

POTTER. (*Simultaneously with "he had:"*) He had no sense of business, that George Bailey— Just like his father. None of the Baileys were ever businessmen. It's his own fault if he wasn't prepared for times like these.

BILLY. (*Simultaneously with "for times..."*) At times like these, I can't help but think it's all my fault. Help him, Father, it's me who's putting him through all this.

PETE. Something's the matter with Daddy.

ZUZU. Should we pray for him, Mommy?

MARY. Yes, Zuzu. Pray. Pray very hard.

(The praying continues in the background and fades away during the following.)

FREDDIE FILMORE / ANNOUNCER. The voices carry heavenward, and Joseph, the superintendent of angels, summons Clarence, an apprentice angel...

CLARENCE. You sent for me, sir?

JOSEPH. Yes, Clarence. A man down on Earth needs our help.

CLARENCE. Splendid! Is he sick?

JOSEPH. No, worse. He's discouraged. At exactly ten-forty-five P.M. tonight, Earth time, that man will be thinking seriously of throwing away God's greatest gift.

CLARENCE. Oh, dear, dear! His life! Then I've only an hour to dress. What are they wearing now?

JOSEPH. You will spend that hour getting acquainted with George Bailey.

CLARENCE. Sir, if I should accomplish this mission— I mean— might I perhaps win my wings? I've been waiting over two hundred years now—and people are beginning to talk.

JOSEPH. What's that book you've got there?

CLARENCE. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, sir, I was reading it when you sent for me.

JOSEPH. Oh fine book, excellent. Well, you do a good job with George Bailey, and we'll see about your wings.

CLARENCE. Thank you! Thank you!

JOSEPH. Now, if you're going to help George, you'll want to know a little something about him. Look: See the town?

CLARENCE. Why, yes. A group of young boys, sledding down a snow-covered hill and onto the ice... This is amazing!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yippee!!

CLARENCE. Who's that?

JOSEPH. That's your problem: George Bailey.

CLARENCE. A boy?

JOSEPH. That's him when he was twelve, back in 1919. Something happens here you'll have to remember later on.

YOUNG GEORGE. And here comes the scare-baby, my kid brother, Harry Bailey.

YOUNG GEORGE. I'm not scared.

ALL. (As BOYS. *Ad lib, ala:*) Come on, Harry! Attaboy, Harry!

HARRY. YIPPEE!!!

(SFX: *Ice cracks, followed by water sloshing.*)

YOUNG GEORGE. Help! Help!

CLARENCE. Oh, dear—Harry's fallen through the ice!

YOUNG GEORGE. I'm coming, Harry. Make a chain, gang! A chain!

CLARENCE. So his brother fell through the ice. But George saved him.

JOSEPH. Yes, Clarence. And ever since George has had a bad ear. All that icy water, you understand...

CLARENCE. Bad ear, yes sir.

JOSEPH. The other event came a few months later. George took an after school job at Old Man Gower's drug store.

(SFX: *Door with bell opens and shuts.*)

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

GOWER. You're late.

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir.

YOUNG VIOLET. Hello, George. 'Lo, Mary.

YOUNG MARY. Hello, Violet.

YOUNG GEORGE. Two cents worth of shoelaces, Violet?

YOUNG VIOLET. Mary was here first.

YOUNG MARY. I'm still thinking.