POTTERSVILLE

written by

Ricky Hawthorne
EXT. ASCENA HEIGHTS, A SMALL TOWN IN NEW YORK STATE: A DECEMBER EVENING

Deep purple dark; the street and sidewalk are dressed in a shawl of snow. Little traffic is evident, human or vehicular. The light from the working street lamps provide paltry comfort, their glow seeming to retreat back into the darkness rather than penetrate it.

From out of a bar steps RICKY: cute but drunk. He staggers towards a car and leans heavily against it. He searches in his pockets, finally recovering a set of keys and presses the fob, opens up and pulls back the driver’s door. He climbs in and, without putting on his seat belt, drives off, swerving out into the road just missing an oncoming truck.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN: NIGHT

Ricky is driving home in blinding snow. The narrow road seems sharper with snow drifts each side and dark green menacing evergreens toss snow from their branches as if in spite. He turns a corner too sharply for the conditions. He begins to swerve and loses control. In front of him is a lanky man staggering over the road. Ricky whips the wheel around to miss him and collides with a small pudgy man. Ricky, instinctively, shuts his eyes bracing for the impact.

RICKY
Shoot!

The expected thud of a body careering over his bonnet is not heard and he opens his eyes to find the car sliding away down the embankment on the right hand side of the road, ploughing into a deep snowdrift.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW DRIFT

The front part of Ricky’s car is buried within the drift. He is unconscious but alive slumped in the driver’s seat.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. OUTSIDE A RESTAURANT: CHRISTMAS EVE EVENING, SOME YEARS EARLIER

The street is bedecked with Xmas lights and it's snowing lightly
RICKY
Not much of a dinner

DIANE
Hey, I saved a month so we could eat there

RICKY
Over-hyped if you ask me

DIANE
You never left a crumb

RICKY
Next year will be different

DIANE
How?

RICKY
I got in at Straker's

DIANE
Oh, you didn't, did you? You packed your job up without asking me?

RICKY
Listen, you know Dan. He cleared 50 grand last year

DIANE
We're doing okay

RICKY
I'm fed up with okay. I want great, fantastic, unbelievable. Straker's can give me that.

DIANE
That's him talking isn't it? I knew the guy years ago. He isn't...

RICKY
I showed him my salary slip and he just laughed at it. He could earn that in ten minutes

DIANE
He probably could. I don't want to be married to Straker. I don't want 10 minute fixes, I want lifelong commitment. I want good old reliable Ricky.
RICKY
Good for nothing Ricky. It isn't right a man being kept by his wife

DIANE
Stop being so neanderthal, it doesn't suit you.

He grimaces

DIANE (CONT’D)
Perhaps it does

RICKY
Can't I try?

DIANE
We'll talk later. Let's enjoy the cold, the snow and the walk home

CUT TO:

INT. RICKY'S LOUNGE

A sparsely decorated Christmas tree sits in the corner of the living room. Ricky is watching TV. Diane is in the kitchen area. ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’ is being broadcast. The clip is from the Bailey household prior to the graduation dance. Harry Bailey has just been told by his father Peter not to touch ‘even so much of a drop’ of gin. Diane enters

DIANE
If he can't have one, I will.

RICKY
It's a tradition. I wrap up the presents and watch Jimmy Stewart

DIANE
It's about the only one you have

RICKY
They'll be others, when I find my Bedford Falls

DIANE
What's so amazing about Bedford Falls?

RICKY
You are kidding me? It's everything you could want.

(MORE)
RICKY (CONT'D)
The people, the community...the snow even

DIANE
I'll go fetch some coal and a carrot if it'll make you happy

RICKY
Too cold for that

DIANE
So you're gonna sit there and drink. Is that another tradition 'cause it happens every year too? Couldn't you try the shelf again?

RICKY
I put it up didn't I?

