

It's A Wonderful Life!

Adapted for the stage from Frank Capra's 1946 film

By Anthony E. Palermo

It's a Wonderful Life is based on the story,
The Greatest Gift by Philip Van Doren Stern

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PRODUCTION SCRIPT

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It's a Wonderful Life! (stage-play)

By Anthony E. Palermo

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NOTE: Musical underscore & sound effects tracks are also part of this play.

All music composed by Jonathan Green

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(name of producer) presents

It's a Wonderful Life!

Adapted for the stage by ANTHONY E. PALERMO from Frank Capra's 1946 film

It's a Wonderful Life is based on the story, *The Greatest Gift*
by Philip Van Doren Stern

Musical score composed & arranged by Jonathan Green

NOTE:

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Author's Biography

Pretty long bio:

ANTHONY E. PALERMO (PLAYWRIGHT) is a dramatist, performer, and educator based in Los Angeles. His work is heard on NPR and XM Satellite Radio as well as in audiobooks and on stage with L.A. Theatre Works, California Artists Radio Theater, numerous theatre troupes, and on national tours. His sound effects work on Yuri Rasovsky's *Sherlock Holmes Theatre* contributed to its winning the *Audie Award*—the Oscar of audiobooks in 2006. He directed the 60th anniversary production of Norman Corwin's *On a Note of Triumph*—also recreating Bernard Herrmann's orchestral score. Tony performed live SFX for shows such as Eric Idle's *What About Dick?*, CART's *Wizard of Oz*, LATW's *Broadway Bound* and *The Rivalry*, as well as performing 65 solo shows at the California State Fair. Tony's *Sonic Storytelling Studio* at San Francisco's Exploratorium is a permanent exhibit that has seen thousands of visitors since 2006. His *Sparx Audio Adventures* assembly programs and workshops are popular with schools and colleges across California, the U.S. and the world. Tony also hosts the RuyaSonic website, offering info on writing, directing, scoring, engineering, and sound effects. www.RuyaSonic.com

Much shorter bio:

ANTHONY E. PALERMO (PLAYWRIGHT) is an Audie Award-winning performer, dramatist, and educator who has produced dramas and workshops for broadcast, stage, and schools. Tony hosts the RuyaSonic website, offering info on writing, directing, scoring, engineering, and sound effects. www.RuyaSonic.com

NOTE: Up-to-date text of the two bios is available at: <https://ruyasonic.com/tp-bio-playwright>. You can cut & paste the text there into your playbill or program and thus not have to worry about typos. Cuts are permitted to the bio text to fit the space available. Please include the final sentence and website URL, as many newcomers to radio-drama attend productions by troupes like yours.

Cast of Characters - *'It's a Wonderful Life!'* (stage-play)

CAST SIZE: Rarely are more than 11 people on stage at once. Doubling is suggested. Without doubling, cast is: 13 males, 6 females, 9 males or females, 7 boys, 4 girls and 2 boys-or-girls.

GEORGE BAILEY	Dreamer/Loan Officer (male)
CLARENCE	Angel, Second Grade (m)
MARY HATCH/BAILEY	George's Wife/Librarian (female)
SUPERINTENDENT	Administrator of all Angels (male/female)
UNCLE BILLY	Absent-minded clerk (m)
MR. POTTER	Warped, old financier (m)
MA BAILEY	George's mother (f)
ANNIE	Bailey family cook (f)
VIOLET BICK	Easy girl (female)
OFFICER BERT	Local policeman (m)
ERNIE	Cab driver (m)
NICK	Bartender (m/f)
POP BAILEY	George's father (m)
SAM WAINWRIGHT	Successful businessman (m)
GOWER	Pharmacist (m/f)
MRS. HATCH	Mary's mother (f)
HARRY BAILEY	George's younger brother (m)
MARTINI	Italian café owner (m/f)
CHARLIE	Difficult shareholder (m/f)
TILLY	Loan office clerk (f)
YOUNG GEORGE BAILEY	Boy, age 10 (m/f)
NIGHT WATCHMAN	Night Watchman (m/f)
ZUZU BAILEY	Girl, age 5 (f)
JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (f)
MR. WELCH	Irate husband (m)
BANK TELLER	Bank clerk (m/f)
EUSTACE	Loan office clerk (m/f)
CARTER	Bank Examiner (m/f)
PETHEY BAILEY	Boy, age 9 (m/f)
MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (f)
NOSEY NEIGHBOR	Nosey neighbor (m/f)
RANDY	Shareholder (m/f)
MRS. THOMPSON	Shareholder (f)
SHERIFF	County Sheriff (m/f)
EDDY	Shareholder(m/f)

Also, assorted extras—boys, pedestrians, bank panic crowds, worried shareholders, bar crowds, lynch mob, reporters, Tommy Bailey (child).

A live keyboardist is optional: Organ and piano. (and accordion)

Other Materials Available For Your Production

Pre-recorded sound effects tracks

I offer 28 pre-recorded sound effects tracks—30 minutes' worth—of the more unusual sounds (crickets, wind, jumping in the river splashes, harp glissandos, the 78 RPM record of "Buffalo Gals", 1940s traffic, period telephones ringing, gym floor retracting, etc.)

While your troupe's Sound Designer could assemble such sounds from various SFX collections, here, they are already edited, ambience is added and sequences are laid out in sync with the dialogue in the script. It will cost you more to do this yourself than to purchase these tracks from me. To license these auxiliary materials, contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com

NOTE: sounds generated by the characters, such as doors, footsteps, plates, forks, bells, typing, etc., are NOT included. Your actors will have to produce those manually.

Pre-recorded music tracks

I also offer 49 pre-recorded music tracks—35 minutes' worth. These tracks cover scene transitions and underscore the drama—often in sync with the scripted dialogue. The instrumentation is primarily a 1940s theater organ, but also in a few places, Italian accordion, piano, and a jazz combo. This authentic musical underscoring adds greatly to the production. They are available as downloadable MP3 tracks or as audio CDs. See the MUSIC section of the appendix to this sample script for a detailed listing of the tracks.

NOTE: These music tracks are NOT 1940s-style orchestral music cues nor are they Broadway-style musical songs. Instead, the tracks function the way 1940s movie music does, but use mostly organ. You could hire a composer to create a score, but that would cost you more time and trouble—and money—than using the tracks I offer.

Sheet music for the original score

Additionally, I offer sheet music that matches the above-described original score--to allow a single, live keyboardist to accompany your show. The instrumentation consists of organ and piano. The score is available as a downloadable PDF document.

NOTE: The accordion and jazz combo cues would be produced by pre-recorded tracks—included when you purchase the sheet music.

ALSO: Many troupes find it useful to purchase both the sheet music AND the pre-recorded music tracks—since this allows the actors and crew to rehearse the full show without having the accompanist present at every rehearsal.

— ACT ONE —

PRODUCTION NOTE:

To quiet an audience at the beginning of each act and set a quaint 1940s vibe, you may wish to use the optional overtures. If not, just proceed to each Scene 1.

1. MUSIC: [MUS-01] [OPTIONAL] “WONDERFUL LIFE” OVERTURE**SCENE 1 - EXT. HEAVEN - DAY****(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)***SETTING:*

The apron of the stage DOWNSTAGE LEFT will serve as “Heaven” throughout the play. The two angels will survey the various scenes from there. Perhaps they view the goings on from a raised pulpit or balcony. Lighting can suggest a special radiance or halo effect for the Heaven scenes.

The apron will also serve as the main street and sidewalk for several scenes. As needed, a desk or bed or bar will be rolled on-stage, occupying the apron area to serve as additional locations.

The area UPSTAGE is bisected into two rooms that will be dressed together and separately as scenes require. The two rooms are connected by a functional door with two more functional doors upstage to allow for entrances. The idea is to allow the play to continue without significant interruption while stagehands redress the two rooms in darkness. The rooms will be described just prior to the opening of scenes.

AT RISE:

Both rooms are dark. In the Pharmacy, GOWER is grieving quietly over a tragic telegram. Later, YOUNG GEORGE will enter from the functional door upstage. No one is in the dining room. The angels are about to begin their survey of George Bailey’s life. THE SUPERINTENDENT angel enters from OFF-STAGE LEFT and stands as if proclaiming to an unseen audience—perhaps a congregation or even God.

AUDIO NOTE:

Try using hidden mics for the angels so that when the Superintendent and Clarence are speaking in Heaven, their voices can have a reverb effect applied throughout. The first line of their dialogue in a scene will specify [REVERB]. However, when Clarence is on Earth, his voice will be “dry” (no reverb.)

1. MUSIC: [MUS-02] (BED) "WONDERFUL LIFE ACT 1 INTRO"—UNDER
CROSSFADE TO NEXT MUSIC CUE
2. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] This is the story of George Bailey--an ordinary man who lives in Bedford Falls, New York. For his whole life, George Bailey wanted to see the world--the world laying beyond his small town. (PAUSE) But, our story doesn't begin in Bedford Falls. Indeed, it doesn't begin in anywhere in your terrestrial world...
3. MUSIC: [MUS-03] MUSIC CROSSFADES TO "HEAVENLY NO. 1"
4. SUPERINTENDENT: ...It begins... here, in Heaven..., where I--the Superintendent of Angels--am briefing an angle-apprentice named Clarence... Ahem! Clarence...? (Sternly) Clarence!
5. MUSIC: "HEAVENLY"--FADES UNDER...

CLARENCE ENTERS from OFFSTAGE LEFT, while reading an old hardback book—"Tom Sawyer." He trips as he comes upon the Superintendent.
6. CLARENCE: [REVERB] (TRIPPING) Whoops! Clarence Oddbody--angel, second class--reporting for duty, your honor!
7. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] What? They sent me an Angel--second class? You haven't earned your wings, yet?
8. CLARENCE: Errr... No, not yet. But I'm hoping this mission will do the trick! Are you really sending me down to Earth? Gosh! I haven't been to Earth since that time I got--.
9. SUPERINTENDENT: (CUTTING HIM OFF) --Yes! You see, there's a man in trouble down there..
10. CLARENCE: Good!
11. SUPERINTENDENT: No, bad, Clarence! At precisely ten forty-five P.M.--Earth time--a man named George Bailey will be thinking about taking his life.
12. CLARENCE: Oh, no! Suicide? Well, I know that's bad!

1. SUPERINTENDENT: Good, Clarence! You must stop him--if you can. Now... let me brief you about George Bailey's case history. You see, when George was a boy--
2. CLARENCE: --Oh, that's okay, your honor. All I need is a plan!
3. SUPERINTENDENT: (DESPARING) A... "plan?"
4. CLARENCE: Of course! I'm reading "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"--Mark Twain, you know? (HE HOLDS UP THE BOOK.)
5. SUPERINTENDENT: (IMPATIENT) I'm familiar with the book--if not Mr. Twain himself... up here.
6. CLARENCE: Well, Tom Sawyer always had a plan.
7. SUPERINTENDENT: (SKEPTICALLY) I see... Well, if you can help George Bailey with your "plan," you just may get your wings. Speaking of which, how long have you been waiting for your wings?
8. CLARENCE: Just two-hundred years.
9. SUPERINTENDENT: Two hundred years? ... Ulp. George Bailey's going to need a miracle.
10. CLARENCE: Yes! Thank you for your confidence in me, Boss. I'll leave immediately...
11. SUPERINTENDENT: Wait, Clarence! (SIGHS) "Plan" or no--first, some background... Now... look here....

The SUPERINTENDENT points out into the audience. CLARENCE turns his attention to the "observe" some boys playing on an ice pond. Sound effects convey the action as the SUPERINTENDENT describes it.

12. SUPERINTENDENT: When George Bailey was just a lad, he and his friends snuck onto mean Mr. Potter's property... and were sliding over a frozen pond on a shovel...
12. WALLA-WALLA: (OFF-STAGE) KIDS PLAYING ON ICE. "PRETTY GOOD, GEORGE!" "MY TURN!" "HARRY'S TURN." "HERE I GO..."

1. SUPERINTENDENT: ...when Harry--George's younger brother--fell through the ice...
2. TRACK SFX: [FX-01] ICE CRACKS
SPLASH FOLLOWED BY SECOND SPLASH--FADE UNDER
3. WALLA-WALLA: KIDS PANIC--THEN, IN SYNC WITH DIALOGUE, CHEER
4. CLARENCE: And George jumped in to save Harry?...
5. SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, he saved his brother that day, but--as a result--George lost his hearing in one ear.
6. CLARENCE: Brrrr! Yes, icy water, infection... I got it. "Bad ear." Go on.
7. SUPERINTENDENT: (PERTURBED) Ahem! Now look, Clarence. ..

The SUPERINTENDENT points to the dim set for Gower's drug store. CLARENCE turns his attention to this new scene. GOWER sits glumly reading a telegram with a bottle of whiskey in his hand. When the scene shifts, the lights come up.
8. SUPERINTENDENT: A few months later, young George was working at Gower's pharmacy. But Mr. Gower had just received a telegram informing him that his only son had died. It was The Great Pandemic... errr.... the influenza pandemic of 1919, you understand. Devastated, Mr. Gower was trying to drown his sorrows in whiskey, when the... (AD-LIB)
9. MUSIC: [MUS-04] (BRIDGE) "GOWER'S SAD DRUG STORE"--FADE UNDER.

**SCENE 2 - INT. GOWER'S DRUG STORE - DAY (MAY 1919)
(GOWER, YOUNG GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The room UPSTAGE LEFT is dressed as Gower's pharmacy. A table holds medicine bottles, papers, vials, and other pharmacist gear. A candlestick- style telephone sits on the table. There is a FUNCTIONAL DOOR to outside (UPSTAGE).

PRODUCTION NOTE:

As Gower mimes slapping Young George with his left hand, an off-stage SFX artist syncs slap sounds to Gower's motion, and George turns his head as if slapped on his right ear. Practice to get this coordinated. Make the audience wince with each slap.

AT RISE:

A drunken Gower is reading a telegram and clearly grieving the sad news it contains.

1. TRACK SFX: [FX-02] GOWER'S PHONE RINGS (3X) [SFX TRACK OR LIVE]

GOWER answers the phone.

2. GOWER: (DRUNKENLY) Gower's drugs.... Mrs. Blaine? ... What?...
Well, George should have delivered that medicine by now!
... Wait, here he comes. I'll send it right over. ... G'bye!

As YOUNG GEORGE ENTERS through the door UPSTAGE, GOWER hangs up the phone.

3. GOWER: (ANGRY) George! Did you deliver that prescription?

4. YOUNG GEORGE: Well, uh... no, Mr. Gower. I...

5. GOWER: Why didn't you deliver that right away? The little Blaine girl's sick! You lost that medicine, didn't you?

6. YOUNG GEORGE: Errr... No, Mr. Gower. Here it is.
[HOLDS UP GLASS VIAL OF PILLS.]

7. GOWER: Here?! (ANGRY) I'll teach you to--
[SLAPS YOUNG GEORGE]

8. YOUNG GEORGE: (IN PAIN) --Ow! Mr. Gower! My ear! My ear!

9. GOWER: You good for nothing-- [SLAP] Lazy loafer-- [SLAP]

10. YOUNG GEORGE: Ow! You're hurting my sore ear!

11. GOWER: What are you trying to do?-- [SLAP] Ruin me?-- [SLAP]

12. YOUNG GEORGE: Ow...! No, Mr. Gower! (In tears, holding out the vial)
You put something wrong in these pills. I--

13. GOWER: --Shut up! You little-- [SLAP]

1. YOUNG GEORGE: (SOBBING) Look! I know you're sad... You're upset about your son dying. You've been drinking! But you put something bad in these capsules. I didn't know what to do.
2. GOWER: Huh?... the... capsules?
[HE TAKES THE VIAL AND EXAMINES IT.]
3. YOUNG GEORGE: Look at them, Mr. Gower! You took the powder from the wrong bottle. It's... poison! (WHIMPERING)
4. GOWER: Poison? Poison? (REALIZES) Oh, my God!
5. YOUNG GEORGE: Don't hurt my sore ear again. Please!
6. GOWER: Poison? [HUGGING GEORGE]
Oh, George, George, George...
7. MUSIC: [MUS-05] (BED) "TENDER MOMENT"--UNDER
8. YOUNG GEORGE: (SOBBING) That's why I didn't deliver the medicine, Mr. Gower! I wanted to ask my Pop--to make sure! But he was busy... He couldn't...
9. GOWER: (SOBS) George, George... Forgive me! George...
10. YOUNG GEORGE: I won't ever tell a soul, Mr. Gower. I know you're sad. I won't ever tell anyone... hope to die...
11. GOWER: (SOBS) George, George...
12. MUSIC: [MUS-06] CROSS-FADE INTO "RIP TO HEAVENLY NO 2"--UNDER

SCENE 3 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

13. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Little Mary Hatch was at the soda fountain that day. She heard it all, but she, too, never told a soul.

1. CLARENCE: [REVERB] My, my! George sure took a beating! But he did the right thing.
2. SUPERINTENDENT: Well, George grew up and wanted to go off to college--but the Bailey's didn't have enough money, so he worked at the Bailey Building and Loan Association and--
3. CLARENCE: --"Building and Loan"?
4. SUPERINTENDENT: Yes. George's father was in the building and loan business... He and George's Uncle Billy--but it was a case of high ideals and low bank account.
5. CLARENCE: Those two always seem to go together.
6. SUPERINTENDENT: (SIGH) Err, yes. Anyway... George slaved away four years, saving enough to pay for college. But first, he was going to summer in Europe--working his way across on a cattle boat. Full of wanderlust, George wanted to do a little traveling before college...
7. MUSIC: FADE "HEAVENLY" QUICKLY UNDER.

SCENE 4 - INT. BAILEY DINING ROOM - EVENING (JUNE 1928)
(GEORGE, POP, ANNIE, MA, HARRY-- LATE)

SETTING:

The room STAGE RIGHT is the Old Bailey House dinning room, with a table and chairs and a mostly-eaten dinner for four set upon it. UPSTAGE, another FUNCTIONAL DOOR leads to the rest of the house.

AT RISE:

Dinner is over. Two chairs are empty. GEORGE and POP are still seated, having desert. ANNIE and MA are nearby. HARRY is off-stage, soon to enter from the UPSTAGE door.

8. GEORGE: (EATING) Ya know, Pop. As good as Annie's apple pie is--and it's... "peachy"--for an apple pie, Annie--I've had enough. (SIGHS) Gee, I can't believe this is my final meal at the ol' "Bailey boarding house."
9. POP BAILEY: We're all going to miss you, son.

1. GEORGE: And, I'm going to miss you, Pop--and Ma, and Annie. And, well, everyone in Bedford Falls.
2. MA BAILEY: You've certainly earned your chance, son.
3. GEORGE: Oh, and I'm gonna take it, Mother! (NOTICES) But-- Hey-- what's the matter, Pop? You look tired.
4. POP BAILEY: I don't know. (SIGH) One more run-in with Potter, today.
5. ANNIE: Mr. Potter? That ol' money-grubbing buzzard?
7. GEORGE: Annie's right. I thought when you put him on the Board of Directors, he'd ease up a little.
8. POP BAILEY: So did I. (SIGHS) He may be the richest man in Bedford Falls, but--
9. GEORGE: --the most miserable, if you ask me. I don't understand somebody like that. I mean, he'll never spend all the money he has.
10. MA BAILEY: Well, Potter is bitter... spent his life in that wheelchair. He's frustrated. Think about it, George. What if you--.
11. GEORGE: --C'mon! Potter owns just about everything in town... everything but the Bailey Building and Loan.
11. POP BAILEY: Well, maybe that's why he's so hard on us. To him, we're just a bunch of foolish--

HARRY BAILEY ENTERS from the door UPSTAGE, dressed in a tux or fancy suit.

12. HARRY BAILEY: --Hey, big brother! I need to borrow your tuxedo cufflinks for tonight's dance
13. GEORGE: Sure! Help yourself, Harry!
14. HARRY BAILEY: Well, where are they?
(LOOKS AROUND. SEE'S GEORGE'S SUITCASE)
Here?--in your suitcase?
15. ANNIE: Harry! George won't need a tuxedo on a cattle boat!

1. HARRY BAILEY: You never know, Annie... (TO GEORGE) Say, where'd you get this beat up old suitcase, anyway, George?
2. GEORGE: At the Emporium, Harry! Mr. Gower bought it for me.
3. HARRY BAILEY: A going-away gift, eh?
4. GEORGE: Yep! Far away! Y'see, soon, that bag will be plastered with exotic destination stickers. Y'know, Rome... Cairo... even Yox-pock-pet!
5. ANNIE: Maybe find me a husband there?
6. POP BAILEY: (AMUSED) I guess you're gonna have a pretty full summer.
7. GEORGE: Oh, nooo! I'm going to have a pretty full life!
8. HARRY BAILEY: So, why don't you come to the dance tonight?
9. GEORGE: Your graduation dance? Naw! I'd be bored to death.
10. HARRY BAILEY: Oh, but what a wonderful death!
11. MA BAILEY: (TO GEORGE) There'll be lots of pretty girls there
12. HARRY BAILEY: ...Plus, we'll be dancing on that new gym floor tonight.

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT

The full script & appendix runs 137 pages.

SCENE 5 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER (CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

13. CLARENCE: [REVERB] So... George Bailey went to a dance. Is that important, your honor?
14. TRACK SFX: [FX-03] DANCE BAND/RETRACTNG/SPLASHING--UNDER
NOTE: 3 CLANKS WILL CUE DIALOGUE BELOW.

1. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Patience, Clarence. That night, George danced “the Charleston” with Mary Hatch. The whole gang was dancing away on the retracting gymnasium floor, over the pool. [WAIT FOR CLANK #1 on SFX TRACK] But that retracting floor suddenly started retracting! [WAIT FOR CLANK #2 on TRACK SFX] You might say the graduating class of 1928 were making... “whoopsie.”
2. CLARENCE: [WAIT FOR CLANK #3 on TRACK SFX]
(BEING “CLEVER”) So, George and Mary were “head over heels“? Heh-heh.
3. SUPERINTENDENT: Ahem. Later, he was walking her home. They were feeling pretty good, Clarence. As a matter of fact... wonderful...
4. MUSIC: [MUS-08] (BRIDGE) LAST 2 BARS OF “BUFFALO GALS” AND LET ACTORS TAKE OVER SINGING IT.

SCENE 6 - EXT. SYCAMORE ST. SIDEWALK - NIGHT
(GEORGE, MARY, NOSEY NEIGHBOR, UNCLE BILLY)

SETTING:

The apron STAGE RIGHT is dressed as Sycamore St. A large hydrangea bush is CENTER STAGE. The Old Granville House is far out in the audience. The actors will refer to it and mime throwing stones at it.

AT RISE:

GEORGE and MARY ENTER, singing, from OFF-RIGHT. Due to having fallen into the pool, George is now dressed as a football player—with a 1920s leather helmet. Mary is in a bath robe.

6. TRACK SFX: [FX-04] CRICKETS #1--UNDER.
7. GEORGE AND MARY: (SINGING--IN UNISON)
 "Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight?
 Come out tonight? Come out tonight?
 Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight...
 (HARMONIZING) aaaaaannnnnnnd dance by the light of
 the moooooooooooooon."

1. LIVE SFX: (OFF-STAGE) DOG HOWLS ALONG
2. GEORGE: Hot dog! Eh, Mary?
3. MARY: We sound beautiful, George!
4. GEORGE: Well we don't look beautiful. You should have seen me scramble to get these dry clothes out of the locker room!
5. MARY: (CHUCKLES) I didn't know you were the "football" type.
6. GEORGE: I didn't know you were the royal robe type.
7. MARY: Didn't you, now? (MOCK REGAL) My train, sir!
8. GEORGE: (MOCK CHIVALROUS) Your caboose, m'lady...
(IN AWE) Hey, you know what, Mary? I'd almost say you were the prettiest girl in Bedford Falls. The way you look!
9. MARY: So... go ahead--say it
10. GEORGE: (TAKEN ABACK) Noooo! (PAUSE) But what happened to you? How'd you get so... "grown up?"
11. MARY: I'm gaining on you, George. Maybe we'll be in the same class at college.
12. GEORGE: Same class? Hey, how old are you anyway?
13. MARY: Eighteen.
14. GEORGE: Eighteen...! Why it seems only last year you were just... seven-teen!
15. MARY: (OFFENDED) So, am I too young...? Or too old?
16. GEORGE: No, no, no. You're exactly... right. Your age sorta fits you. I'm just saying you look a little older... without your... er clothes... on
17. MARY: (MOCK MEAN) What?
18. GEORGE: I-I mean... er... without your dress... on. No! I mean...
19. MARY: What do you mean, George?

1. GEORGE: I... mean-- (CHANGING THE SUBJECT) Hey... Look where we are!

GEORGE points at the Old Granville House (in the audience.) Mary sees it too.

2. MARY: (SIGHS) Ah! The old Granville house...

3. GEORGE: Yeah...! [REACHING FOR A ROCK] I gotta throw a rock! Bust a window!

4. MARY: Oh, no, George! Even though it's deserted, I love this old place. It's full of romance.

5. GEORGE: Romance? Naw! With deserted houses, you make a wish and then try to bust a window.

6. MARY: But it's such a lovely old house. I want to live there someday.

7. GEORGE: In there? Go on! I wouldn't live there if I were a ghost! Now, watch... That window on the second floor... I'm Babe Ruth, see? (RADIO SPORTSCASTER VOICE) "Here's the wind-up... and"--

GEORGE mimes throwing a rock over the audience's heads to break a window. MARY looks on.

8. TRACK SFX: [FX-05] (PAUSE) DISTANT WINDOW SHATTERED BY ROCK #1.

9. GEORGE: How about that? Pretty good shot, eh? Broke that window-- easy as pie.

10. MARY: What'd you wish for, George?

11. GEORGE: My "wish"? Oh... (THINKS) Hmmm... It's not one wish, Mary. I made a whole hatful of 'em. Y'see... I'm leaving this one-horse town. I'm gonna travel. Italy!--the Coliseum. And then Greece!--the Parthenon! And that's just this summer!

