

WORLD PREMIERE

# It's a Wonderful Life

MUSIC BY

**JAKE HEGGIE**

LIBRETTO BY

**GENE SCHEER**

HOUSTON

GRAND OPERA

PATRICK SUMMERS

**PENTATONE**  
AMERICAN OPERAS  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Live Recording





HOUSTON GRAND OPERA  
The Wortham Theater Center





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Newlyweds George Bailey (William Burden) and Mary Hatch (Andrea Carroll) depart for their honeymoon with taxi driver Ernie (Heath Martin) at the wheel.



# It's a Wonderful Life

## An Opera in Two Acts

Based in part on the film *It's a Wonderful Life*™ by permission of Paramount Licensing Inc. and on *The Greatest Gift*, a story by **Philip Van Doren Stern**

Music by **Jake Heggie** | Libretto by **Gene Scheer**

Commissioned and co-produced by Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

Premiered by Houston Grand Opera December 2016

The Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

**Patrick Summers**, Conductor Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

**Leonard Foglia**, Director

**Robert Brill**, Set Designer

**David C. Woolard**, Costume Designer

**Brian Nason**, Lighting Designer

**Elaine J. McCarthy**, Projection Designer

**Andrew Harper**, Sound Designer

**Keturah Stickann**, Choreographer

**Bradley Moore**, Chorus Director and Musical Preparation

**Peter Pasztor**, Musical Preparation

**Patrick Harvey**, Musical Preparation

**Peter Walsh**, Musical Preparation

**Richard Bado**, Musical Preparation The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair

The community of Bedford Falls comes together to help George Bailey (William Burden).



# It's a Wonderful Life

An Opera in Two Acts

## CD 1

### ACT I

1	Prelude	2. 15
2	Christmas Eve: Clara in the Heavens	10. 36
3	Scene 1: George Bailey's Childhood	8. 41
4	Scene 2: The Bailey Family Attic: Bedford Falls's Aladdin	2. 56
5	Quartet: Goodbye Bedford Falls	5. 30
6	Scene 3: The High School Dance	4. 05
7	Scene 4: The Old Granville House: I'm Gonna See the World	6. 31
8	Scene 5: Mr. Potter's Office: Wait and Save	6. 26
9	Scene 6: Mary and Harry at College: Four Years	3. 40
10	Scene 7: Harry's Homecoming	0. 28
11	Duet: A Rainbow at Midnight	6. 10
12	Scene 8: Mary's House: I'm Gonna Love You 'til the Day I Die	6. 26

Total playing time CD 1: 63. 49

## CD 2

### ACT II

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4	A Letter: Thank You, Mr. Bailey	1. 11
5	Scene 4: Mr. Potter's Office: I Want to Hire You, George	5. 15
6	Scene 5: World War II: One Country, One Dream	4. 16
7	Scene 6: Christmas Eve: What a Day!	1. 20
8	Scene 7: Uncle Billy Loses the Bank Deposit	4. 20
9	Scene 8: George and Mary's Home: Zuzu's Petals	5. 09
10	Scene 9: Mr. Potter's Office: You're Worth More Dead than Alive	3. 47
11	Scene 10: The Bridge: I Wish I'd Never Been Born	5. 06
12	Scene 11: The World without George Bailey	8. 12
13	Scene 12: George's Homecoming: Christmas Morning	4. 39
14	Clara's Wings: A Wonderful Life	5. 23
15	Auld Lang Syne	1. 28

Total playing time CD 2: 63. 02

# Houston Grand Opera

With its first season in 1955–56, Houston Grand Opera (HGO) set the tone for its future, staging two performances each of the still-shocking *Salome* and the repertoire staple *Madame Butterfly*. From that modest beginning, HGO has become one of the largest, most innovative, and most highly acclaimed opera companies in the United States. It is jointly led by Patrick Summers, artistic and music director, and Perryn Leech, managing director.

HGO is perhaps best known as the record-holder among opera companies for commissioning and premiering new works as a means of creating a young, American voice in what has been thought of as an old, European art

form. *It's a Wonderful Life* was HGO's 62<sup>nd</sup> world premiere and its fourth from composer Jake Heggie.

Houston Grand Opera's ongoing mission is to advance the operatic art form to serve an ever-evolving audience. The company continues to present standard repertoire in fresh, new ways and also to produce new works that inspire future generations of opera lovers in our diverse city and globally through technology.

The company has received a Tony Award, two Grammy Awards, and two Emmy Awards, and is the only opera company in the world to win all three honors.

## Cast (in order of vocal appearance)

### Clara

Talise Trevigne

### A Voice

Patti LuPone

### Winged Angels, First Class

D'Ana Lombard

Zoie Reams

Yongzhao Yu

Ben Edquist

### George Bailey

William Burden

### Young George

Stephen Thomas

### Young Sam/Tommy

Levi Smith

### Young Mary/Janie

C. J. Friend

### Young Harry

Jack Townsend

### Mr. Gower/Mr. Potter

Rod Gilfry

### Harry Bailey

Joshua Hopkins

### Uncle Billy Bailey

Anthony Dean Griffey

### Mother Bailey

Frankie Hickman

### Mary Hatch

Andrea Carroll

### Ernie

Heath Martin

### Zuzu

Elle Grace Graper



# Houston Grand Opera **Orchestra**

## **Violin**

Denise Tarrant, *Concertmaster*  
The Sarah and Ernest Butler  
Concertmaster Chair

Jonathan Godfrey,  
*Assistant Concertmaster*

Erica Robinson,  
*Principal Second Violin*

Carrie Kauk,  
*Assistant Principal Second Violin*

Anabel Detrick  
Rasa Kalesnykaite

## **Viola**

Eliseo Rene Salazar, *Principal*  
Lorento Golofeev, *Assistant Principal*

## **Cello**

Barrett Sills, *Principal*  
Erika Johnson, *Acting Assistant Principal*  
Wendy Smith-Butler

## **Double bass**

Dennis Whittaker, *Principal*

## **Flute**

Seth Allyn Morris, *Principal*

## **Oboe**

Elizabeth Priestly Siffert, *Principal*

## **Clarinet**

Sean Krissman, *Principal*

## **Bassoon**

Amanda Swain, *Principal*

## **French horn**

Sarah Cranston, *Principal*  
Kimberly Penrod Minson

## **Trumpet**

Jim Vassallo, *Principal*

## **Trombone**

Thomas Hultén, *Principal*

## **Harp**

Joan Eidman, *Principal*

## **Percussion**

Richard Brown, *Principal*  
Nancy Nelson

## **Piano**

Patrick Harvey

# Houston Grand Opera **Chorus**

Geordie Alexander—A Man  
Peter Farley

Suzanne Gregory

Frankie Hickman—Mother Bailey

Julie Hoeltzel—Mrs. Delgado

Jawan CM Jenkins—Mr. Delgado

Joseph Leppek—Mr. Martini

Katie Loff

Miles Robert Lutterbie—Randall

Kathleen Manley—Mrs. Thompson

Heath Martin—Ernie Bishop

Saïd Henry Pressley—Ed

Lindsay Russell—A Woman

Priscilla Salisbury—Mrs. O'Malley

Kate Smith—Helen

Taelon Stonecipher—Mr. Ruffino



## Jake Heggie, composer

*It's a Wonderful Life* is the fourth work by Jake Heggie to be commissioned and premiered by HGO, following *Pieces of 9/11* (with librettist Gene Scheer, 2011), *Three Decembers* (Scheer, 2008), and *The End of the Affair* (Heather McDonald, 2004). Other acclaimed operas by Heggie include *Dead Man Walking* (libretto by Terrence McNally, seen at HGO in 2011); *Moby-Dick* (Gene Scheer); *Great Scott* (Terrence McNally); and *Out of Darkness, To Hell and Back*, and *The Radio Hour*, all with Scheer. Heggie has also composed chamber, choral, and orchestral works as well as more than 250 art songs, many for today's most loved singers, including Kiri Te Kanawa, Renée Fleming, Audra McDonald, Susan Graham, Joyce DiDonato, Jamie Barton, Sasha Cooke, Frederica von Stade, and Bryn Terfel. The operas

have been produced extensively on five continents with major productions in San Francisco; New York; Dresden; Vienna; Washington, D.C.; Cape Town; Sydney; Adelaide; Montreal; Calgary; Los Angeles; Dallas; Seattle; Chicago; Dublin; Malmo; and Copenhagen. *Dead Man Walking* has received 50 international productions since its premiere, as well as two live recordings. *Moby-Dick* was telecast nationally as part of the 40th season of PBS's *Great Performances* and released on DVD. In 2016, Heggie was awarded the Eddie Medora King prize by the University of Texas Butler School of Music. A mentor for Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative for three seasons, he is a frequent guest artist at universities, conservatories, and festivals.





## Gene Scheer, librettist

With composer Jake Heggie, Gene Scheer collaborated on the critically acclaimed 2010 Dallas Opera world premiere *Moby-Dick*, starring Ben Heppner as Captain Ahab; *Three Decembers* (HGO), which starred Frederica von Stade; and the lyric drama *To Hell and Back* (Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra), which featured Patti LuPone. Other works by Scheer and Heggie include *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*, a song cycle premiered by Joyce DiDonato and the Alexander String Quartet, and the song cycle *Pieces of 9/11*, which premiered at HGO in 2011. Scheer worked as librettist with Tobias Picker on *An American Tragedy*, which premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 2005. Their first opera, *Thérèse Raquin*, written for the Dallas Opera in 2001, was cited by *Opera News* as one of the

ten best recordings of 2002. Other recent collaborations include the lyrics for Wynton Marsalis's "It Never Goes Away," featured in *Congo Square*; the Grammy-nominated oratorio *August 4, 1964*, with composer Steven Stucky; the opera *Everest* with composer Joby Talbot, premiered by the Dallas Opera in 2015; and the opera *Cold Mountain* with composer Jennifer Higdon, premiered by the Santa Fe Opera in 2015 (International Opera Award for Best World Premiere in 2015). Also a composer, Scheer has written a number of songs for singers such as Renée Fleming, Sylvia McNair, Stephanie Blythe, Jennifer Larmore, Denyce Graves, and Nathan Gunn. Scheer's song "American Anthem," sung by Norah Jones, was featured in Ken Burns's Emmy Award-winning documentary *The War*.



