMY. Excuse me...excuse me...

GEORGE. Excuse you for what?

TOMMY. I burped.

MARY. All right, darling, you're excused. Now go upstairs and see what little Zuzu wants.

GEORGE. What's the matter with Zuzu?

MARY. Oh, she got a cold. Caught it coming home from school. They gave her a flower for a prize and she didn't want to crush it so she didn't button up her coat.

GEORGE. What is it, a sore throat?

MARY. The doctor says it's nothing serious.

GEORGE. Was the doctor here?

MARY. I called him right away.

GEORGE. Is she running a temperature?

MARY. Just a teensy one.

GEORGE. Gosh, it's this old house. I don't know why we don't all have pneumonia. This drafty old barn! Might as well be living in a refrigerator! Why did we have to live here in the first place and stay around this measly, crummy old town?

MARY. George, what's wrong?

GEORGE. Wrong? Everything's wrong! You call this a happy family? Why did we have to have all these kids?

PETE. Dad, how do you spell "frankincense?"

GEORGE. I don't know. Ask your mother.

MARY. Where are you going?

GEORGE. Up to see Zuzu.

(MUSIC: "Silent Night" on the piano [poorly, with wrong notes, etc.], softens in distance.)

ZUZU. Hi, Daddy.

GEORGE. Well, what happened to you?

ZUZU. I won a flower.

GEORGE. Where do you think you're going?

ZUZU. Want to give my flower a drink.

GEORGE. Here, give Daddy the flower. I'll give it a drink.

ZUZU. Look, Daddy. Some of the petals came off. Paste it.

GEORGE. Yeah, all right. Now, I'll paste this together... There it is, good as new.

ZUZU. Give the flower a drink.

GEORGE. Now, will you do something for me?

ZUZU. What?

GEORGE. Will you try to get some sleep?

ZUZU. I'm not sleepy. I want to look at my flower.

GEORGE. I know, but you just go to sleep, and then you can dream about it, and it'll be a whole garden.

ZUZU. It will?

GEORGE. Uh-huh.

(MUSIC: "Silent Night" on the piano [poorly, with wrong notes, etc.], louder again.)

(SFX: Telephone rings.)

JANIE AND PETE. Telephone!

MARY. I'll get it. *(On phone:)* Hello. Yes, this is Mrs. Bailey. Oh, thank you, Mrs. Welch. The doctor says she'll be out of bed in time for her Christmas dinner.

GEORGE. Is that Zuzu's teacher?

MARY. Yes.

GEORGE. Let me speak to her. *(On phone:)* Hello, Mrs. Welch? This is George Bailey. Say, what kind of teacher are you anyway? What do you mean sending her home like that, half naked?

MARY. George!

GEORGE. Is this the sort of thing we pay taxes for—to have teachers like you? Silly, stupid, careless people who send our kids home without any clothes on? *(To MARY:)* Aw, that stupid...

MARY. Hello, Mrs. Welch. I want to apologize...hello...hello... She hung up.

GEORGE. I'll hang her up!

MR. WELCH. *(Muffled, through phone:)* Now, who do you think you are?!

GEORGE. *(To MARY:)* Wait a minute. *(On phone:)* Hello? Who is this? Oh, Mr. Welch! Okay, that's fine Mr. Welch. Gives me a chance to tell you what I really think of your wife.

MARY. George...

GEORGE. *(To MARY:)* Will you get out and let me handle this? *(On phone:)* Hello? Oh, you will, huh? Okay, Mr. Welch, any time you think you're man enough... Hello? Any... Oh...

PETE. Daddy, how do you spell "Hallelujah?"

GEORGE. What do you think I am, a dictionary? Janie, haven't you learned that silly tune yet? You've played it over and over again. Now stop it! Stop it!

(MUSIC: "Silent Night" on the piano [poorly, with wrong notes, etc.], stops.)

MARY. George! What are you doing?!

GEORGE. *(Long beat, then:)* I'm sorry, Mary. Janie, I'm sorry. I didn't mean...you go on and practice. Pete, I owe you an apology, too. I'm sorry. What did you want to know?

PETE. Nothing, Daddy.

GEORGE. What's the matter with everybody? Janie, go on. I told you to practice. Now, go on, play!

JANIE. Oh, Daddy...

MARY. George, why must you torture the children? Why don't you...

GEORGE. Mary...

(SFX: Door opens and slams.)

JANIE. Where's daddy going?

(SFX: MARY dials the operator on the telephone.)

MARY. Bedford two-four-seven, please.

PETE. Is Daddy in trouble?

MARY. Yes, Pete.

JANIE. Shall I pray for him?

MARY. Yes, Janie, pray very hard.