12. MARY: (HUMORING HIM) That's a good start, George.

13. GEORGE: Yeah... And then, back for college--to see what they know, of course...

1. MARY: Of course...
[MARY REACHES FOR A ROCK]
2. GEORGE: And then.. I'm gonna build things--big things!--air fields, sky-scrapers, bridges--you name it. And then I'm gonna-I'm gonna... Uhh... Uhh... Whatcha doing, Mary?
- MARY mimes throwing a rock over the audience's heads to break a window. GEORGE looks on.*
3. ~~TRACK SFX: [FX-06] (PAUSE) DISTANT WINDOW SHATTERED BY ROCK #2.~~
4. GEORGE: Hey...! You're a pretty good shot yourself! (LAUGHS) So uh... What's your wish?
5. MARY: (COYLY SINGING)
"Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight...
aaaaannnnnd dance by the light of the moon."
7. GEORGE: C'mon, Mary! Is that it? You want the moon? All you gotta do is say the word! I'll throw a lasso around it and--
9. MARY: --Okay! The moon! I'll take it! Then what?
10. GEORGE: "Then what"? Well... well, then... errr... you swallow that moon...! And... errr...it dissolves... with moonbeams shooting out of your fingers and hair! And then--then... (CATCHES HIMSELF) Uh... er... (THINKS) Oh... Maybe I'm talking too much.
11. NOSEY NEIGHBOR: (OFF-STAGE RIGHT) That's for sure! Why don't you just kiss her?
12. GEORGE: (CALLING OUT) How's that? Say what?
13. NOSEY NEIGHBOR: I said, "Why don't you just kiss her?" ...instead of talking her to death!
14. GEORGE: (CALLING OUT) Kiss her, huh?
15. MARY: (WORRIED) George?

1. NOSEY NEIGHBOR: (EXASPERATED) For crying out loud! Youth is wasted on people like you!
2. GEORGE: (CALLING OUT) Well, hey! Hey, just a minute! Hey, you...! Come on back here! I'll show you some kissing that'll...

MARY realizes he's about to grab her and backs away. GEORGE advances, stepping on the tail of Mary's robe.
3. GEORGE: Oh, wait, Mary! Don't run off, I was just funnin' with old--

MARY bolts, but her robe slips off—because George is standing on the tail..
4. MARY: (DISTRESSED SCREAM) --Oh!

GEORGE spins around while MARY—in her underwear—scrambles into the nearby bush, trying to cover herself. GEORGE has lost sight of her.
5. GEORGE: Mary? Mary??? Where'd you go? You're... You're--
6. MARY: (WHISPERING) --Over here... in the hydrangeas!

MARY shakes the bush to signal where she's hiding.
7. GEORGE: “In the hydrangeas”? Where?
8. MARY: (WHISPERING) Toss me my robe, George.
9. GEORGE: “Toss you your robe”? Oh. Sure... I'll just toss you the errr... (RECONSIDERS) Now, wait a minute...!
10. MARY: (WHISPERING) What?!
11. GEORGE: Well... this is a very interesting... situation...
12. MARY: (WHISPERING) Oh...! Give me my robe! Please!
13. GEORGE: (TOYING WITH HER) Now, hold on! I've got to think this through... It isn't every day that a guy has an opportunity like this...
14. MARY: (SCOLDING) George Bailey!
15. GEORGE: ...especially in Bedford Falls!
16. MARY: I'll-- I'll tell your mother on you!

1. GEORGE: Oh, but she lives way up the street from here...
2. MARY: (WHISPERING) George!
3. GEORGE: (TO HIMSELF) Maybe I could sell tickets! Make a little more spending money for the trip...
4. MARY: (SCREAMS) George!
5. GEORGE: I tell you what, Mary. I'll make a deal with you. I'll trade you your robe for--

UNCLE BILLY runs in from STAGE RIGHT and stops.

6. UNCLE BILLY: (OUT OF BREATH) --George! George!
7. GEORGE: Hey, Uncle Billy! Look here! I'm gonna kiss Mary Hatch!
8. UNCLE BILLY: Not now, George! Come home! Quick! It's your father!
9. GEORGE: My father?!
10. UNCLE BILLY: A stroke! He's had a stroke!
11. GEORGE: What? He's had a--
12. UNCLE BILLY: C'mon, George! Hurry!
13. GEORGE: (TOSSING HER THE ROBE) Here, Mary. Sorry...!

GEORGE and UNCLE BILLY run off, STAGE RIGHT. MARY grabs her robe and stands up.

14. MUSIC: [MUS-09] (BRIDGE) "TRAGIC" INTO "HEAVENLY NO 4"--UNDER.

SCENE 7 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER (SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

15. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Well, George's father died that night, Clarence. And George didn't go to Europe. But, that Fall--just as he was ready to leave for college--the directors of the Building and Loan had a meeting to--.
16. CLARENCE: --"A meeting"?
17. SUPERINTENDENT: They had to appoint a successor to Mr. Bailey...

1. MUSIC: FADE "HEAVENLY NO 4" UNDER...

SCENE 8 - INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY (OCTOBER 1928)
(DR. CAMPBELL, MR. POTTER, UNCLE BILLY, GEORGE,
OTHER MEMBERS)

SETTING:

The room STAGE RIGHT has been redressed as the Bailey Building and Loan's Board Room. A large table sits in the center with chairs all around it. Dr. Campbell's gavel and reports and papers sit on the table.

The room STAGE LEFT is dark.

AT RISE:

The Board Members—Dr. Campbell, Mr. Potter (in his wheel chair) and several others-- are seated, arguing. GEORGE hovers tentatively, looking at his watch. UNCLE BILLY stands by the door. DR. CAMPBELL gavels repeatedly, quelling the arguing—for now.

2. DR. CAMPBELL: Enough discussion, gentlemen. All those in favor of approving these last loans made by our deceased president say "Aye."
3. ALL BUT MR. POTTER: (AD-LIB: "AYE")
4. DR. CAMPBELL: All opposed?
5. MR. POTTER: No!
6. DR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Potter's dissent is noted, but the motion carries. The loans are approved. [GAVELS 1X]

The BOARD MEMBERS chatter amongst themselves while GEORGE sidles up to Dr. Campbell to say goodbye.

7. DR. CAMPBELL: (TO GEORGE) Well, thank you, George. That's all we'll needed you for. I know you've got a train to catch.
8. GEORGE: Really! (TO UNCLE BILLY) Is Ernie's taxi out there, Uncle Billy?
9. UNCLE BILLY: (TO EVERYONE) Yes! A taxi is waiting to take George to the train--and college. (TO GEORGE) Hurry, George!

1. DR. CAMPBELL: I'd like the Board to know that George, here, gave up his trip to Europe to oversee things these past months. Good luck to you at college, George.
2. BOARD MEMBERS: (AD LIB "GOOD LUCK" "TAKE CARE, GEORGE" ETC.)
3. GEORGE: Thank you, Doctor. So long, everybody!
[HEADS FOR THE DOOR]
4. DR. CAMPBELL: [GAVELS 1X] Now... Proceeding with our agenda, we come to the real purpose of this meeting. We must--
5. MR. POTTER: --No! Mr. Chairman? Mr. Chairman.
6. DR. CAMPBELL: (SIGHS) Mr. Potter?
7. MR. POTTER: I've waited long enough! Get to my real purpose--the dissolution of this--
8. BOARD MEMBERS: (AD LIB: ARGUING)

They are hushed by Dr. Campbell's GAVEL (2X)
9. MR. POTTER: I said I've waited long enough! Now... This institution isn't needed in this town. It competes with the bank and is a general nuisance to sound business practices. Therefore--
11. BOARD MEMBERS: (AD LIB ARGUING)

They are hushed by Dr. Campbell's GAVEL (3X)
12. DR. CAMPBELL: That is your opinion, Mr. Potter. You--
13. MR. POTTER: --It is not opinion. It is fact! Now that Peter Bailey is dead, I move that we dissolve the Building and Loan and turn its assets and liabilities over to a receiver to--
14. BOARD MEMBERS: (AD LIB ARGUING)

They are hushed by UNCLE BILLY.
15. UNCLE BILLY: Listen, here, Henry Potter. We--

1. MR. POTTER: --No, you listen, “uncle” Billy! ...Your brother was not a businessman. He was a man of high ideals--so-called--but ideals without common sense can ruin this town.
2. UNCLE BILLY: “Ruin”?
3. MR. POTTER: Of course! And unfair to the little people--encouraging them to live beyond their means! Like this... errr... Ernie Bishop..., the taxi driver! I happen to know he was turned down for a home loan by the bank, but here--
4. GEORGE: --Now, hold on, Mr. Potter. I handled Ernie Bishop’s loan. You’ve got the papers in front of you--income, insurance, collateral. And I can personally vouch for Ernie’s character.
5. MR. POTTER: Ah! A friend of yours, George? Humph! (TO BOARD) You see? If someone shoots pool with an employee here, they can borrow money. And what’s that get us?--a discontented, lazy rabble, instead of a thrifty working class. All because starry-eyed dreamers like Peter Bailey put impossible dreams into their heads. Now... who’ll second my motion to dissolve?
6. BOARD MEMBERS: (AD LIB ARGUING)
They are hushed by GEORGE, taking control.
7. GEORGE: Now, wait a minute, Mr. Potter! I--
8. MR. POTTER: -- Pardon my honesty, George, but your father...
9. GEORGE: (CUTS HIM OFF) --Why my father ever started this penny-ante Building and Loan, I’ll never know. But remember this, Potter! That... “rabble”... you’re talking about... Well, they do most of the working and paying... and living and dying in this town.
10. MR. POTTER: ...So?

1. GEORGE: Well, is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms with 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!

The BOARD MEMBERS gasp at George's frankness.

2. GEORGE: In my book--Mr. Potter--my father died a richer man than you'll ever be!
3. MR. POTTER: I'm not interested in your "book," George. I'm talking about the Building and Loan.
4. GEORGE: No! You're talking about something you can't get your greedy hands on! And it's galling you--that's what you're talking about! ... (CATCHING HIMSELF) Well, I've- I've said too much.
5. UNCLE BILLY: That's okay, George. C'mon.
6. MR. POTTER: Actually, that's quite enough!
7. GEORGE: I apologize--members of the board. You can do what you want. But let me just say that Bedford Falls needs this measly Building and Loan, if only to have somewhere folks can borrow money without crawling to Potter! (TO BILLY) Come on, Uncle Billy! I have a train to catch
8. BOARD MEMBERS: (AD LIB ARGUING)

GEORGE AND UNCLE BILLY EXIT into the main Building and Loan office/lobby. As the door closes, the arguing is suddenly cut-off. The Board members "freeze" in mid argue.

**SCENE 9 - INT. LOAN OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY
(TILLY, EUSTACE, UNCLE BILLY, GEORGE, DR. CAMPBELL)**

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is now dressed as the Building and Loan's main office and lobby. It connects to the Board Room via the functional door at CENTER STAGE. Fanning out from that door are some desks and chairs, a candlestick phone, a counter—with the birdcage and Jimmy, the bird—and the lobby. Jimmy, the bird is a puppet or dummy—with a

“talking” beak. A hidden actor can control the bird and speak for him. A large clock on the wall shows 10:10. The public’s entryway is a functional door, OFF-LEFT.

AT RISE:

No customers are here now, but the office staff, TILLY and EUSTACE were listening with their ears to the Board Room door. As GEORGE and UNCLE BILLY enter, the eavesdroppers scatter back from the door, but are eager to find out what the commotion is about.

1. TILLY: What’s the ruckus in there, George?
2. EUSTACE: Yeah! All Tilly and I heard was a lot of yelling.
3. UNCLE BILLY: You won’t believe it, Eustace! George took on Henry Potter! That’ll show him!
4. GEORGE: (SKEPTICAL) Oh yeah...? In a minute, they’ll vote to dissolve the Building and Loan
7. UNCLE BILLY: Well, after twenty-five years, easy come, easy go! Of course, I don’t know what’s going to happen to us--
8. TILLY: --and your mother, George--poor old--
9. EUSTACE: --and no job for Harry.
10. UNCLE BILLY: Well, I don’t care, George. It was worth seeing you shut Potter’s big mouth! (CHORTLES) Ha-ha-ha!
11. TILLY: Now, that’s rich! Don’t worry, George. I’ll get a new job. I’m only fifty-one!
12. EUSTACE: (CORRECTING HER) Fifty-five!
13. UNCLE BILLY: Will you get out of here, George? You already missed the boat trip to Europe. Don’t be late for college! Ernie’s taxi is waiting down--

Suddenly DR. CAMPBELL ENTERS via the Board Room door. As he opens the door, the BOARD MEMBERS un-freeze and argue at full volume, but when he shuts the door they are silenced—and frozen again.

Lights on the Board Room may be quickly faded up and down to further this quick transition.

1. DR. CAMPBELL: George! Billy! They just voted Potter down!
2. UNCLE BILLY: Whoopee! We're still in business! We're still in business!
3. EUSTACE: What a relief, Tilly!
4. TILLY: Ah, but there goes my new career.
5. DR. CAMPBELL: Just one stipulation, George. They've appointed you to take your father's place.
7. GEORGE: "Appointed me?!" No! Uncle Billy's your man!

**SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT
THIS POINT**
**The full script & appendix runs 137
pages.**

**SCENE 10 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)**

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

13. CLARENCE: [REVERB] So... George Bailey didn't go to college, your honor?
14. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] No, he didn't, Clarence. George gave his college money to his brother, Harry. Harry went instead.
15. CLARENCE: But what about that girl? The cute one--stuck in the hydrangea bush, you know.

1. SUPERINTENDENT: Mary went away to college, too. And George worked four more years at the Building and Loan, waiting for Harry to finish school, come back and take over. George still hoped to see the world, though. He planned to work in the oil fields of Venezuela.
2. CLARENCE: Well, that sounds exotic! Good for George.
3. SUPERINTENDENT: Except, when Harry came back, there was a girl with him-- his wife. Of course, the one who best understood all this was Ma Bailey...
4. MUSIC: FADE "HEAVENLY NO 5" UNDER...

SCENE 11 - INT. BAILEY DINING ROOM - NIGHT (JUNE 1932)
(MA BAILEY, GEORGE)

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is again dressed as the Bailey dining room. A laundry basket full of air-dried laundry sits on the table.

AT RISE:

MA BAILEY is folding laundry as GEORGE ENTERS from the back door (UPSTAGE.)

5. MA BAILEY: Is that you, George?
6. GEORGE: (WISTFUL) Yes, Mother. I was just out on the porch, listening to the train whistle... (SIGHS) heading out of town.
7. MA BAILEY: Well, that train brought back Harry--and your new sister-in-law. Don't you like her?
8. GEORGE: Ruth? Oh, she's swell. Harry's got all the luck.
9. MA BAILEY: She'll keep him on his toes.
10. GEORGE: Well... (SIGHS) Keep him out of Bedford Falls, anyway.
11. MA BAILEY: Now, now! Ruth's father has a good job for Harry--up in Buffalo.
12. GEORGE: Yeah... Buffalo.(SIGHS) Meaning...

1. MA BAILEY: Oh... (REALIZES) Then you can't--
2. GEORGE: --Yep... Again.
3. MA BAILEY: (Pause) I'm sorry, George...
4. GEORGE: (SIGHS) Yeah...
5. MA BAILEY: (BRIGHTENING) Well... Did you know... Mary Hatch is back from college too?
6. GEORGE: (Reluctant) Hmm? Oh... yeah. Yeah.
7. MA BAILEY: She's been back three whole days.
8. GEORGE: (SHRUGS) Mmmmm.
9. MA BAILEY: Nice girl, that Mary.
10. GEORGE: (SHRUGS) Mmmmm. I suppose...
11. MA BAILEY: (IMPATIENT) Oh! Stop this moping, George Bailey! It's not like you.
12. GEORGE: Well... What do you want me to do, Mother?
13. MA BAILEY: Give me one reason why you shouldn't go see Mary!
14. GEORGE: Well... how about Sam Wainwright--for one!
15. MA BAILEY: (SCOFFS) "Sam Wainwright"? The boy who went "Hee-Haw"?
16. GEORGE: Sure. Sam's always been "wild about"... er Mary."
17. MA BAILEY: Well, she's never been "wild about Sam."
18. GEORGE: "Never"? (SARCASTIC) Now, how do you know that? Was it in the newspaper? Did I miss it
19. MA BAILEY: Mary's had her eye on you, George! She lights up like a firefly whenever you're around.
20. GEORGE: "Firefly"?
21. MA BAILEY: You don't want her to be an old maid, now, do you? Besides, Sam Wainwright is in New York.

1. GEORGE: Oh, is he, now? So “all's fair in love and war?” Is that it?
2. MA BAILEY: Don't be difficult! The right girl can help you find the answers, dear.
3. GEORGE: Okay. Okay, Mother. Trying to get rid of me, eh? (MOCK LOTHARIO) Well, I think I'll go find a “right” girl and do some passionate necking! (GROWLS)
4. MA BAILEY: (SHOCKED) Oh! George!
GEORGE puts on his hat as he heads for the back door—UPSTAGE.
5. GEORGE: (EXITING) Goodnight, Mrs. Bailey. By the way, do you need any books from the library?
6. MA BAILEY: Library?!
GEORGE EXITS, closing the door.
7. MA BAILEY: (CALLING AFTER HIM) George! George, you go and see Mary! Do you hear?...
8. MUSIC: [MUS-11] (BRIDGE) “DOWNTOWN BEDFORD FALLS”--FADE UNDER.

**SCENE 12 - EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER - JUNE 1932)
(ERNIE, GEORGE, VIOLET, LASCIVIOUS MALE BYSTANDERS)**

SETTING:

The apron DOWNSTAGE will serve as a downtown sidewalk. This can be set with street signs, street lights, fireplugs, shrub planters, etc. A flat can depict a city block with a bank (STAGE RIGHT), shops, a theater, a tavern, etc. Pedestrians walk by occasionally. Ernie's taxi-cab can be a rolled flat or carried—propelled by Ernie.

AT RISE:

GEORGE is walking along, amongst passers-by. VIOLET and several FELLAS are chatting UPSTAGE CENTER—in the dark. ERNIE, in his taxi, pulls up alongside George.

9. TRACK SFX: [FX-07] DOWNTOWN BEDFORD FALLS TRAFFIC--CONTINUE UNDER.
10. ERNIE: Hiya, George! Need a lift?

1. GEORGE: Er..., naw, Ernie. I wouldn't want to rob you of a fare.
2. ERNIE: (CHORTLES) Oh, you wouldn't be robbing me of any fares. The taxi business is on the skids.
3. GEORGE: Ah... just like the Building and Loan business. Wanna swap?
4. ERNIE: Er... Actually, George. I need to talk to you. I-- (SIGHS) I'm gonna have to turn the deed back over to you.
5. GEORGE: "Deed"? The deed to your house? You've only been there two years, Ernie.
6. ERNIE: Yeah, but with business so crummy, I can't make the payments right now. Me and the missus will just have to move back in with her folks.
7. GEORGE: (GASPS) "Her folks"!?
8. ERNIE: Maybe share a flat with Bert. As a cop on the night beat, that might work.
9. GEORGE: Aw, Ernie... (THINKS) No, no! I-I'll tell you what... Can you just pay the interest?
10. ERNIE: "The interest"? Well, sure! I could do that, but then you're--
11. GEORGE: --No. Keep your house. Forget the principal--for a little while. You're just hitting a rough patch, that's all.
12. ERNIE: Gosh, George! I-I don't know how to thank you. This means so--
13. VOICE: (OFF-STAGE LEFT) Taxi!
14. GEORGE: --Hey! Hear that? You're back in business, Ernie!
15. ERNIE: I am? Wait! I am! (CALLS OUT) Taxi coming right up!!
ERNIE'S TAXI pulls away—and exits STAGE LEFT.
16. GEORGE: (CALLS AFTER HIM) Atta-boy, Ernie!

GEORGE walks a few steps to DOWNSTAGE CENTER. VIOLET and several FELLAS walk DOWNSTAGE. GEORGE walks right by them, but VIOLET notices him.

1. FELLAS: (AD LIB: "C'mon, Violet!" "How about it?" ETC.)
2. VIOLET: (TO GEORGE) Hey! ...Going somewhere, Georgie-Porgie?
3. GEORGE: Oh, hello, Violet. Hi, fellas. (STARTLED) Gosh! You look great, Vi!
4. VIOLET: In this old thing? Oh, I only wear this when I don't care how I look... Right, guys?
5. FELLAS: (AD LIB: HOOTS OF AGREEMENT.)
6. VIOLET: (TO MEN) Excuse me, fellas. I think I got a date.

VIOLET steps up, leaving the FELLAS UPSTAGE, to chat—and listen—quietly.

7. VIOLET: (TO GEORGE) So, Georgie, what's goin' on? Where are you headin'?
8. GEORGE: Oh, I was just going to the er... library, I suppose.
9. VIOLET: "Library"? C'mon, Georgie! Don't you ever get tired of just readin' about stuff?
10. GEORGE: (GASP) Well... errr... come to think of it... yes! Okay... Um... What are you doing tonight, Violet?
11. VIOLET: Me? Not a thing...
12. GEORGE: Okay. Well, if you're game, Vi, we can make a night of it! I've got to talk to somebody. What d'ya say?
13. VIOLET: Sure, George. It's about time! What'll we do?
14. GEORGE: Well... we'll go out... to the fields... Yeah. Take off our shoes, and... walk through the grass...
15. VIOLET: (APPALLED) "The fields"???"
16. GEORGE: (POSSESSED) Yeah! Then we can go over to the waterfalls... You've got to see them in the moonlight! There's a green pool up there, Vi. And we can swim in it!

1. VIOLET: (HORRIFIED) “Swim”???
 2. GEORGE: Sure...! And then we can.... climb Mount Bedford. And smell the pines. And watch the sunrise on the peaks! Come with me! We’ll stay up there the whole night and be the talk of the town... and there’ll be a terrific scandal! And-- How about it, Vi?
 3. FELLAS: (AD LIB: MALE CHUCKLES—UNDER)
 4. VIOLET: George Bailey... Have you lost your mind??? (LOUDER) “Walk through the grass?” In my bare feet?
 5. FELLAS: (AD LIB: MALE LAUGHTER--CONTINUE UNDER)
 6. VIOLET: It must be ten miles to the falls! And this is the only thing I have to wear. You expect me to go swimming in this???
 7. GEORGE: (Embarrassed) Shhhhhhh, Violet. Shhhhh. Okay. Okay.
 8. VIOLET: (ANGRY) What’s with you, George? For a guy who wanted to sail around the world, you don’t seem to have been around the block! I mean, c’mon! I--
 9. GEORGE: --No. I get it. (EXITING) No. Fine! Fine! Just forget the whole thing!
 10. FELLAS: (AD LIB: MALE LAUGHTER)
- GEORGE stalks angrily OFF LEFT. VIOLET and the FELLAS EXIT—arm in arm--RIGHT.*
11. SFX TRACKS: FADE DOWNTOWN BEDFORD FALLS TRAFFIC—
UNDER
 12. MUSIC: [MUS-12] (BRIDGE) “FROM VIOLET TO MARY”--FADE UNDER...

SCENE 13 - EXT. MARY’S FRONT WALK - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER - JUNE 1932)
(MARY, GEORGE)

SETTING:

The room STAGE RIGHT is dressed as Mary’s porch, with a rail or gate.

The functional door at CENTER STAGE leads into the room STAGE LEFT, which is dressed as Mary’s parlor.

AT RISE:

GEORGE ENTERS from STAGE LEFT, pacing outside Mary's house. MARY stands UPSTAGE on the porch, watching him.

1. TRACK SFX: [FX-08] CRICKETS #2--UNDER.
2. MARY: George? What are you doing out there?
3. GEORGE: Nothing. Hmmm? Oh! Is that you, Mary?
4. MARY: Err... I think so... Well...?
5. GEORGE: "Well" what? Oh! Me? I'm just... passing by.
6. MARY: Yes, several times! I wondered if you were picketing! ...Or haunting me...
7. GEORGE: (PERTURBED) Now, why would I be--
8. MARY: --your mother phoned, saying you were coming over.
9. GEORGE: My-- She-- phoned? The nerve of-- Well... I just happen to be on a stroll, see. I didn't have any firm, kinda--
10. MARY: --So, are you coming in--or aren't you?
11. GEORGE: Well.... all right. If you insist! I'll come in... (STEPS UP) for a minute. (DIFFICULT) But I didn't tell anybody I was coming here.
12. MARY: Right! You're your own man.
13. GEORGE: Er... So... So, back from college, huh?
14. MARY: Tuesday.
15. GEORGE: Ah... Where'd you get that dress?
16. MARY: New York. What do you think?
17. GEORGE: Well... (EVASIVE) It's okay--I guess. But I thought you'd take up in New York... like Sam Wainwright and everybody.
18. MARY: Oh, I worked there--summers--but I don't know... I got... er... homesick.

1. GEORGE: (INCREDULOUS) You got “homesick”??? What? ...for Bedford Falls?
2. MARY: Well, it is home, after all. (SIGHS) No point just standing here on the porch. Come on in.

GEORGE and MARY ENTER the house and parlor.

3. TRACK SFX: CUT CRICKETS--WHEN DOOR CLOSSES.

**SCENE 14 - INT. MARY'S PARLOR - IMMEDIATELY
(MARY, GEORGE, MRS. HATCH, SAM)**

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is dressed as Mary's parlor, with a small couch, a few chairs, a Victrola/phonograph, a candlestick or model 202-style telephone. A cross-stitch pillow or frame, depicting a cowboy George lassoing a moon sits conspicuously on the couch.

Mrs. Hatch is “upstairs”—all her lines are delivered from off-stage. When Sam calls on the phone, his voice is heard through a speaker—simulating a telephone voice. (See Sound Design section in the appendix for ways to produce this telephone voice effect.)

AT RISE:

MARY leads the way into the parlor. As GEORGE ENTERS, he puts his hat down on a chair.

