

It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play

Side #1

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.

(SPX: 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 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?

Side #2

HORACE THE TELLER
Good morning, Mr. Bailey.

BILLY
Good morning, Horace. Here you are... deposit slip, bank book, and a very merry Christmas to you.

HORACE THE TELLER
You too, Mr. Bailey. Say, you've forgotten something, haven't you?

BILLY
What's that?

HORACE THE TELLER
You want to make a deposit?

BILLY
Well, certainly...

HORACE THE TELLER
Well it's customary to bring the money with you.

BILLY
It's gone! Where'd I put it! Where'd I put that money!!!

Side #3

(MUSIC: Transition.)

JOSEPH

A terrible thing, Clarence, terrible. Uncle Billy couldn't find the money because the envelope with the eight thousand dollars was folded up in that newspaper he gave to old man Potter. At the same time as Billy started looking for the deposit, Violet came to visit George at the Building and Loan.

GEORGE

Oh, hello, Vi.

VIOLET

Suppose you're getting things set back at the house for the party tonight.

GEORGE

You know you're invited. What's wrong?

VIOLET

You see right through me, don't you?

GEORGE

How much do you need?

VIOLET

I hate doing this to you, George. But I won't be asking for any more after this.

GEORGE

You planning on robbing a bank, Vi?

VIOLET

I'm going to Manhattan.

GEORGE

What's in Manhattan?

VIOLET

Why, everything's in Manhattan... A new start, at least.

GEORGE

That's a big step, Vi. What's the matter with starting a new life right here in Bedford Falls?

VIOLET

Well, I'll be. Never thought I'd hear that from you, George Bailey. I thought you hated this place.

GEORGE

I did. But this town has a charm of its own.

VIOLET

You should give tours, maybe.

GEORGE

I'm just thinking of you, Violet. Manhattan's a big place to take on your own.

VIOLET

I've made a decision: There's a midnight train tonight, and I plan to be on it.

GEORGE

It takes a lot of character to leave your home town and start all over again. Here, here's some dough.

VIOLET

No, George, don't...

GEORGE

What do you want to do, hock your furs, and that hat? Want to walk to New York? You know they charge for meals and rent up there just the same as they do in Bedford Falls.

VIOLET

Yeah, sure...

GEORGE

It's a loan. That's my business. Building and Loan. Besides, you'll get a job. Good luck to you.

VIOLET

I'm glad I know you, George Bailey.

Side #4:

GEORGE

(Bewildered) Yeah... just things like that. Now how'd you know that?

CLARENCE

I told you- I'm your guardian angel. I know everything about you.

GEORGE

Well, you look like about the kind of angel I'd get. Sort of a fallen angel, aren't you? What happened to your wings?

CLARENCE

I haven't won my wings yet. That's why I'm an angel Second Class.

GEORGE

Oh, I see.

CLARENCE

But you can help me earn them George, by letting me help you.

GEORGE

You don't happen to have eight thousand bucks on you?

CLARENCE

Oh, no, no. We don't use money in Heaven.

GEORGE

Oh, that's right, I keep forgetting. Comes in pretty handy down here, bub.

CLARENCE

Oh, lut, tut, tut...

GEORGE

I found it out a little late. I'm worth more dead than alive.

CLARENCE

Now, look, you mustn't say things like that. I wot1't get my wings with that attitude. You just don't know all that you've done. If it hadn't been for you-

GEORGE

(Simultaneously with "you") Yeah, if it hadn't been for me, everybody'd be a lot better off. My wife, and my kids and my friends.

CLARENCE

(To himself) Hmm, this isn't going to be easy...

GEORGE

They'd all be better if I hadn't been born.

CLARENCE

What'd you say?

GEORGE

I said I wish I'd never been born.

CLARENCE

George, that's wonderful!

GEORGE

Wonderful?

CLARENCE

The idea you just gave me. Well, you've got your wish. You've never been born.

(SFX: A crash of thunder.)

GEORGE

Never been born?

CLARENCE

Exactly. No worries, no eight thousand dollars to get, nothing. You simply don't exist.

GEORGE

Hey, wait a minute. This ear of mine. Say something else in that ear.

CLARENCE

You don't have a bad ear anymore. Don't you see, you're not the George Bailey you think you are. You're a... well, you're nobody.

GEORGE

Well, that's the doggonedest thing...

CLARENCE

Your lip's stopped bleeding, too, George.

GEORGE

What do you know about that...? What happened? I need a drink, that's what I need. What about you angel, do you want a drink?

CLARENCE

Well, I don't know...

GEORGE

Come on, come one, we'll go as soon as our clothes are dry.

CLARENCE

Our clothes are dry.

GEORGE

Hey, so they are, that's funny. That stove's hotter than I thought. Well look, let's get dressed and we'll stroll over to Martini's and then... Oh excuse me, I'll stroll, you fly.

CLARENCE

I haven't got my wings.

GEORGE

You haven't got your wings. Yeah, that's right. A couple of drinks and we'll both fly.

Side #5

GEORGE & MARY

(Singing) BUFFALO GALS WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT,
COME OUT TONIGHT, COME OUT TONIGHT BUFFALO GALS WON'T YOU COME OUT
TONIGHT AND DANCE 'BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

(They laugh.)

GEORGE

Hot Dog, oh boy, just like an organ, gee whiz!

MARY

Beautiful!

GEORGE

You know something, if it wasn't me talking, I'd say you were the prettiest girl in town.

MARY

Well, why don't you say it?

GEORGE

I don't know. Maybe I will. How old are you anyway?

MARY

Eighteen.

GEORGE

Eighteen?!

MARY

Too young or too old?

GEORGE

Oh, no. Just right. Your age fits you... Hey, look where we are.

MARY

Oh, the old Granville house.

GEORGE

Yeah, I got to throw a rock.

MARY

Oh, no, don't. I love that old house.

GEORGE

Well no, don't you know about deserted houses, you make a wish and then throw a rock.

MARY

But George, it's such a lovely old place. I wish I lived there.

GEORGE

In there? I wouldn't live there if I was a ghost. Now watch, watch this.

(SPX: Glass breaks.)

GEORGE

How 'bout it, huh? Pretty good shot, huh? Broke a window, huh!

MARY

What's your wish, George?

GEORGE

Well, not just one wish. A whole hatful, Mary. I'm shaking the dust of this crummy little town off my feet and I'm going to see the world. Italy, Greece, the Parthenon, the Colosseum. Then I'm coming back here and go to college and see what they know... and then I'm going to build things. I'm gonna build air fields. I'm going to build skyscrapers a hundred stories high, I'm gonna build bridges a mile long... And then I'm gonna... Hey, what...are you gonna throw a rock too?

(SFX: Glass breaks.)

GEORGE

Hey that's pretty good. What'd you wish for Mary?

MARY

Oh no. If I tell you, it may not come true.

GEORGE

Hey, hey Mary... C'mon, what do you want huh? Do you want the moon? All you gotta do just say the word now...

MARY

Okay, the moon. I'll take it. And then what?

GEORGE

Then what? I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down. Then you could swallow it and it'd all dissolve, see? And the moonbeams'd shoot out of your fingers and toes, and the ends of your hair and the... -Am = talking too much?