## Patrick Summers, conductor

Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Patrick Summers was named artistic and music director of HGO in 2011 after having served as the company's music director since 1998. He has conducted a wide variety of repertoire at HGO and has been responsible for many important artistic advances, including the development of the HGO Orchestra. Some highlights of his work at HGO include conducting the company's first-ever complete cycle of Wagner's *Ring* and collaborating on the world premieres of André Previn's *Brief Encounter*; Christopher Theofanidis's *The Refuge*; Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The End of the Affair*, and *Three Decembers*; Carlisle Floyd's *Prince of Players* and *Cold Sassy Tree*; and Tod Machover's *Resurrection*. He also led the American premiere of Weinberg's *Holocaust*

opera *The Passenger* at HGO and on tour to the Lincoln Center Festival and has nurtured the careers of such artists as Christine Goerke, Ailyn Pérez, Joyce DiDonato, Ana María Martínez, Ryan McKinny, Tamara Wilson, Albina Shagimuratova, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Norman Reinhardt, Jamie Barton, and Dimitri Pittas. Maestro Summers is principal guest conductor for San Francisco Opera (SFO), where he was honored in 2015 with the San Francisco Opera Medal. His work with SFO includes collaborating with André Previn on the 1998 world premiere of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and conducting several of the performances, and conducting Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Moby-Dick*, which was recorded and telecast on PBS's *Great Performances*.



## A Note from the Conductor

All theatrical composers have themes that continually inspire and define their art. For Verdi, it was tension between public duty and private passion. Wagner was obsessed with the ancient Greek dramatists and the redemptive power of women. Benjamin Britten continually returned to themes about how societies vilify outsiders.

One of the most popular opera composers of our young century, Jake Heggie, musically and theatrically illuminates rich human stories about identity, the theme to which he so often returns. All of his major characters—both Sister Helen Prejean and the doomed title character in *Dead Man Walking*; Sarah in *The End of the Affair*; Madeline Mitchell in *Three Decembers*; the unforgettable fellow citizens we meet in *Out of Darkness*; the entire crew aboard

*Moby-Dick*'s Pequod; and the ardent Arden Scott, the title character in *Great Scott*—are at the crossroads of a profound *why* in their lives. The same is true of *It's a Wonderful Life*, a memory piece about two characters who come to each other's aid in ways we don't fully understand until the opera's moving climax.

*It's a Wonderful Life* is also about the transformative effect of simple kindnesses, a perfect description of the gratitude that I know Jake Heggie feels towards his growing audience. He is, in his unassuming, bold, and accessible way, bringing opera back to the people.



Patrick Summers, conductor

## Synopsis

**Place: The Heavens and Bedford Falls, New York**  
**Time: 1916–45**

It is Christmas Eve 1945. In the Heavens, an Angel Second Class named Clara sits on a swing and counts. She has been waiting in this place 200 years for a chance to earn her wings and become an Angel First Class. Tonight, for the first time, she hears hundreds of prayers that no other angel can hear—prayers for a man named George Bailey in Bedford Falls, New York. This is George's darkest hour as he stands on a bridge and contemplates jumping into the river below to end his life. Who is he? Why is he about to jump? Why can she hear these prayers? How can she help him? Is it too late? Just before George

jumps, the Angels stop time. They send Clara to Earth where she must learn about him, be his guardian angel, and try to save his life. But there's no time to waste, for even the Angels can't hold the clock for long.

Clara leaps off her swing and lands in a magical place of doorways and portals. This is where all of the days of George Bailey's life meet. Door by door, step by step, Clara will walk with George from childhood to this precarious moment on the bridge. On her journey, she will see how one life can make a difference to a community and to the world. Together, Clara and George will learn what makes a wonderful life, and that no one is a failure who has friends.

# Libretto

## ACT I

### PROLOGUE

#### PRELUDE

*Lights up on Clara, Angel Second Class, alone on stage, swinging back and forth on what appears to be a tree swing. It is night, and stars light the sky. As she swings gently back and forth, Clara counts. Is she counting stars?*

#### Clara

...21, 22, 23...-4...27...-8...-9...39! 49!

Oh my, oh my...

*Clara gently increases the vigor with which she swings back and forth. She notices something. What is it?*

...84...-5...-6...87...-8...wait! Wait! Wait!

*Clara's counting abstractly blends into a fast melismatic run in which*

*each note signals her counting something. What is she counting?*

9...97...-8...-9...101...-2...-3...21...-2...-3...-  
4! More! More and more and more...Ah!

*A large, booming, omnipresent Voice startles Clara. She nearly falls from her swing.*

#### A Voice

Clara! Sorry! Almost forgot you don't have wings yet.

#### Clara

Really? Forgot? Next Thursday, it will be two hundred years.

Still an Angel Second Class. Still no wings. People are beginning to talk.

*The lights come up and reveal that Clara's swing hangs from the moon, hovering in a sky filled with millions of stars. Clara is in the heavens, an*

*Angel Second Class, waiting to earn her wings.*

#### A Voice

Christmas Eve! Beautiful night for counting stars.

#### Clara

I'm not counting stars. I'm counting prayers.

#### A Voice

Prayers?

#### Clara

From a town called Bedford Falls. For a man named George Bailey.

#### A Voice

How many?

#### Clara

Ah! Don't you hear that? 140, no! 240 and 50...60...It just keeps going on!

#### A Voice

But that's almost...

#### Clara

...the whole town! Something is wrong!

*With urgency, A Voice calls to a chorus of Angels.*

#### A Voice

Angels, report!

*A quartet of Angels appears. They are Angels First Class and have their wings.*

#### Clara

I thought you could hear everything.

#### A Voice

Oh, Clara, there's too much. Most of the counting I do is counting on others to be my...

**Angels**

...eyes...ears...and hands. That's what we are: Angels First Class!

*The Angels are now in position.*

**Clara**

I wish I could see down there, but I can't.

**Angels**

Because you're not an Angel First Class!

**Clara**

I have ears! I have hands! I have eyes, don't you see?

Two hundred years I've been floating here, holding tight, tight, tight to this swing.

Waiting and hoping you'd give me the chance to earn my wings.

There was no line when I got here. No one there to tell me what to do.

So I sit here and hold on, and hold on, and wait for a clue.

Mustn't fail. Mustn't fall. So I'm nowhere at all,  
Waiting for the day I get my wings and fly away.

Mustn't fall. Mustn't fail. So, I'm hanging around in this heavenly jail.  
My hands hurt day and night from holding on to this swing so tight.

My eyes are dazzled by the stars.  
My ears are enchanted by the flutter of wings.  
Now, out of the blue, I hear prayers for this man.

Let me see him. Maybe this time, I could be your eyes, ears, and hands.

Let me try! Let me see. There must be a reason they're coming to me  
As I wait here for the day I get my wings and fly away!

*Lights up on George Bailey. In great distress, he stands on a bridge overlooking a great emptiness.*

**George**

I can't see you...

**Clara**

I can see!

**George**

...can you see me?  
All of you must close your eyes...

*Profoundly distraught, George seems to be thinking of jumping off the bridge and ending his life. Later in the opera, George and Mary will sing a joyful, complete version of this nursery rhyme with their children. What he sings now is a distraught, fragmented lament, the first line an appeal to the heavens.*

**Clara**

Is that him, on the bridge? George Bailey, I can see you!

**Angels**

He can't hear you. We're a billion miles away.

**Clara**

What's he doing? No! Stop! Don't jump, George Bailey!

**George**

When you open them...  
You will be astounded by a great surprise...

*George climbs out over the railing, holds onto it and hangs precariously.*

Why go on fighting?  
Why go on trying, failing, falling, selling...lying?

Following spread: Angels First Class (D'Ana Lombard, Yongzhao Yu, Zoie Reams, and Ben Edquist) assist Clara (Talise Trevigne) in helping George (William Burden).





I never dreamed this would happen to me.

I never dreamed. Yes, I did!

That's all I've ever done: dream and dream and dream...

For what?

Day after day after day...I knew.

I knew every dream, every pathetic dream, even the lasso around the moon,

I always knew it would become a noose.

I can't see you. You're not there.

I always knew, always knew, always knew

Some things are meant to die.

**Clara**

What can we do?

**Angels**

Who shall we send? Who shall we send?

**A Voice**

Clara! We shall send Clara.

**Clara**

Me?

**Angels**

You have been called, you mustn't ask why.

Help George Bailey and maybe you'll fly.

**Clara**

It's too late, he's going to leap!

**Angels**

We'll stop the clock and sing time to sleep.

*The face of the full moon becomes the hands of a huge clock. A second hand ticks down the final seconds of George Bailey's life as he hangs precariously from the railing.*

We'll hold the world as still as stone,  
Learn why he feels all alone.

God bless George Bailey...God bless  
George Bailey...

**George**

One...

**Clara**

Hurry! Hurry!

**George**

Two...

**Clara**

It's working!

*The second hand begins to slow down and stops. George freezes. Everything is still. Snowflakes hover in the air.*

Oh my...

**Angels**

The clock has stopped.

Snowflakes hover.

To help George Bailey, you must discover

Who he is...where he came from...

What he dreamed to achieve...

Why he stands here Christmas Eve.

**Clara**

How long do I have?

**Angels**

Not long. Not long. No time to wait!  
Seconds slip, and with them—Fate.

You will have to learn many things.  
Let go now, Clara, earn your wings.

**Clara**

Let go? Just like that?

**Angels**

Let go! Let go!

**Clara**

I don't know. You see...

There's nothing below me. I don't understand.

**Angels**

Let go! Let go! Clara, your chance will be gone.

You can't help him by holding on.

**Clara**

I get that, but still I don't understand: If I let go, where will I land?

**SCENE 1**

*Clara jumps off the swing and falls through a heavenly vortex. She rolls through time and space and lands in what appears to be an old attic. All is still. George and the bridge are gone. The Angels are no longer visible. Clara isn't sure where she is.*

**Clara**

Where am I? I should be at the bridge. He needs me!

*Clara opens up boxes and finds model boats and airplanes.*

**Angels**

To help George Bailey, you must discover

Who he is...where he came from...what he dreamed to achieve.

**Clara**

He needs me now! I don't understand.

*Clara finds a stack of travel magazines.*

"Coral Islands"—"Fiji Islands"—"Tahiti"—  
"See the Coliseum and the Parthenon."

*She finds a framed certificate.*

"Explorer's Club: National Geographic Society, 1916"—he was 13.

Why am I here? Help me understand.

*A hat drops down from the fly space.*

Really? A hat?

*She puts on the hat and the lights shift. A single door is lit in ethereal light. She goes to the door to open it. White light flashes on the stage with swirling images of snow and ice. Four children run in through the door.*

**Young George Bailey**

Stop hoggin' the sled, Sam!

**Young Sam Wainwright**

George, I'm not hoggin' anything.

**Clara**

George Bailey?

**Young Mary Hatch**

Listen to George! You've gone four times. Sam Wainwright, you always hog the sled. Always!

**Young Sam**

I'm not hoggin' anything, Mary.

**Young Mary**

Yes, you are. You're so annoying!

*Mary grabs the sled from Sam and gives it to Harry.*

**Young George**

And here comes the scare baby, my kid brother, Harry!

**Young Harry Bailey**

George! I'm not scared!