4. GEORGE: I don't get this. Nobody knew I was on my way here--even me!
5. MARY: So, you're leaving?
6. GEORGE: No, no. I wouldn't want to be rude. I'll stay a while--since I'm here...
7. MARY: Say... it's nice about your brother and his new wife, isn't it?
8. GEORGE: Oh... er... Ruth. Ummm... she's okay.
9. MARY: What's the matter? You don't like her?
10. GEORGE: (TESTY) Well, sure I like her. Ruth's... a-- a-- “peach!”
11. MARY: Oh...! It's just marriage in general you're down on, huh?

1. GEORGE: No! I didn't say that. Marriage is fine... for some people.... I mean-- I suppose it works for... Harry, or... Sam, or... you
2. MARY: "Works for Sam"???
3. MRS. HATCH: (OFF-STAGE) Mary Hatch! Who's down there?
4. MARY: (CALLS OUT) It's George Bailey, Mother!
5. MRS. HATCH: "George Bailey"?! (GASPS) What does he want?
6. MARY: (CALLS OUT) We're not sure--either of us. (TO GEORGE) What do you want, George?
7. GEORGE: Me? No a thing! (CALLS OUT) I was just strolling by, Mrs. Hatch
8. MARY: (WHISPERS) Coward! (CALLS OUT) He's making violent love to me, Mother!
9. MRS. HATCH: He is?! You tell him to "stroll" right back home! Remember, Sam Wainwright said he'd call tonight--from New York.
10. MARY: (CALLS OUT) I know, Mother. (TO GEORGE) So, George, let me put on an old record, here.

MARY turns on the phonograph.

11. TRACK SFX: [FX-09] (SOURCE) "BUFFALO GAL'S" INST'L 78 RPM--UNDER.
12. GEORGE: Mary, that mother of yours is kinda-- (NOTICES TUNE)Oh... that song. (PERTURBED) Listen, I'm not here for--
13. MARY: (IMPATIENT) --then why are you here?
14. GEORGE: (ANNOYED) How should I know? You're the gal with the answers. How about you tell me why!
15. MARY: (MATCHING HIM) Oh...! I can certainly explain why you should go!
16. TRACK SFX: [FX-10] PHONE RINGS--[EITHER SFX TRACK OR LIVE] --CONTINUE UNTIL MARY ANSWERS, BELOW.

1. GEORGE: (PEEVED) No need! I'll just go!

2. MRS. HATCH: Mary! The telephone is--

3. GEORGE: (ANGRY) --I should never have--

4. MRS. HATCH: --Mary! The--

5. GEORGE: (NASTY) --Too-da-loo!

GEORGE looks for his hat.

6. MARY: (NASTY BACK) --Too-da-loo!

7. MRS. HATCH: Mary! The phone!

8. GEORGE: Y'know, with all this yelling, maybe somebody could--

9. MRS. HATCH: --Mary! It's Sam! Answer the--

10. MARY: (TO GEORGE) --maybe somebody could what, George?

11. MRS. HATCH: Mary! Get the phone!

12. MARY: (CALLS OUT) Enough, already! I'll get it, Mother! (ANGRY)
Oooh! (TO GEORGE) George! On your way out, could you
take off the record?

13. GEORGE: (SARCASTICALLY) My pleasure!

GEORGE angrily pulls the phonograph needle across the record.

14. TRACK SFX: ABRUPT CUT-OFF OF "BUFFALO GALS"

15. GEORGE: (SEETHING) Dad-blasted song! (EXITING) Enough
already!

GEORGE stalks out the front door. MARY picks up ringing phone now.

16. MARY: Hello... Hatch residence.... Oh... Sam!

NOTE: Sam delivers his lines live—off-stage—into a microphone, to simulate the telephone call. See the Sound Design section of the appendix for techniques to render this effect. At one point, Mrs. Hatch will deliver a line using the same effect. In the script, this telephone effect is indicated by the use of [FILTERED] preceding the line.

17. SAM: [FILTERED] Hiya, Mary! It's nice to catch you home.

1. MARY: (DOUBTFUL) It is?
2. GEORGE: (STEPPING BACK IN) Excuse me, Mary! Just grabbing my hat!
- GEORGE grabs his hat and heads out the door again.*
3. MARY: (TO SAM) Oh, Saaaam! How nice of you to call! All the way from New York! (TO GEORGE--TAUNTING) Hee-haw!
4. SAM: What? Mary??? Oh, oh yeah... Hee-haw!
5. MARY: You know what, Sam? Your old friend, George Bailey's here.
6. SAM: What? Old stuck-in-the-mud George? In person?
7. MARY: Yep! "Old stuck-in-the-mud George."
8. SAM: Hee-haw! Well, put old George on! I wanna say hi!
9. MARY: Wait a minute, Sam. (CALLS OUT) George?
10. MRS. HATCH: Mary--you idiot! Sam doesn't want to talk to George!
11. MARY: (CALLS OUT) He does too! He even asked for George.
12. GEORGE: (STEPPING BACK IN) What is it, Mary? Y'see, I'm, late. I've got to get--
13. MARY: --Wait! It's Sam Wainwright! He wants to talk to you.
14. GEORGE: "Me"??? Sam Wainwright??? No, I--
15. MARY: (TO SAM) --Sam? Here's George!
16. GEORGE: (TO SAM ON PHONE) Er... Hi, Sam..
(HALF-HEARTED) um... Hee-Haw!
17. SAM: Hee-Haw!(TEASINGLY) C'mon, George, what are you doing there? Trying to steal my girl, eh?
18. GEORGE: (DEFENSIVELY) "Steal your..."? Hey-- I don't want to steal anybody's girl. (TO MARY) Mary? You talk to Sam. He's--
19. SAM: --No! Wait a minute, George. This for you both! Mary can use the extension upstairs.

1. GEORGE: (TO MARY) Um... He says you should go use the phone extension upstairs.
2. MARY: I can't. Mother's on the extension.
3. MRS. HATCH: [FILTERED] (GASP) I am not!
4. MARY: (TO GEORGE) That's okay, George--we can just put our heads closer together, then we can both hear.
5. GEORGE: (SIGH) Well... Okay. (THEY DOUBLE-UP)
6. MARY: There! Alright. (TO SAM) Sam? We're both on the line
7. SAM: Okay! Now... I got a plan that'll have us all rolling in dough! George--remember that time at Martini's Tavern, when you told me about making plastics out of err... chili beans?
8. GEORGE: What??? Chili--
9. SAM: --Soybeans! I mean soybeans!
10. GEORGE: It was soybeans. Go on.
11. SAM: Well... my dad's willing to bankroll it. We want to build a factory--outside Rochester. What do you think of that?
12. GEORGE: Why Rochester? You can put it here, in Bedford Falls. The old tool machinery works closed down. You could get that building for a song! Plus, there's lots of available labor here!
13. SAM: Now you're talking, George! But... Mary, you listen to this too. If you've got any money... put every dime into our stock.
14. GEORGE: Wait a minute, Sam--
15. SAM: --C'mon, George! We might even have a job for you! That is--if you're not wedded to that worn out Building and Loan. Here's your chance to get in on the ground floor--right there in Bedford Falls!
16. MARY: (TO GEORGE) "Ground floor"! That's wonderful.

1. GEORGE: Er... Bedford Falls? I don't know, Sam.
 2. SAM: (To Mary) Oh, Mary...? Are you still listening?
 3. MARY: Yes, Sam. I'm here.
 4. SAM: Tell that clod-hopper this is the chance of a lifetime, you hear? The chance of a lifetime!
 5. MARY: (TO GEORGE) He-- He says... it's the chance of a lifetime...
 6. GEORGE: Give me that phone!
 7. MARY: (TO SAM) Here's George again, Sam. You try and--.
- GEORGE slams down phone handset--angrily.*
8. MARY: George!
 9. GEORGE: (SLOW, BUT INTENSE) Now, listen, Mary! No plastics! No job! No "ground floor!" And no marriage to no-body. Never! Do you understand me?
 10. MUSIC: [MUS-13] _____ (BED) "WRENCHING" ENTERS--UNDER.

MUSIC & DIALOGUE TIMING NOTE:

As the "Wrenching" music cue plays, George & Mary need to time their lines so the music rises at "I know" on bar #9. In rehearsal, have someone count the bars and cue Mary for when to deliver her "I know." Practice this!

11. MARY: [BAR #2] (SOBS) Oh, George....
 12. GEORGE: [BAR #3-5] I'm gonna do what I want! And-- and no-body is gonna maneuver me into any-- (UPSET) Any--
 13. MARY: [BAR #6] (UPSET) George...
 14. GEORGE: [BAR #7] Mary... Oh, Mary!
[BAR #8] (WHISPERS) I... (SIGH) I--
- Mary puts her index finger on George's lip, hushing him before he completely humiliates himself*
15. MARY: (WHISPERS) I know...

George & Mary embrace. Mrs. Hatch slaps her forehead in disbelief! Her worst nightmare has come true

1. MUSIC: [MUS-14] (BRIDGE) "HEAVENLY NO. 6"--FADE UNDER.

**SCENE 15 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)**

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

2. CLARENCE: [REVERB] So George and Mary got... what do they say...? "Hitched"?
3. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Ahem. Yes, Clarence. They were married on a brisk day in October, 1932.
4. CLARENCE: (TEARING UP) I- I always cry... in October.
5. SUPERINTENDENT: And--honeymoon-bound--were heading for the train station, ... driven by Ernie Bishop, in his taxi...
6. MUSIC: [MUS-15] (BRIDGE) "WEDDING MARCH TAXI"--FADE UNDER.

**SCENE 16 - INT. ERNIE'S CAB - SECONDS LATER (OCTOBER 1932)
(ERNIE, GEORGE, MARY)**

SETTING:

The apron of the stage again serves as the downtown Bedford Falls street. A flat can depict a city block with a bank (STAGE RIGHT), shops, a theater, a tavern, etc.

AT RISE:

Ernie's taxicab, now with George and Mary aboard, enters from behind the angels—STAGE LEFT and slowly works its way toward STAGE RIGHT.

7. TRACK SFX: [FX-11] INTERIOR OF CAB DRIVING, WIPERS, RAIN--UNDER
8. ERNIE: Here, ya go, newlyweds! Sorry about the rainy send off, but Mr. Martini says, (BAD ITALIAN ACCENT) "Wet bride, she is good luck." And, Bert sent this bottle of bubbly. But don't tell anyone--a cop violating Prohibition and all. Eh, Mary?
9. MARY: (JOKING) "Mumm's" the word, Ernie!
10. ERNIE: (LAUGHS) So... What's the plan for this here de-luxe honeymoon, George?

GEORGE pulls out an envelope of cash.

1. GEORGE: See this fat wad of cash? (TO MARY) Count it, Mary. (TO ERNIE) That's our kitty.
2. ERNIE: So....?
3. GEORGE: So... We're gonna shoot the works, Ernie! Week one--New York! Week two--Bermuda! It'll be the swankiest hotels... the dancing-ist music... the prettiest--and soggiest--wife!
4. MARY: That's why I brought an umbrella, cowboy.
5. ERNIE: (LAUGHS) Congratulations! You're finally getting outta Bedford Falls. Where after that?
6. GEORGE: Gee... I don't know. (TO MARY) Um, dear. Where after that?
7. MARY: The moon, of course!
8. GEORGE: Atta-girl! Say, Mrs. Bailey, I haven't kissed you nearly enough!
9. MARY: Well then, c'mere, you... (THEY KISS)
10. ERNIE: Hey! Slow down, lovebirds...! Any fond farewells, George? Here's Genesee Street...
11. GEORGE: (CALLING OUT WINDOW) So long, Bedford Falls! So long, old Building and Loan! So long, Uncle Billy! And Mr. Potter! And-- everybody else! We're leaving town and won't be back for a long time!

At STAGE RIGHT, an unruly crowd of panicking bank customers begins to grow.

Customers run in from STAGE LEFT to join the throng.

12. BANK CROWD: (AD-LIBBED CLAMOR AND WORRY.)
13. ERNIE: (PAUSE) Uh-oh! Say, George! Something's fishy, here! Look at that crowd! Over there--in front of the bank! Looks like the door's locked!
14. GEORGE: Slow down, Ern. There's some cops. Ask Bert.

ERNIE "pulls over" the taxi and stops.

1. TRACK SFX: [FX-12] CAB PULLS OVER -- RAIN ON STREET - THUNDER AT
END--UNDER
2. ERNIE: (CALLS OUT) Hey, Bert. Bert! What's going on?
3. OFFICER BERT: Looks like a bank run!
4. MARY: What? Here??? In this downpour?
5. OFFICER BERT: Rain or no, it's a bank run, Mary. If you've got any money in the bank, you'd better pull it out--before they go belly up.
6. GEORGE: (TO ERNIE) Stay here, Ernie, I'm gotta see.
7. MARY: No, George! Don't. Let's just go! Please!
(TO ERNIE) Ernie! Take us to the train.
(TO GEORGE) George! No!
- GEORGE gets out of the taxi.*
8. GEORGE: Just a minute, honey. Let me see... I'll be back in a second...
(HE HEADS INTO THE CROWD)
9. MARY: No! No! George!
(TO BERT) Bert. Please. Drag him back here!
(CALLING OUT) Please, George. Not now!
10. MUSIC: [MUS-16] "ACT 1 OUTRO"--UNDER AND...
11. MUSIC: LET "ACT 1 OUTRO" FINISH.

— END OF ACT ONE —

NOTE: AN OPTIONAL INTERMISSION GOES HERE

— ACT TWO —

1. MUSIC: [MUS-17] [OPTIONAL] “WONDERFUL IFE ACT 2 INTRO”

SCENE 1 - EXT. HEAVEN - DAY
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)

SETTING:

Again, “Heaven” is *DOWNSTAGE LEFT*.

The rooms *UPSTAGE* are dressed as the Bailey Building & Loan offices, with George’s office in the room *STAGE RIGHT* and the main office and lobby in the room *STAGE LEFT*.

The lobby clock is set at 1 p.m.

George’s office features a desk, a chair, a typewriter and other office items. Jimmy, the bird is here too—in his cage.

AT RISE:

Both rooms are dark, but a crowd of *BUILDING & LOAN SHAREHOLDERS* are “frozen” in the lobby. Tilly and Eustace are behind the counter.

In George’s office, George and Uncle Billy are similarly “frozen” in time—awaiting their cue to continue the story. George, is about to shut the office door—but he’s frozen.

In “Heaven,” *THE SUPERINTENDENT* angel and *CLARENCE* are still reviewing George Bailey’s case.

2. MUSIC: [MUS-18] CROSSFADE INTO “HEAVENLY NO. 7”--UNDER

3. CLARENCE: [REVERB] Fiddle-de-dee, your Excellent-ness! I’ve heard enough background. If George Bailey’s contemplating suicide, I’d better head down to Earth right--

4. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] --Hold your horses, Clarence! We’re not anywhere near the point where George Bailey is thinking of taking his life.

5. CLARENCE: What...? Why not?

6. SUPERINTENDENT: (SIGHS) You’ll never get your wings unless you can be patient! Now..., let me see, where were we?

1. CLARENCE: Here! (SPEEDILY) George and Mary were heading out of town on their honeymoon when they ran into a run. Er... a bank run, I mean.
2. SUPERINTENDENT: Ah, yes... It was The Great Financial Panic. Well... the great panic of nineteen-thirty-two, you understand. As it was, bank failures were very prevalent er... back... then.

The worried BUILDING & LOAN SHAREHOLDERS in the lobby begin to clamor.

4. CLARENCE: Whoa! Did Hell break loose... again?
5. SUPERINTENDENT: No! In the lobby of the Building and Loan, dozens of worried shareholders are clamoring for their savings. George has rushed in from the waiting taxi--to find Uncle Billy, hiding in his office...

**SCENE 2 - INT. UNCLE BILLY'S OFFICE - DAY (OCTOBER 1932)
(GEORGE, UNCLE BILLY, MR. POTTER)**

GEORGE shuts the connecting door—cutting off...

6. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: CROWD NOISES CEASE—ABRUPTLY—BY THE DOOR.)

The SHAREHOLDERS freeze into silence.

7. GEORGE: What is this, Uncle Billy? I saw a line of people outside the bank, but what's with the angry crowd in our lobby?
8. UNCLE BILLY: (NERVOUS) It's a panic, George. They want to withdraw their shares.
9. GEORGE: From us? We're not the bank.
10. UNCLE BILLY: But we're in a pickle! The bank called in our loan this morning!
11. GEORGE: "Our loan"??? The bank called in our loan?
12. UNCLE BILLY: Well, they've got a run! They needed cash, so they demanded we pay off our loan... immediately! I handed over all our cash, George. I had to!

1. GEORGE: “All our cash”!? But that means--
2. UNCLE BILLY: --The whole town's gone nuts, George! Now, we're in the same boat as the bank! Who'd have thought you couldn't trust the American banking system or the American public to--
3. TRACK SFX: [FX-15] BILLY'S PHONE RINGS (1-1/2X)[SFX TRACK OR LIVE]
UNCLE BILLY answers the phone.
Mr. Potter delivers his lines live—off-stage—into a microphone, to simulate the telephone call. (See the Sound Design section of the appendix for techniques to render this effect.)
4. UNCLE BILLY: Hello, this is Billy....
5. MR. POTTER: [FILTERED] This is Henry Potter. Let me speak to George.
6. UNCLE BILLY: (TO GEORGE) George, it's Henry Potter...
7. GEORGE: For me? (PICKING UP THE PHONE) Uh, George Bailey here...
8. MR. POTTER: Are you okay, son. Have you called the police to quell that unruly mob in your lobby?
9. GEORGE: “The police”??? Now, why would we need--
10. MR. POTTER: --I just want you to know that in this financial crisis, I'm here to help.
11. GEORGE: You??? Help???
12. MR. POTTER: Yes! I've just guaranteed sufficient funds to the bank. They will close down for a “bank holiday,” then re-open on Monday.
13. GEORGE: (WHISPERS TO UNCLE BILLY) Potter just took over the bank. (TO POTTER) I see. They'll re-open under “new” management, of course.

1. MR. POTTER: Of course! Now... this may cost me a fortune, but I'm willing to help out your shareholders too! If they need cash, they can sell their shares to me. I'm paying fifty cents on the dollar!
2. GEORGE: Oh, no! There'll be no "fire sale" here. We don't need your kind of "bailout!"
3. MR. POTTER: Ha! You don't have any cash and you know it! That means bankruptcy! And your "working" people will lose everything. Am I wrong?
4. GEORGE: Er...
5. MR. POTTER: I know your charter! If you close your doors before six P.M.--you'll never re-open.
6. GEORGE: (PEEVED) You don't miss a trick, do you, Potter! Well, here's one you did!--

GEORGE slams down the phone handset--angrily.

7. UNCLE BILLY: Well, George, I guess you told him!
8. GEORGE: Aw, but he's right, Uncle Billy! Our charter requires we stay open. That's until six o'clock. If we don't, the state will take away our license! We'll go bankrupt.
9. UNCLE BILLY: "Stay open"?--with no cash on hand? It'll take a miracle!
10. GEORGE: Well, C'mon. Let's see about that crowd out there...

GEORGE walks to the connecting door and opens it. As he does, the B & L SHAREHOLDERS come to life, with a loud clamoring.

**SCENE 3 - INT. MAIN LOAN OFFICE - SECONDS LATER (OCTOBER 1932)
(GEORGE, CHARLIE, UNCLE BILLY, EDDY, RANDY,
MRS. DAVIS, MRS. THOMPSON, MARY, SHAREHOLDERS)**

11. SHAREHOLDERS: (CLAMORING CROWD AD LIB "George!," "Money" etc. -- WITH FREQUENT OUTBURSTS IN REPLY TO UPCOMING DIALOGUE.)

1. GEORGE: Okay. Okay. Hold on, now! Please! Now, now, please--
Everybody! Don't panic! I know you want your money.
2. SHAREHOLDERS: (OUTBURST—"Yeah" "What are we gonna do?")
3. GEORGE: Look! I just talked with Mr. Potter on the phone! He says
the bank will re-open next week. Next week.
4. SHAREHOLDERS: (OUTBURST—"Next week?" "My money's here!")
5. CHARLIE: We want our money, George? Where's our money?
6. SHAREHOLDERS: (OUTBURST—"Yeah!" "Where is it?"--Subsides under.)
7. GEORGE: Oh, come on! C'mon, everybody! Wait! Just a minute, now!
Listen here! You've got it all wrong.
8. UNCLE BILLY: Yeah! Your money isn't here!
9. SHAREHOLDERS: (Crowd ad-libs "What?" "What do you mean not here?")
10. GEORGE: Hold on. Let me explain! Your money's not here! It's not in
the safe! No! The money you've invested in this Building
and Loan was put into people's houses. It's... in Ernie's
house! And the Grimaldis' house! It's invested in your own
house... And your neighbors' houses!
11. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIBS: "What?" "Their houses!?)
12. UNCLE BILLY: That's how the Building and Loan works! If you all want
your money now, what should we do? Foreclose on
everybody? Throw them out of their homes?
13. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIBS: OUTBURST --"Why not? "What?"--Arguing.)

MARY ENTERS, discreetly, and is working her way—UPSTAGE--towards the counter.
14. CHARLIE: I don't care! I got two hundred and forty-two dollars in
shares here. Now, two hundred and forty-two dollars won't
break you. George, close my account! I want my money...
now!
15. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: OUTBURST—"Yeah" "Mine too"--Subside under.)

1. UNCLE BILLY: All you gotta do, Charlie, is sign the withdrawal form and you'll get your funds in sixty days.
2. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: OUTBURST—"Sixty days?")
3. CHARLIE: What do you mean? That's two whole months!
4. GEORGE: Well... that's what you all agreed to when you bought your shares.
5. RANDY: (FROM BACK OF CROWD) Ha! I got my money!
6. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: "Randy" "Where?" "How?")
7. RANDY: (STEPS UP) Mr. Potter will pay you fifty cents on the dollar for your shares!
8. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: OUTBURST—"Yeah?" "Really?" --Subsides Under.)
9. MRS. THOMPSON: Now what do you say, George?
10. GEORGE: Well, now, we have to stick to the agreement.
11. CHARLIE: Oh yeah...? (TO CROWD) C'mon, everybody! Let's take our shares to Potter! Half is better than nothing!
12. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: OUTBURST—"Yeah!" "Let's go!")
The crowd turns away from the George and heads for the door. GEORGE scrambles in front of them and barricades the door.
13. GEORGE: Wait! C'mon! Please! Please, folks! Don't do this! (YELLS)
Stop!
14. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: CROWD HUSHES A BIT)

1. GEORGE: Listen! If you all sell, Potter would then control the Building and Loan. And there won't be a decent house built in this town again! Can't you see? He's just taken over the town bank. He already controls the bus line, the department store... And now he's after us! You know why? Because we're cutting into his business! With the Building and Loan gone, you'll be living in his crummy shacks--and paying whatever rent he demands.
2. EDDY: But George...
3. GEORGE: Eddy! Last year, things were tough for you. You couldn't always pay, right? Do you think Potter would have let you keep your house?
4. EDDY: Well...
5. GEORGE: (TO ALL) Listen, everybody! Potter is buying because you're panicking and he's not! To him, you're just a bunch of... bargains! Now, we can get through this, but only if we stick together! We've got to believe in one other! Have faith!
6. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: CROWD MULLS IT OVER.)
7. CHARLIE: That's a lot of fine talk, George, but I've got doctor bills to pay!
8. MRS. DAVIS: My husband got laid off. We need our money.
9. EDDY: Yeah! What do we live on until the bank re-opens?
10. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: OUTBURST—"Right!" "How?" --SUBSIDES UNDER.)
11. MRS. THOMPSON: You can't feed your kids on "faith!"
12. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: "That's right" "What about that, George?!" "Yeah!"--CLAMOR UNDER.)
13. MARY: (STEPS UP) George! George, darling!
14. GEORGE: (STARTLED) Hey! Mary!

1. MARY: How much do they need? (WAVING MONEY ENVELOPE IN THE AIR.) We've still got some cash on hand!
GEORGE begins working his way to the counter. There, MARY gives GEORGE the envelope of honeymoon money.
2. GEORGE: No! ...Wait! We do??? (GASPS) Oh! Yes! We do!
3. MARY: Our honeymoon money!
GEORGE is now behind the counter, UNCLE BILLY beside him.
4. GEORGE: (TO ALL) Wait, folks! I've got two-thousand dollars here! My own money! (HANDS ENVELOPE TO UNCLE BILLY)
5. SHAREHOLDERS: (AD-LIB: CALMS A BIT--BUT STILL RAUCOUS)
6. UNCLE BILLY: (TO GEORGE) Well..., this could last us until the bank re-opens...
7. GEORGE: I hope so, Uncle Billy. Sure would have made a nice honeymoon...
8. MARY: ...bought some furniture, too.
9. SHAREHOLDERS: (RIGHT OVER THEM, THE CROWD URGENTLY CLAMORS. AD-LIB: "I want mine!" "Give me my money!")
10. GEORGE: (STRUGGLING) Okay! So we've got some cash! Er... Charlie! How much do you need?
11. CHARLIE: Two hundred and forty-two dollars!
12. GEORGE: (PLEADING) C'mon, Charlie! How about just enough to tide you over!

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT

The full script & appendix runs 137 pages.

**SCENE 4 - INT. MAIN LOAN OFFICE - FIVE HOURS LATER (OCTOBER 1932)
(GEORGE, UNCLE BILLY, EUSTACE, TILLY, MARY)**

SETTING:

The lobby is a bit messier than it was. The clock is set to just seconds before 6 p.m. Jimmy the bird—in his cage—is now on the counter.

AT RISE:

The crowd is gone. Only George, Uncle Billy, Eustace, Tilly and Jimmy, the bird remain. Eustace stands by the front door—STAGE LEFT—ready to lock it.