TOMMY. Me, too?

MARY. You too, Tommy. *(On phone:)* Hello, Uncle Billy?

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscore.)

POTTER. So, that's it George. You're short eight thousand dollars in the books, eh?

GEORGE. Oh please, Mr. Potter. I'll pay any sort of interest...if you still want the Building and Loan.

POTTER. You say it was lost, did you notify the police?

GEORGE. No, sir. I haven't done that yet. Harry's homecoming tomorrow...

POTTER. Why did you come to me? What about your good friend Sam Wainwright?

GEORGE. I can't get a hold of him. He's in Europe.

POTTER. What kind of security would I have, George? What collateral?

GEORGE. I have some life insurance, a fifteen thousand dollar policy.

POTTER. How much is your equity in it?

GEORGE. Five hundred dollars.

POTTER. And you want eight thousand! Look at you. You used to be so cocky. You were going to go out and conquer the world! You once called me a warped, frustrated old man. What are you but a warped, frustrated young man? Crawling in here on your hands and knees for help. No securities, no stocks, no bonds. You're worth more dead than you are alive! Why don't you go to the riffraff you love so much and ask them for help?

GEORGE. I'll do anything Mr. Potter, please. Please help me, my wife and kids...

POTTER. You know what I'm going to do for you? As a stockholder of the Building and Loan, I'm calling the state examiner to get a warrant for your arrest.

(SFX: Dialing telephone.)

POTTER. Misappropriation of funds, manipulation, malfeasance—

GEORGE. *(Overlapping with "...manipulation:")* Mr. Potter, please. You can't. They can't arrest me.

(SFX: GEORGE runs from POTTER's office, door slams.)

POTTER. Go on and run! You can't hide in a little town like this! Merry Christmas, George!

(MUSIC: Crescendo / Transition.)

(Applause sign flashes.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. And now, more from our sponsors... Are you guilty of careless driving because windshield bug-spots dulled your vision?

MAN. Yes! I'm guilty!

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Stop straining to see through a bug-spattered windshield! Dux Toilet Cake gets the squashed bugs off quickly, easily—yes, even when the sun has baked them in the glass!

WOMAN. Remember, you need clear vision as well as good breaks to avoid accidents. You'll find Dux Toilet Cake leaves the glass polished so crystal clear you hardly know it's there.

MAN. I feel so much safer after I clean my windshield with Dux Toilet Cake. It leaves no dangerous "oily film" to pick up dust and make night driving difficult.

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Dux Toilet Cake—The Soap of 100 Uses...

ALL. *(Sing to the tune of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town":)*

YOU BETTER WASH HIGH,
YOU BETTER WASH LOW,
BEHIND YOUR EARS TOO,
I'M TELLING YOU SO,
DUX TOILET CAKE IS CLEANING UP TOWN.

IT WASHES UP CARS,
IT WASHES UP BARS,
AND OUT IN L.A.,
IT WASHES UP STARS.
DUX TOILET CAKE IS CLEANING UP TOWN.

IT'S FOUND IN EVERY BATHROOM,
FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA,
IT'S USED BY OUR DEAR PRESIDENT,
AND IT'S USED BY YOU AND ME.

YOU BETTER WASH HIGH,
YOU BETTER WASH LOW,
BEHIND YOUR EARS TOO,

I'M TELLING YOU SO,
DUX TOILET CAKE IS CLEANING UP TOWN.

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. Buy a cake of Dux Toilet Soap today. Keep it in your car.

(Applause sign flashes.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. And now, the dramatic conclusion of *It's a Wonderful Life*...

(MUSIC: Period holiday music as underscoring.)

RESTAURANT PATRONS. *(Happy-go-lucky ad-libs. Much talk of Italian food.)*

MARTINI. Merry Christmas, glad you come.

MAN. How about some of that good spaghetti?

MARTINI. We got everything.

CLARENCE. Where's George, sir? Where!

JOSEPH. After running out of Potter's office, George ended up at Martini's bar. He's had a couple of drinks, Clarence. He's just sitting there...

CLARENCE. What's he saying? Who is he...?

JOSEPH. Shhhhh...

GEORGE. God... God... Dear Father in Heaven, I'm not a praying man, but if you're up there and you can hear me, show me the way. I'm at the end of my rope. Show me the way, God.

NICK. Are you all right, George? You want somebody to take you home?

MARTINI. Why you drink so much, my friend? You don't feel good. Please go home, Mr. Bailey.

MR. WELCH. Bailey? You say Bailey? Which Bailey?

MARTINI. This gentleman is Mr. Bailey. George Bailey.

MR. WELCH. George Bailey, huh!

(SFX: MR. WELCH punches GEORGE.)