*Harry goes to the top of the hill to sled down.*

**Clara, Angels, and Children**

*The children chant rhythmically while the Angels and Clara sing*

Come on, Harry, you've been dared!  
Come on, Harry, don't be scared!

Go! Go! Show 'em how.  
Go! Go! Go! Go! Now! Wow!

*Harry flies down the hill as all whoop and holler. A trap door opens on the stage, representing a hole in the ice. Harry falls in.*

**Clara and Angels**

No! He fell through the ice!

**Young Harry**

Help! George! Help!

**Young George**

Hold on, Harry! I'm coming!

*George jumps into the hole. The lights shift. The children disappear.*

**Clara**

Harry! Hold on! George! Harry...  
George...Harry...George?  
Where'd they go? What happened?

**Angels**

George saved his brother's life that day. But lost the hearing in one ear.

**Clara**

What is this place?

**Angels**

She doesn't see.

**A Voice**

Send down the feather turbo booster.

*A feathered hat drops down from the fly space. Clara puts it on. With a swish of light, thousands of doors and hatches are revealed. The doors are portals that will be used to piece together the story of George's life.*

**Clara**

My, oh my, oh my...

*She inspects the door through which the children entered and points to other doors.*

You mean, this door...

**Angels**

Mumps. Age four.

**Clara**

This one?

**Angels**

Fifth grade science project.

**Clara**

This one?

**Angels**

First day of college.

*Clara indicates another door.*

Little League. Two singles and a homer.

**Clara**

That hatch?

**Angels**

A high school dance.

**Clara**

George Bailey's life. Each door...

**Angels**

...a different day.

**Clara and Angels**

All the days of George's life.

**Angels**

And they all meet here.

**Clara and Angels**

To help George Bailey, I/you must discover who he is. Where he came from.  
What he dreamed to achieve...

*Clara opens a door. Young George walks out with a bottle of medicine and runs off.*



**Clara**

George! Hey!

*She looks at the door.*

What day is this?

**Angels**

One month after he saved his brother.

*Clara walks through the door and we are in Gower's Pharmacy and Soda Fountain. Young Mary is seated at the soda fountain counter. She's looking at a telegram. Clara reads it over her shoulder. Mr. Gower is on the phone. He is drunk and slurs his words.*

**Clara**

What's this? A telegram.

**Gower**

Gower's Pharmacy and Soda Fountain.  
Mrs. Blaine? You didn't?

**Clara**

"Mr. Gower we regret to inform you that your son died suddenly this morning (Stop)..."

**Gower**

Why, I sent George Bailey with that medicine twenty minutes ago...

**Angels**

"Everything was done for his comfort (Stop)..."

*Gower covers the phone and addresses Young Mary.*

**Gower**

Mary Hatch, you seen George?

**Young Mary**

Not since he left the pharmacy, Mr. Gower.

**Gower**

*[Into the phone]* I'll call you back.

*He slams down the phone, suddenly in a rage.*

Where is George? I give a kid a job.  
Give a kid a break. This is what I get.  
Send him out the door. Trust him to take medicine to a sick child.  
Medicine to a child who might...die.  
This is what I get!

**Clara**

That poor man has lost his son.

**Gower**

Lazy, irresponsible George. Good-for-nothing George.

*Young George walks back in.*

George! Where you been?

**Young George**

I'm sorry, Mr. Gower.

**Gower**

Sorry? Mrs. Blaine's little boy is sick! He needs medicine. I thought your job was to take it to him.

**Young George**

I couldn't deliver it, Mr. Gower...

**Gower**

Why you good-for-nothing, lazy...I'll teach you a lesson or two.

*Gower starts to hit George on the head. Young Mary, horrified, sits clutching a magazine.*

**Clara and Angels**

Stop! Stop! Stop!

**Young George**

Stop! Mr. Gower! Please! Let me explain...Ow! Ow! Not my good ear, please, don't hit my good ear!

*Gower stumbles and falls.*

Stop! Mr. Gower, I know you're upset about your son. He died. I saw the telegram. I know you're...sad. [*He indicates the liquor bottle.*] But, you put something bad in this bottle. You made a mistake.

**Gower**

Mistake? What?

**Young George**

It's poison! You put poison in here. Look. I didn't know what to do.

*He shows Gower the medicine bottle he was supposed to deliver. Gower smells it. Horrified, he realizes his mistake. He reaches to hug George.*

You didn't mean to do it. Please don't hit me again!

**Gower**

George, oh, George. Thank you. Thank you.

*Gower hugs George and sobs.  
Young Mary writes something in the magazine she was holding.*

**Clara**

Hey, George's magazine. What'd she write?

**Young Mary**

"George Bailey, I'm gonna love you 'til the day I die."

*Young Mary goes to Clara's magic swing and slowly sways as the lights fade on the scene.*

**SCENE 2**

4

*A trap door opens and up climbs the 22-year-old George Bailey. He finds his old magazines.*

**Clara**

George?

*She looks at a date on the trap door.*

Age 22!

**George**

Ah! My old travel magazines! "Coral Islands"—"Fiji Islands"—"Tahiti."

**Clara**

"See the Coliseum and the Parthenon."

*George goes back to the Fiji brochure and starts doing a dance. He looks incredibly silly.*

**George**

Twist, shuffle, hop...

**Clara**

What's he doing?

**George**

Step, slide...one, two, three...

*Harry Bailey climbs into the attic.*

**Harry**

Hey, George!

**George**

Harry!

**Harry**

What you doin' in the attic?

**George**

The Mekee-Mekee.

**Clara and Harry**

The Mekee?...

**George**

...Mekee! One, two, three...See?

*He holds up the magazine and reads.*

"Here in Fiji, the natives still indulge in a dance called the Mekee-Mekee." Come on!...Twist, shuffle, hop...

*Harry starts to dance. Clara does, too.*

That's right, Harry...Step, slide, one, two, three!

*Harry stumbles. They laugh.*

Harry, the long-awaited exodus is about to begin!

**Harry**

You don't mean...

**George**

Yes!

**Harry**

How could you ever say goodbye?

**George and Harry**

Goodbye, Bedford Falls!

**George**

All I need is a suitcase.

**Harry**

Better be a big one!

*George starts looking around. Uncle Billy climbs through the attic trap door.*

**Uncle Billy**

Hey! Is someone lookin' for a suitcase?

**George and Harry**

Uncle Billy!

**Uncle Billy**

Something like this?

*He brings up a beautiful, new leather suitcase. George gasps.*

**George**

Uncle Billy, where'd you get this? It's perfect.

**Harry**

What a beauty!

**Uncle Billy**

Mr. Gower sent it.

**Harry**

The pharmacist?

**George**

My old boss.

**Harry**

That oughtta be big enough!

**George**

Room for labels from Rome to Paris to Baghdad...

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

Make way, make way for Bedford Falls's Aladdin!

**Clara**

Make way!

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

He's on a magic carpet ride we can't imagine! Off to college!

**George and Clara**

First, the world!

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

London, Paris...

**George and Clara**

Further still!

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

But, we don't understand.

[*Sweetly sarcastic*]

What's there to discover that ain't here to be seen in Bedford Falls, the City of Lights...

**George, Harry, and Uncle Billy**

...blinkin' red and green.

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

(Red and green and red and green and red...)

**Clara**

(Yella!)

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**George**

Why run off to Paris with its uninspired nights?

Here in Bedford Falls is the city of lights.

What is the Seine, but a dirty little creek?

Our Oswego is the river magnifique!

**All**

Goodbye, Bedford Falls!

**Harry**

Your mystery and enchantment have set the bar so high.

**All**

Goodbye, Bedford Falls!

**Uncle Billy**

How will you ever leave us?

**George**

I don't know, but I'll try.

Paris and Rome! How will I survive without a desk to sit at each day from nine to five?

Nothing to see, to taste, to do!

In each piazza...

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

...all you see is lotsa beauties lookin' for a date.

**George**

What can I do, but...

**All**

...curse my/your fate! Goodbye, Bedford Falls!

**Uncle Billy**

Skyscrapers soaring...

**Harry**

...two stories high!

Uncle Billy (Anthony Dean Griffey), George (William Burden), and Harry (Joshua Hopkins) share George's excitement about his upcoming trip.





**All**

Goodbye, Bedford Falls!

*Clara removes her hat and everything freezes. The music stops abruptly: everyone stands with mouths wide open.*

**Clara**

What happened?

*Clara puts the hat back on the scene comes back to life. She takes it off, and everything freezes. She does this a couple of times as the scene stutters back to life. The hat has the power to stop the scene. This amuses Clara enormously.*

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

How can you leave?

**George**

I do not know...

**Harry and Uncle Billy**

He does not know!

**George**

...but I'll try.

**Harry, Uncle Billy and Clara**

Bedford Falls, goodbye!

*They all laugh. Mother Bailey climbs into the attic.*

**Mother Bailey**

What's going on up here?

**Harry**

George is getting ready...

**George**

...to dance the Mekee-Mekee with my mother! Twist, shuffle, hop...come on, Mother!

*George spins his mother around.*

**Mother**

George! George! What is this?

**George**

The Mekee...

**Uncle Billy**

Mekee?

**George**

...Mekee! Yes!

**Harry**

Uncle Billy, can you believe it? My big brother George, off to Europe and then to college.

**Mother**

It's about time!

**Uncle Billy**

Time! Time! Harry, I almost forgot. Someone called about the graduation dance tomorrow.

**Harry**

Who?

**Uncle Billy**

I don't know. I'll go call back.

*He starts to climb out of the attic.*

**Mother**

But, if you don't know, how can you...?

*Clara takes off her magic hat and all freeze. She studies Uncle Billy's face.*

**Clara**

Not the brightest bulb, are you? But look at that face. A sweet man.

*She puts her hat back on. Uncle Billy leaves.*

**George**

Gonna miss Uncle Billy.

*Harry looks a bit blue.*

Hey! Your turn is coming. College, all of it.

**Harry**

I know. I know.

**George**

Save your money. Work for Dad for awhile. And don't let old man Potter push him around.

**Harry**

What's eatin' that old money-grubbin' buzzard anyway?

**George**

Potter won't be happy until he owns the whole town.

**Harry**

He almost does.

**George and Mother**

But, not the Bailey Building & Loan!

*Mother starts doing the Mekee-Mekee again.*

**Mother**

Twist, shuffle, hop...step, slide...

**George and Mother**

...one, two, three, four, Mekee-Mekee!

**Harry**

George! Hey! Come to the dance tomorrow night!

**George**

The high school dance? I don't know...

**Harry**

Lots of changes in four years. Just finished the new gym. Swimming pool's now underneath the floor. You gotta see it! Come on!

**Mother**

And Mary Hatch keeps asking about you.

**George**

Mary Hatch? You mean the little girl with...pigtails?