1. UNCLE BILLY: Look at the clock, George! Look!
2. GEORGE: I'm looking, Uncle Billy. I'm looking.
(COUNTS) Five more seconds... four...
3. ALL OF THEM: Three... two... one...
4. MUSIC: QUICKLY FADE OUT "TIME PASSING"
5. UNCLE BILLY: Six o'clock! Whew! We made it!
6. GEORGE: Lock the door, Eustace! Lock that door!
7. EUSTACE: Right, George!

EUSTACE locks the lobby door. Everybody celebrates!
8. ALL OF THEM: (CHEER) Yay!
9. TRACK SFX: [FX-14] OFFICE PHONE RINGS (1-1/4X)[TRACK OR LIVE]
DURING THE "YAY".

TILLY answers the phone quietly and chats a bit.
11. GEORGE: Ha! Still in business! Even if we only got two bucks left!
12. UNCLE BILLY: Maybe they'll breed in the safe. Eh, Eustace?
13. EUSTACE: Yeah! Like bunnies!
14. GEORGE: They'd better!
15. TILLY: George. Telephone!
16. GEORGE: Thanks, Tilly! Oh, by the way... call my wife, will you?
17. TILLY: --Mrs. Bailey's on the line...

PRODUCTION NOTE:

For Mary's side of the phone conversation below, she is off-stage speaking into a microphone. (See the Sound Design section in the appendix for information on telephone vocal effects.) Mary will babble in response to George's dialogue. She should vocalize while flicking her finger across her lips--as if talking underwater. Even though the content of her lines is listed, she is NOT to be intelligible through words--only through inflection. She "converses" with George, but only via babble. He--in turn--echoes her inflections of "Our home?" "I love you" etc.

1. GEORGE: (DISTRACTED) "Mrs. Bailey"??? No. I don't want... Mrs. Bailey! Wait! Mrs.... Bail..? Oh! Right! That's my wife's name too, now! Give me the phone, already, will you? (TO MARY) Hello... errr... is this Mrs. Bailey?
2. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"Yes, this is Mrs. Bailey!"
3. GEORGE: Well, Mary! We survived...! I'm sorry, I--
4. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)--"Now that you're done saving things, come home!"
5. GEORGE: I... Huh...?
6. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"Come home."
7. GEORGE: "Come home"??? Wait, what home?
8. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"Our home!"
9. GEORGE: What?
10. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"Our home, George! At three-twenty Sycamore."
11. GEORGE: "Three-twenty Sycamore"??? Whose home is that?
12. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"Our home!"
13. GEORGE: ...Huh?
14. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"Our home, bird-brain!"
15. GEORGE: ...But, Mary, how can we have a--
16. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING)"--Right now!"

1. GEORGE: "Right now." OK.... sure, all right, sure
2. MARY: [FILTERED] (BLURBLING) "I love you!"
3. GEORGE: I love you too, honey. I'm on my way.
4. MUSIC: [MUS-20] (BRIDGE) "BRIDE" TO "HEAVENLY NO 8"--FADES
UNDER

**SCENE 5 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)**

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

5. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] So, Clarence, it turns out three-twenty Sycamore was--
6. CLARENCE: [REVERB] --his mother-in-law's?
7. SUPERINTENDENT: No! It was that run-down Granville house--the one George and Mary threw rocks at for their wishes! You see, Mary's wish was to "marry" George--and live in the old Granville house. That's where they honeymooned. That's where they set up house. And... two years later, that's where they were living when Mr. Potter had George come by his office for a little talk...

**SCENE 6 - INT. POTTER'S PRIVATE OFFICE – NIGHT (JUNE 1934)
(MR. POTTER, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The apron STAGE RIGHT is dressed as Mr. Potter's office, with a desk, an impressive desk set, a fancy cigar box, a bust of Napoleon, and an imposing mantel clock. A chair opposite the desk is deliberately low, so Potter's visitors are at a disadvantage.

AT RISE:

MR. POTTER sits at his desk—in his wheelchair. GEORGE sits opposite him, in the low chair. (Some cigar action between the two would be nice, but it is optional.)

8. TRACK SFX: [FX-15] POTTER'S CLOCK TICKING IN BACKGROUND--UNDER.

1. MR. POTTER: Now, George, I suppose you're wondering why you're here.
2. GEORGE: I don't know, Mr. Potter, but I'm sure you do.
3. MR. POTTER: That's what I admire about you, George. You're like me-- you get right to the point. OK... Well, George... (SIGHS) I'm giving up.
4. GEORGE: What? "Giving up?"
5. MR. POTTER: Yes. As you know, I run nearly everything in this town-- everything except the Bailey Building and Loan, of course. I've tried to gain control of it for years, but you've outwitted me, evaded me, de-feated me. Am I right?
6. GEORGE: Errr... actually... (PROUD) yes.
7. MR. POTTER: That's because you're a smart man, George. Two years ago-- during that Financial Panic--you and I were the only ones who kept our heads. You saved the Building and Loan... and I... saved everything else.
8. GEORGE: Most would say you stole everything else.
9. MR. POTTER: Envious people might say that, George; The "suckers" might stay that--but we both know that I was just being a smart businessman. And that's what I'm being right now.
10. GEORGE: So smart that you're "giving up"???
11. MR. POTTER: Well... "if you can't beat'em..."
12. GEORGE: (ALARMED) No! If you're suggesting we-- (STARTS GETTING UP FROM HIS CHAIR.)
13. MR. POTTER: --Wait, George. Don't get up. Don't leave. Take it easy, now. I've told you my side of the story, but let's look at your side.
14. GEORGE: What???
15. MR. POTTER: Your side. Now... You're a young man--married a few years--making... what?... forty dollars a week?

1. GEORGE: Forty-five.
2. MR. POTTER: OK. Forty-five. And... if you were a common, everyday “bumpkin”, you’d think you were doing well. However, you’re no common, everyday bumpkin, son. No, you’re a smart resourceful, and... ambitious man--who hates his job.
3. GEORGE: (CLEARS THROAT UNCOMFORTABLY) Er...
4. MR. POTTER: Yes! You hate that Building and Loan almost as much as I do, George. You’ve been dying to get out of this town ever since you were born. You see your friends, your brother, go places.... while you’re trapped here, “frittering away” your life--a mere servant to a bunch of garlic-eaters! Am I right or do I exaggerate??
5. GEORGE: (SWALLOWS) Er... so... what's your... point, Mr. Potter?
6. MR. POTTER: My point is, come work for me, George. I’ll hire you.
7. GEORGE: “Hire me”...? Er... to do.... what?
8. MR. POTTER: To manage my affairs! Oversee my properties! And... I can start you off at twenty thousand dollars a year.
9. GEORGE: (STUNNED) “Twenty thous--“? Are you talking twenty-thousand dollars? ...per year?
10. MR. POTTER: Of course! And you’re worth it! Wouldn’t you like to live in the best house in town? Get your wife some fine clothes? A trip to Europe... (PAUSE) every year?
11. GEORGE: Europe...? Wait. You're talking to me--George Bailey? The George Bailey from the Building and Loan?
12. MR. POTTER: Yes, that George Bailey. (PAUSE) Son, your ship has finally come in! Now muster up the brains and climb aboard!
13. GEORGE: But... but... what about the Building and Loan?

1. MR. POTTER: (ANGRY) Forget the Building and Loan! I'm offering a three-year contract for... let's sweeten the pot. Make it twenty-five thousand per year. (PAUSE) Agreed?
2. GEORGE: Er... well, twenty-five thousand dollars... a nice home... Europe.... Errr... Can you give me time to think a bit? Ask my wife?
3. MR. POTTER: Of course! Of course, George. Meanwhile, I'll draw up the papers. But first, let's shake on it, son.

GEORGE rises from his seat and shakes Potter's hand.
4. GEORGE: (WHILE SHAKING HANDS) Well, Mr. Potter! Gee, who would've thought-- If my father could see me now... (CHOKES ON THE THOUGHT) he'd be--
5. MR. POTTER: --What? Is something wrong, George? We're just shaking hands over a little business--
6. GEORGE: --Wait!(SUDDENLY REPULSED) Wait! No! I can't do it! I don't need time to think it over. I know right now! The answer is "no"!
7. MR. POTTER: (SHOCKED) What do you mean?
8. GEORGE: If you offered me a million dollars... to stay in Bedford Falls... to be your stooge..., the answer would still be "no"!

**SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT
THIS POINT
The full script & appendix runs 137
pages.**

12. TRACK SFX: CLOCK TICKING--FADES OUT UNDER MUSIC.

1. MUSIC: [MUS-21] (BRIDGE) "INDIGNANT" TO "SLEEPY"--FADE UNDER.

**SCENE 7 - INT. GRANVILLE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (JUNE 1934)
(MARY, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is dressed as a modest, but homey living room. A sofa, coffee table, an easy chair, etc. A functional "front" door-- STAGE LEFT--leads "outside."

AT RISE:

GEORGE ENTERS through STAGE LEFT door--gently. MARY sits in the easy chair knitting quietly.

2. GEORGE: Sorry, I'm so late, Mary. Are you bored--waiting up for me?
3. MARY: Just knitting, George. So... What did Mr. Potter want to see you about?
4. GEORGE: (SLEEPY) Oh, not much, really. Just talk--business-talk, you know... (SIGHS DEEPLY) But jeez... Why-- How could you have married someone like me? Why?
5. MARY: (CHUCKLES) Well, I didn't want to be an "old maid."
6. GEORGE: (DEJECTED) But we were going to see the world! Go places! I was going to give you the moon... But, instead, what have I given you? Huh? Not much. Some husband I am! I feel terrible...
7. MARY: (COYLY) Me too... Especially in the mornings, lately.
8. GEORGE: (NOT CATCHING HER DRIFT) Y'know, you could have married somebody... successful. A guy like Sam Wainwright... A some-body.
9. MARY: I didn't marry "a some-body"... because I wanted a baby that looked like you.
10. GEORGE: I didn't even give you a real honeymoon. No swanky-- (GETS IT) Wait! You wanted what to look like me?
11. MARY: ...a baby... you bird-brain.

1. GEORGE: (STUNNED) “Baby”! What-- Then-- Hey.... Mary-- You mean you're--on the nest?
2. MARY: (CHICKEN SQUAWK) Be-gawk!
- MARY holds up knitting needles dangling a--previously hidden—baby booty.*
3. MUSIC: [MUS-22] (BRIDGE) “ROCK-A-BYE” TO “HEAVENLY NO 9”--FADES UNDER.

**SCENE 8 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)**

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

4. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Well, Clarence, soon, Mary gave birth to their first child--a boy they named Petey.
5. CLARENCE: [REVERB] “Petey”--That’s nice!
6. SUPERINTENDENT: Two years later, another baby--a girl--Janie!
7. CLARENCE: “Janie”--Good for them!
8. SUPERINTENDENT: But, of course, George never got out of Bedford Falls.
9. CLARENCE: He didn’t?
10. SUPERINTENDENT: No. Year after year, George slaved away at the Building and Loan. They built “Bailey Park” and town-folk settled there--like the tavern-owner, Mr. Martini. George kept on dreaming and Mary kept on hoping. In 1940, they had another child--Susan--nicknamed, Zuzu.
11. CLARENCE: “Zuzu”??? (UNCERTAIN) Oh-kaaaaay.
12. MUSIC: [MUS-23] “WAR MONTAGE”--UNDER
13. SUPERINTENDENT: Oh, but then came the world war--the second world war, you understand. Mary ran the U.S.O. and had another boy--Tommy. Uncle Billy and Mr. Gower sold war-bonds. ...Old Mr. Potter headed the draft board, of course.
14. CLARENCE: (SLYLY) Of course!

1. SUPERINTENDENT: (SIGHS) Violet Bick joined the Waves-- ...until they found that her way of “raising morale” could er... sink the Navy.
2. CLARENCE: Huh??? (GASPS) Oh! Oh my!
3. SUPERINTENDENT: Bert--the Cop--got wounded in Tunisia and received the Silver Star. Ernie--the taxi driver--was captured by the Nazis, but escaped from a prison camp. And George's brother, Harry... remember him?
4. CLARENCE: Yes! He moved to Buffalo!
5. SUPERINTENDENT: Ahem. Yes, he did, but Harry became a real hero! As a Navy flier, he shot down fifteen planes--two of them just as they were about to crash into a ship full of soldiers!
6. CLARENCE: What about George? What did George do in the war?
7. SUPERINTENDENT: Well, George fought “the battle of Bedford Falls.” He was designated “Four-F” ...due to his bad ear. So he served as an air-raid warden, ran the scrap drives, rubber drives, the bacon-grease drives. (PAUSE) Like the rest of the country, on V-E Day, he wept and prayed. And on V-J Day, he wept and prayed again.
8. MUSIC:

BEGIN FADING “WAR MONTAGE” UNDER...
9. CLARENCE: Well then... We're just about up to today.
10. SUPERINTENDENT: We are. The only thing you don't know about George Bailey is how he's come to the point of wanting to take his own life.
11. CLARENCE: (SHUDDERS) Suicide. Tell me. How???
12. SUPERINTENDENT: Alright... Today is the day before Christmas. ...And in addition to holiday preparations, George is very excited...
13. MUSIC:

“WAR MONTAGE”—IS COMPLETELY OUT.

SCENE 9 - INT. LOAN OFFICE/LOBBY - DAY (12/24/1945)
(GEORGE, TILLY, EUSTACE, CARTER, VIOLET)

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT, is again dressed as the loan office, much as it was in 1932. The counter, desk and chairs are as they were. A coat rack holds winter coats. Christmas decorations are up. Some chairs line the walls. A 1945 calendar hangs by the desk.

The room STAGE RIGHT, is George's office with his desk, chairs and typewriter—with a letter half-typed still in it. His old suitcase is also there. AT RISE:

TILLY and EUSTACE are at work behind the counter. CARTER, the bank examiner sits impatiently in one of the wall chairs. Jimmy, the bird—in his cage—sits on the counter. GEORGE hurriedly ENTERS via the main door—STAGE LEFT. He has a newspaper in his hands.

1. GEORGE: (ENTERING) Tilly! Eustace! Did you see this article in the paper? (READS) "Commander Harry Bailey, Famous Navy Ace, decorated by the President!" My own brother! The Medal of Honor!
2. TILLY: Gosh, George! That's swell!
3. GEORGE: It says here,(READS)"Commander Bailey downed fifteen enemy planes. The last ones, kamikazes, aiming to dive into a troop-ship." Think of it! Our Harry Bailey saved hundreds of lives! (TO EUSTACE) Hey, Eustace, where's Uncle Billy? Shopping?
4. EUSTACE: (WHISPERS) George, the bank examiner's here, waiting for him.
5. GEORGE: Oh, right--the annual audit.(TO CARTER) Well... Good afternoon... uh--
6. CARTER: Carter. Bank examiner.
7. GEORGE: Yes, of course. Hey, you know what? My brother's picture's here in the paper! The President is decorating him today!

1. CARTER: (UNIMPRESSED) Yes. Well, I suppose they do that sort of thing. Now, about the books.

VIOLET ENTERS via the main door—stage left.

2. VIOLET: (ENTERING) Er... George?

3. GEORGE: Violet! How are ya? Did you see the paper? All about Harry's homecoming and...

4. VIOLET: Er... Can I see you a minute, George?
...Privately?

5. GEORGE: Okay. Okay, Vi. We can just go to my...

6. CARTER: (REMINDING GEORGE) Ahem! Mr. Bailey. I'd like to finish your audit.... tonight, so I can get back to Elmira... and spend the holiday at home.

7. GEORGE: Oh, yes. That's right! I just have to... (TO TILLY) Errr... Tilly! Please show the books to um... um--

8. CARTER: (A BIT PERTURBED) --Carter.... Bank-examiner?

9. GEORGE: Of course, of course....
(TO TILLY) Can you, Tilly?

10. TILLY: Sure, George. (TO CARTER) Come right this way, uh--

11. CARTER: Carter... (PATHETIC) Bank-examiner. (SIGHS)

TILLY shows CARTER the books and a stack of papers. CARTER begins to work.

12. GEORGE: Let see... err... Violet. Step into my office.

13. VIOLET: Oh, sure. Thanks, George.

GEORGE and VIOLET go into George's office via the connecting door, which he closes.

14. GEORGE: So, what can I do for you, Vi?

15. VIOLET: The letter you promised...?

16. GEORGE: Uh-- (THINKS) Oh. Yes! The letter of recommendation. I was about to type it when there was all this news about Harry. (SITS DOWN AT TYPEWRITER.)

1. VIOLET: Good kid, that Harry. So, er... like I told you on the phone, George, I'm leaving--for New York. After that thing with the Waves, I gotta make a fresh start, maybe.

2. GEORGE: Sure! How about this...

GEORGE begins typing away.

3. GEORGE: (TYPING) "To whom it may concern," (CARRIAGE RETURN/BELL)
"The bearer--Miss Violet Bick--has been employed here at Bailey Building and Loan (CARRIAGE RETURN/BELL) for the past two years--

4. VIOLET: --That's a lie, George. I haven't--

5. GEORGE: --Now, now, Violet. (TYPING) "She demonstrated... intelligence..."--

6. VIOLET: --A lie.

7. GEORGE: (TYPING) --"...ability..."--

8. VIOLET: --Another lie.

9. GEORGE: (TYPING) "...and good character." (CARRIAGE RETURN/BELL)

10. VIOLET: "Character"? If I had any character, I wouldn't have gotten drummed outta the--

11. GEORGE: (TYPING) --"I'm happy to give her my whole-hearted endorsement."

GEORGE pulls the paper from the platen, signs and folds it. He hands the letter to Violet.

12. VIOLET: Gee... Thanks... "liar."

13. GEORGE: C'mon, now, Violet. It takes a lot to leave your hometown and start somewhere new. (He pulls out his wallet) And here... Here's something to help you get started.

GEORGE gives Violet thirty dollars. She's reluctant.

1. VIOLET: No. Oh, no, George. I can't take that.
2. GEORGE: C'mon! You're broke, aren't you? D'you want to hock your furs and that hat? Are you gonna walk to New York? It's a loan, Violet! That's all! I'm in the loan business. Besides, you'll find a job.
3. VIOLET: (BRIGHTENS) Yeah... sure! Ok.
- GEORGE walks VIOLET out the connecting door, into the lobby area.*
4. GEORGE: Good luck, Vi.
5. VIOLET: I'm glad to know you, George Bailey.
(KISSES GEORGE) Merry Christmas, Georgie.
6. GEORGE: The same to you, Vi. Say "Hello, New York" for me.
- As Carter watches, VIOLET EXITS via the main door—STAGE LEFT.*
7. GEORGE: Eustace! Where's that Uncle Billy?"
8. EUSTACE: He's making a deposit--at the bank.
9. MUSIC: [MUS-24] (BRIDGE) "GOD REST YE MERRY ENDS SOURLY"--LET
IT FINISH.

SCENE 10 - INT. BANK LOBBY - AT SAME TIME

**(UNCLE BILLY, MR. POTTER, AIDE, BANK CUSTOMERS,
BANK TELLER)**

SETTING:

A bank counter and teller window sits STAGE RIGHT.

AT RISE:

The BANK TELLER attends a CUSTOMER at the window. Other customers wait in line. UNCLE BILLY strolls in from STAGE LEFT, with a newspaper under his arm and an envelope full of money in his hand. He has strings tied around his fingers—as reminders. As he approaches the teller line, MR. POTTER ENTERS from STAGE RIGHT—pushed in his wheelchair by an AIDE.

10. UNCLE BILLY: Well, well! Mr. Potter! Here to personally guard your money? What?-- Your bank vault not strong enough?

1. MR. POTTER: Look out, Bailey, you old fool! My wheelchair!

UNCLE BILLY pulls out his newspaper, and using both hands, shows the headline to Mr. Potter.

2. UNCLE BILLY: Did you see the newspaper? The headline is--
(READS)“Harry Bailey Gets Medal of Honor!” Gee! What’ll those Bailey boys do next?

3. MR. POTTER: Huh? Let me see that newspaper!

4. UNCLE BILLY: Sure. (GIVES POTTER THE PAPER—AND INADVERTENTLY, THE ENVELOPE TOO.)
Here.

MR. POTTER reads a bit of the article, folds the paper in disgust and puts it in his lap.

5. MR. POTTER: (DISGUSTED) Hmmph! What does that shirker, George say?--about Harry being decorated?

6. UNCLE BILLY: Well, if that “shirker, George” had gone, he’d have earned two medals of honor.

7. MR. POTTER: Oh, but George didn’t go! His “bad” ear heard everything but the call to arms!

8. UNCLE BILLY: Well... Make sure to read the part about the parade for Harry tomorrow. Sorry I can't chat more, you old thief. I gotta go make a deposit.

MR. POTTER picks up the paper again and reads. UNCLE BILLY gets into the teller line, just as the last customer has finished his business there—and departs.

9. BANK TELLER: Next customer, please...

As Potter reads—and casually listens—UNCLE BILLY steps up to the teller window and begins digging items out of his pockets.

10. UNCLE BILLY: (TO TELLER) Hello! Let see here. Um... Here you are... Bank book... deposit slip... And a “Merry Christmas” to you.

11. BANK TELLER: And to you too, Mr. Bailey. But... uh... haven’t you forgotten something?

1. UNCLE BILLY: Er...? (Looks at strings on fingers) I forget things all the time.
2. BANK TELLER: Yes, but, Mr. Bailey, but where's the money?
3. UNCLE BILLY: Wha--what?
4. BANK TELLER: You want to make a deposit, don't you?
5. UNCLE BILLY: Of course! I want to deposit eight-thousand dollars.
6. BANK TELLER: Well then... it's customary to bring the money with you.
7. MR. POTTER: (TO AIDE) Guard! Wheel me into my office...
The AIDE quickly pushes Mr. Potter's wheelchair off—STAGE RIGHT.
8. UNCLE BILLY: (PUZZLED) The “money”??? (LOOKS AROUND) The money! It's gone! Where'd I...? Where'd I put that money?! I... I...
9. MUSIC: [MUS-25] (BRIDGE) “LOST” TO “HEAVENLY NO. 10”--FADES UNDER.

**SCENE 11 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)**

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

10. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Take note, Clarence. Uncle Billy couldn't find the deposit money because the envelope with the eight thousand dollars was folded up in that newspaper he gave to Mr. Potter
11. CLARENCE: [REVERB] Oh! And Potter kept that lost money, didn't he? (Getting it.) So that's why George and Uncle Billy are out there, scouring the street in front of the bank...

**SCENE 12 - EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE BANK - MINUTES LATER (12/24/1945)
(UNCLE BILLY, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The apron serves as the sidewalk in front of the bank. Some street signs, a mailbox, trash can, fireplug, etc.

AT RISE:

Pedestrians walk by as GEORGE and UNCLE BILLY search for the missing deposit envelope. They think it was dropped on the ground.

1. GEORGE: Look by the curb, Uncle Billy! I'll look by the mailbox.
2. UNCLE BILLY: (DISTRAUGHT) For the life of me, George. I don't know where it could be. When I left our office, I had the envelope with our money.
3. GEORGE: (WORRIED) That eight-thousand dollars is not our money! It's the depositors' money! (SIGHS) And with the bank- examiner here!
4. UNCLE BILLY: But, George! We've checked every step I took.
5. GEORGE: Well, if you didn't drop it, maybe you never put the envelope in your pocket in the first place.
6. UNCLE BILLY: Maybe... Maybe... But oh... (SIGHS) I'm useless to you. Useless, George!
7. GEORGE: (DESPERATE) C'mon! You've got to think! Think!
8. UNCLE BILLY: (SOBS) I can't think! I just can't!
9. GEORGE: (LASHING OUT) Now, where is the money, you doddering fool? We'll be bankrupt! That's fraud! Scandal! Somebody's going to prison--and it won't be George Bailey. You keep looking, you hear? (EXITING) I'm going home!!

GEORGE storms off—STAGE LEFT. UNCLE BILLY sinks to his knees.

10. UNCLE BILLY: (SOBS) George...!
11. MUSIC: [MUS-26] (BRIDGE) "DESPERATE"--LET IT FINISH.

**SCENE 13 - INT. GRANVILLE HOUSE LIVING ROOM (12/24/1945 AT 6 P.M.)
(MARY, GEORGE, JANIE, PETEY, TOMMY, ZUZU)**

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is the same Granville House living room we saw before, but 12 years later. Sofa, chairs, coffee table, a model 202 or 300-style telephone. etc. A modest upright piano sits against the wall UPSTAGE. There are Christmas decorations and a tree—partially decorated.

The room STAGE RIGHT is set as Zuzu's bedroom. It has a bed, a lamp, a night table with a single flower in a glass, a pitcher of water. A plate of half-finished food sits on a tray.

AT RISE:

In the bedroom, ZUZU is sitting in bed, quietly talking to PETEY. Soon, Petey will bring Zuzu's plate to Mary.

In the living room, JANIE is (miming) practicing piano. TOMMY—a small child—colors nearby. MARY is stringing popcorn for the tree. GEORGE sits in the easy chair, but he's in a foul mood.

1. MUSIC: [MUS-27] (SOURCE) JANIE'S PIANO PRACTICE #1--"HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"--UNDER--IT ENDS QUICKLY.
2. MARY: What's the matter, George? You've been brooding since you got home. Talk to me.
3. GEORGE: How can I?--with Janie's piano-playing. She keeps banging away--over and over.
4. JANIE BAILEY: But, Daddy! I gotta to practice for the Christmas party.
5. MUSIC: [MUS-28] (SOURCE) JANIE'S PIANO PRACTICING #2--"HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"--SHE RESTARTS--UNDER.
6. MARY: (TO GEORGE) I'm sorry, dear. Hectic day?
7. GEORGE: (SARCASTIC) Another stellar day for the Bailey family.
PETEY enters from Zuzu's room—with the tray holding Zuzu's half-eaten supper.
8. PETEY BAILEY: (PUTTING DOWN THE PLATE) Mom! Here's Zuzu's plate.
(TO GEORGE) Hey... Dad!
9. MARY: Not now, Petey.

