

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.*)

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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!

*(He exits offstage. YOUNG GEORGE turns and starts to move after YOUNG HARRY. He cups his hands and shouts.)*

YOUNG GEORGE. Don't go too far! The ice is thin out in the middle! Hey, fellas! Here comes the scare-baby, my kid brother, Haaaarrrry Bailey!

YOUNG HARRY *(from offstage, shouting)*. I'm not scared, George!

*(YOUNG GEORGE notices the scarf, turns and crosses to pick it up. CLARENCE beams.)*

CHILDREN'S VOICES *(offstage ad-lib)*. Go Harry! Attaboy, Harry! *(etc)*

HARRY *(offstage)*. Here I gooooooooooooo!

*(The sound of the shovel across the ice. The ice breaks. A splash.)*

CLARENCE. Oh no! The ice broke! He's fallen through the ice!

CHILDREN'S VOICES *(offstage ad-lib)*. Harry! Somebody save him! He fell in! He's going to drown! *(Etc.)*

YOUNG HARRY. George!

*(YOUNG GEORGE, scarf in hand, turns and runs offstage. CLARENCE follows him across the stage.)*

YOUNG GEORGE. I'm comin', Harry! Everybody, make a chain! Make a chain!

*(The lights fade, save for CLARENCE's.)*

CLARENCE. What happened? Did George jump in and save Harry?

JOSEPH.. Yes. But, he caught a bad cold.

CLARENCE. Oh!

JOSEPH. That led to an infection in his left ear.

CLARENCE. Oh!

JOSEPH. And he lost the hearing in that ear.

CLARENCE. Permanently?

JOSEPH. Permanently. It was weeks before he could return to his after-school job at Gower Drug.

*(Lights come up RC, Gower Drug. A counter and soda fountain, with 3 stools R. A high back bar with an opening through which prescriptions may be dispensed from the back. YOUNG MARY sits on a stool at the soda fountain. A door opens offstage, a bell tinkles and the door closes. YOUNG GEORGE enters; he doesn't see YOUNG MARY.)*

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

*(He crosses to the big cigar lighter bolted to the L end of the counter, puts his hand on the trigger mechanism, closes his eyes and raises the other hand in the air.)*

CLARENCE. What's he doing?

JOSEPH. Cigar lighter ... a complementary light for customers.

CLARENCE. He doesn't smoke at his age!

JOSEPH *(with a chuckle)*. No ... he dreams dreams and makes wishes ...

CLARENCE. On a falling star?

JOSEPH. No ... on that old cigar lighter. It's a tradition among the boys in Bedford Falls.

YOUNG GEORGE. Wish I had a million dollars. *(He triggers the lighter, igniting a flame.)* Hot dog!

CLARENCE. He'll get his wish!