*Clara takes off her magic hat and whispers in George's ear.*

**Clara**

Don't you remember? She's gonna love you 'til the day she dies.

*She puts on her hat.*

**Harry**

Pigtails? Not anymore!

**SCENE 3**

*The set changes to the high school gym where the Bedford High School graduation dance is taking place. Young Mary, who was dimly lit on the*

Following spread: George Bailey (William Burden, far left) and Mary Hatch (Andrea Carroll, center) at Mary's high school dance.

*swing in the previous scene, has swung off. The beautiful, radiant, laughing 18-year-old Mary Hatch swings on and jumps into the party. When she enters she becomes the focus of the party and sings the senior class farewell song. The students join in.*

**Mary**

"Farewell, Bedford High, it's time for us to part.

I will always carry you in my heart.

Though the years go drifting by

The bonds of our friendship will never die.

Goodbye, Bedford High. Farewell, our alma mater, our joy and pride.

Goodbye, Bedford High. Until we meet again....

**Mary and Students**

Until we meet again, goodbye!

*George enters the gym while Mary sings. He watches and admires*



*her beauty and vibrancy. As Mary concludes the song, she and George see each other across the room. The lights change and they approach each other. One of Mary's suitors follows her.*

**Mary**

Hello, George.

*George is completely dumbstruck.*

**George**

Hi. Mary, you dancin' with him?

*Mary waves off a suitor.*

**Mary**

I'm dancin' with you.

*The lights shift back to reality as Mary and George start to dance. The chorus joins and a big group dance emerges. Mary's disgruntled suitor finds a big lever, which controls the gym floor.*

**Students**

Goodbye, Bedford High! Farewell, our alma mater! Our joy and pride!  
Goodbye, Bedford High! Goodbye!  
Goodbye!

*The suitor pulls the lever. The floor starts to open up, revealing the pool. George and Mary don't see it. They are dancing up a storm and fall in. Screams and laughter. General pandemonium.*

**SCENE 4**

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*George and Mary run from the party and arrive in front of the old Granville house, a broken down old place. They are both wet and laughing. George carries a heap of clothes.*

**Mary**

Let's go in. I'm freezing!

**George**

Into that old, broken-down place?

**Mary**

The old Granville house!

*George looks wary.*

Well, I'm not changing out here! My robe, sir.

**George**

Milady.

*George hands Mary some clothing. She goes inside. They speak through the screen door.*

Grabbed what I could from the locker room. I'll keep watch. I mean, I'll watch for others!

**Mary**

This old house is full of romance.

**George**

It's full of ghosts! And I thought I'd be bored tonight. Hey, you're a good dancer.

**Mary**

Am not.

**George**

Are, too. This is a night everyone will remember.

*Mary steps out from behind the screen door in a robe. She looks incredibly beautiful.*

I know I will.

**Mary**

Your turn. I'll keep watch.

*George goes inside the house to change.*



When you saw me tonight, you looked as if you didn't know me. You used to pass me on the street every day.

**George**

That was a little girl in pigtails. How old are you now?

**Mary**

Eighteen.

**George**

Eighteen! Why, just last year you were seventeen.

**Mary**

Off to college in New York City in three months.

**George**

I'll be off to State.

**Mary**

[*To herself*] I wish we were going together.

**George**

[*Interrupting*] What'd ya say?

**Mary**

Are you nervous?

*George steps out in an ill-fitting football uniform.*

You should be, looking like that!

*They step away from the house.  
George picks up a small rock.*

**George**

You make a wish and try to break some glass.

**Mary**

Oh, no, don't! I love this old place. I'd like to live in it.

**George**

Live in it?

*He throws the rock and some glass shatters.*

**Mary**

What'd you wish for, George?

**George**

Not just one wish. A whole hatful. I know what I'm gonna do tomorrow and the next day, and the day after that, and the year after that, and after that, and after that. I'm shaking the dust of this crummy little town off my feet, and I'm gonna see the world. I'm gonna see...

**Mary**

[*Interrupting*]...the Parthenon and the Coliseum!

**George**

How did you...?

**Mary**

Dance the Mekee-Mekee!...Gower's Soda Fountain. You must have showed me those travel magazines a million times. And you'd always say, "I'm gonna see..."

**Mary and George**

"...the Parthenon and the Coliseum!

**George**

Paris...

**Mary**

London...

**Mary and George**

...and Borneo! And then I'm gonna build...

**George**

...bridges...

**Mary**

...skyscrapers...

**Mary and George**

...a hundred stories high!"

*Mary picks up a rock. Closes her eyes to make a wish and throws the rock. Glass shatters.*

**George**

What'd you wish for, Mary? Hope it was something wonderful. How 'bout the moon, Mary? You want the moon? Say the word and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down!

**Mary**

And then what?

**George**

Then you could swallow it and it'd all dissolve, see? And the moonbeams would shoot out of your fingers and toes, and the ends of your hair. You want the moon, Mary?

*Uncle Billy calls from offstage and enters frantically.*

**Uncle Billy**

George! George! There you are! Come quickly! Your father's had a stroke. Doctor's on his way.

**George**

Mary, I'm sorry...

*George runs off with Uncle Billy. Clara emerges from the shadows, having watched the entire scene. Mary walks off. A door marked College is illuminated. Out of another door emerges Mr. Potter.*

**SCENE 5**

8

*Potter seems to be delivering a loving eulogy. George and Uncle Billy step into the room.*

**Mr. Potter**

To the public, Peter Bailey was the Building & Loan. He's gone now. A man of "high ideals." But, high ideals without common sense will be the ruin of this town. Gentlemen, it's time to dissolve the Building & Loan.

**Uncle Billy**

What?

**George**

No, Mr. Potter. No. Never.

**Potter**

I'll get the votes. The board is with me. This institution is a dream, not a business. I just saw Ernie Bishop sitting on his brains outside in his taxi.

**George**

He's waiting for me.

**Uncle Billy**

George is heading off to college today!

**Potter**

You're building Ernie Bishop a home? The bank turned down that loan. But here he gets five thousand dollars.

*Ernie enters.*

**Ernie**

Hey, George!

**George**

Ernie.

**Ernie**

Train's leaving soon.

**Uncle Billy**

We'll keep the car running.

**Ernie and Uncle Billy**

All aboard who's going to college!

*Ernie and Uncle Billy exit.*

**Potter**

Go to college, George. Make some new friends. Your father would have wanted that.

**George**

What my father wanted was to give this town one place where people didn't have to come crawling to you.

**Potter**

They don't have to crawl. They need to wait and save. Wait and save. Profit is the art of the future. Wait and see! Wait and save.

**George**

Wait and save. Wait and save for what? Do you know how long it takes to save \$5,000? Wait and save for your kids to grow up and leave you?

**Potter**

You just keep building and building these new homes, then give them

away. What does that get us? A lazy, discontented rabble instead of a thrifty working class.

**George**

These are human beings, Mr. Potter.

**Potter**

Where's the profit? The profit!

**George**

But to you—a warped, frustrated old man—people are commodities.

**Potter**

Profit is the art of the future.

**George**

Human beings!

**Potter**

Profit is the lifeblood of this country. Not dreams.

**George**

My father died a richer man than you'll ever be.

**Potter**

Richer? Bah! The only question is: What happens now? Hand the reins to your uncle? Your brother? You? Go to college, George. Grow up. You need to understand, some things are meant to die.

*Potter exits.*

**George**

I never dreamed this would happen to me. Never.

**Clara**

But, George goes off to college through this door, right? He sees the Coliseum and the Parthenon and dances the Mekee-Mekee. You said so. You said: "First day of college." You said so!

*The Angels appear. We see George send Harry through the "College" door.*

**Angels**

George sent Harry in his place. Gave him the money he'd saved. And stayed.

**Harry**

This doesn't feel right, George. Me using the money you saved.

**George**

Hey, we're brothers.

**Harry**

Look, I'll finish college and when I come back it will be your turn to go.

**George**

Sure.

**Harry**

You can count on me, big brother.

**George**

I know I can.

**Clara**

I see—this is Harry Bailey’s First Day of College.

**Angels**

Mary Hatch, too. Off to pursue their dreams.

**Clara**

What about George? What about George’s dreams? How much time do I have?

**Angels**

Not long! No time to wait! Seconds slip...

**Clara**

...and with them, Fate.

**SCENE 6**

9

*Four years will pass by in this scene.*

*George and Uncle Billy continue the daily work of running the Building & Loan while Harry and Mary experience college life.*

**Angels**

He stayed home, his own dreams denied

And kept the Building & Loan alive.

To honor his father, kept Potter from

getting his way,

Fighting a takeover,

Building new homes,

Guaranteeing new loans,

Day after day after day after day...

**Mary and Harry**

I never dreamed this would happen to me!

**Angels**

One year.

**Uncle Billy**

Hey, George! How ‘bout that Harry?

Did you read it? “Freshman All

American!” Can you believe it? And

Mary Hatch has pledged a sorority.

**George**

Good for him. Good for her.

**George, Mary, and Harry**

I never dreamed this would happen to me!

**Angels**

Two years.

**Uncle Billy**

Hey, George! Harry says: “Being a

sophomore is much easier. Tell George

he’s gotta visit soon!”

**George**

Uncle Billy, did you notarize the Stevens’s loan?

**Uncle Billy**

No, George. I forgot.

**George**

You need to pay attention.

**Uncle Billy**

Sorry, George.

**George**

Gotta pay attention.

*Some brochures fall out of a folder.*

**Uncle Billy**

What are these? “See the Parthenon and the Coliseum.”

**George**

Sorry. Those are mine.

**Uncle Billy**

You should go visit Harry. I can mind the store.

**George**

We've gotta get the town to make that road. Then we can build dozens of homes. Dozens! Just need a way in and a way out.

**Mary and Harry**

I never dreamed this would happen to me!

**Angels**

Three years.

*Sam Wainwright enters and greets Mary.*

**Mary**

Hey there! Sam Wainwright. What are you doing here? To see me? Really?

*Harry meets Helen.*

**Harry**

Your name is Helen, right? You're a junior, too?

**Mary**

Dinner Saturday night? Sure, I'm free.

**Harry**

It's a date!

**George**

How'd you do it, Dad? Day after day after day the same work, the same streets, year after year after year...

**Mary**

Another date? That sounds great, Sam.

**Harry**

Yes, of course, I'd like to meet your parents.

**George, Mary, and Harry**

I never dreamed this would happen to me!

**Angels**

Four years!

*Mary is walking with Sam. Harry is on his knee, proposing to Helen.*

**Harry**

How 'bout Niagara Falls, Helen of Troy, New York? Say the word!

