

GLORIA. A man on earth needs our help.

CLARISSA. Oh goody! Is he sick?

GLORIA. No, worse, he's discouraged. At exactly ten forty-five tonight, earth time, that man will be thinking seriously of throwing away God's greatest gift.

CLARISSA. His life? Oh my! If I... if I should accomplish this mission... might I win my wings? I've been waiting over two hundred years and people are beginning to talk.

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

CLARISSA. Oh, thank you! Oh dear, I've only got an hour to dress. What are they wearing down there now?

JOSEPH. You've only got an hour to save him. If you're going to help this poor man, you need to know something about him.

CLARISSA. Well, yes, I suppose...

~~SAM'S VOICE~~. Excuse me...

CLARISSA. Yes... Who...?

~~SAM'S VOICE~~. Excuse me, God.

CLARISSA. Oh, it's not for me...

During the following speech the two ANGELS get ready to become other characters.

~~SAM'S VOICE~~. It's Sam, God... Sam Wainwright? I know you don't hear from me too much but, well, my old friend George Bailey... I think he needs a break...

JOSEPH. You've got one hour.

CLARISSA. So little time to find out about him. If I concentrate... oh dear, concentrate... I should be able to see his whole life... with some help from his friends.

GLORIA. You'll get help.

CLARISSA *is now in the town.*

CLARISSA. This George Bailey is certainly in lots of folks' thoughts.

As SAM's voice is heard, GLORIA joins in and goes into the town to become SAM.

SAM/GLORIA. He's a good guy. Could you give him a break, God?

SAM (~~now played live by GLORIA~~). Hey, I remember when he saved his kid brother.

CLARISSA. Really! This could be useful... go on... oh I hope he goes on... I do think wings would suit me...

HARRY, played by JOSEPH, as a kid jumps up and down and calls out and GEORGE, now twelve years old, calls from the bridge.

HARRY. Look at me, Georgie! Look at me, Sam!

GEORGE. Not on the ice, Harry, it's too thin!

SAM. 1918... no, no 1919. Cold winter, 1919. Me and George, we were twelve. But Harry was just a little sprout, just eight.

HARRY. World Champion Slider! Aaaagh!

SAM. George just jumped right in that icy river. But I guess it's only us who ever knew... (*To God.*) us and you.

GEORGE runs from the bridge to SAM and HARRY. He rescues HARRY. He is shivering with cold but still in charge.

GEORGE. You gotta swear...

CLARISSA. Oh dear!

GEORGE. Swear not to tell.

HARRY. I'm cold...

GEORGE. Do you want a larruping?

HARRY. No... but I'm cold and wet and...

GEORGE. We gotta get our story straight... Sam?

SAM. We saw Old Ma Holloway's cat on the ice, and we tried to save her but she fell in and you guys fell in trying to rescue it...

GEORGE. What didn't happen...?

HARRY. George...

GEORGE. Come on, Harry... what didn't you do?

HARRY. I didn't try to be World Champion Slider, I didn't go on the ice, I didn't get saved... but I did get real cold.

GEORGE. Me too. (*Fading fast.*) Now swear... Come on... spit 'n' swear.

They spit on their hands and then slap each other palms.

Spit 'n' swear 'n' hope to die...

SAM. Spit 'n' swear 'n' hope to die...

HARRY. Spit 'n' swear 'n' hope to die...

ALL. Hot dog!

GEORGE (*with his last gasp*). Sam... what are you gonna do?

SAM. On the way home I'm gonna dunk Ma Holloway's cat in the water butt.

GEORGE. Thanks, Sam.

GEORGE *passes out.*

SAM/~~GLORIA~~. George saved his kid brother's life that day. But he caught a bad cold... infected his left ear. Cost him his hearing in that ear. It was weeks before he could return to his after-school job.

The BOYS are now recovered, have linked arms and are coming back from school. They stop and stare out at the audience as if watching a carriage go by. Sound effect: horses' hooves.

GEORGE. Mr Potter!