1. PETEY BAILEY: Hey, Dad! The Browns got a brand new car! You should see it!
2. GEORGE: (ORNERY) What's wrong with our car, Petey? Not good enough for you?
3. PETEY BAILEY: (TAKEN ABACK) Gee, Dad. I was just--
4. MARY: (DIVERTING) --Thank you for bringing Zuzu's plate, Petey. All right. Run along, now.
5. PETEY BAILEY: Okay. I'll finish up the decorations.
PETEY goes by the Christmas tree, picks up a pad of paper and starts writing.
6. GEORGE: Mary, Why is Zuzu eating in her room? What's the matter?
7. MARY: Oh, I think she may have caught a cold, coming home from school. She didn't button her coat because she got a flower as a prize and didn't want to crush it.
8. GEORGE: "She caught a little cold"?
9. MARY: It's okay, dear. The doctor said not to worry.
10. GEORGE: What? The doctor came?
11. MARY: Zuzu's got a little temperature, just ninety-nine point--
12. GEORGE: (ANGRILY) It's this drafty old house! It's a wonder we don't all have pneumonia!
13. MARY: (CONCERNED) George!
14. GEORGE: I mean... why do we live here in the first place? Why in this crummy little town?
15. MARY: (WORRIED) What's wrong, dear?
16. GEORGE: Everything's wrong! Oh...! Why did we have to have all these kids anyway?
17. PETEY BAILEY: Daddy, how do you spell "frankincense"?
18. MUSIC: JANIE HAS STOPPED PLAYING PIANO BY NOW.

1. GEORGE: I don't know! Ask your mother! (Heads for Zuzu's room.)
2. MARY: Where are you going, George?
3. GEORGE: I'm gonna check on Zuzu!

GEORGE walks to Zuzu's door, knocks—and enters. He closes the door.

4. ZUZU: Da-dee!
5. GEORGE: Are you okay, Zuzu? I heard you caught a cold.
6. ZUZU: (SNIFFLES) I won a flower at school, Da-dee. Can you give it a drink of water?
7. GEORGE: “Drink of...”? (SIGHS) Oh. Okay. I'll um--

GEORGE waters the flower, but brushes it, causing some petals to fall off.

8. ZUZU: (GASPS) --Da-dee! You crushed it!
9. GEORGE: Oh! I didn't mean to. I was just--
10. ZUZU: (UPSET) --Fix it, Da-dee. Paste the petals back on.
11. GEORGE: Umm... There! (HIDING LOOSE PETALS IN POCKET) See? It's all fixed. Good as new.
12. ZUZU: Thank you, Da-dee. You can do anything.
13. GEORGE: Er... any-thing? (HUGS/SOBS)Now, try to get some sleep, darling. You'll feel better.
14. ZUZU: (SNIFFLES) Happy Christmas, Da-dee.

GEORGE leaves Zuzu, re-entering the living room—via the connecting door. He closes it..

15. GEORGE: Mary...? Zuzu felt a--
16. TRACK SFX: [FX-16] BAILEY PHONE RINGS (1-1/2X)[SFX TRACK OR LIVE]
17. GEORGE: --Zuzu felt a bit hot to me. We'd better--

MARY answers the phone.

18. MARY: (INTO PHONE) --Bailey residence (LISTENS). ...Oh, thank you, Mrs. Welch. Zuzu's resting. I'm sure it's nothing.

1. GEORGE: (STEPS OVER) Who's on the phone, Mary?
2. MARY: (TO GEORGE) It's Mrs. Welch--Zuzu's teacher. (INTO PHONE) What?Oh ...Well, the doctor says she should be out of bed in time for--
3. GEORGE: --Give me the phone, Mary.
4. MARY: (FEARFUL) George, no! Now, calm down.
5. MUSIC: [MUS-29] JANIE PLAYS PIANO #3--"HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"--UNDER--IT WILL END DURING DIALOGUE.
6. GEORGE: (GRABBING THE PHONE) Gimme that! (UPSET, INTO PHONE) Is this Mrs. Welch? ...George Bailey here! What kind of teacher are you? Don't you realize she could get pneumonia on account of you?
7. MARY: George!
8. GEORGE: (FUMING) Silly, careless people like you! Sending kids home half-naked! You know, maybe my kids aren't the best-dressed in town, but at least-- ...Hello? Hello??
- GEORGE slams phone handset down--angrily.*
9. GEORGE: (HOLLERS) Janie! Enough with the piano! Somebody stop her!
10. MUSIC: ABRUPTLY KILL JANIE'S PIANO PRACTICE #3.
11. JANIE BAILEY: (Sobbing) Oh, Daddy....
- Petey and Tommy are afraid. Mary is thunderstruck!*
12. MARY: George! Whatever's wrong with you? Must you torture the children too? Stop it! You're acting like a wild--
13. GEORGE: (GETS A GRIP ON HIMSELF)--I'm-- (SIGHS) Sorry, Janie. Sorry, Mary... I--
14. MARY: --George!

GEORGE steps to front door—opens it.

1. GEORGE: (EXITING) I-- I've just got to get out of here!

GEORGE runs out—slamming the door after him.

2. MUSIC: [MUS-30] (BRIDGE) "TROUBLED"--FADES UNDER.

**SCENE 14 - INT. POTTER'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER (12/24/1945)
(MR. POTTER, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The apron STAGE RIGHT is again dressed as Mr. Potter's office, with his desk, impressive desk set, fancy cigar box, bust of Napoleon, Model 300-style phone, and imposing clock. The seat opposite the desk is still deliberately low, so Potter's visitors are at a disadvantage.

AT RISE:

MR. POTTER sits at his desk—in his wheelchair. GEORGE sits opposite him, in the low chair. GEORGE is distraught. POTTER is smugly satisfied.

3. TRACK SFX: [FX-17] POTTER'S CLOCK TICKING IN BACKGROUND--UNDER.

4. MR. POTTER: So that's what this sudden visit is about, George. You're eight-thousand dollars "short."

5. GEORGE: (DEJECTED) Er... that's right, Mr. Potter. But you gotta help me! I'll pay whatever interest. And if you-- want the Bailey Building and Loan, we can... arrange some--

6. MR. POTTER: --You claim the money was... "lost"? What if it was... stolen? You should notify the police and--

7. GEORGE: --No... no, sir. Harry's homecoming is tomorrow and well, the publicity would--

8. MR. POTTER: --I see... You didn't "lose" that money playing the market, did you, George? Horses, maybe?

9. GEORGE: Of course not! The money's just--

10. MR. POTTER: --A woman, then...! Half the town's talking about you giving money to Violet Bick.

1. GEORGE: No...! That has nothing to do with the--
2. MR. POTTER: (RHETORICALLY) --So you come to my door. Why not your buddy, Sam Wainwright?
3. GEORGE: Well, I er... I tried to reach Sam, but er... he's vacationing in Europe right now and--
4. MR. POTTER: --So you want a loan from me... for eight-thousand dollars. Hmmm.... What do you have as collateral, George?
5. GEORGE: Well... All I have is a life insurance policy. Here, It's--
GEORGE pulls an insurance policy out of his jacket pocket and gives it to Mr. Potter.
6. MR. POTTER: --Life insurance? For how much?
7. GEORGE: A fifteen-thousand dollar policy. It's--
8. MR. POTTER: --Hmm... (READING) "Fifteen-thousand." But what's your equity in it?
9. GEORGE: Er... (SIGHS) Around five-hundred dollars.
10. MR. POTTER: Five-- hundred??? And you want an emergency loan... for eight-thousand dollars?--on Christmas Eve? Hmmmph!
11. GEORGE: (MEEKLY) Um... er... yes.
12. MR. POTTER: Bah! You're pathetic, George Bailey! For years, you opposed my plans and derided my character. You said you didn't need me or my money. Did you not?
13. GEORGE: (SHEEPISHLY) Er... well, you see--
14. MR. POTTER: --And now... suddenly, I'm very important to you. But.... do I look like... (CHORTLES) Santa Claus? (CHUCKLES) Hm-m-m-m.
15. GEORGE: Er... No, Mr. Potter, I--

1. MR. POTTER: --You once called me a “warped, frustrated old man.” Well, now! What are you?--but a warped, frustrated young man? (LAUGHS) Hah!
2. GEORGE: I-- I--
3. MR. POTTER: --You dreamed of “conquering the world!” Look at you now... sniveling to me, looking for a handout! Hah!... Go beg the “cattle” you love so well! Go beg them for help!
4. GEORGE: Mr. Potter-- Please! I don’t know what I’m going to do!
5. MR. POTTER: Well, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to swear out a warrant--for your arrest!
6. GEORGE: Wait a minute, Mr. Potter! I thought we--
7. MR. POTTER: --I'm calling the sheriff, and then the district attorney, and then... the newspaper!
8. GEORGE: The Sheriff? The newspaper? What about a loan on my life insurance policy?
9. MR. POTTER: (CONTEMPTUOUS) For five-hundred dollars in equity? Come now, George. Can’t you see you’re worth more dead than alive?
- POTTER dials phone—under--timed to the Sheriff answering. Dial five digit # - 3-1-2-2-1.*
10. GEORGE: No. no! (EXITING) There must be something I can do.
- GEORGE jumps out of his chair and runs out of the office—EXITING STAGE RIGHT.*
11. MR. POTTER: (CALLING OUT AFTER HIM) Where are you going, George! You can’t hide in a small town like this. (INTO PHONE) Hello, Sheriff Baxter? This is Henry Potter. I want to report embezzlement at the... (AD LIB FADING UNDER)
12. TRACK SFX: CLOCK TICKING--FADES OUT UNDER MUSIC.
13. MUSIC: [MUS-31] (BRIDGE) “CRUEL” TO “HEAVENLY NO 11”--FADES UNDER.

**SCENE 15 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)**

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

1. CLARENCE: [REVERB][CUE] The nerve of that Henry Potter!
2. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Yes, Clarence. And he had George's missing eight-thousand dollars sitting in his desk drawer.
3. CLARENCE: What'll George do now? Where is he?
4. SUPERINTENDENT: At Martini's Tavern. George has had a couple of drinks. (FADING UNDER) He's dazed. Just standing at the bar...
5. MUSIC: [MUS-32] (SOURCE) "SANTA LUCIA" ON ACCORDION--UNDER

**SCENE 16 - INT. MARTINI'S CAFE - SECONDS LATER (DECEMBER 24, 1945)
(GEORGE, NICK, MARTINI, WELCH)**

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is now a small Italian café/tavern, with a bar, some tables, an accordion player in the back. The front door is STAGE LEFT.

AT RISE:

A BAR CROWD is drinking and talking—quietly—under the scene, MR. WELCH among them—but mixed in, UPSTAGE.. NICK is behind the bar. GEORGE is seated at the bar. He's had a few drinks. MARTINI stands near George. He's worried for his friend.

6. GEORGE: [CUE](PRAYING, QUIETLY) "Our Father who art in Heaven"... Oh, God... I've never been a praying man, but if... you are listening, Please... I'm lost, God. Lost!
7. NICK: (STEPS UP) Mr. Bailey, are you okay? (TO MARTINI) Mr. Martini! George, here, don't look so good.
8. MARTINI: (ITALIAN ACCENT) (TO NICK) You right, Nick. (TO GEORGE) Mr. Bailey, you drink too much! Too much! You have enough... Please!
9. MR. WELCH: Did you say "Bailey"? Which of the Baileys are you talkin' about?

1. MARTINI: This Mr. Bailey--Mr. George Bailey!
2. MR. WELCH: Oh, this George Bailey, is it? Why, you--
WELCH punches George. GEORGE falls to floor. BAR CROWD reacts--then murmurs under.
3. MUSIC: ABRUPTLY CUT "SANTA LUCIA"—DUE TO THE FIGHT.
4. MR. WELCH: Serves you right, Bailey! If you ever talk to my wife that way again, I'll give you even worse!
5. GEORGE: (DRUNK/DAZED) Huh?
6. MR. WELCH: She slaves away... teaching your stupid kids how to read and write, then you bawl her out on the phone??? She cried for over an hour, you louse!
7. MARTINI: Hey! Get out, Mr. Welch! You punch my best friend! He help me buy my house! Outta here! Go! (TO NICK) Nick, throw him out!
8. NICK: (TOUGH)Go on, Welch! ...Never mind the tab!
9. MR. WELCH: (EXITING) Okay. Okay. I'm goin'...
WELCH stomps out the door—STAGE LEFT. GEORGE—his lip bloodied—is struggling to get up from the floor. The BAR CROWD resumes its chatter.
10. MARTINI: (TO GEORGE) Mr. Bailey! How you doin'?
11. GEORGE: (GETTING UP) Ohhhh! Martini! Who was that?
12. MARTINI: You hit by Mr. Welch!
13. GEORGE: Oh.... (REALIZES) That's what I get for praying...
 (MUTTERING) Where-- Now, where is my policy?
14. NICK: Huh?
15. GEORGE: My-my insurance policy!
16. MARTINI: Insurance? You no worry, Mr. Bailey! Welch no come here any-more! Here, I get something cold for your face... Look!
 The blood!

1. GEORGE: (STEPPING AWAY) No, Mr. Martini. I'm fine.
2. MARTINI: Please! Don't go out, Mr. Bailey! The cold! Stay!
3. NICK: C'mon, Mr. Bailey. It's snowing!
4. MARTINI: Nick! You take Mr. Bailey home.
5. GEORGE: No...! Let me go! (EXITING)...Alone, do you hear?

GEORGE staggers out the main door—STAGE LEFT.

6. MUSIC: [MUS-33] (BRIDGE) "ALONE TO "HEAVENLY-NO 12"--FADES UNDER.

SCENE 17 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER (SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)

The SUPERINTENDENT and CLARENCE have been watching the scene just past.

7. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Well, Clarence, George staggered out of Martini's Tavern a few moments ago. (SIGHS) Now, he's standing on the river-bridge... gazing down at the river. He's about to jump! Do you have your "plan"?

**SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT
THIS POINT**
**The full script & appendix runs 137
pages.**

11. MUSIC: [MUS-34] (BRIDGE) "ACT 2 OUTRO"--ENDS IN SUPENSE CHORD
12. MUSIC: LET "ACT 2 OUTRO" FINISH (NO FADE OUT)

— END OF ACT TWO —

NOTE: AN OPTIONAL INTERMISSION GOES HERE

— ACT THREE —

**SCENE 1 - EXT. RIVER-BRIDGE - NIGHT (12-24-1945 AT 10:45 PM)
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE, GEORGE)***SETTING:*

The apron *STAGE RIGHT* has a raised “bridge” deck, with a guard rail. The “river” is *OFF-RIGHT*.

Fog pours across the stage.

AT RISE:

THE SUPERINTENDENT stands at “Heaven” *GEORGE* stands on the bridge, looking at the water below. *CLARENCE* is *UPSTAGE* of the bridge, in the dark, but close enough to quickly mount the rail and “jump”—*RIGHT*—into the wings, where the river is located.

1. MUSIC: [MUS-35] (BED) “ACT 3 INTRO” TO “DIRE BRIDGE”--UNDER.
2. **SUPERINTENDENT:** Oh! That troubled George Bailey stands on the Bedford Falls river-bridge--convinced that he's worth more dead than alive. George is gazing at the freezing river below--poised to end it all! (CALLS OUT) Do something, Clarence!

CLARENCE “jumps” into the river—*OFF-RIGHT*—and “splashes” about, *OFF-STAGE*.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

The “Heaven” set is no longer needed. *THE SUPERINTENDENT* will have no more lines.

3. TRACK SFX: [FX-18] SPLASH--CLARENCE JUMPS IN RIVER. SPLASHING.
4. **CLARENCE:** Ohhh! Help me! Help! I’m drowning! Help! (GLUB) (AD LIB UNDER)
5. **GEORGE:** [DISTANT] Whoa! Wait, there! Here I come...
GEORGE “jumps” into the river—and “splashes” about, *OFF-STAGE*.
6. TRACK SFX: [FX-19] SPLASH--GEORGE JUMPS IN RIVER. SPLASHING.--
FADES
7. MUSIC: FADE “DIRE BRIDGE” UNDER—IN COORDINATION
WITH TOLL BRIDGE LIGHTING FADE.

**SCENE 2 - INT. WATCHMAN OFFICE - MINUTES LATER (12/24/1945 AT 11 PM)
(NIGHT WATCHMAN, CLARENCE, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The room *STAGE RIGHT* is dressed as the Tol- Taker's shack, with a stove, a desk, some chairs, perhaps a cot and pot of coffee. A *FUNCTIONAL DOOR—UPSTAGE—*is the entry. George and Clarence's outer clothes are hanging near the stove, drying out. Clarence's clothes are not modern—they date from about 1810. His "Tom Sawyer" book is also drying out.

AT RISE:

GEORGE and *CLARENCE* are in their underwear, keeping warm by the stove. The *NIGHT WATCHMAN* is sitting at the desk, reading the newspaper (optionally with the headline about Harry Bailey's upcoming parade.)

1. NIGHT WATCHMAN: (SCOLDING) Jumping in the river like that! You two sure are lucky I was checking the river warehouse tonight. Otherwise, you'd have froze to death. Warming up, now?
2. GEORGE: I'm okay. (TO CLARENCE) How about you?
3. CLARENCE: Well enough... although my underwear seems a bit out of fashion. I was buried in it.
4. NIGHT WATCHMAN: You were buried in what???
5. CLARENCE: Luckily, "Tom Sawyer's" drying out, too.
6. GEORGE: (MISUNDERSTANDING) Um... The name's "George."
7. CLARENCE: No, I'm talking about the book! I have "Tom Sawyer"--the book--along with me. But... you know..., there is a "Tom Sawyer" quality to you, George--Lots of ideas... wanderlust...
8. GEORGE: So how'd you fall in the river?
9. CLARENCE: "Fall in"???
10. GEORGE: That's backward. I jumped in to save you, remember?

1. CLARENCE: Well, it worked, right? You didn't go through with your plan, did you?
2. GEORGE: (PUZZLED) "Go through with my plan"???
3. CLARENCE: (QUIETLY) Y'know... errr... suicide.
4. NIGHT WATCHMAN: Hey! You can't commit suicide 'round here! I think it's against the law!
5. CLARENCE: It's certainly against the law where I come from.
6. NIGHT WATCHMAN: And where might that be, stranger?
7. CLARENCE: Oh... y'know... Heaven.
8. NIGHT WATCHMAN: What???
9. GEORGE: (SARCASTIC) Right...
10. CLARENCE: Errr... George... you're bleeding. Your lip.
11. GEORGE: Oh, that. Well, I got punched in the face in answer to a prayer.
12. CLARENCE: No, George. I'm the answer to your prayer. I was sent down from Heaven to help you.
13. GEORGE: Oh, come on...
14. CLARENCE: The name's Clarence Oddbody. I'm an "A-S-Two."
15. GEORGE: Are you, now?
16. CLARENCE: "A-S-Two. Angel, er... second class.
17. NIGHT WATCHMAN: "Angel"???" (SARCASTIC) Right! Well, I'll go see if any other "angels" just answered some prayers! (EXITING) When your clothes are dry, feel free to leave...

The NIGHT WATCHMAN EXITS via the door--UPSTAGE.

18. CLARENCE: (CALLS OUT TO NIGHT WATCHMAN) Thank you, so much, for the warm stove...
19. GEORGE: Wait a minute! Now... Why would an "angel" save me?

1. CLARENCE: Because killing yourself is a sin, George. Especially for eight-thousand dollars!
2. GEORGE: “Eight... thousand dollars”??? How in the--?
3. CLARENCE: --I know all about you, George Bailey. You see, I’m your “guardian angel”.
4. GEORGE: (TO HIMSELF) Uh-huh... Exactly the kind of angel I’d wind up with. (TO CLARENCE) “Angel,” huh? Where are your wings then?
5. CLARENCE: I’m an Angel, Second Class, George. I haven't won my wings yet. But you can help me earn them--by letting me help you!
6. GEORGE: Sure. You couldn’t “help” me with, say.... eight-thousand dollars, could ya?
7. CLARENCE: Oh... but we don't use money in Heaven.
8. GEORGE: Oh??? (SARCASTIC) Well, it sure comes in handy down here, bub!
9. CLARENCE: (CHUCKLES) Some may think so, but--
10. GEORGE: (SNOTTY) --It just dawned on me a bit late! But, if you know all about me, then you know I’m worth more dead than alive. Right?
11. CLARENCE: Oh... Don’t talk that way, George! I’ll never earn my wings if you keep that up. You don't know all the good you’ve done for people. I mean, if it wasn't for you--
12. GEORGE: --If it wasn't for me, they’d all be better off!--my wife.... kids... my friends...
13. CLARENCE: But killing yourself wouldn’t make them happier.
14. GEORGE: Hmm... (SIGHS) I suppose you’re right... (THINKS) Maybe it would be better if I had never been born to begin with!

1. CLARENCE: What???
2. GEORGE: Yeah... (HMMPH) I wish I'd never been born!
3. CLARENCE: (GETS AN IDEA) Oh.... That's a good one, George.
4. GEORGE: (SNOTTY) Good "what"?
5. CLARENCE: The plan you just gave me--it reminds me of "Tom Sawyer".
Well... Let me see here...
[CLARENCE SNAPS FINGERS (1X)]
6. GEORGE: Hey...! What the--
7. ~~TRACK SFX: [FX-20] "MAGICAL HARP GLISSANDO--UP"--LET IT FINISH.~~
8. CLARENCE: --There, George! I've granted your wish! You were never born!
9. GEORGE: (SKEPTICAL) "Never born," huh?
10. CLARENCE: That's right! You have no troubles; no missing eight-thousand dollars; no sheriff--or Mr. Potter--on your trail. Poof! A world without George Bailey.
12. GEORGE: (ALARMED) Hey, wait! [TOUCHES RIGHT EAR] My ear! Say that again?
13. CLARENCE: You heard me alright! You don't have a bad ear. That's because you are not the George Bailey you used to be. Now, you're-- well, in a way, you're... "nobody."
14. GEORGE: That's bonkers... (THINKS) But... I was deaf, and now I can... (ULP) hear???
15. CLARENCE: Your lip isn't bleeding, either... because you never got punched at Martini's Tavern.
16. GEORGE: (AMAZED) Hey...! No blood! What is this??? Bah! I need a drink. Yeah. How about it, "angel?" Let's you and me get a drink.
17. CLARENCE: "A drink"? Oh... but, George, I'm on duty.

1. GEORGE: C'mon! Join me! Once our clothes dry out, we can just--
2. CLARENCE: --Our clothes are dry, George. You see, they never got wet, since you never--
3. GEORGE: (UNSURE) --Never-- Bah! We'll just get dressed and walk back to Martini's for a-- Oh, oh, sorry-- I'll walk and you fly.
4. CLARENCE: Oh, but I haven't earned my--
5. GEORGE: --wings, right. Not yet. Well... after a few drinks, we'll both be flying. C'mon...

GEORGE and CLARENCE EXIT via the main door—UPSTAGE.

6. MUSIC: [MUS-36] (SOURCE) "JUKE JOINT JINGLE BELLS"—PLAYS UNDER ENTIRE SCENE.

**SCENE 3 - INT. NICK'S BAR – NIGHT - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(NICK, GEORGE, CLARENCE, GOWER, BOUNCER,
BAR CROWD, PIANIST)**

SETTING:

The room(STAGE LEFT is now a dirtier, nastier bar than Martini's Café. There's a piano in the corner and a cash register on a counter behind the bar. Perhaps also, a neon sign saying "Nick's Bar." The front door is STAGE LEFT.

AT RISE:

A PIANIST is banging away at a barrelhouse version of "Jingle Bells." A large, rowdy BAR CROWD is drinking and talking—rudely, with nasty laughter—under the scene. NICK—now a sour tough—is behind the bar. THE BOUNCER stands in the back. GEORGE and CLARENCE ENTER via the main door—STAGE LEFT—and step up to the bar.

7. NICK: (STEPS UP) What'll it be?
8. GEORGE: Err... Nick. Is Martini still here? I want to apologize for earlier, when I--
9. NICK: --You want a martini? Or are you a wise guy?
10. GEORGE: No. No! Just give me a double bourbon then.
12. NICK: (TO CLARENCE) And for you?

1. CLARENCE: (TO NICK) Clarence is the name. I'd just love... a flaming rum... No!.... hmmm... maybe mulled wine. Yes! With a dollop of nutmeg and just a dash of cloves. Hop to it, my lively lad.
2. NICK: (FED UP) Listen, "Clarence." We serve hard liquor here for men who want to get drunk quick. If that's not good enough, perhaps I could "convince" you otherwise!
3. GEORGE: (TO NICK) No. That's okay, Nick. Just give him the same as me.
4. NICK: Ehh. (EXITING) Two double-bourbons.
NICK steps away to prepare the cocktails.
5. GEORGE: Why is Nick acting that way? What's going on here? The tavern's all... "different."
6. CLARENCE: Bedford Falls is different. You got your wish, George. You were never born. It's a different world--one without you.
7. GEORGE: "Different."
NICK rings up a sale on the cash register.
8. LIVE SFX: CASH REGISTER DRAWER AND BELL.
9. CLARENCE: Ah! (SIGHS) Good! At least somebody made it!
10. GEORGE: Huh? Made "what"???
11. NICK: (ENTERING) Here are your drinks...
NICK steps up and sets their two cocktails down on the bar.
12. CLARENCE: (TO GEORGE) Well, "Every time a bell rings... an angel gets-his-wings."
13. NICK: (WARY) What did you say? "Angel"???
14. CLARENCE: (DRINKS) I'm an angel, second class.
15. GEORGE: (WHISPERS) Uh... Clarence... You might not want to talk about "angels" in a bar.

1. CLARENCE: Why? Don't they believe in angels?
2. GEORGE: (DRINKS) Sure, they believe, but--
3. CLARENCE: --then why would anyone be shocked to actually see one?
4. NICK: (SARCASTIC) "In a bar"??? ...Yeah!
5. GEORGE: (TO NICK) Sorry, Nick. He never grew up.
6. CLARENCE: Sure I did! Next September, I'll be... two hundred and ninety-three!

