

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. Ooow! 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!

GOWER. Poison? What ...

YOUNG GEORGE. I couldn't deliver 'em! Look at 'em! Look at 'em!

*(GOWER takes the box from YOUNG GEORGE, opens it, takes out a capsule, breaks it open and puts a small bit of the contents on the tip of his tongue. Quickly, he crosses to the jar on the soda fountain counter and turns it so he can see the label.)*

GOWER. Oh my God ... oh my dear God. George!

*(He runs to YOUNG GEORGE, who cringes and pulls back.)*

YOUNG GEORGE. No, please ... please don't hurt my sore ear again.

GOWER *(he embraces YOUNG GEORGE)*. Oh, George, I am so sorry

YOUNG GEORGE. I won't tell anyone, Mr. Gower, not ever.

*(GOWER breaks the embrace and moves back to the soda fountain, leaning on the far end of the counter, facing upstage.)*

YOUNG GEORGE *(cont'd)*. You don't need to worry. I won't tell a soul.

*(YOUNG GEORGE moves toward him, crossing behind the counter.)*

YOUNG GEORGE *(cont'd)*. I know how sad you are ... you don't need to worry ... you don't need to ... you don't need to ...

*(He ducks below the counter for a moment and is quickly replaced by GEORGE, grown up, who comes out from behind the soda fountain carrying a suitcase. GOWER whirls around and moves to the center of the room. His hair is combed, tie straightened. Light change.)*

GEORGE. You don't need to ... you don't need to go and do a thing like this ...

GOWER. I wanted to, George. Least I could do. It's not so much ...

GEORGE. Not so m ... !

GOWER. Been hiding it back there for a week, waiting for you to come by. Just an old second hand suitcase.

GEORGE. Say, listen, this is better than any of the new ones I've seen ... this ... this is quality. They don't build 'em like this anymore. I been lookin' for a nice, strong big one like this. Why, I ... I could use it for a raft in case the boat sinks!

GOWER. Picked it out myself. I'm glad you like it.

GEORGE. Like it! It's even got my name on it ... engraved right there. "George Bailey."

GOWER. I thought that'd tickle ya.

GEORGE. Tickle me! Say, I'm walkin' on air here! *(He looks straight out into the house.)* Wait a minute, wait a minute, is that a new jukebox?

GOWER. Yeah, it is. I got so many of the kids coming here after school these days, I just thought ... well, you know. I love kids.

GEORGE. Look at the colored lights on that, will ya?

GOWER. And bubbles! See the bubbles!

GEORGE. That's a humdinger! Say, I haven't been in here for a couple o' months! You're really changin' the old place! Wouldja look at that! *(He crosses to the tobacco counter.)* The old cigar lighter!

GOWER. I'll never get rid of that, George! It's a tradition! Go ahead! Make a wish on it ... for old time's sake.

*(GEORGE puts his hand on the trigger mechanism, closes his eyes and holds the other hand in the air.)*