

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes sir. But ...

GOWER (*writes on the billing form as he crosses DR.*) Order for Mrs. ... Blaine ... pills ...

YOUNG GEORGE. They got the diphtheria over there, don't they?

*(He gets down off the stool, countering, moves to the end of the soda fountain and turns the jar around to read the label.)*

YOUNG GEORGE (*cont'd, to himself*). Say ... this is ... poison! (*He crosses down toward GOWER.*) You get the stuff for these capsules out of that jar, Mr. Gower?

GOWER. Mmmmm. (*He tears the bill from the pad, wraps the bill around the box and thrusts it at YOUNG GEORGE.*) Take these capsules over to the Blaine ... the Blaine house. Mrs. Blaine. She ... she ...

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower ... I ... I think maybe you better ...

GOWER (*shouts in a sudden rage*). Get going! Get out! Now!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes sir! (*Exits quickly.*)

*(The lights cross fade from Gower Drug, R, to the Bailey Building and Loan, L. TILLY sits at her desk and switchboard. A counter behind her with a grill on the upstage edge and an opening for customer business. UNCLE BILLY stands L, trying to listen to a conversation in an office off L. The phone line buzzes and TILLY, wearing a headset with attached microphone yoke, answers.)*

SIDE 4

TILLY (*affected phone voice*). Bailey Building and Loan. (*Drops phone voice.*) Oh hi, Maude. No, he's in a meeting! (*Lowering voice ... heavy with foreboding.*) With Potter. I got a bad feeling about it. "Tilly," I sez to myself, "That Potter's up to no good." Well, no, Maude, every time he comes here, I start looking through the want ads for another job. Hey, I got skills, and I'm still young. Mostly. (*Another buzz.*) There's the other line. Gotta go, Maude.

*(YOUNG GEORGE enters quickly from R, headin for his father's office door, off L. UNCLE BILLY grabs his arm.)*

UNCLE BILLY. Avast there, Captain Cook! Where you headin'?

YOUNG GEORGE. Gotta see Pop, Uncle Billy.

UNCLE BILLY. No no, there's a squall goin' on in there shapin up into a storm.

YOUNG GEORGE. But ...

TILLY. Billy, telephone.

BILLY. Who is it?

TILLY. Bank examiner. Says you were supposed to call him yesterday.

BILLY (*looks at a string around his finger*). That's what this string was supposed to remind me about!

TILLY. Look how well it worked.

BILLY. Yes, but what're these other strings for? (*He opens his hand to show a string on each finger.*) I'll take it in my office. Find that file for me, will you?

*(He exits. TILLY turns to paw through files. HENRY POTTER, an older man in a wheelchair, comes rolling in from L. YOUNG GEORGE retreats upstage. PETER BAILEY enters from L, just in.)*

POTTER. Bailey, you're hopeless! Don't come crying to me when these people can't pay their debts!

PETER BAILEY. I'm not crying, Mr. Potter, but times are hard, and a lot of these people are out of work. It's ...

POTTER (*stops, turns chair to face PETER BAILEY*). Then foreclose! If they don't want to work, they have no right to own a house.

PETER BAILEY. They *want* to work, Mr. Potter, they ...

POTTER. If they wanted to work they'd have jobs!

PETER BAILEY. These people have children. I can't...

POTTER. They're not *my* children! Is this a business or a charity ward?

YOUNG GEORGE. Pop! I need some advice! See, these pills are ...

TILLY. Not now, George. Your father's in a meeting.

*(YOUNG GEORGE gives her a look. She shrugs and exits toward UNCLE BILLY's office.)*

PETER BAILEY. Mr. Potter, have you no pity? You have more money than you could ever spend ...

POTTER. So I should give it all to miserable failures who can't pay their mortgages? *(He moves back toward PETER BAILEY.)* Or failures like you and that idiot brother of yours with your shoestring Building and Loan!

YOUNG GEORGE *(jumps in POTTER's path)*. He's not a failure! You can't say that about my father!

PETER BAILEY *(overlapping)*. George, George ...

YOUNG GEORGE. You're not a failure, Pop, you're the biggest man in town!

PETER BAILEY. George ...

YOUNG GEORGE. Don't let him say that about you, Pop.

PETER BAILEY. George, we'll discuss this at dinner.

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes sir.

POTTER *(mumbling, with some amusement)*. Biggest man in town! *(Scoffs.)*

YOUNG GEORGE. Bigger'n you!

PETER BAILEY. George, I'll talk to you tonight. Come back in, Mr. Potter. *(POTTER moves back toward the office, PETER BAILEY guiding the wheelchair.)* All I'm asking is thirty days more.

POTTER. Thirty days!

MR. BAILEY. Just thirty short days.

POTTER. May as well be thirty years! Have you put any real pressure on these people of yours to pay those mortgages?

YOUNG GEORGE. Pop, I need ...

BAILEY. Not now, George. Times are bad, Mr. Potter. I'll dig up that five thousand somehow. ]

*(MR. BAILEY and POTTER exit L. YOUNG GEORGE stands for a moment, contemplating the box of capsules, makes up his mind and leaves.)*

*The lights crossfade from the Bailey Building and Loan back to Gower Drug just as GOWER's phone, on the L end of the back bar, rings.)*

**SIDES**

GOWER *(answers the phone)*. Gower Drug. Whuzzat? Wull ... those ... those pills shoulda been there 'n hour ago! Yes'm ... 'msorry ... thank you f ... fur callin'. *(He hangs up the phone just as YOUNG GEORGE enters.)* George Bailey!

YOUNG GEORGE *(crosses to GOWER)*. Mr. Gower, I been pacin' up and down out front here, and I guess I'd better tell you ...

GOWER *(grabs YOUNG GEORGE)*. Where's Mrs. Blaine's pills?! Where!

YOUNG GEORGE. Oow! Let go! You'll rip my shirt! Ouch! Let go! You don't ...

*(GOWER cuffs and slaps YOUNG GEORGE.)*

GOWER *(in a rage)*. Where are they? What kind of tricks are you playing? Answer me! I'll beat it out of you! So help me I will! Don't you know that boy's sick? Don't you know he could die?

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, you're hurting my sore ear! You don't know what you're doing! You put something wrong in those capsules! It wasn't your fault, Mr. Gower! Look, look at the pills! Look at the jar! It's poison, I tell ya, it's poison!