NICK slams a bottle down on the bar in disgust.

*During the following exchange, MR. GOWER sneaks into the bar via the front door—
STAGE LEFT.*

7. NICK: Two "pixies," eh? I'll bet you don't got any money either.
8. CLARENCE: Of course not! We don't use money in Heaven.
9. NICK: (FED UP) Well, this ain't Heaven, pal! That's enough! Out! Out! Get outta my bar!
10. GEORGE: "Your bar"??? Where's Martini, Nick?
11. NICK: You ain't gettin' no martini! ...And how do you know my name, anyway? I don't know you from Adam and-- (SEES GOWER) Hey! You again?
12. GOWER: (DRUNK) Spare some change, sir? Spare some--
13. NICK: (ANGRIER) --No, Rummy! You can't panhandle in here!
14. GEORGE: (GASPS) Mr. Gower? (TO GOWER) Mr. Gower! Listen! You know me! I'm George Bailey! George Bailey!
15. GOWER: (DRUNK) I know you??? Gooood. So buy me a drink--just a little one. Won't ya, mister?
16. NICK: Get out, Gower! (CALLS OUT) Ben! Throw that rummy out!
17. GOWER: Oh, no... No! Please... (AD LIB UNDER...)

BOUNCER scuffles with/hustles GOWER out the front door—STAGE LEFT.

BOUNCER returns.

1. GEORGE: But that's Mr. Gower! From the pharmacy!
2. NICK: Yeah! That drunkard went to prison--twenty years--for poisoning a kid. If you know him, you must be another jail-bird! (CALLS OUT) Ben! Get them out, too! Out! Out! Out!

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT

The full script & appendix runs 137 pages.

6. MUSIC: FADE OUT "JUKE JOINT JINGLE BELLS"

SCENE 4 - EXT. STREET OUTSIDE NICK'S - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945) (CLARENCE, GEORGE)

SETTING:

The apron STAGE LEFT is now the street outside Nick's Bar. Perhaps a street sign, maybe even some piles of snow or a tree.

AT RISE:

GEORGE and CLARENCE are recovering from being ousted.

7. TRACK SFX: [FX-21] WIND #1--UNDER.
8. GEORGE: What happened to Mr. Gower? How could that be? "Poisoning a kid"?
9. CLARENCE: Don't you see, George? You didn't stop Gower from putting poison into those capsules, so--
10. GEORGE: --Sure I did. I was there!
11. CLARENCE: No you weren't! Because you were never born.
12. GEORGE: Well, then who the hell am I?

1. CLARENCE: You're... nobody! You don't exist.
2. GEORGE: What do you mean? I'm George Bailey!
3. CLARENCE: No, you're not! No driver's license. No Four-F card... and no insurance policy.
4. GEORGE: (THINKS) Zuzu's petals. I put them--
GEORGE digs through his pants pocket looking for the flower petals he'd put there earlier.
5. CLARENCE: --Sorry, George. They aren't there either. You may have put those flower petals in your pocket--before--but now. Well...
6. GEORGE: They're gone. Gone! What am I? A... ghost?
7. CLARENCE: You've been given a gift, George: To see the world without you.
8. GEORGE: You're nuts! And you're making me nuts, too! I'm heading home to my wife and family--do you hear? (EXITING) Go away!

GEORGE runs off--STAGE RIGHT.

9. TRACK SFX: _____ FADE OUT WIND.
10. MUSIC: [MUS-37] _____ (SOURCE) "POTTERSVILLE STREETSCENE"--UNDER

**SCENE 5 - EXT. POTTERSVILLE MAIN ST. - SECONDS LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(GEORGE, OFFICER BERT, VIOLET, STREET CROWD)**

SETTING:

The apron serves as Downtown Pottersville--a bigger, badder version of Bedford Falls. A flat features nightclubs, casinos, boxing rings, pawnshops, liquor stores, a strip joint, a jail, etc. A beat up trash can sits at STAGE LEFT. A sign says, "Welcome to Pottersville." A Jazz combo's music spills out of nearby strip joint.

AT RISE:

OFFICER BERT is standing CENTER STAGE, looking mean. A STREET CROWD--some are sailors--is hanging around at LEFT. Shady pedestrians hurry by. GEORGE wanders in from STAGE RIGHT.

11. TRACK SFX: [FX-22] _____ DOWNTOWN POTTERSVILLE/TRAFFIC--UNDER.

1. GEORGE: (ENTERING) Hey, officer! Officer!
(RECOGNIZES) Bert! Hey! What's with this sign...
"Welcome to Pottersville."
2. OFFICER BERT: What about it? You're in downtown Pottersville.
3. GEORGE: "Pottersville"??? But where's the Building and Loan...? The Bailey Brothers' Building and Loan.
4. OFFICER BERT: (PUZZLED) What? Oh, that closed down years ago. As you can see, it's a pawnshop now.
5. GEORGE: But what about the--
- Arguing toughs tussle—STAGE LEFT. Someone kicks over the trash can. A drunken VIOLET staggers out of the crowd. She's dressed as a hooker. VIOLET stalks past Officer Bert. BERT stops VIOLET.*
6. OFFICER BERT: (TO VIOLET) --Hey! Where do you think you're going, Violet?
7. VIOLET: (ENTERING)(DRUNK) Get your filthy hands offa me, copper! I didn't jack-roll nobody! That sailor had it coming!
8. OFFICER BERT: He did, eh? Well, you're coming with me--
9. VIOLET: --I said, lay offa me! I know the mayor, the judge, and the chief! And I'll have ya bounced off the force! You can't touch me--
- The rowdy toughs tussle again. BERT scuffles with VIOLET*
10. OFFICER BERT: --Enough out of you! Get in the wagon! I'm running you in.
OFFICER BERT begins to drag VIOLET off LEFT.
11. VIOLET: (CRYING) No! No! No! (AD LIB)
12. GEORGE: Wait! Violet! (TO BERT) Hey, I know that girl! She--
13. OFFICER BERT: --Yeah. You and every other wolf in town! Now, move along! ...before I run you in too!

OFFICER BERT leads VIOLET off LEFT, passing ERNIE'S TAXI, headed RIGHT. The crowd thins out.

1. MUSIC: FADE OUT "POTTERSVILLE STREETSCENE"
2. TRACK SFX: FADE OUT DOWNTOWN POTTERSVILLE/TRAFFIC.
3. MUSIC: [MUS-38] (BRIDGE) "I KNOW THAT GIRL"--FADE UNDER

**SCENE 6 - INT. ERNIE'S CAB - NIGHT - SECONDS LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(GEORGE, ERNIE)**

SETTING:

The same street.

AT RISE:

GEORGE flags down ERNIE'S TAXI and gets in. They drive towards STAGE RIGHT.

4. TRACK SFX: [FX-23] INTERIOR OF CAB DRIVING--UNDER
5. GEORGE: Step on the gas, Ernie. You gotta get me home. I'm losing my mind!
6. ERNIE: (TOUGH) Uh-huh... So where's "home", pal?
7. GEORGE: Now, cut it out, Ernie! Don't try that on me. I live at three-twenty Sycamore!
8. ERNIE: (SKEPTICAL) "Three-twenty Sycamore"?
9. GEORGE: Yeah! And hurry! Zuzu's sick.
10. ERNIE: Whatever you say.
11. GEORGE: Listen, Ernie, I-- Something crazy's going on here. I'm-- I don't know... loopy. (SIGH) Tell me, now. Your name's Ernie Bishop, isn't it? And you and your wife and son live over in Bailey Park.
12. ERNIE: (NASTILY) What? What about my wife?
13. GEORGE: Deloris! I've been to your house! The one I built for you.
14. ERNIE: My wife ran away five years ago--and took the kid with her! I rent one of Potter's shacks! And I've never seen you before in my life, so what are you calling me "Ernie" for?

1. GEORGE: (ULP) Okay, Ern..., I mean-- (SIGHS) Okay. Just keep driving.

ERNIE'S TAXI "drives" OFF-STAGE RIGHT.

2. TRACK SFX: FADE OUT INTERIOR OF CAB DRIVING.
3. MUSIC: [MUS-39] (BRIDGE) "EMPTY GRANVILLE HOUSE"—PLAYS UNDER SCENE---FADES AT "IN THERE, OFFICER!"

**SCENE 7 - INT. EMPTY GRANVILLE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(GEORGE, CLARENCE, ERNIE, OFFICER BERT)**

SETTING:

The room(STAGE LEFT is now a "ghost" of George and Mary's comfy home. Nobody has lived here since the Granville family moved out in the 1920s. Perhaps furniture stacked and covered with sheets. Cobwebs, peeling wallpaper, vandalized walls, water damage, etc. The functional front door is STAGE LEFT.

AT RISE:

GEORGE is offstage, just outside the front door—STAGE LEFT. CLARENCE stands in the dark in a corner. OFFICER BERT and ERNIE are offstage (outside) awaiting their cues.

GEORGE ENTERS tentatively, via the front door. He leaves it open.

4. GEORGE: (CALLS OUT) Mary? Kids? Where is everybody? Petey! Janie! Zuzu! Tommy! Hello?
5. CLARENCE: (STEPS UP) This house is just an abandoned wreck, George. You have no wife--or children.
6. GEORGE: What's happened to them? I just want to--
7. ERNIE: [OFF-STAGE] (TO BERT) --In there, officer! That guy! He's off his rocker!
8. OFFICER BERT: [OFF-STAGE] Hold it, you two! This is the police! Put your hands up!
9. GEORGE: Bert! Wait! It's me...
10. OFFICER BERT: (ENTERING) Take it easy, mister! Come along, quiet-like, and we'll get you some help.

1. GEORGE: Bert! What's happened to you? (FRANTIC) Look! It's this guy, here! He-- he's an angel! I've been hypnotized.
2. CLARENCE: Well, I am an angel, but we don't hypnotize people. We prefer to--
3. OFFICER BERT: --Right. Well, I'm taking the both of you in.
4. ERNIE: I'm with you, Bert.

Suddenly, CLARENCE grabs OFFICER BERT and begins tussling with him—grabbing his gun hand.

5. OFFICER BERT: (STARTLED) Hey! Ow! Let go of me, you--
6. CLARENCE: (TO GEORGE) --Now's your chance, George! Run!
- GEORGE runs out the front door—STAGE LEFT. ERNIE, cowardly backs away.*
7. OFFICER BERT: Owwww! Bite me, will ya...! (STRUGGLES UNDER) (TO ERNIE) Hey, Cabbie! Give me a hand here!
8. ERNIE: Yes, sir! (HE JOINS THE FRAY.)
9. CLARENCE: Hey! You wouldn't smite an old angel, now? Wait...!
(CALLS OUT) Oh, Superintendent? Superintendent? Help!
Help me!
10. MUSIC: [MUS-40] (GLISSANDO UP) "MAGICAL HELP"—QUICK CUE

CLARENCE "disintegrates"—slips away—while OFFICER BERT and ERNIE struggle into each other's arms.

**SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT
THIS POINT
The full script & appendix runs 137
pages.**

15. MUSIC: [MUS-41] (BRIDGE) "ESCAPE" TO "MEAN MOTHER"--FADE
UNDER...

**SCENE 8 - EXT. MA BAILEY'S PORCH - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(MA BAILEY, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The room STAGE RIGHT is dressed as the front porch of the Old Bailey Boarding House. A flat will serve. On the porch, there's no rocking chair, nothing. A light is on in a window—perhaps there's a porch light. The front door—UPSTAGE—is closed, and locked. When it opens, a chain holds it from being opened much—just enough to see her face.

AT RISE:

GEORGE runs up, from OFF RIGHT. MA BAILEY is inside her house.

GEORGE pounds frantically on the front door—3 knocks, then another 3 knocks. After a pause, MA BAILEY opens the door—but just a crack. She's a secretive, tough-shelled old woman—full of scorn and mistrust.

1. MA BAILEY: (SOURLY) Yeah...?
2. GEORGE: Mother!
3. MA BAILEY: (REVOTED) Mother? Who are you?
4. GEORGE: I'm George! Surely, you remember me! George!
5. MA BAILEY: George who?
6. GEORGE: Mother! Listen-- You gotta help me! Something terrible's happened. Something's happened to everybody! If I can just come in and stay until I get over it, maybe then--
7. MA BAILEY: --Get over what? No vacancies. Scram!
8. GEORGE: But we're family! You know... me, your brother-in-law-- Uncle Billy, and--
9. MA BAILEY: (SUSPICIOUS) --You know Billy?
10. GEORGE: Sure! I saw him today at the--
11. MA BAILEY: --Today? Ha! Billy's locked away in the nut house! ...Ever since he lost his business.
12. GEORGE: Uncle Billy? The nut house? What--

1. MA BAILEY: --The Pottersville nut house! And that's where you belong too! Now, beat it!

MA BAILEY slams the door and locks it. GEORGE pounds on the door—5X--under...

2. GEORGE: Mother! Open up. It's me!
3. MA BAILEY: (FROM OTHER SIDE OF DOOR) Beat it, you! I'm calling the cops! So, you better run!

GEORGE staggers back from the door—stunned by the rejection. He exits—STAGE RIGHT.

4. MUSIC: [MUS-42] (BED) "SHATTERED" TO "THE CEMETERY"—PLAYS UNDER SCENE. FADES AT "TELL ME WHERE SHE IS."

A fog wafts in from STAGE LEFT—the Cemetery.

**SCENE 9 - EXT. CEMETERY - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(CLARENCE, GEORGE)**

SETTING:

The apron STAGE LEFT—where "Heaven" used to be—is now a graveyard. Tombstones dot the stage. Fog drifts across the stage. (Think: Haunted, but Sad.)

AT RISE:

GEORGE wanders in from OFF-RIGHT. CLARENCE ENTERS from OFF-LEFT.

5. TRACK SFX: [FX-24] WIND #2--UNDER.
6. CLARENCE: (STEPS UP) (SIGHS) Looking for "Bailey Park," George?
7. GEORGE: You again! Well... where's the housing development? ...Bailey Park! My dad and I built it...right... right...(UNSURE) here...
8. CLARENCE: As you can see... It's a cemetery, George.
9. GEORGE: "Cemetery"? Where are the houses...? The people I knew...?
10. CLARENCE: Oh... (SIGHS) They're here, George.... They're here.
11. GEORGE: What?

1. CLARENCE: Amidst these gravestones. Martini's buried here.... the little Blaine girl... there. Your father... and... right next to him--
- GEORGE bends down to read a tombstone. Upon it is inscribed "Harry Bailey (1909-1919)"*
2. GEORGE: (UNCOMPREHENDINGLY) --Ha- Harry??? Harry Bailey??? Dead?
3. CLARENCE: Little Harry fell through the ice... and drowned at the age of nine.
4. GEORGE: (ANGRY) No! No! Harry got the Medal of Honor! Harry shot down the kamikazes--and saved the lives of every man on that troop-ship.
5. CLARENCE: Every man on that troop-ship died, George!
6. GEORGE: Wha--? How???
7. CLARENCE: Harry wasn't there to save them... because you weren't there to save Harry.
8. GEORGE: (SHOCKED) "Me"???
9. CLARENCE: Strange, isn't it? Every man's life touches the lives of so many others. Y'know, George, you had a wonderful life.
10. GEORGE: "Wonderful"???
11. CLARENCE: It's been said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is spread upon the Earth... but men do not see it." Don't you see, George? See what a mistake it would be to throw your life away?
12. GEORGE: (SUDDENLY BROKEN) But-- all the things I... wanted to... do.
13. CLARENCE: (SIGHS) It's easier to want what you get... than to get... what you want.
14. GEORGE: (PAUSE) But... But... Clarence...
15. CLARENCE: Yes?

1. GEORGE: (BROKEN) What about... Mary? My wife.
2. CLARENCE: But you don't have a...
- GEORGE suddenly—and angrily--grabs CLARENCE by the collar. He's unhinged.*
3. MUSIC: FADE OUT "THE CEMETERY"—UNDER.
4. GEORGE: (URGENTLY) --Where is she? Where--
5. CLARENCE: --You won't like it, George.
6. GEORGE: (DESPERATELY) What's become of her? (THREATENING)
Where's my wife?!
7. CLARENCE: Haven't you seen enough, George?
8. GEORGE: (ANGRIER) Where is she? Tell me!
9. CLARENCE: (FEARFULLY) Err... uh... She... never married. She's
become... an "old maid"!
10. GEORGE: Where? Tell me! Now!
(FURIOUS) Or do I have to beat it out of you?
- GEORGE begins choking CLARENCE—really!*
11. CLARENCE: (GASPS) Okay! Okay, George! The library! She works at the
library! About now, she's closing up for the night. But she
won't--
12. GEORGE: (EXITING) --Mary! Mary! Help me! Mary!
- GEORGE runs off—STAGE LEFT.*
13. CLARENCE: George! George! Come back! (Exiting—STAGE LEFT) Oh...
(Sighs) There must be an easier way to get my wings.
14. TRACK SFX: FADE OUT WIND--UNDER.
15. MUSIC: [MUS-43] (BRIDGE) "LIGHTLY" INTO "OLD MAID"--FADE UNDER

**SCENE 10 - EXT. LIBRARY SIDEWALK - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(GEORGE, MARY, PEDESTRIANS, OFFICER BERT)**

SETTING:

The apron is again the Pottersville street. Signs, fireplugs, trash cans. The library—perhaps a flat—is CENTER STAGE. And features the Henry Potter Library—with an imposing (non-functional) door.

AT RISE:

PEDESTRIANS walk by. MARY—now a spinster—has just locked the library door.

GEORGE runs in from STAGE LEFT. GEORGE accosts MARY.

1. GEORGE: [CUE] (ENTERING) Mary! Mary! I...
2. MARY: Sorry, but the library closed early tonight.
3. GEORGE: No! Mary! It's me! George...! George! C'mon-- You know me! I--
4. MARY: --No. (WARY) I don't think so. Excuse me.
5. GEORGE: (Grabbing her) Mary!
6. MARY: (Shocked) Let me go!

GEORGE and MARY scuffle. He won't let her go. He's frantic.

7. GEORGE: (GRABBING HER) Mary! I--
8. MARY: (SHOCKED) --Let me go!

PEDESTRIANS begin to notice the scuffle.

9. GEORGE: Mary! I want you! Please! I know you! We--
10. MARY: (STRUGGLING) --No! Stop! Let me go!
11. GEORGE: Mary, please! Please! Where are the kids?--our kids? I need you, Mary! I beg you!
12. MARY: (STRUGGLING) Let go! Get away! (CALLS OUT) Help! Help!

PEDESTRIANS converge on the tussle. More run in from OFF-LEFT.

13. GEORGE: No! No, Mary! It's me--George! George!

1. MARY: Help! Somebody help me! He's mad!
(SCREAMS) Ahhhhhh!
2. GEORGE: Mary! It's me! Your husband!
3. MARY: (SCREAMS) Ahhhhhh!
- SEVERAL PEDESTRIANS restrain GEORGE.*
4. PEDESTRIANS: Ad-lib: "Hold it now, you!" , "That's enough, bub!" , etc.
GEORGE tries to free himself from the crowd. MARY backs away—LEFT--from the spectacle.
5. GEORGE: (STRUGGLING) Hey! Hey! Get out of my way! That's Mary!
My wife! Let me go!
6. MARY: (BACKING AWAY) No...! No...!
7. GEORGE: Mary! Wait! Wait! Don't run away!
8. MARY: Help! Help! There's a madman after me! (Exiting—STAGE LEFT) Stop him! Help!
9. GEORGE: (BREAKING FREE) I've got to see her! (EXITING—STAGE LEFT) Mary! Mary! Please! Please...!
- OFFICER BERT runs in from STAGE RIGHT. He has his revolver drawn and a police whistle in his mouth.*
10. PEDESTRIANS: (AD-LIB: UPROAR--"There he goes, officer!" "Get him!"
CONTINUE THIS CHATTER UNDER...)
- The PEDESTRIANS and OFFICER BERT chase after George—EXITING STAGE LEFT.*
11. TRACK SFX: [FX-25] POLICE-WHISTLE-GUNSHOTS-2X--BED--UNDER
12. MUSIC: [MUS-44] (BED) "LYNCH MOB" TO "REDEMPTION" THEME--
HOLD UNDER, UNTIL HARP GLISSANDO, THEN FADE.

SCENE 11 - EXT. RIVER-BRIDGE - MINUTES LATER (DECEMBER 1945)
(GEORGE, CLARENCE)

SETTING:

The bridge—on the apron STAGE RIGHT—is as it was previously: a raised “bridge” deck, with a guard rail. Fog pours across the stage.

AT RISE:

GEORGE wanders in from STAGE LEFT—exhausted from running. He mounts the bridge and peers into the waters below. CLARENCE is UPSTAGE of the bridge, in the dark.

1. TRACK SFX: [FX-26] WIND #3--FADE OUT BY “THAT’S THE SPIRIT”
2. GEORGE: (CALLS OUT) Clarence...! Clarence...! (PAUSE) Are you here...? Clarence! Where’d you go? (DESPAIRING) Is any-body there?
3. CLARENCE: [DISTANT] Here I am, George. (STEPS TO MIC) Are you going to jump off this bridge... again?
4. GEORGE: Clarence... I want things back the way they were. Put me back into the world. I want to have been born! I do!
5. CLARENCE: But you’ll face scandal and prison! The newspapers... bankruptcy... disgrace!
6. GEORGE: (HUMBLED) Yes! But I’ll do it! Anything! Gladly! ...Just let me see my family, Clarence! I want to live!
7. CLARENCE: (RELIEVED) Ah! That’s the spirit, George! Don’t despair... (STEPS BACK) Always be willing!
8. GEORGE: (SOBBING) Oh... yes! Can you do it? Can you do it for me, Clarence? (PRAYING) I want to live, again! God! Let me live again...! Yes! Let me live again...!
9. TRACK SFX: [FX-27] “MAGICAL HARP GLISSANDO--DOWN”--UNDER GEORGE.
10. GEORGE: (PRAYING) Yes, God, I want to live! Yes, God, please...! Oh, yes. Oh, yes...(AD LIB)

CLARENCE “disappears” into the fog.

OFFICER BERT—searching for George—calls out from OFF-LEFT.

1. OFFICER BERT: (CALLING OUT) George...? What are you doing here?

OFFICER BERT enters from OFF-LEFT. His flashlight illuminates George on the bridge.

2. GEORGE: (DAZED) Huh...? Bert!? (FEARFUL) Stay away! Stay away, officer! (ANGRY) Come any closer and I'll... I'll... (CALLS OUT) Clarence! Clarence! Save me!

3. OFFICER BERT: What in “the Sam Hill” are you talking about, George?

4. GEORGE : Huh . . . ? ! (PUZZLED) “George”? “George”???

5. OFFICER BERT: Well, that is your name, isn't it?

6. GEORGE: Oh, Bert! You recognize me? You know me?

7. OFFICER BERT: Know you so well, I've been searching all over town for you! Where've you been?

8. GEORGE: “Where've I been”? Wait! Say that again. I can't hear you.

9. OFFICER BERT: I'll try the good ear. (SPEAKS TO GEORGE'S LEFT EAR) I said, “Where'd you go.”

10. GEORGE: Why, Bert...! (REALIZES) I'm alive! Alive again!

11. OFFICER BERT: (PUZZLED) “Alive... again”? Are you all right, George? Hey... your lip's bleeding.

12. GEORGE: My lip? (ELATED) Hey...! My lip is bleeding! Gee! Look at all that blood oozing out there! Well, what do you know?!

13. OFFICER BERT: It's not that bad, George.

14. GEORGE: Oh and-- Hey! Zuzu's petals? I had them in my right pocket over--

GEORGE searches in his pants pockets. He finds the flower petals.

15. OFFICER BERT: --Petals? Flower petals?

1. GEORGE: (GASPS) They're here! Here in my pocket! Aww...., Merry Christmas, Bert!
2. OFFICER BERT: (UNSURE) Well... Merry Christmas to you, too, George. Now, hop in the squad car and I'll drive you home. I just got a stop by the--
3. GEORGE: --Sorry, Bert, but I can't wait! (EXITING) I'm going home! And I know the way! Boy, do I know the way! ...Merry Christmas!
4. OFFICER BERT: (BEMUSED) Have it your way. (EXITING) Merry Christmas, George...
5. MUSIC: [MUS-45] (BED) "ORGAN: HARK THE HERALD ANGELS"--
UNDER--THEN FADES

Fog floods the stage. Snow falls. GEORGE ENTERS—running—from STAGE LEFT, heading RIGHT. He's humble and blissful as he walks through town now—with the audience serving as the townscape. GEORGE waves to the buildings and the people as he proceeds RIGHT.

6. GEORGE: (WAVING) Merry Christmas, Bedford Falls!... Oh! How I love this town!.... Hey! Merry Christmas, old Building and Loan...! Hurray!.... Merry Christmas, Mr. Potter!... Everybody! (LAUGHS) Ha-ha-ha-ha! (AD LIB) (EXITS—STAGE RIGHT)

SCENE 12 - EXT. OLD GRANVILLE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER. (12/24/1945)
(GEORGE, REPORTERS, CARTER, SHERIFF, PETEY, JANIE, TOMMY, ZUZU, MARY, UNCLE BILLY, ANNI, ERNIE, VIOLET, HARRY, MA BAILEY, EVERYBODY)

SETTING:

The room STAGE LEFT is once again George and Mary's beloved home--as it was when he stormed out earlier. The bridge model is gone—the table it was on is empty. The room STAGE RIGHT is again Zuzu's bedroom.

AT RISE:

Several REPORTERS, CARTER and THE SHERIFF stand in the living room, chatting. The 4 Bailey kids—PETEY, JANIE, TOMMY and ZUZU are in Zuzu's room, reading a story.

GEORGE ENTERS from the front door—OFF LEFT.

