

**ACT I**  
**Prologue**  
**HEAVEN – December 24, 1946**

*(In the darkness, we hear an angelic chorus singing offstage. The music segues to a lighter, celestial feel. Slowly, and dimly at first, the lights reveal a painted scrim of stars and clouds—we are in Heaven. After the chorus sings, the music continues as we hear offstage voices over the sound system.)*

OFFSTAGE

CHORUS: *(singing)* AHHHH, AHHHH . . .

GOWER'S VOICE: I owe everything to George Bailey. Help him, dear Father.

MARTINI'S VOICE: Oh, dear Jesus, help my friend Mr. Bailey.

MRS. BAILEY'S  
VOICE: Help my son George tonight.

BERT'S VOICE: He never thinks about himself, God; that's why he's in trouble.

ERNIE'S VOICE: George is a good guy. Give him a break, God.

MARY'S VOICE: I love him, dear Lord. Watch over him tonight.

JANIE'S VOICE: Please, God. Something's the matter with Daddy.

ZUZU'S VOICE: Please bring Daddy back.

*(The music changes as we begin to hear two angels speaking to one another, JOSEPH and FRANKLIN. They are unseen, but as they speak, we see their individual stars "sparkle" on the scrim—as if the stars were speaking.)*

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE: Hello, Joseph, trouble?

JOSEPH'S  
VOICE: Looks like we'll have to send someone down—a lot of people are asking for help for a man named George Bailey.

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE: George Bailey. Yes, tonight's his crucial night. You're right, we'll have to send someone down immediately. Whose turn is it?

JOSEPH'S  
VOICE:

That's why I came to see you, sir. It's Clarence's turn again.

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE:

Oh . . . Hasn't got his wings yet, has he? We've passed him up right along.

JOSEPH'S  
VOICE:

Because, you know, sir, he's got the IQ of a rabbit.

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE:

Yes, but he's got the faith of a child—simple. Joseph, send for Clarence.

*(Underscore ends. A harp glissando and CLARENCE enters. He is dressed in a white tuxedo and bowler hat.)*

CLARENCE:

You sent for me, sir?

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE:

Yes, Clarence. A man down on earth needs our help.

CLARENCE:

Splendid! Is he sick?

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE:

No, worse. He's discouraged—A man with no hope. At exactly ten-forty-five PM tonight, Earth time, that man will be thinking seriously of ending his life . . . and Clarence . . . this man has never accepted God's greatest gift.

CLARENCE:

Oh, dear, dear! That's tragic! I've only got an hour to dress. What are they wearing now?

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE:

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 for over two hundred years now, sir and . . . people are starting to talk.

FRANKLIN'S  
VOICE:

Clarence, you do a good job with George Bailey, and you'll get your wings.

CLARENCE:

Oh, thank you, sir. Thank you.

JOSEPH'S

VOICE: Poor George . . . Sit down, Clarence.

CLARENCE: Sit down? (*he sits*) What are . . .

JOSEPH'S

VOICE: If you're going to help a man, you want to know something about him, don't you?

CLARENCE: Well, naturally. Of course . . .

JOSEPH'S

VOICE: Keep your eyes open. I'm going to take you back to 1928, Clarence. See the town?

CLARENCE: Where? I don't see a thing.

JOSEPH'S

VOICE: Oh, I forgot. You haven't got your wings yet. Now look, I'll help you out. Concentrate. Begin to see something?

*(The lights behind the scrim begin to fade up and we see the town of Bedford Falls—Main Street. It is a beautiful, traditional vision of small-town America, Summer, 1928. We see a prominently displayed white sign—“YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS”)*

CLARENCE: Why, yes! This is amazing.

JOSEPH'S

VOICE: If you ever get your wings, you'll see all by yourself.

CLARENCE: Oh, wonderful! I can really see something now . . . what a pretty little town.

JOSEPH'S

VOICE: Clarence . . . you are now in Bedford Falls!