MR. WELCH. And the next time you talk to my wife like that, you'll get worse. It isn't enough she slaves teaching your stupid kids how to read and write, you've got to bawl her out...

MARTINI. You get out of here, Mr. Welch. You hit my best friend. You get out!

MR. WELCH. All right! All right!!

(SFX: Door opens and closes.)

MARTINI. Mr. Bailey, you okay?

GEORGE. Who was that?

MARTINI. Mr. Welch. But don't worry, he don't come in this place no more. I'll get something for your face, it's bleeding.

GEORGE. I'm all right.

MARTINI. Please don't go away Mr. Bailey, please don't...

GEORGE. *(Fading away:)* Leave me alone, leave me alone!

(SFX: Door opens and closes.)

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

(SFX: Howling wind.)

JOSEPH. George is headed to the bridge now, Clarence. Can you see him?

CLARENCE. He looks like he's going to jump!

JOSEPH. It's time, Clarence.

(SFX: CLARENCE's decent from Heaven to Earth.)

CLARENCE. Excuse me! You, there. Have you got the time?

GEORGE. My watch is dead.

CLARENCE. Thanks just the same.

(SFX: Wind quieter, a splash from CLARENCE jumping into the water, the wind surges.)

CLARENCE. *(From the water:)* Help! Help me! I can't swim!

GEORGE. Hold it, mister! I'm coming!

(SFX: Splash of GEORGE jumping in after CLARENCE, the wind surges again.)

BRIDGE KEEPER. What in Sam Hill are the two of you doing?! This storm's not fit for man or beast! Now, get out of that water!

(SFX: Water sloshing dies down and wind dies out, door opens and shuts.)

BRIDGE KEEPER. Are you two are all right? Do you need a doctor?

GEORGE. No, I'm all right.

CLARENCE. No, I'm fine. This underwear, I didn't have time to get anything stylish. My wife gave me this on my last birthday. I passed away in it.

BRIDGE KEEPER. Passed away?!

CLARENCE. Oh, I see *Tom Sawyer* is drying out too.

BRIDGE KEEPER. Who?

CLARENCE. My book. I left in such a hurry, I brought *Tom Sawyer* with me. You should read the new book Mark Twain is working on.

GEORGE. How'd you happen to fall in?

CLARENCE. Oh, I jumped in. I jumped in to save you.

GEORGE. You jumped in to save me?

CLARENCE. Well, I did, didn't I? You didn't go through with it, did you?

GEORGE. Go through with what?

CLARENCE. Suicide.

BRIDGE KEEPER. It's against the law to commit suicide around here.

CLARENCE. Yeah, it's against the law where I come from, too.

BRIDGE KEEPER. Where do you come from?

CLARENCE. Heaven.

BRIDGE KEEPER. What?

CLARENCE. I had to act quickly — that's why I jumped in. I knew if I were drowning you would try to save me. And you see, you did, and that's how I saved you.

GEORGE. Oh, that's very funny.

CLARENCE. Your lip's bleeding, George.

GEORGE. Yeah, I got a bust in the jaw in answer to a prayer.

CLARENCE. Oh, no—no—no, George. I'm the answer to your prayer.

GEORGE. How do you know my name?

CLARENCE. Oh, I know all about you. I've watched you grow up from a little boy.

GEORGE. What are you, a mind reader or something?

CLARENCE. Oh, no...

GEORGE. Well, who are you, then?

CLARENCE. Clarence Oddbody, A-S-2.

GEORGE. "Oddbody...A-S-2." What's that "A-S-2?"

CLARENCE. Angel Second Class.

BRIDGE KEEPER. Hey?! I'm getting out of here, you may not need a doctor, but I do!

(SFX: Door opens and slams.)

CLARENCE. Cheerio, my good man!

GEORGE. Hey, look here, why'd you want to save me?

CLARENCE. 'Cause I'm your guardian angel.

GEORGE. I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

CLARENCE. Ridiculous of you to think of killing yourself for money. Eight thousand dollars.

GEORGE. (*Bewildered:*) Yeah...just things like that. Now how'd you know that?

CLARENCE. I told you—I'm your guardian angel. I know everything about you.

GEORGE. Well, you look like about the kind of angel I'd get. Sort of a fallen angel, aren't you? What happened to your wings?

CLARENCE. I haven't won my wings yet. That's why I'm an angel Second Class.

GEORGE. Oh, I see.

CLARENCE. But you can help me earn them George, by letting me help you.

GEORGE. You don't happen to have eight thousand bucks on you?

CLARENCE. Oh, no, no. We don't use money in Heaven.

GEORGE. Oh, that's right, I keep forgetting. Comes in pretty handy down here, bub.