*Helen nods. They embrace. Clara takes off her hat to stop the scene.*

**Clara**

No! Stop! This is not the way the story goes. Not the way I want the story to go. It's four years later. What about George? *[To Mary, who is frozen]* You're going to love him 'til the day you die. Remember? *[To Harry, who is frozen]*

And Harry, you're going to come home and take over the Building & Loan so George can finally go to college, see the Parthenon...

*Clara puts her hat back on. George exits. Mary walks off with Sam. Harry asks Helen to wait and he walks through a door into a room where Uncle Billy is working.*

**SCENE 7**

10

*In the Building & Loan. Harry enters.*

**Uncle Billy**

Harry! What are you doing here?

**Harry**

That's my "Welcome Home" after four years?

**Uncle Billy**

George went to meet you at the station.



**Harry**

I took an early train. Need to talk to you alone.

**Uncle Billy**

Me?

**Harry**

George is counting on me to take over now so he can leave. But, something has happened. Something unexpected, Uncle Billy.

**Uncle Billy**

Something serious?

**Harry**

Serious as breathing. Serious as your heart beating. Serious as seeing and hearing.

**Uncle Billy**

Serious? You're sick? Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy...

**Harry**

No, Uncle Billy, the opposite. Serious as in knowing you've found your way. Serious, knowing you'll always be happy. Something has happened. Like a rainbow at midnight.

**Uncle Billy**

Did it rain last night?

**Harry**

No, Uncle Billy. The girl I met in college...Helen...well, we got married!

**Uncle Billy**

Married?!? Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy! You've been a busy boy!

**Harry**

I didn't plan it. It just sort of happened.

**Uncle Billy**

Like a rainbow at midnight?

**Harry**

Yes, Uncle Billy. Unexpected and beautiful.

**Uncle Billy and Harry**

Serious as your heart beating. Serious as seeing and hearing. Something has happened. Like a rainbow at midnight.

**Harry**

And the only question that matters now is "Where will it lead?"

**Uncle Billy and Harry**

..."Where will it lead?"

*George bursts into the room with Helen.*

**George**

Look what I found! A sister-in-law! Hot dog!

**Harry**

Aw, George...

**George**

You graduated, little brother, all right.

*To Helen*

Can't imagine what a swell girl like you is doing with my two-headed brother.

**Helen**

Purely mercenary, I assure you. My father offered him a job in Troy.

**George**

Did he?

**Helen**

"George, George, George, George." That's all Harry ever talks about.

**George**

Uncle Billy, meet Helen Bailey.

**Uncle Billy**

Did you say Bailey? We have the same last name! Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy...

*Uncle Billy takes Helen aside.*

**Harry**

George, about that job. I never said I'd...

**George**

It's fine. Wait 'til Mother hears. Uncle Billy, take them home. Start the celebration. I'll just close up here.

**Harry**

You're gonna love her, George.

**George**

She loves you, so I already do.

*Uncle Billy, Helen, and Harry leave. When they are gone, George slams the door.*

Do you want adventure? Do you want to see the world?  
Make way, make way for Bedford Falls's Aladdin!

I'm on a magic carpet ride—you cannot imagine.

*He picks up the travel brochures.*

Who needs college? Who needs to see the world?  
London [*he tears up a brochure*].  
Paris [*and another*].  
The Parthenon [*another*].  
And the Coliseum [*and another*].

*George leaves the Building & Loan and is walking through town.*

Hello, Bedford Falls! Looks like we are in this together, you and me.  
Hello, Bedford Falls! I guess the only way I'll leave you is in a box.

Make way, make way, for Bedford Falls's Aladdin.  
He's finally on that magic ride. Make way! Make way!

## SCENE 8

*George has wound up pacing in front of Mary's house. She steps out of the front door and interrupts him.*

**Mary**

Hey! Why all the ruckus?

**George**

Just out for a walk.

**Mary**

Can I come along?

**George**

Thought you were in New York.

**Mary**

I was.

**George**

Not anymore?

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**Mary**

No. I got homesick.

**George**

Homesick? For Bedford Falls? Thought you and Sam Wainwright were...well... Heard he's doing pretty well.

**Mary**

Oh, he is! Plastics. He says it's "the opportunity of a lifetime."

**George**

So you're all set.

**Mary**

Well...you see, the thing is...Sam Wainwright always hogged the sled. He will always hog the sled.

**George**

Mary Hatch, I have bad news. You sound like my Uncle Billy.

**Mary**

I don't look like him, do I?

**George**

You look OK.

**Mary**

Just OK?

**George**

S'pose that's what they're wearing in New York.

**Mary**

Don't know. Don't care. It's what I'm wearing here and now in Bedford Falls with you, under a moonless sky. Moonless, because you threw a lasso around it and pulled it down for me! So I could swallow it up—and it dissolved. Now, the moonbeams are shooting out my...my...

*She waits for George to fill in the words, but he stands there glumly.*

George, don't you remember?

**George**

Yeah...your fingers and...toes...and the ends of your...

**Mary**

When I threw that rock four years ago, do you know what I wished for? To live in that broken-down Granville house someday—with you, George. That's all I've ever wanted. To build something with you—make something beautiful together. What do you see when you look at me, George? Because I hope you see someone who loves adventure as much as you do. Because I do love adventure. I do! It's just that to me the greatest adventure has always been loving you.

**George**

Me? But, Mary, you could have anyone.

**Mary**

Don't want "anyone." I looked, and, well, in the whole city of New York I couldn't find one person who knows the steps to the Mekee-Mekee.

**George**

Really? Not a single person?

**Mary**

A few know the twist, shuffle, hop...but the step, slide? Hopeless.

**George**

Hopeless? Really hopeless?

**Mary**

You tell me.

**George**

Oh, Mary.

**Mary**

George Bailey, I'm gonna love you 'til the day I die.

*George and Mary embrace. Clara steps forward.*

**Clara**

How can it happen? From this kiss to a bridge at midnight?

## ACT II

### SCENE 1

1

*The chorus—friends and family of George and Mary—enters, snapping, clapping, ready to dance the Mekee-Mekee. A big group dance develops. This is George and Mary's wedding.*

**Chorus**

Twist, slide, shuffle, hop!  
Give the rhythm all that you've got.  
Stomp your feet! Shake your mop!  
You're doin' the Mekee-Mekee!

*Clara joins in singing with the chorus. Eventually, everyone is singing and dancing. George and Mary enter.*

**Chorus**

George and Mary Bailey!

Twist, slide, shuffle, hop!

Give the rhythm all that you've got.

Stomp your feet! Shake your mop!

You're doin' the Mekee-Mekee!

*At the conclusion of the dance, Mary and George head to Ernie's taxi.*

*Mother Bailey is with them.*

**Mary**

Goodbye, Mrs. Bailey.

**Mother**

Mother Bailey, please.

**Mary**

I love your son. I'll write.

**Mother**

[*Aside to Mary*] Don't want letters.

Want grandchildren!

**Mary**

Yes, ma'am!

*Mary gets into the taxi with George.*

**George**

What'd she say?

**Mary**

Tell ya later.

*Clara, unseen to them all, sits in the front with Ernie.*

**Ernie**

So where you goin' on this here honeymoon?

*George and Mary are so busy kissing that they don't hear Ernie's question.*

**Clara**

London, Paris, Baghdad, and Borneo!

Make way for Bedford Falls's Aladdin!

He's finally on his way with his bride!

**Ernie**

Don't mind me!

**Clara**

Well, don't mind me, either!

**George**

There's the kitty, Ernie! Two thousand bucks! Count it, Mary.

**Mary**

I feel like a bootlegger's wife!

**George**

Gonna shoot the works! New York, Bermuda...

**Clara**

And don't forget the Parthenon!

**Mary, Clara, and George**

Goodbye, Bedford Falls!

**Ernie**

And then?

**Mary**

Who cares!

**Clara**

Who cares!

*In the background, the chorus—now the townspeople of Bedford Falls—has begun to stomp and chant at the doors of the Building & Loan. The sound grows louder and louder.*

**Chorus**

Open the doors! Open the doors!

**George**

Wait. What's happening over there? That's the Building & Loan!

**Mary**

No! Let's not stop.

**Clara**

Go! Go! Go! Go!

**Mary and Clara**

Goodbye, Bedford Falls!...

**George**

Uh-oh. Pull over.

*The chorus has become a loud rabble.*

Just a moment, dear.

**SCENE 2****Chorus**

Open the doors! Open the doors!

*George wades into the crowd.*

**George**

What seems to be the problem?

**Chorus**

Open the doors! Open the doors!

**George**

Can't get in? Folks! Please, let me see what's going on.

*George slips past the crowd through a door. Clara takes off her hat to stop time and reads what's written on the door.*

**Clara**

**2** The Bank Run of 1929. Fear on every face.

*She puts her hat back on. George is inside the Building & Loan. Uncle Billy is in a panic with Potter on the phone. He hands the phone to George. In the background, we can hear the chorus chanting and stomping.*

**Uncle Billy**

We're in a pickle, George.

**George**

Hello?

**Potter**

George, there's a rumor you've closed your doors. Not enough cash on hand. Tell you what, I've just guaranteed the bank sufficient funds. They'll reopen next week.

**George**

[*To Uncle Billy*] He's taken over the bank!

**Potter**

Tell your customers I'll pay 50 cents on the dollar for their shares.

**George**

You don't miss a trick, do you?

**Potter**

If you close your doors before 6 p.m., you'll never open them again.

*George hangs up the phone and goes to open the doors. The chorus bursts*

*through the door—angry, distraught, scared. They yell randomly.*

**George**

Folks! It's not as bleak as it appears. Old man Potter has guaranteed cash payments when the bank reopens next week.

**Chorus**

Our money's here. Our money's here, George!

**Ed**

I'll take my money now!

**George**

Your money isn't in a safe. It's in Joe's house and Charlie's house, in Mrs. Macklin's house, right next to yours. You're lending them money to build. They pay you back as they can. That's how this works.

**Ed**

I've got \$242. That won't break anyone.

*Randall runs in.*

**Randall**

Old man Potter's paying 50 cents on the dollar. Cash!

**George**

If Potter gets the Building & Loan, there will never be another decent home built in this town. He wants you living in his slums. Joe, don't you remember what it's like? Ed, when you lost your job and were late, did you lose your house? Would Potter have let you keep it?

Don't you understand what's happening? Potter isn't selling. He's buying! We've got to stick together! Have to keep the faith.

**Mrs. Thompson**

But, my husband hasn't worked in over a year, George.

**A Woman**

How can we live until the bank reopens?

**A Man**

Can't feed my kids with faith.

**Mary**

How much do you need?

*Mary enters, holding the honeymoon money high over her head. George beams at her.*

**George**

Look, we've got \$2,000 here. That ought to hold us 'til the bank reopens. Now Ed, how much do you need?

**Ed**

\$242.

**George**

But...

**Ed**

Two hundred forty-two dollars.