*(Immediately, MUSIC BEGINS. The Heaven scrim flies out quickly and the TOWNSPEOPLE enter with much bustling and activity. Immediate segue into the next scene.)*

**ACT I**  
**Scene 2**

**MAIN STREET, BEDFORD FALLS, June 1, 1928 in the late afternoon.**

TOWNSPEOPLE: YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
WHERE FOLKS ARE FINE AND FRIENDLY  
AND THE NEIGHBORS COME TO CALL  
(WELCOME NEIGHBORS ONE ANE ALL)

TOWNSPEOPLE: YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
THE WEATHER IS DELIGHTFUL  
SUMMER, WINTER, SPRING OR FALL

MEN: SUMMER, WINTER, SPRING OR FALL

TOWNSPEOPLE: IN OUR FAIR CITY OF BEDFORD FALLS

*(During the following chorus, GEORGE BAILEY enters the stage  
and walks about the square, interacting with the people.)*

YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
WE MAY BE RATHER SIMPLE

MAYOR: BUT WE'RE STANDING STRAIGHT AND TALL

TOWNSPEOPLE: BUT WE'RE STANDING STRAIGHT AND TALL  
YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
IT'S NOT LIKE NEW YORK CITY

WOMAN SOLO: BUT OUR CHILDREN HAVE A BALL

TOWNSPEOPLE: NOT CHICAGO OR ST. PAUL  
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE IN BEDFORD FALLS

*(Music continues as BERT, the cop, enters with ERNIE, the cab  
driver. They both approach GEORGE center stage.)*

BERT: Avast there, Captain Cook. You got your sea legs yet?

ERNIE: Parlez vous francais? Hey, send us some of them picture postcards,  
will you, George?

BERT: Hey, George, don't take any plugged nickels.

ERNIE: George, are you sure you have to go away for so long?  
We're gonna miss you here in Bedford Falls . . .

BERT: George . . . no matter how far you travel . . . there's no where else  
like Bedford Falls. . . you'll see!

*(GEORGE crosses down center to sing with the TOWNSPEOPLE  
behind him.)*

GEORGE: I'M GOING CRAZY IN BEDFORD FALLS  
IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE BEEN HERE  
NO, IT HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL  
I BID FAREWELL TO BEDFORD FALLS  
I'VE GOT TO CROSS THE OCEAN  
BEFORE I CLIMB THE WALLS  
AND SAY "GOOD RIDDANCE" TO BEDFORD FALLS

BERT: THERE'S LOTS OF THINGS TO DO HERE

ERNIE: AND LOTS OF THINGS TO SEE

GEORGE: BUT I'VE ALREADY DONE THEM ALL  
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH FOR ME!

TOWNSPEOPLE: YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
WHERE FOLKS ARE FINE AND FRIENDLY  
AND THE NEIGHBORS COME TO CALL

GEORGE: *(speaks loudly over the others)* I already know all the neighbors.  
Some of them I don't even like.

YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
THE WEATHER IS DELIGHTFUL  
SUMMER, WINTER, SPRING OR FALL  
(SUMMER, WINTER, SPRING OR FALL)  
IN OUR FAIR CITY OF BEDFORD FALLS

GEORGE: Yeah, it's fair all right . . . fair to middlin' . . .

YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
WE MAY BE RATHER SIMPLE  
BUT WE'RE STANDING STRAIGHT AND TALL

BOY SOLO: WANNA GO AND PLAY SOME BALL?

GEORGE: No thanks, kid. I've got bigger things on my mind than that.

TOWNSPEOPLE: YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS  
IT'S NOT LIKE NEW YORK CITY

GEORGE: You can say that again!

TOWNSPEOPLE: IT'S NOT LIKE NEW YORK CITY  
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE  
(IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE)  
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE  
(IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE)  
IN BEDFORD FALLS,  
BEDFORD FALLS!

*(After applause, CAST freezes in pose with GEORGE down center.  
Lights come up in Heaven.)*

CLARENCE: Hey . . . what did they stop for?

JOSEPH: I want you to take a good look at that face.

CLARENCE: Who is it?

JOSEPH: George Bailey.

CLARENCE: Is he my man?

JOSEPH: Yes. That's your man.

CLARENCE: It's a good face. I like it. I hope I'll like George Bailey.

JOSEPH: Oh, you will.

CLARENCE: But . . .why does he want to get out of this pretty little town? . . .  
Everyone seems so nice.

JOSEPH: Wait and see.