1. GEORGE: (CALLS OUT) Mary, I-- (NOTICES) What's with all the-- (REALIZES) Oh! Reporters! The Sheriff! ...Yes! (LAUGHS) Well...! Merry Christmas... reporters! Sheriff! (SEES CARTER) And you--
2. CARTER: (STEPS UP) --Carter, bank-examiner... Mr. Bailey, your books show a deficit of--
3. GEORGE: --Yes! Eight-thousand dollars, Right?
4. SHERIFF: (STEPS UP) (TO CARTER) --Excuse me. (TO GEORGE) Mr. Bailey... I have a warrant, here, for your--
5. GEORGE: --arrest? Yes! A warrant, Sheriff! (CHORTLES) Christmas in jail! Isn't that wonderful?
6. SHERIFF: (TAKEN ABACK) Actually, George, it's not so--
7. REPORTERS: (AD-LIB: "Mr. Bailey..." "Is it true the Building and Loan...")
8. GEORGE: --Yes. In a minute, folks. (CALLS OUT) Mary...? Kids? I'm home! I'm home! (TO REPORTERS) Oh, I love this marvelous, drafty, old house! (CALLS OUT) Mary...? (SEES KIDS) Kids!

The BAILEY KIDS hear George's voice. PETEY, JANIE and TOMMY jump off the bed, and run into the living room. ZUZU is slower in getting out of bed.

9. BAILEY KIDS: (AD LIB) (ENTERING) Daddy! Daddy! You're home. Merry Christmas, Daddy! Merry Christmas!
10. GEORGE: Yes! (KISSING EACH) Janie! Petey! Tommy! Oh, I love you so! Where's your mother? Where is she?

1. JANIE BAILEY: Out looking for you, Daddy--her and Uncle Billy.
2. ZUZU BAILEY: (ENTERING) Da-dee!
3. GEORGE: Zuzu! Merry Christmas, sweetheart! How are you feeling?
4. ZUZU BAILEY: All better, Da-dee! Not a smidge-- Not a smidge of temp-a-shure!
5. GEORGE: "Not a smidge"! It's a miracle!

MARY ENTERS via the front door.

6. MARY: (CALLS OUT) George??? George!
7. JANIE BAILEY: Mommy's home! Mommy!
8. GEORGE: Oh, Mary...!
9. MARY: (RUNS UP) George, where did you--
10. GEORGE: --Mary! (HUGS HER)
11. MARY: George, dear! (SHE KISSES GEORGE)
12. GEORGE: Mary! I have to hold you! (HUGS HER) Oh, it's you, Mary! You! You're real! Oh..., you don't know what happened!
13. MARY: And you don't know what's happened, George!

The front door opens and a crowd rushes in—CHARLIE, MRS. DAVIS, MARTINI, MR. GOWER, MRS. THOMPSON, ERNIE. They have baskets filled with dollar bill—and party foods, liquor, gifts. Throughout the scene, people keep entering—joining the party.

14. CROWD: (AD-LIB: "Hooray!" "George!" "Merry Christmas!"-- CONTINUED HAPPY BUZZ--UNDER.)
15. UNCLE BILLY: (ENTERING WITH A BASKET OF CASH) George! Look what I've got!
16. GEORGE: Uncle Billy...!
17. UNCLE BILLY: Money, George! Bushels... of money!

UNCLE BILLY dumps the basket of dollars on the table.

18. GEORGE: You found the eight thousand dollars?

1. UNCLE BILLY: No, George. Your wife saved the day! Didn't you, Mary?!
2. MARY: Well, people heard you were in trouble, dear--your friends! They've pitched in to help!
3. GEORGE: Annie? A pie... and your "strong-box"?
4. ANNIE: (STEPS UP) Oh, I've just been saving this here money for a divorce... in case I ever get a husband. (LAUGHS)

Members of the crowd step up and contribute money to the pile.

5. CROWD: (AD-LIB: "Here's more, George!" "Here's my share!" "Merry Christmas, George!" etc.--CONTINUED BUSTLE UNDER...)
7. GEORGE: (ELATED) Martini! Mrs. Davis-- and Mr. Gower! Mr. Gower...! Thank you! Mrs. Thompson! Thank you! Eddy! Tom! Yes! I can't believe it! (TO ERNIE) Ernie!
8. ERNIE: (STEPS UP) Well, I wouldn't have a roof over my head if it wasn't for you, George!
9. CROWD: (AD-LIB: CLAMORS OF APPROVAL--CONTINUED BUZZ UNDER...)

MARTINI and ERNIE begin pouring drinks for everybody.

10. VIOLET: (ENTERING) Here, Georgie. Just call it a "loan"...! (SHE CONTRIBUTES SOME MONEY TO THE PILE.)
11. GEORGE: Violet! You didn't go...?
12. VIOLET: Naw... This town needs a town-flirt!

MARY steps up--waving a telegram that was just delivered to the door.

13. MARY: Wait, everybody! Here's a cable from Sam Wainwright! It reads... (READS) "Gower notified me you needed cash. Stop. My office will advance you up to twenty-five thousand dollars. Stop. Hee-haw and Merry Christmas. Sam."
14. CROWD: (AD-LIB: CHEERS--CONTINUED BUZZ UNDER...)

1. GEORGE: I don't know what to say...!
- OFFICER BERT, MA BAILEY, and HARRY ENTER—via the front door.*
2. GEORGE: (GASPS) Mother! And Harry!
3. MA BAILEY: (STEPS UP) George! Mary called us down in Washington, and--
4. HARRY BAILEY: (STEPS UP) --we flew in as fast as we could.
5. ERNIE: (TO THE CROWD) A toast! C'mon, Hey! I propose a toast! A toast! Go ahead, Harry!
- The CROWD raises their glasses.*
- JANIE sits at the piano—eager to play. (Or—optionally--an adult prepares to play.)*
6. HARRY BAILEY: Yes...! A toast... to my brother, George...! The richest man in town! (CONDUCTING THE TOAST) To George!
7. CROWD: (AD-LIB: "To George!")
- The CROWD clinks their glasses and drinks and cheers.*
8. MUSIC: [MUS-46] (BED) JANIE AT PIANO BEGINS "AULD LANG SYNE"--UNDER.
9. CROWD: (BEGINS SINGING "AULD LANG SYNE"--UP AT FIRST, THEN QUIETLY UNDER.)
- MARY picks up a hardback book from under the Christmas tree.*
10. MARY: George, somebody left a book, here, under the tree. See?
11. GEORGE: (CHUCKLES) Why, it's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."
- MARY opens the book to the title page.*
12. MARY: And there's an inscription. (SHE HOLDS THE BOOK UP TO GEORGE.) What's it say?
13. GEORGE: (READS QUIETLY) "Dear George, Remember... no man is a failure... who has friends. Thanks for the wings... Love, Clarence."
14. MARY: "Clarence?"

1. GEORGE: Yeah. A very “old”... friend of mine.

GEORGE, picks up ZUZU in his arms.

2. ZUZU BAILEY: Da-dee, look! See my little bell hanging on the Christmas tree?

3. GEORGE: I see it, Zuzu.

4. ZUZU BAILEY: I hung it up there all by myself!--and a ladder. (PAUSE)
Can you ring it, Da-dee?

GEORGE Reaches up and rings Zuzu’s bell on the tree.

5. ZUZU BAILEY: Daddy! Teacher says, “Every time a bell rings..., some angel gets-their-wings!”

6. GEORGE: (Joyous) That's right, Zuzu. That's right! That's right.
(Looking Heaven-ward) Thank you, Clarence. Thank you!
Yes... It truly is a wonderful life! Happy landings!

7. ALL: (Sings “Auld Lang Syne” chorus)
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll take a cup of kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!

PRODUCTION NOTE:

As applause begins to subside, have the cast lead the audience in a reprise of “Auld Lang Syne.”

8: MUSIC: [MUS-47] ORGAN--"AULD LANG SYNE" TO A FINISH.

Auld Lang Syne:

CHORUS:
For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

=====

OPTIONAL ENDING: (Two choruses of the song)

1: MUSIC: [MUS-48] ORGAN--"AULD LANG SYNE" TO A FINISH.

**SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT
THIS POINT**

**The full script & appendix runs 137
pages.**

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OPTIONAL WALK-OUT MUSIC

3: MUSIC: [MUS-49] WALK-OUT MUSIC--"WONDERFUL CREDITS"--FADE
OUT AS NEEDED.

— END OF PLAY —

Writer/Director's notes for "It's A Wonderful Life"

by Anthony E. Palermo, playwright & sound effects designer

My adaptation of *It's A Wonderful Life* brings this beloved tale to the stage--as a particularly imaginative theatrical production. It began as a radio-on-stage adaptation and then I remodeled it to work as a traditional stage piece, with sets, costumes and props. I kept the extensive sound design from the radio version—which saves troupes from having to reinvent these wheels.

I also offer pre-recorded music tracks--featuring a period-correct theatre organ, upright piano and accordion (and jazz-combo for one scene)--to provide a 1940s style underscoring. However, if you have a live accompanist, they can listen to the tracks and learn to duplicate the style for the many musical bridges, stings and beds called for in the script. (Currently no printed sheet music is available for the show, but we look to offer one in 2010.)

While several playwrights offer radio and stage versions of *Wonderful Life*, I am not just a playwright, but a professional *radio* dramatist and performer who brings the experience of doing over 900 radio shows (on-air and on-stage) to my adaptation. My experience is particularly useful here, since I wrote and produced the hit radio-on-stage *Wonderful Life* adaptation for a 6-week run at the 680-seat Pasadena Playhouse in 2005. Our rotating casts included such stars as Michael Richards, Joe Mantegna, Alfred Molina, Stephanie Zimbalist, Sharon Lawrence, Jamie Farr, Tony Shaloub, Orson Bean, Susan Sullivan and others. My 2011 cast at L.A.'s Geffen Playhouse included Annette Bening, Peter Gallagher, Bryan Cranston, Shirley Jones and Leslie Jordan

With this in mind, I've created a traditional stage version that is both faithful *and* fresh. Rather than merely present "the film, *cloned* for the stage", my adaptation fully explores the themes in Capra's original, but also features theatrical hijinx that audiences so enjoy.

The dialogue is *not* word-for-word from the film, but has been sharpened and tweaked to underline psychological shadings that reinforce Frank Capra's themes. Please consider my intentions when producing this script.

Thematic Approach

In order to present this play as something deeper than a nostalgia trip or mere rerun of Frank Capra's film, you must understand the themes working beneath the surface. While my adaptation abounds in exuberance and comedy, it explores the sorrow, regret, sacrifice and redemption undergirding the story. Take note as I explain the subtext of the story and how my adaptation uses it to make the drama come alive.

George Bailey's Rise and Fall (and Rise)

It's a Wonderful Life is an Americanized version of Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. Only here, George Bailey's kindly Bob Cratchit-like clerk character meets the otherworldly visitor who re-educates him via a frightful "Christmas-Yet-To-Come." If you can see how Frank Capra echoes Dickens, you can make the story resonate with audiences better—a more engaging theatrical experience. On the surface, *Wonderful Life* seems a folksy 1940s romp—the trials & tribulations of George Bailey—but you'll find Dickens' *Carol* beneath the Americana. While the miserly Mr. Potter may seem the stand-in for Scrooge, as the story progresses, George Bailey takes on many Scrooge-isms.

For example: George was a dreamy youth, as was the boy Scrooge—fascinated by the exotic worlds of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Ali Baba*. But for all George's longing for adventure, he—like Scrooge—winds up merely counting money. Both George and Scrooge are tormented by Desire and Fear; For George, his desire to see the big world out there, and his fear of being trapped forever in small town America.

Yet, the more George sacrifices his dreams, the more frustrated and resentful he becomes, finally cracking under the pressure of a missing \$8000, which would mean prison—a horrible fate for the wanderlust-y George. After a lifetime of sacrifice, George decides he will give no more. He snaps, becoming a monster who abuses his family and friends, fights strangers, and even attempts suicide—the ultimate selfish act. George has given in completely to his dark side.

Mr. Potter, George's Evil Twin

George is unconsciously similar to his nemesis, Mr. Potter, whom fate has somehow shackled him to. There's a lesson here for George. He and Potter are both ambitious, imaginative men, but both have seen frustration in life; Potter is physically crippled; while George is crippled by circumstance. George can no more run away from Bedford Falls than can Mr. Potter in his wheelchair. Potter only lives for money and George plans to die for money—the insurance payout to cover the \$8000 shortfall. Both are shrewd businessmen—neither losing his head in the bank panic—but both love being in control—of their own lives and controlling (either aiding or squashing) their fellow citizens.

This doppelgänger aspect is important—and I underline it in my adaptation—with Potter thoroughly understanding George's fears and desires, which he uses to taunt George. But Potter is mistaken in his cynicism and sourness. No amount of money or control will leaven his bitter resentment. Mr. Potter functions like the ghost of Jacob Marley in Dickens' *Carol*; He shows the hero where he'll end up if he gives in to selfishness and misanthropy: unloved; damned to a personal Hell.

Throughout my script, Potter recognizes himself in George and seeks to tempt George to the dark side of money and power. Their many confrontations are actually George arguing with his own dark self. George thinks he can defy his "inner-Mr. Potter." Ironically, it is only when George fully gives *into* his dark side, that he can escape Potter's wretched fate. The paradox of *Wonderful Life!* is that George's road to Heaven must go through Potter's Inferno. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a similar tale of a mortal man on a fantastical journey through a dystopia full of grotesques, yet who finally emerges into the light of humility and selflessness. One reason Frank Capra's film has such an emotional effect upon people is that George's dilemma resonates with themes central to Western culture and religion.

George's Dark Night of the Soul

ironically, one-ups Mr. Potter's devilish temptations by granting George's most selfish desire—to escape from Bedford Falls by having *never been born*. George *contemplates* suicide, but Clarence makes it happen. This plan is from Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*—where a dream-chasing adventurer with big plans decides to fake his death and, thus, see everyone in town mourn him at his funeral. Capra didn't have Clarence quote from *Tom Sawyer*, but themes of death and resurrection are threaded throughout the film. George is both Tom Sawyer *and* Ebenezer Scrooge—an Everyman in crisis.

Like Tom Sawyer, George gets his death-wish, but the funeral he attends is for everyone else! George's absence transforms quiet little Bedford Falls into the nightmarish "Pottersville"—awash in violence, fear, and loneliness. Pottersville is a fallen world of ruined marriages, broken lives, tawdry bars, tough cops, and rampant vice. George gets to experience what his hometown would be like without his do-gooder efforts. He sees that the life he hated—with his dreams denied, scrounging just to get by—actually made a big difference to those around him.

This dystopia sequence was the entirety of Philip Van Doren Stern's unpublished short story, *The Greatest Gift*—the source material that Frank Capra and his writers reworked into the *Wonderful Life* film. However, both Van Doren Stern's and Capra's nightmare scenarios spring from the "Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come" sequence from Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. In Pottersville, we see a collection of Dickensian lowlifes—from Nick's Bar, to a rum-head Mr. Gower, to a nasty Violet Bick being arrested for jack-rolling a sailor. Both stories pivot on a soul-shattering graveyard revelation.

In the Hell of Pottersville, several characters are dead because George wasn't around to aid them. I handle this by having Clarence *tour* George through Pottersville's cemetery—what would have been the "Bailey Park" housing development. This is a tender moment—a sudden change of pace between Nick's rowdy bar and the upcoming mob scene. Haunted regret in a cemetery—right out of Dickens' *Carol*—drives home how much George matters to the world of the living.

Amidst the crumbling tombstones, an incredulous George asks, “A cemetery??? Where are the houses? The people I knew?” Clarence replies, “Oh... they’re here. George. They’re here... The little Blaine girl... Martini... your father... and over here... Harry Bailey.” Harry’s death brings along with it the deaths of hundreds on a troop transport that Harry would have saved in WW II. Ironically, George’s long wished-for escape from Bedford Falls comes at a great cost to his town, his country, and the world. Those troops—and Harry—died for George’s sin of selfishness. Harry is George’s “Tiny Tim” and Harry’s death is the real turning point for George’s redemption.

It is here that George faces the enormity of his selfishness in wanting to have never been born. While the bitterness exhibited by the Pottersville versions of Nick, Bert, Violet, Ernie and even Ma Bailey could be mere attitude, the needless deaths in the cemetery make George confront what his selfishness has wrought. It’s the pivotal moment in George’s salvation—and oddly, a scene missing entirely or merely whisked through in other play adaptations of *Wonderful Life*. Capra’s film version has visuals of tombstones and windy snow, but other adaptations don’t sufficiently marshal the dramatic arsenal of words, music, and sound to give this scene the gravitas, sorrow, and tragic irony of its moment.

However, this cemetery scene is not the final straw for George. Trying to escape the guilt of the graveyard, George seeks refuge in the greatest joy from his Bedford Falls life; he must see what’s become of Mary in Pottersville. Here—having never married George—she is a timid, stunted old maid, working at the library. Desperate for one last thread to hang onto, the never-born George accosts Mary outside the library, pleading with her to recognize—and save—him from the weight of his sin.

Pottersville Mary panics, drawing a crowd that quickly becomes a mob chasing after George. Having given up living, he must now run for his life, pursued by the mob and shot at by the cops. Pottersville can no more abide the never-born George Bailey than he can abide it. In my adaptation, the mob pursuing George is frightening—and ugly—and an evocative use of radio drama’s powerful “walla-walla” crowd sound effect.

Eluding the angry mob, George returns to the bridge, where the only way to escape Pottersville is suicide. Clarence asks if he’s going to really kill himself this time, but George has been chastened by his suffering. He has learned his lesson: “Don’t despair! Life could be worse!” What’s more, George realizes suffering is a necessary step on the road to salvation. It serves to purge one of ego and selfishness. Sacrifice isn’t something to avoid or resent—it must be embraced! This aura of necessary sacrifice permeated American culture during World War II—and resonates with modern audiences, as we are again plagued by war, division, and economic hardship. Willful sacrifice in order to aid your fellows is a deeply philosophical paradox, and I address it dramatically throughout my adaptation.

The Frank Capra Hero

In many of Frank Capra's films, there is a Christ figure—and a crucifixion. You can see this hero in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town*, *Meet John Doe*, and of course, *It's a Wonderful Life*. These martyrs *must* suffer before they can find salvation. Capra was a Catholic and the theme of Christ suffering on the cross is as central to Capra's art as the plucky optimism of his wisecracking, down-home characters. Nailed to the cross, as long as Christ held onto his mortal side—the fear of pain and death, the desire to escape his fate—he writhed and suffered. But at a pivotal point in his ordeal, Christ lets go of his resistance to his fate and gives himself up to his duty: sacrificing himself for mankind. This decision to surrender himself *willingly* is how Christ transcends his mortal self and becomes one with the Divine. This “letting go” of ego is also found in the stories of Herakles, Gilgamesh, Odin, and Mohammed. For the mythical hero, *humility* is key. And that lesson permeates Frank Capra's films.

In *Wonderful Life*, George has been writhing on his *own* cross—from his frustrations at being “trapped” in Bedford Falls, to fear of bankruptcy and prison over the missing \$8000, to the incredible guilt engendered by the nightmarish visit to Pottersville.

Throughout my play, George continually boasts of his dreams and then sees them dashed—setting up the believability of his later dark turn. In Capra's 1946 film, actor James Stewart created a very emotional George—arguing for generosity, compassionate about his neighbors, but later, ornery, lashing out, kicking chairs. In my adaptation, George's descent into despair is illuminated by cutting off others lines, ornery banter, slamming doors, stalking off. This *radio* physicality allows actors playing George to hit the right *thematic* notes without aping Stewart's increasingly desperate demeanor or distinctive manner of speaking.

George has suffered *throughout* the story—because he's always seen Paradise as being “over the rainbow”—in traveling, in building bridges or skyscrapers; in doing “*big* things.” George's Paradise was always *somewhere not here*.

On the Bedford Falls river-bridge, I have Clarence quote the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas*, telling George, “The kingdom of Heaven is spread upon the Earth ...but men do not see it.” George will come to realize that *his* Heaven was Bedford Falls all along. It was there, amidst the frustrations and troubles, in his service to family and community. At the end of his Pottersville ordeal, George finally understands his life's *real* adventure—selfless service—and is now willing to embrace his previously “unbearable” life. George must let go of his dream of finding happiness “somewhere else” and learn to participate joyfully in the sorrows of the world he is in. And at that moment of realization, George is reborn/enlightened/resurrected. With his attitude transformed, George's life—no matter *what* it is—becomes truly wonderful.

This echoes Dickens' Ebenezer Scrooge after his graveyard conversion. He becomes as giddy as a schoolboy and as generous as he'd been miserly. Both Scrooge and George are now joyful lunatics, running through town, shouting "Merry Christmas" to one and all. George now says "yes" to everything—the reporters, the bank examiner, the sheriff, even prison. And the Universe reciprocates his newfound willingness with money raining down like manna from Heaven—via his friends' contributions to a rescue fund. While bushels of money as a Christmas gift may seem crass and materialistic, they are tokens of love, thanks and goodwill—fully earned by George for his lifetime of service. This is the *real* meaning of Christmas—the hero willing to sacrifice himself for his fellow man.

As much as *Wonderful Life* echoes the patriotic lessons of World War II, my adaptation sets it as a profoundly spiritual tale of death and resurrection, echoing Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Christ's story, and Dickens' *Carol*.

These psychological, philosophical, and religious undercurrents are threaded through my play—but not as overtly as in this essay. I employ metaphor (birds, water plunges, doors, bells, etc.) language, and character "feather in" the theme of this battle for George's soul. And it is this dramatized battle that lifts my *Wonderful Life!* adaptation beyond a mere nostalgia-trip for fans of the film. The play must work on its own as drama in order to truly reach a live theater audience, both emotionally and symbolically. It does so through playing the subtext of the story and not just via the dialogue, sound effects, and music. Otherwise, one could merely show Capra's film version.

That being said, my adaptation is still comical and full of invention in exploiting the radio-on-stage medium, while exploring the themes and emotional nuances of Capra's story.

Music

In radio drama, sound effects are motion and music is *e-motion*. Underscoring has a powerful effect on audiences. In scoring *Wonderful Life!*, accompanist/composer, Jonathan Green played a radio theater-style organ—employing the unique registrations (organ drawbar settings) that made 1930s-1940s radio dramas sound so distinctive. This is no synthesizer, but the authentic sound and style used in radio drama's heyday.

Much of the score consists of bridge cues that shuttle us between Heaven and Bedford Falls, while commenting on the drama. These cues immediately make it clear where we are—which is important with so many scene changes. They let the audience know that time and tone have changed—from Mr. Gower's pharmacy to the old Granville House to Ernie's cab to George emotional state as he loses his last chance at college or is peering into the oblivion of the river. In Martini's Tavern, an Italian accordion plays "Santa Lucia" while George prays for help.

In several cues, Jonathan used a beat-up spinet piano to render young Janie's shaky practicing and the bluesy barrelhouse atmosphere of Nick's Bar. In the finale, "Auld Lang Syne" is played on Janie's broken down piano and then reprised on the organ as sing-along for the cast and audience.

Troupes wishing to have their own accompanist perform live can purchase the sheet music derived directly from the pre-recorded score (available for a fee—contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com) The score even includes a listing of the organ registrations (drawbar settings) that your keyboardist could use to reproduce the authentic timbre of radio drama organs—if they are using a Hammond organ or some similar keyboard.

Sound Effects

Bells are central to this story and I use plenty of them as sound effects. The bells serve as punctuation and as a metaphorical "wake up call" to George—who's been lost in his dreams—and later his nightmares. The bell sound effects work their way through the many phone calls, door bells, cash register ka-chings, and finally to Zuzu's little Christmas tree bell as Clarence finally gets his wings.

There is also a great deal of background crowd sounds (also known as walla-walla) to paint the ice pond, boardroom, bank run, bars, crowds and party. In many scenes, the sound effects, voices, and music are layered together in a complex pattern that enhances the storytelling.

For example: In the courtship scene, Mary plays a noisy 78 RPM novelty record of "Buffalo Gals" that must compete with the telephone ringing, Mary's mother calling out, and George and Mary bickering. As the tension mounts and the courtship unravels, the cacophony heightens the drama—and when the two lovers break up, George noisily scratches the record in anger, as he tries to escape. This approach differs markedly from Capra's film version, but the tension contributed by the layering of voices, music, and SFX echo the turbulence going on within George and Mary—and for all the noise, the scene ends with Mary *whispering* "I know...". The sonic contrast underlines the peace and quiet that the lovers find in each other. Sound Effects are not merely noises to represent the reality of ice ponds and cars and crickets. They can serve to produce dramatic effects, as they do throughout my adaptation.

Similarly, the use of "Jimmy the Bird" (a repeated squawking voice in tandem with a bird-in-a-cage) lends humor to the establishment of Carter, the bank examiner—a scene that could have just been dull plot mechanics. (Try to create a bird puppet—or stick-driven marionette to squawk along with an unseen actor delivering Jimmy's lines.)

Another bit is to the use of an off-stage mic (mimicking the sound of a telephone voice) for Sam Wainwright, Mrs. Hatch, Mr. Potter and—most absurdly—Mary's burbling call to George, urging him to come home to their new house. (See the *Sound Design Notes*

section of the Sound Effects appendix for a variety of ways to render this telephone voice effect.)

Sounds such as doors and dinner dishes, footsteps, the scratching record, cracking ice, and champagne toast will be produced by the off-stage SFX artist. Other sounds such as wind, Clarence's river splashing, cars, and harp glissandos are triggered from pre-recorded SFX tracks. I offer my own professionally designed SFX tracks for a one time fee. They (and the music tracks) can be downloaded as MP3 files.

Direction Suggestions

Please be conscious that there is a ritual aspect to the production of *Wonderful Life*. I've seen theater audiences in tears as George despairs while trapped in Pottersville. His plea to live again is a highly emotional peak for the star and audience. I milk his subsequent joy at getting to "live again" by having him address his humble thanks and "Merry Christmases" to a Bedford Falls townscape situated out in the audience.

There are a number of metaphors I use in my interpretation of this material to fully evoke this ritual of sacrifice, death and rebirth and you should consider them in setting a tone for your production. First, I suggest you seek to convey an edge-of-the-seat quality by urging a vigorous delivery and slightly fast tempo.

