

playing nursemaid to a lot of garlic eaters. Do I paint a correct picture George, or do I exaggerate?

GEORGE. What's your point, Mr. Potter?

POTTER. My point is you're the only man in town who's licked me. I want to hire you. Manage my affairs, I'll start you out at twenty thousand dollars a year.

GEORGE. Twenty thousand...twenty thousand dollars a year?!

POTTER. You wouldn't mind living in the nicest house in town, buying your wife a lot of fine clothes, a couple of business trips to New York a year, maybe once in a while Europe. You wouldn't mind that, would you, George?

GEORGE. Would I? You're not talking to somebody else around here, are you? Are you sure you're talking to me? I'm George Bailey, don't you remember me, the Building and Loan, remember?

POTTER. Yes, George Bailey. Whose ship has just come in, providing he has brains enough to climb aboard.

GEORGE. Well, what about the Building and Loan?

POTTER. Oh, confound it man! I'm offering you a three year contract at twenty thousand dollars a year. Is it a deal or isn't it?

GEORGE. Mr. Potter, I know I ought to jump at the chance but I wonder if you might give me twenty-four hours to think about it.

POTTER. Sure, sure, sure. You go home and talk to your wife.

GEORGE. Yeah, I'd like that.

POTTER. In the meantime I'll draw up the papers and soon you'll be managing my affairs.

GEORGE. Your affairs... ~~No...no..~~ The answer's no, dog gone it! You sit around here and you spin your little webs and you think the whole world revolves around you and your money. Well, it doesn't, Mr. Potter! In the whole vast configuration of things, I'd say you were nothing but a scurvy little spider!

(SFX: Shoes storm out of the room, a door opens and slams.)

(MUSIC: Transition.)

MARY. What did Mr. Potter want, George?

GEORGE. Nothing, nothing. Just talk, talk...nothing. Oh gee. Mary Hatch, why in the world would you ever marry a guy like me anyway?

MARY. To keep from being an old maid.

GEORGE. And wine! That joy and prosperity may reign forever.
Enter the Martini castle!

(MUSIC: Transition / Underscore.)

JOSEPH. Bailey houses were popping up all over the place—mostly owned by people that used to live in Potter's Field. And Potter had had just about enough of that. So after a couple of years, Old Man Potter decided to call our George into his office.

POTTER. Sit down, George, sit down. Have a cigar?

GEORGE. Thank you, sir.

(SFX: A Zippo lighter strikes, followed by puffing on a cigar.)

GEORGE. Quite a cigar, Mr. Potter.

POTTER. You like it? I'll send you a box.

GEORGE. Well, I...I suppose I'll find out sooner or later, but just what exactly did you want to see me about?

POTTER. George, now that's just what I like so much about you. George, I'm an old man, and most people hate me. But I don't like them either, so that makes it all even. You know just as well as I do that I run practically everything in this town but the Bailey Building and Loan. You know, also, that for a number of years I've been trying to get control of it...or kill it. But I haven't been able to do it. You have been stopping me. In fact, you have beaten me, George, and that takes some doing. Take during the depression, for instance. You and I were the only ones that kept our heads. You saved the Building and Loan, and I saved all the rest.

GEORGE. Yes. Well, most people say you stole all the rest.

POTTER. The envious ones say that, George, the suckers. Now, let's look at your side. Young man, twenty-seven, twenty-eight...married, making, say...forty a week.

GEORGE. Forty-five!

POTTER. Forty-five.

GEORGE. Forty-five...

POTTER. Now if you were some ordinary yokel, I would say you were doing fine. But George Bailey is intelligent, ambitious. He hates the Building and Loan almost much as I do. He's been dying to get out of town ever since he was born. A young man...the smartest one of the crowd, mind you, who has to sit by and watch his friends go places, because he's trapped. Trapped into frittering his life away