CLARENCE. Oh, tut, tut, tut...

GEORGE. I found it out a little late. I'm worth more dead than alive.

CLARENCE. Now, look, you mustn't say things like that. I won't get my wings with that attitude. You just don't know all that you've done. If it hadn't been for you—

GEORGE. (*Simultaneously with "you:"*) Yeah, if it hadn't been for me, everybody'd be a lot better off. My wife, and my kids and my friends.

CLARENCE. (*To himself:*) Hmmm, this isn't going to be easy...

GEORGE. They'd all be better if I hadn't been born.

CLARENCE. What'd you say?

GEORGE. I said I wish I'd never been born.

CLARENCE. George, that's wonderful!

GEORGE. Wonderful?

CLARENCE. The idea you just gave me. Well, you've got your wish. You've never been born.

(*SFX: A crash of thunder.*)

GEORGE. Never been born?

CLARENCE. Exactly. No worries, no eight thousand dollars to get, nothing. You simply don't exist.

GEORGE. Hey, wait a minute. This ear of mine. Say something else in that ear.

CLARENCE. You don't have a bad ear anymore. Don't you see, you're not the George Bailey you think you are. You're a...well, you're nobody.

GEORGE. Well, that's the doggonedest thing...

CLARENCE. Your lip's stopped bleeding, too, George.

GEORGE. What do you know about that...? What happened? I need a drink, that's what I need. What about you angel, do you want a drink?

CLARENCE. Well, I don't know...

GEORGE. Come on, come one, we'll go as soon as our clothes are dry.

CLARENCE. Our clothes are dry.

GEORGE. Hey, so they are, that's funny. That stove's hotter than I thought. Well look, let's get dressed and we'll stroll over to Martini's and then... Oh excuse me, I'll stroll, you fly.

CLARENCE. I haven't got my wings.

GEORGE. You haven't got your wings. Yeah, that's right. A couple of drinks and we'll both fly.

(*MUSIC: Period seedy jazz underscoring.*)

ALL. (*Crowd ad-libs throughout scene. This crowd is seedier and louder than before.*)

GEORGE. There's a place to sit down. Sit down. Oh, hello, Nick. Clarence, welcome to the best bar in Bedford Falls.

NICK. Bedford Falls? Don't you mean Pottersville?

GEORGE. Pottersville? Hey, where's Martini?

NICK. Look, I'm the boss. You want a drink or don't you?

GEORGE. Okay – all right. Double bourbon, quick, huh?

NICK. Okay.

(SFX: Bottles, a glass.)

NICK. *(To CLARENCE:)* What's yours, bub?

CLARENCE. I was just thinking of mulled wine.

NICK. Huh!?

CLARENCE. Heavy on the cinnamon and light on the cloves. Off with you my lad, and lively now!

NICK. Hey, look mister, we serve hard drinks in here for men who want to get drunk fast. And we don't need any characters around to give the joint atmosphere.

GEORGE. Now come on here, just give him the same as I ordered. He's okay.

NICK. *(Grumbling:)* Two double bourbon.

(SFX: Bottles, glasses.)

GEORGE. What about this place, it's all changed.

ALL. *(Crowd laughs, cackles, coughs.)*

CLARENCE. All of Bedford Falls has changed. You're having your wish George, you've never been born. Oh, they'll be lots of things you've never seen before.

(SFX: A cash register bell rings.)

CLARENCE. Oh, good! Somebody's just made it.

GEORGE. Made what?

CLARENCE. Every time you hear a bell ring, it means that some angel's just got his wings.

NICK. What did you say!

GEORGE. Look, Clarence, I don't think you better talk about angels around here?

CLARENCE. Don't they believe in angels?

GEORGE. Yeah, they believe in them, but you know, it's just...

CLARENCE. Well then, why should people be surprised when they see one?

NICK. Huh?

GEORGE. Don't mind him Nick, he just never grew up. How old are you, anyway, Clarence?

CLARENCE. Two hundred and ninety-three...next May.

NICK. That does it!

(SFX: Bottle slammed down on bar.)

NICK. Out you two pixies go through the door or out the window, go on get! Get!

GEORGE. Where's Martini, will you tell him...

NICK. Stop asking about Martini, he ain't here... *(Re GOWER:)* Well, well, well, look who crawled out from under whatever hole he's been hiding in:

GEORGE. Hey, it's Mr. Gower!

NICK. Hey you, Rummy, didn't I tell you never to come panhandling around here?

CLARENCE. George, look.

GEORGE. Mr. Gower! This is George Bailey! Don't you know me?

GOWER. Will you buy me a drink, mister, just one drink, mister...