*Uncle Billy pays out the money while George moves on.*

**George**

Mr. Delgado?

**Mr. Delgado**

I've got three hundred...

**George**

Just 'til the bank reopens. How much?

**Mr. Delgado**

\$20?

**George**

Thank you! Mrs. Thompson?

**Mrs. Thompson**

But it's your own money.

**George**

Never mind.

**Mrs. Thompson**

\$17.50?

**George**

Bless your heart!

*George continues transactions until they safely close the doors at 6 p.m.*

**Clara**

They kept the doors open, but never went on that honeymoon.

**Angels**

Once again, dreams of travel denied, Together they fought Potter, side by side. Saved the Building & Loan, built a life and a home,



Day after day, year after year,  
Changes and blessings began to  
appear.

### SCENE 3

*George and Mary's home—the old  
Granville house. One by one, their  
three children are revealed. They've  
been putting up wallpaper—a loving  
home improvement.*

#### Mary

I can't see you, can you see me?  
All of you must close your eyes.  
When you open them you will be  
astounded by a great surprise!

What has changed?  
What's the same?  
Who can guess...

*George sneaks in and surprises the  
children.*

#### George

...and win the game?

#### Children

Daddy! Daddy!

#### Mary

Your turn! Close your eyes.

#### Children

Close your eyes! Close your eyes!

#### Mary

You will be astounded by a great  
surprise!

*The children lead George to the newly  
papered wall.*

#### Children

One! Two! Three! Surprise! We did it!

#### Clara

The old Granville house. Look at it now!

#### Zuzu

I put up the wallpaper, Daddy.

#### George

I see that, Zuzu.

#### Zuzu

Mommy helped.

#### Mary

Children, upstairs! Time for bed.

#### Children

Aw, Mom!

#### Mary

Right now!

*The children head upstairs. As they  
do, George looks around the still fairly  
tattered old house.*

#### George

You deserve a new place. Wish I could  
have given you...

#### Mary

...the Parthenon or the Coliseum?

#### George

A honeymoon! Even a roof that doesn't  
leak!

#### Mary

It can be fixed.

#### George

Good ol' Sam Wainwright's roof  
doesn't leak. Plastics! How many  
millions is he worth now?

#### Mary

Who cares? Twenty-four new houses in  
six months! Wonder what Potter thinks  
of Bailey Park now!

#### George

His slums aren't empty, yet.

**Mary**

I bet he's noticed! The Thompsons, the Ruffinos, O'Malleys, Delgados, and today the Martinis.

**Children**

[From offstage] Mom! Mom!

**Mary**

Coming!...Mr. Martini left a note and some wine for you.

*Mary heads upstairs. George goes to his desk. He tosses the note in the trash. He looks at model airplanes, some of his old travel brochures. Clara takes the note out of the trash and reads.*

**Clara**

"Thank you, Mr. Bailey. Me, Ernesto Martini, I own my own home: three rooms and a bath! No longer paying rent like pigs in Potter's Field. I thought I was dreaming. No, not a dream! I

thank you. My whole family thanks you."

*George heads over to Potter's office.*

**SCENE 4**

5

**George**

You wanted to see me?

**Potter**

Always direct, like your father. Have a cigar.

*George takes a cigar.*

George, I'm an old man and most people hate me. But, I don't like them, either. I run everything in this town. Everything but the Building & Loan. And why is that? You, George. Because of you. Yes, you've beaten me, George.

**George**

Beaten you?

**Potter**

You have beaten me. You make—what—forty a week?

**George**

Forty-five.

**Potter**

If you were an ordinary yokel, I'd say you were doing just fine. But you, George, you're an ambitious young man who hates the Building & Loan almost as much as I do.

**George**

Now wait a minute.

**Potter**

Don't deny it, George. A young man—smartest in the crowd—dying to strike out on your own since the day you were born. But, day by day by year by year, you watch as your friends go places. How about that Sam Wainwright?

**George**

What's your point?

**Potter**

My point? I want to hire you, George.

**George**

Hire me?

**Potter**

To run my properties. How about \$20,000 a year?

**George**

\$20,000?

**Potter**

To start.

**George**

\$20,000...

**Potter**

\$20,000...How about the nicest house in town?

**George**

The nicest house in town.

**Potter**

Fine clothes for your wife and children.

**George**

My wife and children.

**Potter**

How about business trips to New York?

Once in a while to Europe.

**George**

To New York...to Europe...

**Potter**

Wouldn't that be nice for a change?

**George**

I don't know what to say.

**Potter**

Say yes! Say, "My ship has finally come in!" Think about it!

**George**

I don't know what to say. New York City. Then to Europe...

What about the Building & Loan?

**Potter**

Confound it! Are you afraid of success?

I'm offering a three-year contract at \$20,000 a year!

**George**

Would it be possible to think it over?

**Potter**

Sure! Talk it over with your wife. I'll draw up the papers.

**George**

Thank you, Mr. Potter.

*George shakes Potter's hand. The touch revolts him and snaps him back to reality.*

Wait a minute. No...No...No! I don't have to talk to anyone. I know right now the answer is no! You and your money! You sit here and spin your little webs with your money. Who do you think you are?

**Potter**

I know who I am, George. Who are you?

*The lights fade on Potter as George heads home. The sound of radio static fills the air as we tune into FDR's World War II radio address.*

## SCENE 5

### Voice of President Roosevelt

Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan...

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost...

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God.

*While the address is read, the men of Bedford Falls go off to war. George remains still until he bids farewell to Harry.*

6

### Chorus and Angels

One country, one dream, one fight,  
We march together for truth and right.  
Out of darkness, into the light,  
One dream to achieve.

By land, air, and sea we'll go  
To stop the fires of war and woe.



A fight for freedom, our children will  
know  
One country, one dream.

**Clara**

[To George] You wanted to go with  
them, but you couldn't. Your bad ear.

**Angels**

George fought the war from Bedford  
Falls,  
Pulled his neighbors together,  
They all gave what they could of their  
lives:  
Scrap metal, rubber, and paper drives.

Women worked at the U.S.O.  
Built planes and flew planes.  
Ernie fought in France.  
Ruffino in the Philippines.  
Delgado died on D-Day.

George (William Burden) refuses to accept  
a job offer from Mr. Potter (Rod Gilfry).

**Clara**  
And Harry?

**Angels**

A fighter pilot. A hero. He saved a  
transport full of soldiers.  
On V-E Day, he wept and prayed.  
On V-J Day, he wept and prayed.

**Chorus and Angels**

One country, one dream, one fight,  
We march together for truth and right.  
Out of darkness, into the light,  
One dream to achieve.

By land, air, and sea we'll go  
To stop the fires of war and woe.  
A fight for freedom, our children will  
know  
One country, one dream.

*The scene fades. One door remains  
illuminated. Clara walks to it.*

**Clara**

And this door?

**Angels**

Today.

**Clara**

Today.

## SCENE 6

*George bursts through the door with a stack of newspapers.*

**George**

What a day! What a day!

*He reads the headline. Clara reads over his shoulder.*

"HARRY BAILEY WINS  
CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR."

**Clara**

"PRESIDENT DECORATES LOCAL  
BOY..."

**George**

"PRIVATE CEREMONY..."

**George and Clara**

"...AT THE WHITE HOUSE!"

**Clara**

A picture of the transport Harry saved.

**George**

What a day!

*George sees Ernie and Mr. Martini.*

Ernie! Mr. Martini! Did you see?

*They look at the newspaper.*

**Ernie**

Oh, look! It's gonna snow again!

**Martini**

Oh, look! You're right.

**Ernie and Martini**

We're gonna have a white Christmas!

**George**

What do you mean?

**Ernie**

Got ya, George!

**Martini**

Yes! Yes!

**Ernie and Martini**

Marvelous! Great news!

**Clara**

Great news!

**Clara, George, Ernie, and Martini**

There's gonna be a celebration!

**George**

The likes of which this town has never  
seen!

**Martini**

There's a banner hanging over Main  
Street.

**Ernie and Martini**

You gotta see! You gotta see!

**George**

I'll come right over after I finish with  
the bank examiner.

**Ernie and Martini**

Merry Christmas, George!

**George**

Merry Christmas! What a day! What  
a day!

*They exit as Uncle Billy enters the bank.  
He has a newspaper, too.*

## SCENE 7

*In the bank. Uncle Billy talks to himself as he fills in a deposit slip.*

### Uncle Billy

What a day! What a day! Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy...  
Deposit. \$8,000.

*He sees Potter in the bank holding a newspaper. Uncle Billy goes to him.*

Good morning, Mr. Potter! What's the news? Ah, look! Can't keep those Bailey boys down, now can you?

### Potter

How does slacker George feel about that?

### Uncle Billy

Very jealous. He only lost three buttons off his vest. Of course, if George had

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been able to go he'd have earned two medals.

### Potter

Bad ear.

### Uncle Billy

Well, after all, Potter, some people like George had to stay home. Not every heel was in Germany and Japan.

*Uncle Billy goes to the bank teller and hands the teller the deposit slip.*

Here you go. Did you read about Harry? We're all so excited. The army's flying his mother to the White...wait...  
The cash. It was here. \$8,000. I was sure. I must have left it...Or did I leave it...I...I...

*He starts looking frantically for the money. His coat. The area around him. The trash bin. Potter sees that Billy has accidentally given the money to him.*

*He tucks it quietly away. Clara sees all of this.*

### Clara

Uncle Billy! The money! Potter has it!

*Uncle Billy cannot hear her, of course, and leaves the bank in a total panic.*

[*To Potter*] How can you do this?

[*To the heavens*] How can you let this happen? How can I help them now?

*A quick light change. In medias res, George has learned what happened and is questioning Uncle Billy.*

### George

Uncle Billy, what street did you go down?

### Uncle Billy

I don't know. I think...

### George

Thinking isn't good enough. Now, where were you?

### Uncle Billy

I don't know. I don't know.

### George

What'd you do? Did you buy something?

### Uncle Billy

Not a stick of gum.

### George

Uncle Billy, we have to find that money!

### Uncle Billy

I'm no good to you, George.

### George

[*He's starting to lose it now.*] Listen! Do you have any secret hiding places?



**Uncle Billy**

I've searched the house. Gone into rooms I locked when my wife died.

**George**

Think! Think!

**Uncle Billy**

I can't think any more, George.

**George**

There's a bank examiner in our office right now. There isn't time! Where's that money, you stupid, silly, old fool? Do you know what this means? Bankruptcy, scandal, and prison! One of us is going to jail. Well, it's not gonna be me.

*Uncle Billy exits. George stands still in a trance of despair. It begins to snow. He is so distraught that he is oblivious to anything and is soon covered with snow.*

**SCENE 8**

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*Mary and the children are preparing the house for Christmas morning.*

*Janie is playing "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" on the piano. Tommy is decorating the Christmas tree. Mary is on the phone with Harry.*

**Mary**

Oh, Harry, it's all so exciting! The whole town is making a huge fuss.

