

GOWER

CLARENCE. What was that piece of paper George just picked up?

JOSEPH. It's a telegram for Mr. Gower. He found out this morning that his son died of influenza.

CLARENCE. Oh, awful.

JOSEPH. Yes, and he's spent the afternoon drowning his grief in whiskey.

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, do you want something... Anything?

GOWER. No.

YOUNG GEORGE. Anything I can do back here?

*(SFX: Capsules falling to the floor.)*

GOWER. No.

YOUNG GEORGE. I'll get them, sir. *(Pause.)* What's this bottle, Mr. Gower?

*(SFX: Capsules being put back into glass bottle.)*

GOWER. Never mind that, take those capsules over to Mrs. Blaine's.

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir. They have the diphtheria there, haven't they, sir?

GOWER. Ummmm...

YOUNG GEORGE. Is it a charge, sir?

GOWER. Yes—charge.

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, I think...

GOWER. Aw, get going!

YOUNG GEORGE. Yes, sir... Mr. Gower...?

GOWER. What is it?!

YOUNG GEORGE. Mr. Gower, you...that bottle you used...you put something wrong in those capsules.

GOWER. Who do you think you're talking to?!

*(SFX: GOWER slapping YOUNG GEORGE.)*

YOUNG GEORGE. You're hurting my sore ear.

GOWER. Did you hear what I said?! Get out of here!

*(SFX: GOWER slaps YOUNG GEORGE again.)*

YOUNG GEORGE. *(Whimpering:)* Mr. Gower, you don't know what you're doing. You put something wrong in those capsules. I know you're unhappy. You got that telegram, and you're upset. It wasn't

your fault, Mr. Gower. But look Mr. Gower look, look. This bottle, you used this bottle to make up the capsules. It's poison!

GOWER. Poison!

YOUNG GEORGE. (*Overlapping:*) Don't hit my sore ear again.

GOWER. Poison, oh George, George!

GEORGE. All I wanted was to make sure. Mr. Gower, I won't tell anyone. I know what you're feeling. I won't ever tell a soul. Hope to die, I won't.

GOWER. Oh, George.

(*MUSIC: Transition.*)

CLARENCE. Did he ever tell anyone about those pills?

JOSEPH. Not a soul.

CLARENCE. Did he ever marry the girl? Did he ever go exploring?

JOSEPH. We'll get there soon enough, Clarence. When George Bailey grew up he wanted to go to college, but there just wasn't the money. So he worked four years in the Building and Loan Association.

CLARENCE. Building and Loan Association?

JOSEPH. George's father was in the Building and Loan business, along with George's Uncle Billy...

BILLY. George, what's the combination to the safe?

YOUNG GEORGE. We wrote it down so you wouldn't forget it.

BILLY. That's right... Where?

YOUNG GEORGE. Your wallet, Uncle Billy.

BILLY. Thanks.

JOSEPH. Lovable fellow, just forgetful is all.

(*SFX: Door [without bell] opens and shuts.*)

CLARENCE. Who's that?

JOSEPH. That's Henry F. Potter: The richest and meanest man in all the county.

BILLY. Peter! Potter's here.

POTTER. Mr. Bailey, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Bailey. There is nothing quite so loathsome as a family business. Now, Peter, you know what I'm here for. I'm on a very tight schedule—a family to evict at three.