NICK. Binky! Throw the Rummy out!

BINKY. You got it.

GOWER. Oh, no, no please...

GEORGE. Hey Nick, isn't that Mr. Gower, the druggist?

NICK. That rum-head spent twenty years in jail for poisoning some kid. If you know him, you must be a jailbird yourself. *(To BOUNCER:)* Binky, here's two more, get them out of here.

BINKY. You got it boss.

ALL. *(Crowd laughs.)*

(SFX: Door slams.)

CLARENCE. Here, let me help you up—the snow is quite cold.

GEORGE. What's wrong with Mr. Gower?

CLARENCE. Mr. Gower doesn't know you George. You see, George, you weren't there to stop Gower from putting that poison into that prescription.

GEORGE. *(Simultaneously with "into the...:")* What do you mean, I wasn't there? What are you, a hypnotist? Why am seeing all these strange things here?

CLARENCE. Don't you understand? It's because you were never born.

GEORGE. Then if I wasn't born, who am I?

CLARENCE. You're nobody. You have no identity.

GEORGE. What do you mean, no identity? My name's George Bailey.

CLARENCE. There is no George Bailey. You have no papers, no cards, no driver's license, no 4-F card, no insurance policy...

GEORGE. Zuzu's petals!

CLARENCE. What?

GEORGE. Zuzu's petals—My little girl, some petals fell off her flower, I told her I'd fix it and stuck them in my pocket—but they're gone too, everything is gone.

CLARENCE. But, you've been given a great gift George. The chance to see what the world would be like if you had never been born.

GEORGE. You're crazy! You're crazy as a bed bug and you're driving me crazy too. Now look, I'm going home to my wife and family, do you understand that? And I'm going home alone!

(SFX: Wind stops, running through snow, police siren.)

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

COP. You know the drill, hands behind your back, sister.

VIOLET. Keep your hands off me! Why don't you bust somebody else for a change!?

GEORGE. Hey...hey, officer. Where did the Building and Loan move to?

COP. The Building and what?

GEORGE. The Bailey Building and Loan. It was up there.

COP. They went out of business years ago. Now all that's left is this burlesque house.

VIOLET. Not so fast, copper—I know Potter!

GEORGE. *(Overlapping "I know Potter:")* Hey, Violet! Hey, listen—that's Violet Bick!

COP. Oh, I know. Believe me, I know.

GEORGE. I know that girl!

COP. Who doesn't?! Now, get out of our way.

(SFX: COP leads VIOLET off, stomping through snow, a car drives up.)

GEORGE. Taxi! Hey, Ernie! Ernie, take me home. I'm going off my nut!

(SFX: Car door opens and closes.)

ERNIE. Where do you live?

GEORGE. Aw, now, doggone it, Ernie, don't you start pulling that stuff. You know where I live. Three-twenty Sycamore. Now hurry up.

ERNIE. Okay. Three-twenty Sycamore?

GEORGE. Yeah—yeah—hurry up. Zuzu's sick.

ERNIE. All right.

GEORGE. Look here, Ernie, straighten me out here. I've got some bad liquor or something. Listen to me. Now, you are Ernie Bishop, and you live in Bailey Park with your wife and kid? That's right, isn't it?

ERNIE. You seen my wife?

GEORGE. "Seen your wife?!" I've been to your house a hundred times.

ERNIE. Look, bud, what's the idea? I live in a shack in Potter's Field and my wife ran away three years ago and took the kid, and I ain't never seen you before in my life.

GEORGE. Okay. Just step on it. Just get me home?!

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

ERNIE. Is this the place?

GEORGE. Of course it's the place.

ERNIE. Well, this house ain't been lived in for twenty years.

(SFX: Car door opens and closes.)

GEORGE. Mary! Mary! I'm home! Pete! Tommy! Janie! Zuzu! Where are you?

CLARENCE. They're not here, George. You have no children.

GEORGE. Where are they, Clarence? What have you done with them?!

BERT. All right, put up your hands.

GEORGE. What is this?!?

BERT. No fast moves. Come on out here, both of you.

GEORGE. Bert! Thank heaven you're here! Bert, what's happened to this house? Where's Mary? Where's my kids?

ERNIE. Watch him, Bert.

BERT. Come on, come on. I'm going to take you down to the station.

GEORGE. Bert, now listen to me. It's that fellow there—he says he's an angel—he's tried to hypnotize me.

BERT. Don't make me use my nightstick...

GEORGE. Bert, I hate to do this, but...

(SFX: GEORGE punches BERT.)

CLARENCE. Run...George! Run, George!

(SFX: GEORGE running through snow.)

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

GEORGE. *(Reading to himself—out of breath:)* Ma Bailey's Boarding House.