[*To Tommy*] Put a few red ones over there, Tommy.

[*To Harry*] Yes, a banner over Main Street!

[*To Tommy, who is now eating the strung popcorn*] Don't eat the decorations!

[*To Harry*] We miss you, too. What? Really?

[*To the children*] Kids! Guess what? Uncle Harry says Grandma just had lunch with the president's wife!

**Janie**

Which president?

**Tommy**

Don't be a knucklehead! The president of the United States. I know them all!

**Janie**

I'm a musician. Not a historian!

*Tommy proceeds to name the presidents while decorating the tree. Janie resumes playing the piano.*

**Tommy**

Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison...[*The rest of these names under the dialogue that follows*]... Monroe, Adams, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln,

Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, and Truman!

**Mary**

[*To Harry*] George isn't home yet. Did you try the office? He must be on his way. He'll call you when he gets here. Bye-bye!

*Zuzu appears in a bathrobe, holding a flower.*

Zuzu! Back to bed! You're sick.

**Zuzu**

My flower needs to drink.

**Mary**

I'll get it for you.

*Zuzu exits. Mary gets a glass of water. George enters covered in snow.*

Hello, dear! Did you bring the wreath?

**George**

It's at the office.

**Mary**

Harry called! [*Referring to the glass of water*] This is for Zuzu. She won a flower at school and didn't want to crush it. So she didn't button up her coat. Doctor says she's fine.

**George**

The doctor was here?

**Mary**

Tiny temperature.

**George**

Janie! Do you have to play that?

**Janie**

I have to practice, Daddy!

**George**

Temperature! It's this old house. Why'd we have to live here? Stay in this crummy little town?

**Mary**

What's wrong, George?

**George**

Everything's wrong! You call this a happy family? Why'd we have all these kids?

*Janie and Tommy have both stopped what they are doing, upset by their father's outburst.*

**Mary**

George.

**George**

I'll take that.

*George takes the glass of water and goes to Zuzu, who is in her bed holding her flower.*

**Zuzu**

I won a flower.

**George**

I brought it a drink. Can I see it?

**Zuzu**

Petals fell off.

**George**

That's something Daddy can fix. A little paste...and all better.

*George puts the petals in his pocket.*

Do something for me?

**Zuzu**

What?

**George**

Try to get some sleep.

**Zuzu**

I want to look at my flower.

**George**

Sleep and you'll dream a whole garden. I can't see you. Can you see me? Now it's time to close your eyes. When you open them You will be astounded by...

*Zuzu has fallen asleep. George leaves her room and goes back downstairs. Mary is on the phone.*

**Mary**

Thank you, Mrs. Welch. [*To George*] Zuzu's teacher.

**George**

[*Grabbing the phone*] Give me that. [*To Mrs. Welch on the phone*] Say, what kind of teacher are you, anyway? Sending her home like that, half naked! She could die from stupid people like you. Maybe my kids aren't the best dressed! Maybe they don't have any decent clothes! Maybe! Maybe!... Maybe, I will!

Mary gets the phone back from George.

**Mary**

Mrs. Welch? Mrs. Welch, I'm so sorry...I...Hello? Hello?...She's gone.

*George has been tearing through his desk, throwing things everywhere in search of his life insurance policy, which he finds. Mary, Janie, and Tommy watch, horrified. The children are crying.*

**Mary**

George! Why are you torturing the children?

*George runs from the house to Potter's office.*

## SCENE 9

10

**George**

I'm in trouble, Mr. Potter.

**Potter**

I know! \$8,000! Reporters have been calling.

**George**

Reporters?

**Potter**

And the D.A. He spoke to the bank examiner. Something wrong with the books?

**George**

No. Nothing wrong. I just misplaced some money.

**Potter**

You misplaced it? Did you call the police?

**George**

No, I didn't want the publicity. Harry's homecoming is tomorrow...and it's Christmas Eve. Help me. Won't you help me, Mr. Potter? I have some life insurance. \$500 in equity.

**Potter**

Look at you. You used to be so cocky. You were going to conquer the world! You once called me a warped, frustrated old man. What are you but a warped, frustrated young man! Conquer the world! Look at you, crawling in here on your hands and knees. Begging for help. No stocks. No bonds. Nothing but a miserable little \$500 policy. George, you're worth more dead than alive. Tell you what I'll do for you: swear out a warrant for your arrest!

*George starts to run from the building.*

Go ahead and run! You can't hide in a town like this.

*George runs out into the snow. As he wonders what to do next, an ensemble builds as the voices in his head become relentless.*

**Clara, Mary, Uncle Billy, Harry, Potter, and Chorus**

George! George! George!

**Together**

**Mary:** Why are you torturing the children, George? Why?

**Uncle Billy:** I'm just no good to you, George. No good!

**Harry:** Serious as breathing...as your heart beating.

**Potter:** Malfeasance! A warrant for your arrest!

**All:** Goodbye, Bedford Falls. Goodbye, George.

## SCENE 10

*George finds himself at the bridge. Overwhelmed, he is thinking of jumping. The voices (the entire town) in his head are now relentless, hissing recriminating whispers. Clara is pleading with the Angels to allow George to see her.*

**George**

I can't see you...

**Clara**

I'm here, George!

**George**

Can you see me...?

**Clara**

Yes, I can see you!

**George**

All of you must close your eyes...

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**Clara**

[*To the heavens*] Please! Please open his eyes so I can help him.

**George**

When you open them, you will be astounded by a great surprise.

**Clara**

Are you listening? It's time! How can I stop him?

**Angels**

Now is the time! You know the way, Clara!

**Clara**

How? How?

*Suddenly Mary, Billy, Harry, the chorus, and the Angels are unified in sending blessings toward George as he steps over the railing and stands precariously on the edge.*

**Mary, Billy, Harry, Angels, and Chorus**

God bless George Bailey!

**George**

One...two...

*Clara knows what she must do and jumps off the bridge into the icy water below. She flails about for help.*

**Clara**

Ah! Help! Help! I can't swim!

*George, by instinct, jumps in to save Clara and pulls her to safety.*

**George**

Are you all right?

**Clara**

Of course!

**George**

How come you're not wet? I thought you were drowning.

**Clara**

I can't drown. I'm already dead.

**George**

You're what? Did you hit your head or did I? How'd you fall in?

**Clara**

I jumped in. To save you.

**George**

Save me?

**Clara**

I knew if I jumped in you wouldn't go through with it.

**George**

Through with what?

**Clara**

Suicide. And over \$8,000.

**George**

How'd you know that?

**Clara**

I know everything about you, George.

**George**

You know my name?

**Clara**

I've been watching you since you were a little boy. I'm your guardian angel.

**George**

My guardian angel?

**Clara**

Clara Odbody. A.S. Two.

**George**

A.S. Two?

**Clara**

Angel Second Class.

**George**

Where are your wings?

**Clara**

I don't have them yet. You'll help me win them, won't you, George?

**George**

Sure.

**Clara**

Listen!

**Mary, Billy, Harry, Angels, and Chorus**

[From offstage] God bless George Bailey...Keep him from harm tonight... Watch over him...He needs your help... Watch over him tonight...

**Clara**

You don't hear that, do you?

**George**

Hear what?

Clara (Talise Trevigne) reveals to George (William Burden) that she is his guardian angel.



**Clara**

All of those prayers. But I do. That's how I got the job.

**George**

My guardian angel?

**Clara**

Yes! I heard voices!

**George**

I'll bet you did.

**Clara**

I was sent here to learn many things. To help you. To earn my wings. You've done so much. Why, if it hadn't been for you...

**George**

Everyone would be better off.

**Clara**

You think that?

**George**

I wish I'd never been born at all.

**Clara**

What did you say?

**George**

I wish I'd never been born!

**Clara**

Wait a minute. That's an idea.

[*To the heavens*] What do you think?

All right, then.

[*To George*] George, you've got your wish. You've never been born.

*Sudden silence. The prayers end.*

## SCENE 11

*An eerie new soundscape emerges, entirely electronic, with a soft, high electrical hissing and a very low wavering electrical hum. The world without George Bailey is without music—all dialogue is spoken.*

**George**

What did you say?

**Clara**

You've never been born. You don't exist.

**George**

What are you talking about?

**Clara**

No worries. No obligations. No \$8,000...No Potter...No sheriff...

*George puts his hand to his ear.*

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**George**

What's happened?

**Clara**

Sure. You can hear out of it.

**George**

That's the darndest thing! I gotta go. Now, don't go drowning yourself.

**Clara**

I told you, I can't drown.

**George**

That's right, that's right, you're already dead. I'm going home to see my wife and kids.

**Clara**

You have no home, no family, no friends...no petals from Zuzu.

**George**

What are you talking about?



*George checks for Zuzu's petals. They are gone.*

Strange. Must have fallen out in the water. I don't have time for this.

**Clara**

There is no time here, George. You'll have to get used to that.

**George**

I'm going home.

**Clara**

You have no home.

**George**

Stop that! Of course I do! 23 Sycamore, the old Granville house! Zuzu's sick. I can't stay here and listen to this.

**Clara**

*[To the heavens]* How am I doing?  
Thank you.

*George walks across the stage to the Granville house as it first appeared.*

**George**

This is the right address. I don't understand.

**Clara**

Hasn't been lived in in over 30 years.

**George**

You're nuts. *[Calling out]* Kids! Mary!  
Where are you? Tommy! Janie! Zuzu!  
Where are they? What have you done with them?

**Clara**

They're not here.

**George**

Mary and I threw rocks at those windows and made wishes...

**Clara**

You never made those wishes. You didn't throw any rocks.

**George**

Of course, we did. Harry invited me to his graduation dance. Mary and I danced...

**Clara**

Harry couldn't have invited you...

**George**

What are you, some kind of hypnotist? I've heard of things like this.

**Clara**

I told you I'm your guardian angel.

*We hear Mr. Gower in a drunken stupor emerge from the shadows of the house.*

**Gower**

*[Drunk]* Get out of here!

**George**

Mr. Gower? What are you doing here? What's wrong with you?

**Gower**

I'm not bothering anybody. This is my house. I'll teach you a lesson or two. Coming into my house!

*He stumbles as he tries to hit George.*

**George**

Stop. Stop. Stop! Mr. Gower, it's George Bailey. Don't you know me?

**Gower**

Who told you my name? Get away from me. This is my house...this is my house...this is my house...

**George**

What's happened to him?

**Clara**

He's homeless. Been squatting here in this broken down old house, George.

**George**

Mr. Gower never drinks...not since...

**Clara**

...Not since the day his son died. Not since the day he poisoned the little Blaine boy.