Thematically, a fast tempo also has a purpose. This is a Christmas-themed show, of course. And Christmas celebrates the pending birth of a child and always carries anticipation and mystery, as does the unwrapping of a Christmas gift, and so too, the best ghost stories--which is what *Wonderful Life* really is. With that in mind, there should be surprise everywhere and you should endeavor to keep the audience always guessing "what's next," even though the storyline is familiar.

The second metaphor to pursue is the contrast of delight amidst awfulness--the bustling crowds despite the repeated crises--especially the use of walla-walla. The more exuberant and noisy--but at a controlled volume level--the better. Thematically again, there's a defiant mysticism about celebrating life on the shortest day of the year. The idea that hope can spring from such bleak surroundings is at the heart of Christmas--and Capra's fable.

Lastly, try to impart a gusto from the many "little people" of Bedford Falls and their grotesque counterparts in Pottersville. The actors will enjoy being able to portray characters who are sweet and then later sour. Have them do so with urgency--to underline the contrasting worlds on display here. George's loony joy at the end seems that much higher for all the frustration and suffering that preceded it.

Encourage cast and crew to dive headlong into their roles and leave behind the film's familiar portrayals. This adaptation is a re-invention of the film for the stage and as a stand-alone dramatic experience.

Preparation

The only other advice I could give regarding producing the program would be to have the director and crew watch Frank Capra's' original film--to refresh their memories as to what is going on--but to avoid letting any of the cast watch the film. Replicating the portrayals and delivery of the film actors will only serve to distract audiences from experiencing the drama you are presenting. The idea here is to explore the script in front of you and make it your own--to have your own "wonderful life" bloom on-stage. You need to earn your OWN wings.

Happy Landings!

Tony Palermo

Casting Evaluation - *Wonderful Life!*

CAST SIZE: Rarely are more than 11 people on stage at once. Doubling is suggested. Without doubling, cast is: 13 males, 6 females, 9 males or females, 7 boys, 4 girls and 2 boys-or-girls.

_____	GEORGE BAILEY	Dreamer/Loan Officer (m)
_____	CLARENCE	Angel, Second Grade (m)
_____	SUPERINTENDENT	Boss of Angels (m/f)
_____	MARY HATCH BAILEY	George's Wife/Librarian (f)
_____	MR. POTTER	Warped, old financier (m)
_____	UNCLE BILLY	Absent-minded clerk (m)
_____	SAM WAINWRIGHT	Successful businessman (m)
_____	VIOLET BICK	Town flirt (f)
_____	POP BAILEY	George's father (m)
_____	MA BAILEY	George's mother (f)
_____	ANNIE	Bailey family cook (f)
_____	GOWER	Pharmacist (m/f)
_____	NICK	Ornery shareholder/bartender (m/f)
_____	ERNIE	Cab driver (m)
_____	OFFICER BERT	Local policeman (m)
_____	MARTINI	Italian café owner (m/f)
_____	YOUNG GEO. BAILEY	Boy, age 10 (m/f)
_____	ZUZU BAILEY	Girl, age 5 (f)
_____	COUSIN TILLY	Loan office clerk (m/f)
_____	MRS. HATCH	Mary's mother (f)
_____	NIGHT WATCHMAN	Night Watchman (m/f)
_____	CHARLIE	Difficult shareholder (m/f)
_____	MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (f)
_____	EUSTACE	Loan office clerk (m/f)
_____	CHARLIE	Difficult shareholder (m/f)
_____	MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (f)
_____	JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (f)
_____	MR. WELCH	Irate husband (m)
_____	CARTER	Bank Examiner (m/f)
_____	JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (f)
_____	MR. WELCH	Irate husband (m)
_____	IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR	Impatient neighbor (m/f)
_____	SHERIFF	County Sheriff (m/f)
_____	BANK TELLER	Bank clerk (m/f)
_____	PETHEY BAILEY	Boy, age 9 (m/f)
_____	RANDY	Shareholder (m/f)
_____	NOSEY NEIGHBOR	Impatient neighbor (m/f)
_____	EDDY	Shareholder (m/f)

EXTRAS: (a few of whom speak—but only as parts of a crowd)

YOUNG BOYS, TOMMY BAILEY (child)
PEDESTRIANS, STREET CROWDS, VIOLET'S FELLAS
PANICKING BANK CUSTOMERS, BUILDING & LOAN SHAREHOLDERS
POTTER'S AIDE, NICK'S BOUNCER
BAR PATRONS (NICE/NASTY)
CHRISTMAS PARTIERS—in the final scene.

Doubling Roles

Regarding casting, I've produced the show with a cast of 7 men and 4 women and also 8 men and 3 women. However, plenty of roles can be played by either men or women--as is indicated--so you may mix and match as needed.

Please note, that unlike some playwrights, I have no problems with you changing genders of characters (or deleting scenes or lines.) Here's one way of splitting up roles.

--ACTOR-- GEORGE BAILEY	Dreamer/Loan Officer (m)
--ACTOR-- CLARENCE	Angel, Second Grade (m/f)
--ACTRESS-- MARY HATCH BAILEY	George's Wife/Librarian (f)
--ACTOR OR ACTRESS-- SUPERINTENDENT	Boss of Angels (m/f)
--ACTOR-- UNCLE BILLY NIGHT WATCHMAN	Absent-minded clerk (m) Bridge night watchman (m/f)
--ACTOR-- MR. POTTER OFFICER BERT EDDY	Warped, old financier (m) Local policeman (m/f) Shareholder(m/f)
--ACTOR-- ERNIE GOWER MARTINI CHARLIE	Cab driver (m/f) Pharmacist (m/f) Italian café owner (m/f) Shareholder (m/f)
--ACTOR-- POP BAILEY YOUNG GEORGE MR. WELCH CARTER PETEY BAILEY RANDY	George's father (m) Boy, age 10 (m) Irate husband (m) Bank Examiner (m/f) Boy, age 9 (m/f) Shareholder (m/f)

--ACTOR--

SAM WAINWRIGHT	Successful businessman (m)
HARRY BAILEY	George's younger brother (m)
NICK	Ornery shareholder/bartender (m/f)
SHERIFF	County Sheriff (m/f)

--ACTRESS--

VIOLET BICK	Town flirt (f)
MRS. HATCH	Mary's mother (f)
ANNIE	Bailey family cook (f)
COUSIN TILLY	Loan office clerk (m/f)
MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (f)

-- ACTRESS--

EUSTACE	Loan office clerk (m/f)
MA BAILEY	George's mother (f)
ZUZU BAILEY	Girl, age 5 (f)
JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (f)
BANK TELLER	Bank clerk (m/f)
NOSEY NEIGHBOR	Impatient neighbor (m/f)
MRS. THOMPSON	Shareholder (f)

Pre-recorded Sound Effect Cues - *Wonderful Life!*

A collection of *Wonderful Life!* sound effects tracks is available from Sales@RuyaSonic.com

The pre-recorded sound effects are to be triggered from a playback device—app, CD player, computer, MP3 player, etc. These sounds include crickets, cars, splashing water, clocks, harp glissandos, traffic and wind.

Playback devices

This show uses many back-to-back music & SFX tracks. It may require TWO playback devices OR quick triggering. I suggest troupes use tablets or smartphones running inexpensive theatrical playback apps such as Go Button (IOS) or Audio Cues (Android). You take the audio out of the tablet/phone, run it into a small mixer—so volume can be controlled with a slider or knob, *not* using the tablet app's touch screen interface, except for the PLAY and STOP buttons.

Hand mark your script with the Track number (1 to 27) to be played. Leave space to also mark a volume level for each track—in pencil—as the director may change levels over the course of rehearsal. Go through the script and listen to each SFX track. Know the SFX cues well, so you don't cut them off too early. In some cases, you will have to fade them out or crossfade between two tracks (a cab driving and a cab pulling over).

Please note that some SFX tracks will be played at the same time as the music cues—and thus will require balancing the volume levels, as well as considering the level of the actors' voices.

Some theaters use slow-to-engage DVD players to trigger music or sound design tracks, but you should make sure the playback devices can quickly play the tracks as scripted. I recommend using DJ-style devices or apps since they respond instantly to button pushes. If your playback devices take a while to actually play the tracks, you should notate on the script exactly when to trigger a track to have it play in sync with the actors' dialogue reaching the point where the cue should play. Depending upon the response time of your playback gear, this could be earlier than indicated in the script.

Ideally the playback device should not advance automatically to the next SFX track. Some CD players or software will finish a track and cue up the next one and pause. If you don't have a device like that available, use this technique: Before the end of a SFX track, the SFX playback technician should pause the track on a silent spot, advance to the next

track and be ready to trigger the next SFX. Note that some cues come very quickly on top of one another. It will take some practice to be able to trigger certain cues in rapid succession. If you trigger your SFX from a CD player, you may wish to duplicate the SFX CD and use a second CD player to allow for quicker SFX triggering.

I would recommend using TWO playback devices since there are a few times where an ambience is playing and you need to trigger a spot effect (such as crickets and window breaking or traffic and a car pulling away). In those instances, you need to trigger the spot effect timed with the actor's delivery of a line, so a combination of the two cues won't do much good.

Pre-Recorded Sound Effect List - *Wonderful Life!*

All tracks end with 8 seconds of silence, to provide time to pause playback devices that don't have one-track-then-stop mode. "BED" describes sounds that play underneath live dialogue. "SPOT" sounds stand out in the open--with no dialogue over them.

Track	Volume	Description	Run time
01		Splashes into ice pond [BED]	0:18
02		Gower's phone rings (3X) – can be done live, also [BED]	0:20
03		Dance Band / Floor retracting / Splashing [BED]	0:53
04		Crickets #1 [BED]	5:42
05		Distant window shattered by rock #1 [SPOT]	0:10
06		Distant window shattered by rock #2 [SPOT]	0:10
07		Downtown Bedford Falls (Traffic) [BED]	3:51
08		Crickets #2 [BED]	2:24
09		"Buffalo Gals" 78 RPM record [BED]	2:08
10		Mary's phone rings (20X) – can be done live, also [BED]	2:18
11		Interior of cab driving, wipers, rain [BED]	3:06
12		Cab pulls over, rain on street, thunder at end [BED]	1:08
13		Billy's phone rings (1-½X) – can be live, also [BED]	0:16
14		Office phone rings (1-¼X) – can be done live, also [BED]	0:13
15		Potter's clock ticking in background #1 [BED]	5:02
16		Bailey phone rings (2X) – can be live, also [BED]	0:13
17		Potter's clock ticking in background #2 [BED]	3:47
18		Clarence jumps in river, splashes around [BED]	0:51
19		George jumps in river, splashes around [BED]	0:24
20		Magical harp glissando--UP [BED]	0:15
21		Wind #1 [BED]	1:39
22		Downtown Pottersville (Traffic) [BED]	1:26
23		Interior of cab driving #2 [BED]	1:37
24		Wind #2 (Cemetery) [BED]	4:24
25		Police whistle, gunshots (2X) [BED]	0:17
26		Wind #3 (Bridge) [BED]	0:49
27		Magical harp glissando--DOWN [BED]	0:15

Telephone Ringing

Throughout the script, several telephone rings are required. I provide authentic telephone ring SFX tracks for the rings. For timing purposes, you may want to use a live ringing phone (bell) . You can use a typical Model 500 style phone (available 1947-1980s) for even the cues specifying a Candlestick, Model 200 or Model 300 phone. The Model 500 phones can be found at flea markets or on e-bay. Candlestick phones may be harder to come by. You could try to fabricate one using plastic plumbing pipes.

For the sound, the rhythm is 2 seconds of ringing and 4 seconds of silence—then repeat. You can actually ring the real phone on-stage, or use a prop phone on-stage and ring a real phone that is mic'd off-stage. Just be careful to stop ringing precisely when the actor picks up the handset on-stage.

As far as triggering a real telephone to ring, **Tele-Q** makes an excellent 9-volt battery powered device that can ring any kind of line-based telephone (vintage or modern—but NOT cell phones). You use a standard modular phone wire to plug your real telephone into the device and push a button to ring in the required rhythm. All theater troupes will find many uses for this device. For information on the Tele-Q visit www.tele-q.com Their optional 18-volt power adapter is not necessary—two standard 9-volt batteries will last for years.

Telephone voices

There are several scenes with through-the-phone voices (Sam Wainwright's call to Mary, Mr. Potter's call to George and Mary's Call to George). For these lines, you'll need to simulate the tinny tone of a telephone handset's through-the-earpiece sound. Set up a microphone off-stage—in the wings, so the actor on the distant end of the call can see and interact with the on-stage actors. There are several ways to achieve this phone voice effect.

The Cup Method:

One easy version can be produced by taking a coffee mug, paper cup, or tall drink glass and holding it up to the side of your mouth while you speak into a regular microphone. You have to play with the positioning a bit to get the right balance of full voice and phone-voice. Garrison Keillor's actors on the radio variety show, *Prairie Home Companion*, used this technique. The sound quality only *suggests* the phone and our imaginations let it BE a phone caller..

The EQ-it-to-Heck Method:

A not too bad electronic method uses a standard microphone run through a mixer board that cuts out all frequencies under 300 Hz and over 3000 Hz--but not all mixers can cut so specifically, nor as deep as is needed. Like the cup method, this equalization tweaking method only *suggests* a voice over the phone.

There are also computer "plug-in" effects out there that use this EQ technique, but they lack the slight distortion and thus, the intimacy of a real telephone. Also, those plug-ins won't work in real time for a stage show. I've seen some engineers use a beat up old microphone and run it through an electric guitar distortion pedal and then EQ it severely, but that's expensive and not entirely convincing. The distortion pedal trick also tends to feed-back easily in live situations.

Music - *Wonderful Life!*

A collection of *Wonderful Life!* music underscore tracks is available from Sales@RuyaSonic.com.

Live Vs. Pre-Recorded Music

Some troupes may use the pre-recorded theatre organ and piano music cues I offer (contact: Sales@RuyaSonic.com for more information) or they may opt for a live keyboardist. The music cues can be “beds”—which play underneath dialogue, or “bridges”—which play between scenes and fade under the new scene’s dialogue, or as “source” music which is supposedly played by either musicians or a phonograph within the scene—often a bar or party. The engineer’s task here is to mix the music with the voices and sound effects so the volume level of the three elements is properly balanced. Generally, the music will need to fade as the dialogue begins—unless the script indicates otherwise, such as:

LET CUE FINISH

or PLAYS UNDER ENTIRE SCENE

or MUSIC CUTS ABRUPTLY at a certain line of dialogue.

If your troupe chooses to use the pre-recorded music tracks, a technician will be triggering those tracks from a playback device—an audio CD player, MP3 player, or computer. The audio tech will need to be able to clearly hear the actors’ dialogue and sound effects, so as to trigger their music cues at the appropriate time.

Some cues are triggered quickly in succession, such as where one scene ends with musical punctuation and the next begins with its own musical motif—for example, the many transitions from Bedford Falls to Heaven. You may find it useful to employ TWO playback devices—both loaded with the exact same tracks—and trigger one after the other or even crossfade between the two.

Some theaters use slow-to-engage DVD players to trigger music or sound design tracks, but you should make sure the playback devices can quickly play the tracks as scripted. I recommend using DJ-style devices since they respond instantly to button pushes. If your playback devices take a while to actually play the tracks, you should notate on the script exactly when to trigger a track to have it play in sync with the actors’ dialogue reaching

the point where the cue should play. Depending upon the response time of your playback gear, this could be earlier than indicated in the script.

Playback devices

This show uses many back-to-back music & SFX tracks. It may require TWO playback devices OR quick triggering. I suggest troupes use tablets or smartphones running inexpensive theatrical playback apps such as **Go Button** (IOS) or **Audio Cues** (Android). You take the audio out of the tablet/phone, run it into a small mixer--so volume can be controlled with a slider or knob, *not* using the tablet app's touch screen interface, except for the PLAY and STOP buttons.

If a live keyboardist will be used, they should familiarize themselves with the unique concepts of how to accompany 1940s radio dramas. (See my articles at www.ruyasonic.com/rdr_music.htm for an overview of how scoring for radio differs from pop music or film scoring.) It would be useful for the live accompanist to listen to the pre-recorded music track to learn how to play in the traditional style for accompanying radio drama. Those tracks are available for a fee from Sales@RuyaSonic.com

Whether there are pre-recorded or live music cues, you may have to fade them out under the dialogue as each scene progresses. Some keyboardists may use a volume pedal to adjust their own volume as they play--particularly as they end a cue. You'll need to work out an arrangement as to who fades out--versus who sets the overall level of the music.

Pre-recorded Music Cue List - *Wonderful Life!*

A complete script should be marked up with highlighted colors to show how long music cues run (through scenes and dialogue). The initial volume of a track should be high--to establish itself, then fade it down a bit once the actors begin to speak. Some scenes may require fading the music bed at the end--this will vary due to actors' differing delivery tempos.

“BED” music cues play underneath dialogue and sound effects. “BRIDGE” music cues have no dialogue on top of them, but may have sound effects. “SPOT” cues stand out in the open--with no dialogue over them. “SOURCE” describes music that is supposedly

Track	Volume	Description	Run time
1		“Wonderful Overture” (Radio Theater Theme) [BED]	0:47
2		“Wonderful Life Intro” [BED]	0:57
3		“Heavenly” [BED]	0:48
4		“Gower’s Sad Drugstore” [BRIDGE]	0:15
5		“Tender Moment” [BED]	0:15
6		“Up and Segue into “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:18
7		“Heavenly” [BED]	0:46
8		Last 2 Bars of “Buffalo Gals” setup [BRIDGE]	0:10
9		“Tragic” into “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:38
10		“Oh Well” segues to “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:53
11		“Downtown Bedford Falls” [BRIDGE]	0:19
12		“From Violet to Mary” [BED]	0:21
13		“Wrenching” [BED]	0:33
14		“Heavenly” [BED]	0:46
15		“Wedding March Taxi” [BRIDGE]	0:13
16		“Act 1 Outro” [BED]	0:18
17		“Wonderful Life Act 2 Intro” [BED]	0:23
18		“Heavenly” [BED]	0:49
19		“Time Passing” [BED]	0:27
20		“Bride” to “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:44
21		“Indignant” to “Sleepy” [BRIDGE]	0:19
22		“Baby” to “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:50
23		“War Montage” [BED]	1:44
24		“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” - ends sourly [BRIDGE]	0:16
25		“Lost” to “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:37

26		“Desperate” -- Let it Finish [BRIDGE]	0:14
27		Janie Piano - #1 - “Hark the Herald Angels” [BED] (SOURCE)	0:20
28		Janie Piano - #2 - “Hark the Herald Angels” [BED] (SOURCE)	1:16
29		Janie Piano - #3 - “Hark the Herald Angels” [BED] (SOURCE)	0:43
30		“Troubled” [BRIDGE]	0:15
31		“Cruel” to “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:55
32		“Santa Lucia” on accordion--gets abruptly stopped [BED] (SOURCE)	1:10
33		“Alone” to “Heavenly” [BRIDGE]	0:19
34		“Act 2 Outro” --ends in suspense chord [BRIDGE]	0:17
35		“Act 3 Intro/“Dire Bridge” [BED]	0:51
36		“Juke Joint Jingle Bells”--under entire scene [BED] (SOURCE)	3:14
37		“Pottersville Streetscene”--under entire scene [BED] (SOURCE)	1:16
38		“I Know That Girl” [BRIDGE]	0:15
39		“Empty Granville House” [BRIDGE]	0:37
40		(GLISSANDO UP) “Magical Help” [SPOT]	0:11
41		“Escape” to “Mean Mother” [BRIDGE]	0:30
42		“Shattered” to “The Cemetery” [BED]	2:46
43		“Lightly” to “Old Maid” [BRIDGE]	0:18
44		“Lynch Mob” to “Redemption” [BED]	1:20
45		“Organ Hark The Herald Angels Sing” [BED]	1:00
46		“Piano Auld Lang Syne” – Janie playing [BED] (SOURCE)	1:46
47		“Organ Auld Lang Syne” – Chorus only [BED]	0:32
48		“Organ Auld Lang Syne” – Verse & 2 choruses (OPTIONAL) [BED]	1:11
49		“Wonderful Credits” – Long version of intro (OPTIONAL) [BED]	2:18

NOTE: All tracks end with 8 seconds of silence, to provide time to pause playback devices that don't have one-track-then-stop mode. If tracks must be triggered in rapid succession, an old track may still be playing it's silent padding when you wish to trigger the new track.

All music arranged and performed by Jonathan Green.

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Advice for Live Keyboardists - *Wonderful Life!*

If your troupe chooses to have a live keyboardist accompany the drama, I would suggest you primarily use an organ as this adds a 1940s radio dramas touch to the production. The characters would have been listening to radio dramas and here, their life has become one. The organ was a “one man orchestra” capable of producing a wide variety of timbres. It was particularly well-suited dramas because of its ability to sustain notes under the dialogue. Using only a piano may be too “percussive” to underscore dialogue—consequently a piano may be limited to merely “bridging” between scenes.

However, there are portions of this adaptation of *Wonderful Life!* that call for pianos—but only as “source” music occurring in the location a scene is set in: There’s 8-year old Janie Bailey practicing “Hark The Herald Angels Sing,” a bluesy, barrelhouse piano played in Nick’s Bar, and “Auld Lang Syne” (*also* played haltingly) by Janie in the party scene finale. All these scenes call for a slightly out-of-tune piano sound, since neither the modest Bailey household nor the roughneck bar would have fancy grand pianos. One more scene—Martini’s Italian Tavern—uses an accordion, but that can be rendered with a piano if you have no real accordion, or accordion sound available on your keyboard.

In reproducing the sound of organs used in 1940s radio shows, please note that they ranged from the brands Thomas and Hammond to small Wurlitzer organs. Many modern synthesizer/sampler keyboards can emulate these sounds. However, most synth organ emulations are of the familiar Hammond B-3 model, and that instrument was only introduced in 1955, so its characteristic sounds wouldn’t have been used in a 1940s radio drama. However, it is possible to set a B-3, or modern clone to emulate the organs used in Golden Age radio. This would involve setting the drawbars for the two manuals in unusual registrations. (For information about organ registrations and drawbars see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammond_organ#Drawbars)

**SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT
THIS POINT**

The full script & appendix runs 137 pages.

In seeking to accompany your troupe's production of *Wonderful Life*, you may want to listen to the pre-recorded music tracks composed for this adaptation to get an idea of the style and feel. The tracks are available for download as MP3 files--for a fee of \$50 (contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com for info.)

At the end of an organ music cue leading into a new scene, the organ usually fades out as the dialogue begins. Someone must do that fading. Usually, the organist—using an expression pedal (which controls both volume and EQ) or just a volume pedal—will fade the volume in coordination with what they are playing (say, holding a suspense chord, etc.). However, it is also possible for an audio technician to do this fade. You'll need to designate who controls those fadeouts--organist or audio technician.

Listed below are the drawbar--and some vibrato, chorus, and rotating Leslie speaker)--settings for the radio soap opera sound. If your modern keyboard allows you to vary its drawbar settings, you can approximate the sounds--and come up with variations to suit the needs of the show.

Radio Soap Opera Organ Registrations

Registration	Name
00 8703 004 (Vibrato 3, Chorus 3 - fast Leslie)	Soap Opera #1
60 2584 878	Soap Opera #2
70 4008 084	Soap Opera #3
71 4118 184 (Vibrato 3, Chorus 3 - fast Leslie)	Soap Opera #4

Theatrical Organ Registrations

Here are typical drawbar settings used to reproduce the sound of theater-organs, which are far closer to the timbres of radio drama organs than the familiar rock, jazz and gospel settings in use since the 1950s.

Upper Manual	
Registration	Name
-- ---- ---	Cancel
00 8740 000	French Horn 8'
00 8408 004	Tibias 8' & 2'
00 8080 840	Clarinet 8'

08 8800 880	Novel Solo 8'
60 8088 000	Theatre Solo 16'
00 4685 300	Oboe Horn 8'
60 8807 006	Full Tibias 16'
00 6888 654	Trumpet 8'
76 8878 667	Full Theatre Brass 16'

Lower Manual	
Registration	Name
-- ---- --	Cancel
00 4545 440	Cello 8'
00 4432 000	Dulciana 8'
00 4800 000	Vibraharp 8'
00 3800 460	Vox 8' & Tibia 4'
00 6554 322	String Accomp. 8'
00 5642 200	Open Diapason 8'
43 5434 334	Full Accomp. 16'
00 8030 000	Tibia 8'
84 7767 666	Bombarde 16'

Prop Listing - *Wonderful Life!*

HERO PROPS:

- [] Clarence's hardback copy of Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"
- [] Gower's candlestick-phone
- [] Gower's telegram
- [] Gower's whiskey bottle and glass
- [] Glass vial of pills
- [] George's suitcase
- [] Gavel
- [] Candlestick or Model 202 phone for Mary's house (in the 1920s)
- [] Candlestick phone for Building & Loan (in the 1920s)
- [] Model 202 or 300 for Building & Loan office (in 1930s-40s)
- [] Model 300 for Mr. Potter's office (in the 1940s)
- [] Model 202 or 300 for Granville House (in 1930s-40s)
- [] Envelope of cash—Honeymoon fund.
- [] Building & Loan office lobby clock
- [] Manual typewriter (or mock-up) Use clicking scissors & desk bell off-stage for sounds.
- [] Uncle Billy's ledger book
- [] Uncle Billy's string
- [] Uncle Billy's newspaper, money envelope, bank book, deposit slip.
- [] George's life insurance policy
- [] Zuzu's bell on the Christmas tree (also needed for SFX)
- [] George's bridge model (made of popsicle sticks???)
- [] Annie's pie
- [] Annie's "strong box" (a ceramic cookie jar)
- [] Prop money (for Honeymoon, the \$8000, Violet's "loan", donations)
- []
- []

SETTING PROPS:

- [] Hydrangea bush (for Mary to hide behind)
- []
- []
- []