(SFX: Knocking on door, creaky door opens.)

ROSE. Well?

GEORGE. Mother?

ROSE. Mother?! What do you want?

GEORGE. Mother, this is George. I thought sure you'd remember me.

ROSE. George, who? If you're looking for a room there's no vacancy.

GEORGE. Oh Mother, Mother, please try to understand, something's happened to me. I don't know what it is, but I need a place to stay. Please, let me stay here.

ROSE. I don't take in strangers.

GEORGE. I'm not a stranger. I know everybody you know. Your brother-in-law, Uncle Billy.

ROSE. You know him?

GEORGE. Well, sure I do.

ROSE. When'd you see him last?

GEORGE. Today, over at his house.

ROSE. That's a lie. He's been in the insane asylum ever since he lost his business. And if you ask me, that's where you belong!

(SFX: Creaky door slams.)

CLARENCE. *(After a beat:)* I'm here again George.

GEORGE. My mother, my own mother didn't even know me.

CLARENCE. Strange, isn't it? One man's life touches so many others. And when he isn't around, he leaves a pretty big hole, doesn't he?

GEORGE. Look, you: I've heard of things like this before. You've got me under some kind of a spell. Well I'm gonna get out of it, I've got to. I know I talked to Billy this afternoon, how can he be in an asylum? I've got to snap out of this. Now, let me think a minute... Bailey Park!

CLARENCE. There is no Bailey Park if you weren't here to build it.

GEORGE. We'll see.

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

CLARENCE. This is Bailey Park? People live here? Pretty grim.

GEORGE. This is where Bailey Park is supposed to be. What's this gravestone doing here? And why's the name Bailey on it.

CLARENCE. That wouldn't be yours.

GEORGE. My father's name is on it. But, what's this other name? Why is my brother Harry's name here?

CLARENCE. Your brother broke through the ice and drowned at the age of nine.

GEORGE. That's a lie! Harry Bailey went to war! He got the Congressional Medal of Honor! He saved the lives of every man on that transport!

CLARENCE. Every man on that transport died. Harry wasn't there to save them because you weren't there to save Harry. You see,

George, you really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?

GEORGE. What do I do now? Clarence? What do I do?

CLARENCE. It's your life, George.

GEORGE. What happened to Mary, Clarence?

CLARENCE. Mary?

GEORGE. My wife, Mary. What happened to her if I was never born?

CLARENCE. I'm not supposed to tell you, George.

GEORGE. I don't know how you know the things you do, but please. If you know where she is, just let me see her. That's all I'd need to make a decision.

CLARENCE. Very well, George. But you're not going to like it.

GEORGE. Where is she, Clarence?

CLARENCE. She's an old maid, George.

GEORGE. Where is she?!

CLARENCE. She's just about to close up the library!

(SFX: GEORGE runs off through the snow.)

CLARENCE. There must be some easier way to earn my wings...

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)

(SFX: Wind dies down, GEORGE running in snow.)

GEORGE. Is the library closed?

MARY. It's Christmas Eve, we can't stay open all night.

GEORGE. Can I ask you something?

MARY. I should really be getting home.

GEORGE. What is there to go home to?

MARY. That is none of your business, sir. The library is closed. Maybe you should try back the 26th.

GEORGE. Mary, I'm sorry.

MARY. How do you know my name?

GEORGE. All I need is a couple of minutes.

MARY. I told you, the library is closed.

GEORGE. Please: just two minutes, that's all I need. I'll do anything.

MARY. You sound desperate. I'll help if I can. What is it?

GEORGE. Isn't this town Bedford Falls?

MARY. It used to be. But that was some time ago. I wasn't very old when Potter was elected and took the town, along with its name, for himself.

GEORGE. So, you do know a place called Bedford Falls?

MARY. I've seen pictures, it looked like a very nice place. Things have changed, but that's with the times. I have to go.

GEORGE. Mary Hatch: You live on Reed Street, a white Victorian. Your bedroom is at the top of the stairs, you turn to the left. You have an older brother Marty and you live with your mother Edwina.

MARY. How do you know all this?! What are you, some crazy man? Stop it! I'm leaving!

GEORGE. Don't you know me, Mary? Just let me touch you.

MARY. Get your hands off me! I'll call a cop!

GEORGE. The house you wished for! Don't you remember?!

MARY. I told you I don't know you! Let me go! Officer!!

GEORGE. Don't you know me? You must! Mary, it's George, don't you know me.

MARY. Let me go!

GEORGE. Mary, please! Oh, don't do this to me. Please, Mary, help me. Where are our kids?

MARY. What?

GEORGE. I need you, Mary! Help me, Mary!