**George**

He didn't poison him. I stopped him.

**Clara**

You weren't there to stop him and the boy died. Mr. Gower spent 20 years in prison. He got out two years ago.

**George**

I must have hit my head. Wait a minute. I got to figure this out. Who was the last person I saw?

**Clara**

Potter.

**George**

Now, how do you know that? Never mind. Where is he?

**Clara**

Where he always was...the biggest house in town.

*George bangs on Potter's door.*

**George**

Potter! Mr. Potter! It's George Bailey! Mr. Potter, open up!

*The door opens. Ernie, who now works for Potter, is standing in the doorway.*

**Ernie**

What's going on out here?

**George**

Ernie.

**Ernie**

Who are you, mister?

**George**

Don't you know me? I'm George. George Bailey! Ernie, what are you doing here?

**Ernie**

I work for Mr. Potter. I can tell you he won't appreciate the ruckus...And I don't either, buddy!

**George**

You work for Potter? Have you gone mad? Does your wife know?

**Ernie**

You seen my wife?

**George**

I see her all the time.

**Ernie**

All the time? Then you know my wife left me years ago when I lost my house. Scram! Get outta here!

*Potter appears at the doorway.*

**Potter**

What's going on?

**Ernie**

Nothing, Mr. Potter.

**Potter**

Nothing? Who's this?

**George**

Don't tell me you don't know me? I'm George Bailey. You sit on the board of the Bailey Building & Loan, right here in Bedford Falls.

**Potter**

That went out of business years ago when Peter Bailey died.

*He smells the liquor that spilled on  
George from Gower's bottle.*

Drunk! How dare you come banging on  
my door in the middle of the night!

**George**  
I'm not drunk.

**Potter**  
Right. Don't come back here!

**George**  
You know me.

**Potter**  
I don't know you...I don't care who you  
are...

**George**  
I'll bet you remember the \$8,000.

**Potter**  
What? Get rid of him.

*Potter exits.*

**Ernie**  
Hey, buddy, look, the name of this  
town is Pottersville. It has been for  
years. Sleep it off. He'll make me call  
the cops. Scram!

*Ernie slams the door.*

**Clara**  
Don't you understand, George? You  
were never born.

**George**  
If I was never born, who am I?

**Clara**  
You're nobody. You have no identity.

**George**  
What do you mean, no identity? My  
name is George Bailey!

**Clara**  
There is no George Bailey. You have no  
papers, no cards, no driver's license,  
and no insurance policy.

**George**  
You're crazy.

**Clara**  
You've been given a great gift, George.  
A chance to see what the world would  
be like without you.

**George**  
Wait a minute, here. This must be  
some kind of a funny dream I'm having  
here. I know what to do.

**Clara**  
[*To the heavens*] Is he heading where I  
think he is?

*George runs up the path to the front  
door of the house and raps on the  
door.*

**George**  
Mother?

**Mrs. Bailey**  
Mother? What do you want?

**George**  
Mother, it's George. I thought for sure  
you'd remember me.

**Mrs. Bailey**  
George who? If you're looking for a  
room there's no vacancy.

*She starts to close the door, but  
George stops her.*

**George**  
Mother, please help me. Something  
terrible's happened to me. I don't know  
what it is. Something's happened to  
everyone. Please let me come in.

**Mrs. Bailey**

I don't take in strangers unless they're sent here by somebody I know.

**George**

Well, I know everybody you know. Your brother-in-law, Uncle Billy.

**Mrs. Bailey**

You know him?

**George**

Sure I do.

**Mrs. Bailey**

When'd you see him last?

**George**

Today over at the house.

**Mrs. Bailey**

That's a lie. He's been in the insane asylum for years. Ever since he lost his business. And if you ask me, that's where you belong, too.

*She slams the door shut.*

**George**

Mother!

**Clara**

Strange, isn't it?

**George**

I've heard of things like this. You've got me in some kind of spell or something. Well, I'm going to get out of it. I'll get out of it. I know how, too. I know where everyone knows me. The Ruffinos, Delgados, O'Malleys, the Martinis...

**Clara**

Where are they?

**George**

In Bailey Park. There's a hundred homes there. They all know me.

*George walks around and arrives at what he thinks is Bailey Park. A graveyard emerges.*

Where are the houses?

**Clara**

You weren't there to build them. And now it's just a cemetery...Nothing but graves. George, look here.

*George sees Harry Bailey's tombstone.*

**George**

Harry Bailey? 1907 to 1916. That's impossible.

**Clara**

Harry Bailey broke through the ice and was 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.

**Clara**

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**

Where's Mary?

**Clara**

She went away to college and she never came back.

**George**

I don't know how you know these things but tell me something...did she marry?

**Clara**

Do you really want to know? Does it matter, George? You were never born.

*Clara walks away from George.*

There is no George Bailey. None of this ever happened.

*Clara disappears through a door. Stillness. George is completely alone, disconnected from the world. There is just an eerie, bone-chilling silence. George looks around. The doors are gone. He is cut off from everything. He is filled with heartbreak and fear. Is this what it is has come to? Alone? Cut off forever? Has even this strange angel abandoned him?*

**George**

Clara? Clara...Come back.

*Silence. George falls to his knees and closes his eyes in prayer. As he prays, the electronic soundscape begins to fade. By the end of his plea, there is total silence.*

**George**

Help me, please.

Get me back. Get me back.

I don't care what happens to me.

Jail, scandal.

Just get me back to my wife and kids.

Help me, please, Clara! Please! Please!

Please!

**SCENE 12**

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*George is on his knees with his eyes closed as he prays. The scene changes around him as music begins and he reenters the world.*

**George**

I just want to live again. I just want to live again. Please, God, let me live again!

*Janie walks over and puts her hand on George's shoulder. He opens his eyes. He is home.*

**George**

Janie! Tommy! Are you real? I could eat you up! Where's Zuzu?

*Zuzu runs over to George.*

**Zuzu**

Merry Christmas, Daddy!

**George**

Zuzu! My little gingersnap. How do you feel?

**Zuzu**

Fine, Daddy!

*Ernie enters.*

**George**

Ernie! Tell me you know me!

**Ernie**

Know you? Been looking for you all night long! Listen, there's a bank examiner and a sheriff outside...

**George**

With a warrant for my arrest! Isn't life grand, Ernie?

*The Examiner and the Sheriff enter.*

Merry Christmas, gentlemen!

*Mary enters.*

Mary!

**Mary**

George! George darling, where have you been?

**George**

Mary, let me touch you. Are you real?

**Mary and George**

You have no idea what's happened!

**Mary**

It's a miracle.

*Uncle Billy runs in with a big basket filled with money.*

**Uncle Billy**

Mary did it! It was Mary. She told a few people you were in trouble and they scattered all over town collecting money. Look! It's a miracle.

*Clara appears from above.*

**Clara**

A miracle!

**Uncle Billy**

Nobody asked any questions.

**Clara**

No questions.

**Uncle Billy**

They just said: "If George is in trouble, you can count on me."

*Mary calls to people outside.*

**Mary**

Everybody! Inside!

*All start to enter. They address George and throw money into the basket.*

**Mary**

Mr. Martini!

**Martini**

Came right over as soon as I heard.

**Mrs. Delgado**

Me, too!

**Mary**

Mrs. Delgado.

**Mrs. O'Malley**

God bless you, George.

**Ed**

Wouldn't have a roof over my head if not for you!

George's friends come to his aid.





**Ruffino**

Me neither!

**All**

Me neither!

**George**

Mr. Gower!

**Gower**

Been saving this for the right moment.

**All**

Merry Christmas, George!

**Mary**

Mr. Ruffino!

**Ruffino**

We collected money all over Bailey Park.

**All**

All over town! Neighbor to neighbor to neighbor. For George!

*Harry bursts into the room.*

**Harry**

Came as soon as I could, George.

**All**

Harry! Harry!

*Harry quiets the crowd to read a telegram he's holding.*

**Harry**

Quiet, everybody! Quiet. Listen, this came from London.

*He sings the contents of a telegram.*

"Mr. Gower cabled you need cash. STOP. My office instructed to advance you up to twenty-five thousand dollars. STOP. Merry Christmas. STOP. Sam Wainwright."

*Ernie hands Harry a glass of wine.*

A toast! To my big brother, George: the richest man in town!

*All cheer and gather around George.*

*The crowd freezes in joyful celebration.*

*The lights shift. Clara enters.*

**George**

Clara.

**Clara**

Strange, isn't it? Look around you. Each person's life touches so many others. If he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole. You've really had...

**Clara and George**

...a wonderful life.

**Angels**

Clara. Clara Odbody A.S. Two—It's time!  
We have wings for you.

**Clara**

They're so beautiful. George, how can I ever thank you?

**George**

Thank me?

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**Clara**

Yes! Look!

**Angels**

Clara!

**Clara**

Me!

**Angels**

An Angel First Class! Are you ready, Clara?

**Clara**

Oh my, oh my, oh my!

*Clara puts on her wings and soars into the heavens.*

It's happening! My wings!  
I'm changing! I can see all sorts of things.  
Oh my! Oh my! Ah!  
21, 22, 23...-4...27, -8, -9. 39! 49!  
Oh my...

*She sees something. What is it? She continues counting.*

### **A Voice**

Ah, Clara! Angel First Class! You're counting stars.

### **Clara**

No. I'm not counting stars. I'm counting angels.

### **A Voice**

Where?

*Clara points to the audience as the auditorium is slowly lit.*

### **Clara**

There, there, and over there. And over there. [*Now she sings directly to the audience.*]  
All of you who hear my voice—who might be lost—you have a choice,  
A door, a swing, oh, try to sing what's written in the sky.

### **George and Clara**

No matter how your story ends  
No one is a failure who has friends.

*Now the entire cast and chorus step forward and sing to the audience.*

### **Full Company**

Each of us just plays a part. All that's real is in your heart.  
Our journey ends with angel wings...

*Clara launches off the swing and enormous, beautiful wings appear. She ascends.*

...when all of you, with all of us, sing:  
No matter how your story ends  
No one is a failure who has friends.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot 15  
and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and days of auld lang syne!  
For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne  
We'll take a cup of kindness yet, for auld lang syne.

### **THE END**



## Acknowledgments

### Producer

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### Artistic Media Manager

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### Recording Engineers

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David Williams

### Mixing and Mastering Engineer

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### Packaging Designer

Pattima Singhalaka

### Album Cover

George Bailey (William Burden) celebrates his wonderful life with his children, Janie (C. J. Friend), Tommy (Levi Smith), and Zuzu (Elle Grace Graper).

### Cover CD 1

Mary Hatch (Andrea Carroll) reconnects with George Bailey (William Burden) at her high school dance.

### Cover CD 2

Clara (Talise Trevigne) earns her wings.

### Product Manager

Max Tiel



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