

ACT TWO

We hear, quietly, some WW2 music – The Andrews Sisters' 'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy' maybe. The three angels enter.

GLORIA. War.

CLARISSA. I don't like it.

GLORIA. No, Clarissa, it's an awful sign of failure. Do we know how Bedford Falls got through it?

JOSEPH. Well now, let me see. Everyone plays their part. Mary joins the Red Cross, she's got three little ones by then, but she does her bit. Her brother, Marty, helped capture Remagen Bridge and Ernie, left his cab and parachuted into France. Sam Wainwright made a fortune in plastic hoods for planes and Potter became Head of the Draft Board

CLARISSA. That figures.

JOSEPH. Bert the cop was wounded in North Africa, got the Silver Star. But Harry, Harry Bailey topped them all. George's kid brother became a Navy flier. He shot down fifteen planes, two of them as they were about to crash into a transport full of soldiers.

GLORIA. But George, where's George?... Ah yes... poor old George.

GEORGE *walks slowly and thoughtfully back to the bridge.*

GLORIA. On account of his ear, he was refused the draft. George fought the battle of Bedford Falls... air-raid warden, paper drives, scrap drives... and like everyone else on VE Day he wept and prayed... and on VJ Day he wept and prayed again.

CLARISSA. So here we are... back to today... Christmas Eve, nineteen hundred and forty-five. Oh my, I still don't know why he's here and there's so little time left to find out.

GLORIA. Down you go, Clarissa. And don't let him out of your sight.

As they exit, JOSEPH starts the speech then GEORGE takes it up.

JOSEPH and GEORGE. The water sure looks cold. Wonder how long a man could stay alive in it.

CLARISSA (*not standing on the bridge, slightly panicky tone*). I wouldn't do that if I were you.

GEORGE *looks round, puzzled. No one is there.*

I need to go back to the start of the day... the start of the day, George.

GEORGE *starts to move off the bridge, heading back the way he came.*

There must be an easier way than this to earn my wings.

As GEORGE and CLARISSA exit, ACTORS 3 and 4 sing a carol, a jolly one to contrast with GEORGE's mood. I suggest 'Deck the Halls'. UNCLE BILLY enters with a newspaper with which he conducts the singing, MARY enters carrying Christmas parcels.

BILLY. They're gonna deck the town with a great big banner, Mary, and it's gonna have Harry Bailey's name on it! Hope they spell the name right!

MARY. See you at the party, Billy.

BERT *enters as MARY leaves.*

BILLY. Hi, Bert, look at that!

BILLY holds up the front page of the Bedford Falls Sentinel with the headline, 'PRESIDENT DECORATES HARRY BAILEY – LOCAL BOY WINS CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR.'

BERT. Gonna snow again.

BILLY. What do you mean... it's gonna snow again? Look at that – (*He reads.*) 'President decorates Harry Bailey'.