MARY. Get away from me. Help! Help! Police!

(SFX: Police whistle.)

GEORGE. Mary! It's George! Please Mary! You're my wife!

(MARY screams.)

GEORGE. Clarence! Clarence! Clarence, where are you?

(SFX: Wind builds.)

GEORGE. Help me, Clarence. Get me back. I don't care what happens to me. Only get me back to my wife and kids. Help me, Clarence, please. Please! I want to live again! I want to live again, please! Oh God, please let me live again.

(SFX: Wind stops.)

BERT. George! Is that you, George!

GEORGE. Now get out of here Bert! Get out of here! You come any closer and I'll hit you again.

BERT. What the Sam Hill are you yelling for George?

GEORGE. Come on!... "George??" "George!" Bert, do you know me???

BERT. Know you, I've been looking all over town for you. Where've you been?

GEORGE. Hey Bert! Bert! I'm alive again Bert!

BERT. You sure you're all right? Hey, your mouth's bleeding.

GEORGE. It is? Hey, my mouth's bleeding! Bert, look at the blood come out of there! Would you...! Zuzu's petals, Zuzu's petals—there they are! What do you know about that?! Merry Christmas, Bert!

BERT. Well, Merry Christmas. Get in the car, I'll drive you home.

(SFX: Car door opens and closes.)

GEORGE. You will, Bert. Well do that and turn the siren wide open!

(SFX: Police siren.)

GEORGE. Merry Christmas Bedford Falls! Hey, Merry Christmas you wonderful old Building and Loan! Merry Christmas Mr. Potter! Yippee!!!

(MUSIC: Joyous Christmas carol blares, possibly "Joy to the World.")

(SFX: Door opens and closes.)

ALL. *(Crowd noises under scene.)*

GEORGE. Mary! Mary! I'm home! Have you seen my wife? Hey, what is this, these people, these reporters? Hey, Merry Christmas, reporters!

SADIE. Mr. Bailey, there's a deficit.

GEORGE. I know. Eight thousand dollars I bet, huh?

SHERIFF. George, I've got a little paper here.

GEORGE. I'll bet it's a warrant for my arrest. Isn't wonderful? Merry Christmas! Hey, where's Mary, you know? Look at this wonderful old drafty house. Isn't it wonderful, where's, Mary!?

PETE, JANIE, TOMMY & ZUZU. Merry Christmas, Daddy! Merry Christmas, Daddy!

GEORGE. Kids! Pete! Janie! Tommy! I could eat you up! Where's your mother?

JANIE. She went looking for you with Uncle Billy.

ZUZU. Daddy!

GEORGE. Zuzu! Zuzu! My little gingersnap! How do you feel?

ZUZU. Fine, Daddy, not a smitch of temperature!

GEORGE. "Not a smitch!" Hallelujah!

(SFX: Door opens and shuts.)

MARY. George! Darling!

ZUZU. It's Mommy! Mommy's home!

GEORGE. Mary!

MARY. George! Where have you been? Oh, George, George, George...

GEORGE. Mary! Let me touch you! Oh, you're real!

MARY. Oh, George, George!

GEORGE. You have no idea what's happened to me.

MARY. You have no idea what's happened, either! Come on, George, quick! They're on their way!

GEORGE. Who, who's on their way? The police department? The FBI? The National Guard! I'm alive again, Mary! Listen, I'm alive again Mary!

MARY. Come on in here now. Now, you stand right over here, by the tree. Right here, and don't move, don't move.

ALL. *(Crowd noises.)*

MARY. I hear them now, George, it's a miracle! It's a miracle! Come in, Uncle Billy! Everybody! In here!

ALL. *(Crowd noises.)*

BILLY. Isn't it wonderful? Mary did it, George! Mary did it! She told a few people you were in trouble and they scattered all over town collecting money. They didn't ask any questions, just said "If George is in trouble, you can count on me." You never saw anything like it!

CHARLIE. What is this, George, another run on the bank? Here you are, Merry Christmas!

(SFX: Coins into cash box.)

ERNIE. The line forms to the right! Mr. Gower! Merry Christmas! Mr. Martini! Step right up now.

MARTINI. I busted the jukebox, too!

(SFX: Coins into cash box.)

GEORGE. Mr. Gower!

GOWER. I made the rounds on my charge accounts!

(SFX: Coins into cash box.)

GEORGE. Violet Bick!

VIOLET. I'm not going to go, George. I changed my mind.

(SFX: Coins into cash box.)

CHARLIE. I wouldn't have a roof over my head if it wasn't for you, George. Here you go: Two hundred and forty-two dollars!

(SFX: Coins into cash box.)