*(MUSIC BEGINS. It is a musical playoff for the TOWNSPEOPLE  
to exit and for Hepner's Department store to come on. GEORGE  
crosses to HEPNER and starts speaking as soon as the music  
ends.)*

GEORGE: Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Now, look, Joe . . . I want a BIG one. (*gestures to show size*) Big, see? I don't want one for one night. I want something for a thousand and one nights, with plenty of room for labels from Italy and Baghdad, Samarkand . . . a great big one.

JOE: I see, a flying carpet, huh? I don't suppose you'd like this old second-hand job, would you? (*He brings a large suitcase up from under the counter.*)

GEORGE: Now you're talkin'. Gee whiz, I could use this as a raft in case the boat sunk. How much does this cost?

JOE: No charge.

GEORGE: That's my trick ear, Joe. It sounded as if you said no charge.

JOE: (*indicating name on suitcase*) That's right.

GEORGE: (*as he sees his name*) What's my name doing on it?

JOE: A little present from old man Gower. Came down and picked it out himself.

GEORGE: (*admiring the bag*) He did? Whatta you know about that —my old boss from the drugstore . . .

(*MR. GOWER approaches.*)

GOWER: Say, George, did you get your bag?

GEORGE: Mr. Gower . . . Mr. Gower . . . thanks ever so much. It's just exactly what I wanted.

GOWER: Aw, forget it . . . it's the least I can do, George, after all you've done for me.

GEORGE: It's wonderful.

(*MR. & MRS. MARTINI enter. They are immigrants from Italy and speak with exaggerated accents.*)

MR. MARTINI: So, George, I see you gotta you bags. Where you go?

MRS. MARTINI: Italy, maybe?

GEORGE: Italy, France, Spain . . . you name it.

MRS. MARTINI: Oh, George, if you go to Italy, you have to see my mother.

MR. MARTINI: *(to his wife)* Not before he sees my mother first.

GEORGE: I'm probably going to be moving so fast I won't have time to see either one of them.

*(HARRY BAILEY enters hurriedly and approaches GEORGE. MOTHER BAILEY enters just after HARRY, looking for GEORGE.)*

HARRY: You're not moving too fast right now. Mother just told me we had better get moving if we're gonna get home for dinner before the graduation dance tonight.

*(GEORGE momentarily ignores HARRY and goes to MOTHER, showing her his new suitcase.)*

GEORGE: Hey, Mom! Look at the new suitcase Mr. Gower bought for me.

MOTHER: It's perfect!

GEORGE: I'm ready to go to Europe!

HARRY: But first we've got to get home and get ready for the dance. Come on, George!

GEORGE: Harry, I told you I wasn't sure I was going to the dance . . . all those little kids . . .

*(VIOLET enters the group. She is attractive. She knows it and shows it. BERT & ERNIE follow her as if she were a magnet.)*

VIOLET: You mean little kids like me, George Bailey?

GEORGE: Oh, hey, Violet . . . that's some dress you got there.

VIOLET: Oh, this old thing . . . I only wear it when I don't care how I look. Well . . . *(kisses GEORGE on the cheek)* I hope I see ya at the dance tonight . . . with all the other little kids.

*(All the men's eyes follow VIOLET as she exits. Then, involuntarily, MARTINI blurts out loudly:)*

MR. MARTINI: Mamma-Mia! . . .

*(At which, MRS. MARTINI hits her husband over the head with her purse and then takes him offstage, nagging all the way. UNCLE BILLY and COUSIN TILLY have made their entrance during this sequence.)*

ERNIE: Bert, isn't there a law against looking like that—I mean, in broad daylight?

MOTHER: *(before BERT can answer)* Well, if there's not, there oughtta be.

TILLY: *(approaching GEORGE)* George! I'm so glad I found you! Your father was wondering if you have seen this week's deposit slips. Mr. Potter was asking to see them – you know, he's on the Board now.

GEORGE: Sure. I know where they are. I left them with Uncle Billy like always.

TILLY: That's what I was afraid of. Well, Billy . . . I guess we'll just have to keep looking until we find them.

UNCLE BILLY: Sure we will. I bet they're in the same place as last week's . . . wherever those are . . . say, George . . . have you seen those, by the way?

TILLY: *(exasperated)* Now, Billy . . .

UNCLE BILLY: Alright, alright . . . I just thought George might like to help out the old Bailey Building & Loan one last time before his big trip . . . for old times' sake . . .

