

POTTER. Sure, you old fool.

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

POTTER. Let me see that newspaper.

BILLY. Here ya go.

(SFX: Newspaper thwack.)

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

(SFX: Footsteps.)

HORACE THE TELLER. Good morning, Mr. Bailey.

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

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

BILLY. What's that?

HORACE THE TELLER. You want to make a deposit?

BILLY. Well, certainly...

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

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

(MUSIC: Transition.)

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

GEORGE. Oh, hello, Vi.

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

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

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

GEORGE. How much do you need?

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

GEORGE. You planning on robbing a bank, Vi?

VIOLET. I'm going to Manhattan.

GEORGE. What's in Manhattan?

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

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

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

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

VIOLET. You should give tours, maybe.

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

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

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

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

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

VIOLET. Yeah, sure...

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

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

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

ERNIE. All right.

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

ERNIE. You seen my wife?

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

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

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

*(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)*

ERNIE. Is this the place?

GEORGE. Of course it's the place.

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

*(SFX: Car door opens and closes.)*

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

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

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

BERT. All right, put up your hands.

GEORGE. What is this?!?

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

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

ERNIE. Watch him, Bert.

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

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

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

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

*(SFX: GEORGE punches BERT.)*

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

*(SFX: GEORGE running through snow.)*

*(MUSIC: Transition / Underscoring.)*

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

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

ROSE. Well?

GEORGE. Mother?

ROSE. Mother?! What do you want?

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

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

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

ROSE. I don't take in strangers.

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

ROSE. You know him?

GEORGE. Well, sure I do.

ROSE. When'd you see him last?

GEORGE. Today, over at his house.

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

(SFX: Creaky door slams.)

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

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

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

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

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

GEORGE. We'll see.

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscore.)

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

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

CLARENCE. That wouldn't be yours.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CLARENCE. It's your life, George.

GEORGE. What happened to Mary, Clarence?

CLARENCE. Mary?

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

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

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

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

GEORGE. Where is she, Clarence?

CLARENCE. She's an old maid, George.

GEORGE. Where is she?!

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

(SFX: GEORGE runs off through the snow.)

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

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscore.)

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

GEORGE. Is the library closed?

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

GEORGE. Can I ask you something?

MARY. I should really be getting home.

GEORGE. What is there to go home to?

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