DIANE
The DIY equivalent of the Tacoma Narrows bridge. Sixty seconds it lasted. All I wanted was to have my Mother's picture put up. The last one I had took with her before she died. That shelf wouldn't have supported a passport photograph

RICKY
The case for the defense I believe...oops

DIANE
That's low, even for you

RICKY
I didn't mean it honestly

DIANE
There seems to be little of that quality in you lately. Watch your film

RICKY
Sit down with me

DIANE
I'll wait for bedtime to dream. George Bailey isn't going to cook my Christmas dinner

CUT TO:
INT. AN OFFICE PARTY: CHRISTMAS EVE, A YEAR LATER

Ricky is standing with a colleague, DAN, solid like a purloined section of the Berlin Wall. Typical Xmas party scene: people draped across tables and chairs like an explosion in a human cloakroom and a glass orgy of bottles and tumblers strewn across every square inch of tile, wood and fabric.

RICKY
Didn’t we do this last year?

DAN
This is last year; we're stuck in a time warp

RICKY
Could be – looks like Joe's about to make the same move on Carol he did...

They look across at Joe and Carol. Joe is as thin as a Praying Mantis on a diet and leans into Carol, small and attractive, like a Pekinese, who pops him in the face.

RICKY (CONT’D)
3:14 – a little earlier this year

DAN
He's a little drunker this year

RICKY
With good cause – Straker's looking to offload

DAN
Joe?

RICKY
He's had a bad year

DAN
He's not alone

RICKY
Maggie you mean? She's got Straker's ear

DAN
Not just his ear I'm told. I wasn't thinking about her

RICKY
Who?
DAN
Could be anyone. Maybe even you.

RICKY
I'm top this month

DAN
Come on Ricky - you got lucky with Parker

RICKY
Lucky? When's the last time you were top?

DAN
Consistency is a better strategy

RICKY
Ah - jealous

DAN
Of Diane maybe

RICKY
Hey - she just mentioned her brother wanted the business. I did all the work

DAN
He's your brother-in-law for God's sake

RICKY
What - you don't do business with family?

DAN
The difference is if I didn't, I wouldn't starve

RICKY
I suppose we'll be sizing out each others turkeys next

DAN
Ricky - you like to eat but you don't like cooking

RICKY
What the hell does that mean?

DAN
Jeez Ricky, I think you were raised on a checker board?
An attractive girl LAURA looks over at Ricky and gestures

RICKY
Time for the traditional giving and taking of presents Dan my boy

DAN
And Diane? After all she may have saved your job

RICKY
Come on, it's nothing. It's a party. Look I got Diane a special gift this year. She's earned it.

DAN
You make her sound like an employee

RICKY
Lighten up Dan. It's Christmas: the season of goodwill and Frank Capra

DAN
You still watch that old film?

RICKY
Every Christmas Eve - never miss. Me and Gloria Grahame, the sexiest woman ever to grace the silver screen. Can you imagine bumping into her in Bedford Falls?

DAN
Isn't it a bit lame for a pace setter like you?

RICKY
When I make my fortune Dan that's where I'm going

DAN
Do you have a fictional house in this fictional town that matches this fictional career path?

RICKY
There must be somewhere like it and I'm gonna live there

He moves after Laura. A few seconds later STRAKER, the company boss, joins Dan. He's lean and characterless like an insipid side of bacon.
DAN
Evening

STRAKER
Sober?

DAN
Unfortunately

STRAKER
Ricky?

DAN
He'll be back in five minutes

STRAKER
You sure?

DAN
Well, maybe four: important?

STRAKER
Awkward

DAN
You don't...

STRAKER
It's confidential. He should really be the first to know. How will he take it?

DAN
After the Parker business, probably shock

STRAKER
He could hardly fail with that. He hadn't written any business in six weeks. We'd already agreed to let him go

DAN
Now, at Christmas? Christ I thought it was cold outside

STRAKER
First thing they teach you - cut when necessary

DAN
Who's your surgeon Straker?
STRAKER

Huh?

DAN

Next time they operate on you tell them to give you a heart

STRAKER

Too much of a heart - that's my problem. I've given him chances. I should've got rid of him in the summer. Look at the leads the Parker deal has generated and what's he done - took the month off as his reward.

Ricky walks back in tidying himself up

DAN

I'm going home

RICKY

But it's early

DAN

Jane just rang. Her favorite Aunt's turned up

He grabs his coat and leaves

RICKY

Bull. He sure is well and truly tethered

STRAKER

And Diane?