GEORGE: Now, Uncle Billy, you'll be fine. Harry here will take good care of you while I'm gone. I figure he'll have that office working so smooth, you and Dad will soon forget about ole George Bailey.

UNCLE BILLY: Now George, I know Harry will do a good job. He's smart. But we could never forget about you.

*(MUSIC BEGINS)*

Bedford Falls will never be the same without you, George.  
Just think about all you've done.

HARRY: That's right, Uncle Billy.

*(HARRY sings to those gathered around.)*

HARRY:           WHEN I WAS ONLY NINE YEARS OLD  
I FELL INTO THE ICE  
THE WATER WAS SO DARK AND COLD  
BUT GEORGE DID NOT THINK TWICE  
HE JUMPED RIGHT IN THERE AFTER ME  
AND SAVED HIS BROTHER'S LIFE  
NOW THAT'S GEORGE BAILEY TO ME!

GOWER:           Don't you remember, George?

*(GOWER sings)*

WHEN I HAD MADE A HUGE MISTAKE  
WITH POISON FROM THE SHELF  
I SENT IT OUT AS MEDICINE  
I COULD BLAME NO ONE ELSE  
WHY, THIS BRAVE BOY CONFRONTED ME  
AND SAVED ME FROM MYSELF  
NOW THAT'S GEORGE BAILEY TO ME!

*(Now, everyone onstage is caught up in the spirit. In the midst of this POTTER is rolled in by his GOON to observe. He watches with disgust.)*

TOWNSPEOPLE:   THAT'S GEORGE BAILEY —

MOTHER:         A MOTHER'S PRIDE AND JOY!

TOWNSPEOPLE:   THAT'S GEORGE BAILEY —

VIOLET:          A VERY HANDSOME BOY!

TOWNSPEOPLE:   THAT'S GEORGE BAILEY —

GOWER:           A FRIEND FOR LIFE, INDEED!

TOWNSPEOPLE:   THAT'S GEORGE BAILEY —

POTTER:          HE'S ALL THAT THIS TOWN NEEDS!

*(spoken)* I'll tell you what I think of George Bailey-

*(POTTER SINGS)*

POTTER: HIS FATHER IS AN IMBECILE  
A FAILURE OF A MAN  
WHO THINKS IT IS HIS SPECIAL TASK  
TO LEND A HELPING HAND  
AN OBSTACLE, A “DO-GOODER”  
WHO’S FOILING ALL MY PLANS  
NOW THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY TO ME!

UNCLE BILLY: That’s enough out of you, Potter!

UNCLE BILLY: GEORGE BAILEY’S BEEN MY CLOSEST FRIEND  
SINCE HE WAS JUST A LAD  
I’M PROUD TO BE HIS UNCLE  
HE IS SO MUCH LIKE HIS DAD  
HIS WHOLE LIFE LONG I’VE LOVED HIM  
LIKE THE SON I NEVER HAD  
NOW THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY TO ME.

TOWNSPEOPLE: THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —

MEN: A MAN THAT YOU CAN TRUST.

TOWNSPEOPLE: THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —

WOMEN: WE’RE PROUD HE’S ONE OF US.

TOWNSPEOPLE: THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY  
WE’RE GLAD TO SHAKE HIS HAND  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY

POTTER: I’LL NEVER UNDERSTAND!

*(POTTER motions for GOON to “get me out of here.”  
BILLY follows him off, taunting him.)*

TOWNSPEOPLE: THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —  
HE’LL ALWAYS TREAT YOU RIGHT  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —  
HIS FUTURE LOOKS SO BRIGHT  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —  
HE SERVES US FAITHFULLY  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY,  
A MAN YOU CAN BELIEVE.

*(The TOWNSPEOPLE begin a “parade” of moving GEORGE around in celebration.)*

*(INSTRUMENTAL BREAK FOR DANCE)*

TOWNSPEOPLE: THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —  
HE’LL ALWAYS TREAT YOU RIGHT  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —  
HIS FUTURE LOOKS SO BRIGHT  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY —  
HE SERVES US FAITHFULLY  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY,  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY,  
THAT’S GEORGE BAILEY TO ME!

*(CAST holds final pose gathered around GEORGE for a moment – then – BLACKOUT. Lights up immediately in Heaven.)*

