

It's a Wonderful Life

ACT I

SETTING: *The stage is dark. Once the lights have come up, we will see that a bridge with steel cross bracing runs from SL to SR, high in the air above the stage floor.*

AT RISE: *Lights come up on the bridge to reveal GEORGE BAILEY, a man in his late 30s, wearing a rumpled business suit and scarf, standing center on the bridge, his arms braced against the railing, looking downward. The sky is dark and cloudy behind him, black below. A gentle snow is falling.*

(A train whistle in the distance, as THE PEOPLE OF BEDFORD FALLS enter from L and R and move downstage where they gather, looking out over the house. GEORGE's light fades slowly as a dim light illuminates the group.)

GOWER. I owe everything to George Bailey, help him Lord.

MOTHER BAILEY. Dear God, please help my son, George.

BERT. He never thinks about himself, Lord, that's why he's in trouble now.

UNCLE BILLY. Please, your honor, he's protecting me. It's all my fault. Don't let him get hurt.

HARRY. He's given so much. That should count for something, shouldn't it?

VIOLET. I hate to think what our lives would have been like without him, God. Oh, you've just got to help him!

TILLY. He's just the best, Lord. Give 'im a hand here, wouldja?

MARY. I love him, Lord. Watch over him for me.

ZUZU. Please, God, something's the matter with Daddy! Please bring him back home. Thank you. Your friend, Zuzu.

(Music effects under as THE PEOPLE turn and move offstage in several directions. The bridge moves upward and out of sight, and the sky is replaced with a star field. Wind chimes tinkle to punctuate the dialogue between THE BOSS and JOSEPH, disembodied, echoing voices.)

SIDE 1

THE BOSS. You wanted to speak with me, Joseph?

JOSEPH. Sorry to bother you, Boss, but the name "George Bailey" keeps turning up.

THE BOSS. Yes. I know.

JOSEPH. We should probably send someone down.

THE BOSS. Whose turn is it?

JOSEPH. Clarence ... the clockmaker.

THE BOSS. Ah. Clarence. He still doesn't have his wings, does he?

JOSEPH. No sir, he doesn't have his wings, he doesn't have ... well, he doesn't have much going for him at all, Boss.

THE BOSS. He has faith, Joseph ... a strong and simple faith. Seems to me that's exactly what George Bailey needs right now. Send for Clarence.

(Through this last bit of dialogue, CLARENCE has entered far upstage to stand C in the darkness. Now a spot fades up downstage, and he strolls down into it. He is dressed in 18th century shirt, trousers and shoes.)

CLARENCE. You wanted to see me, sir?

THE BOSS. Yes, Clarence. Someone needs our help. His name is George Bailey, and he's about to throw away God's greatest gift.

CLARENCE. His life?

THE BOSS. His life.

CLARENCE. Oh dear!

THE BOSS. It will be your mission, Clarence, to change his mind.

CLARENCE (*in rapture*). I have a mission! Um ... sir ... if I should accomplish my mission ... might I perhaps have my wings? It's been nearly two hundred years now ... and ... well ... people are beginning to talk.

THE BOSS. Clarence, you do a good job and you'll get your wings.

CLARENCE. Oh, thank you, sir!

THE BOSS. Joseph?

JOSEPH. Sir?

THE BOSS. I'm turning this over to you. Brief Clarence on his mission.

JOSEPH. Yes sir.

THE BOSS. I have my eye on a sparrow I must attend to. (*Fading.*) Good luck, Clarence!

CLARENCE. Thank you, sir!

(*The sound of mark tree bar chimes.*)

JOSEPH. All right, Clarence, let's go.

CLARENCE. Go? Where?

JOSEPH. Into the past.

CLARENCE. The past?

JOSEPH. George Bailey's past.

(*Lights come up onstage as YOUNG GEORGE enters, carrying a snow shovel over his shoulder. Sky cyclorama lit for cold winter weather. CLARENCE watches, delighted. YOUNG GEORGE is just past CLARENCE when YOUNG HARRY runs in, losing his scarf as he runs after his brother. CLARENCE notices and crosses to the scarf.*)

SIDE 2

YOUNG HARRY. George! George! Wait for me! George!

(*YOUNG GEORGE stops, turns.*)

YOUNG GEORGE. Go home, Harry!

YOUNG HARRY. No, I wanna play with you guys!

YOUNG GEORGE. It's too dangerous.

YOUNG HARRY. Why? Whatcha gonna do?

YOUNG GEORGE. Gonna slide down the hill and across Potter's Pond on these snow shovels. You're too little.

YOUNG HARRY. Am not!

YOUNG GEORGE. Are, too! Now scam!

YOUNG HARRY (*crossing away, picking up the scarf. CLARENCE is pleased*). I'm tellin' Mom. Mom!

YOUNG GEORGE (*drops the shovel and pursues YOUNG HARRY*). OK, OK, OK!

YOUNG HARRY (*stops and turns*). I can come?

YOUNG GEORGE. Yeah ... you can come.

YOUNG HARRY. Hooray! (*He crosses past YOUNG GEORGE, dropping the scarf again, and grabs the shovel. CLARENCE crosses to the scarf.*) Me first! I'll go farther'n anybody!