MATILDA. I've been saving this money for a divorce, if I ever get a husband!

(SFX: Coins into cash box.)

ROSE. Merry Christmas, George.

GEORGE. Merry Christmas, Mother!

ROSE. Merry Christmas, everyone!

ALL. (Crowd ad-libs "Merry Christmases," etc.)

ERNIE. Just a minute. Quiet, everybody. Quiet—quiet. A telegram from London.

MATILDA. Oh! London!

ERNIE. Mr. Gower cables you need cash. Stop. My office instructed to advance you up to twenty-five thousand dollars. Stop. Hee-haw and Merry Christmas. Sam Wainwright.

(MUSIC: "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" on the piano.)

ALL. (Sing:) HARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING, GLORY TO THE NEWBORN KING...

(SFX: Door opens.)

HARRY. Hello, George, how are you?

GEORGE. Harry! Harry!

ALL. (Crowd ad-libs welcoming Harry.)

HARRY. Mary! Looks like I got here too late.

BERT. Mary, I got him here from the airport as quickly as I could! The fool flew all the way up here in a blizzard!

ROSE. Harry, how about your banquet in Washington?

HARRY. Oh, I left right in the middle of it as soon as I got Mary's telegram.

MARY. How about some wine?

(SFX: Cork pops.)

HARRY. Good idea. A toast: To my big brother, George. The richest man in town!

(ALL cheer.)

(MUSIC: "Auld Lang Syne" on the piano [Possibly becoming a fuller orchestration as builds].)

ALL. (Singing:) SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT, AND NEVER BROUGHT TO MIND...

MARY. What's this book, George?

GEORGE. *Tom Sawyer*...

MARY. Look: There's an inscription.

CLARENCE. "George: Remember, no man is a failure who has friends. Thanks for the wings. Love, Clarence."

MARY. What's that?

GEORGE. That's a Christmas present from a very dear friend of mine.

(SFX: A bell on the tree sounds.)

ZUZU. Look, Daddy. Teacher says, every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings.

GEORGE. That's right, that's right. Attaboy, Clarence.

(MUSIC: "Auld Lang Syne" on the piano [Possibly becoming a fuller orchestration as builds].)

ALL. (Sing:) SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT,
AND NEVER BROUGHT TO MIND
SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT AND DAYS
OF AULD LANG SYNE

(ALL continue humming the song as underscoring to FREDDIE's sign-off.)

ANNOUNCER. This has been WBFR Playhouse of the Air's presentation of *It's a Wonderful Life*. The WBFR Playhouse is brought to you, this and every week, by Bremel Hair Tonic and Dux Toilet Cake. Please stay tuned for a program of popular holiday music. This is Freddie Filmore, signing off for WBRF in New York City, and wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas. Good night.

ALL. (Sing:) FOR AULD LANG SYNE, MY DEAR, FOR AULD LANG SYNE. WE'LL TAKE A CUP OF KINDNESS YET, FOR AULD LANG SYNE.

(The "On the Air" sign pops off.)

End of Play

Appendix

SOUND EFFECTS: In the era of old time radio, sound effects were created by sound effects men and occasionally women. The sound effects technicians collected an enormous array of objects all used in the creation of live sound effects. While recorded effects were first used as early as 1928, most of the sounds heard were created live. It is suggested that the sounds be made in the most visual manner possible, as this adds an additional visual aspect to the production.

The numerous sound effect cues (indicated throughout the script by "SFX") create the mood and add detail to the play. These sound effects should be performed live by the actors. (Although some productions have chosen to employ a foley artist, the actors provide an additional visual element.)

What follows is a list of sound effects used in *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. Please note that sounds used multiple times (i.e. door opens and shuts, etc) are only noted once. Some sounds also include notes on how these effects can be achieved:

<i>Sound Effect</i>	<i>Suggestion</i>
Ice cracking	Corn flakes crushed on baking sheet or bamboo/wood being broken/peeled
Water sloshing	Bucket of water in basin of water
Door with/without bell opens and shuts/slams	Door on frame
Ice cream noises	Seltzer bottle, ice cream scooper in tin of water, candy jar lids open/closed
Opening up telegram	
Capsules falling to the floor	Jellybeans dropped onto baking sheet
Capsules being put back into glass bottle	Jellybeans placed into bottle
Gower slapping Young George	Belt (fold and snap)
Car horn	Period car horn
High heeled footsteps	High heels on surface
Dinner plates and silverware	
Running footsteps	Shoes on surface
Glass breaks (rock through a window)	Ribbon candy and hammer
Car (approaches/drives off)	
Car door opens and closes	Car door on frame
Phone hangs up	Period telephone
A train whistle	