RICKY

She's happy, why shouldn't she be?

STRAKER

What do you want Ricky?

RICKY

A bottle of wine, a good dinner and 'It's a Wonderful Life'

STRAKER

Is that really all it takes?

RICKY

Ah this year the wine will be more expensive and the dinner will have all the trimmings.
STRAKER
And Bedford Falls?

RICKY
That may take a little longer to achieve

STRAKER
Yes, that's what I want to talk to you about.

RICKY
Bonus?
   (pause)

STRAKER
I'm not going to string this out but we're letting you go

RICKY
It's a little early for April Fools isn't it?

STRAKER
The Parker deal doesn't mean a thing Ricky

RICKY
Okay I'll have your cut. Listen am I missing something here?

STRAKER
If that was the basis of your contract I'd be hiring Diane

RICKY
Okay, okay but I've got leads on the back of that

STRAKER
Which you've done nothing with

RICKY
Give me a break - it's Christmas

STRAKER
You've been celebrating since Thanksgiving. A real salesman would've been on it a month ago. Face it Ricky, this life isn't for you. Get a regular job - you couldn't sell a match to an arsonist
RICKY
And Maggie?

STRAKER
She's young; she's still learning

RICKY
You are screwing her. How long have I got?

STRAKER
End of January

RICKY
Maybe I do need to smell a different brand of manure

STRAKER
Ricky, you can't rely on things just landing in your lap. You need to work at it and that isn't you, if it was Diane wouldn't be holding down two jobs

RICKY
Merry Christmas Santa

STRAKER
Give my love to Diane

RICKY
Tact really isn't your thing is it?

He exits. Straker is approached by a young pretty woman who links his arm. He guilefully unhooks it but begins to converse with her.

CUT TO:

INT. RICKY'S APARTMENT

The front door opens and Ricky steps in hitting the lights as he enters. It is a tidy flat; the furnishings adequate - the sort of place friends always comment as ‘nice’ when they mean tedious. Ricky goes toward the small kitchen situated to the right side of the living space. He sniffs as if expecting something to be cooking but is disappointed. He checks the refrigerator.

RICKY
She's not in. Good. Better have another drink before I get the 'I told you so' speech
He turns on the TV, walks back into the lounge and pours a drink before heading toward the single bedroom opposite. He flicks on the light and opens up an angry looking wardrobe to hang his jacket. He sits back on the sad double bed behind him and peels off his trousers, slinging them into a wash basket beside the wardrobe. He lies back on his side of the bed, looking pensive and exhales loudly. His arms stretch out to the side and his right arm catches something on the other pillow. It is a note. He reads it:

DIANE (V.O)
Ricky, you probably won’t be surprised to read this but I have decided to call it a day. I won’t lie to you, I haven’t been happy for a good six months now. We don’t talk and make love even less. I haven’t met someone else but I can’t pretend I’m not hoping to. I’d really like to say it’s not you it’s me; but it is you. Sorry. Diane.
Ps. Don’t look for me – I’ve left town and I haven’t gone to my mothers.

RICKY
She could’ve microwaved a pizza before she left

Behind him the TV is showing the opening credits of 'It's a Wonderful Life'

RICKY (CONT’D)
Oh God – that’s all I need

He takes another drink, staring vacuously into the screen

DISSOLVE:

INT. RICKY'S CAR: NIGHT PRESENT

Ricky stirs. He shakes his head to clear it. A strange dissonant music is heard and at once it stops snowing. The starry sky disappears behind dark clouds and it becomes pitch black. Ricky looks out at the windshield in front of him. It is completely covered in snow. He licks away at his lip and then touches the spot with his finger. His lip is bleeding. He tries to move but is completely wedged in by his seat belt which is twisted and will not release. He hears the car groan. He can feel, without seeing, that the car is edging forward. Painfully he moves his arm and switches on the wipers.
They clear away some of the snow giving Ricky a restricted view of what’s in front of him. He squints at the screen but outside visibility is still poor but he can hear water. Gradually he comprehends the fact that the car is lying 50 yards short of foaming, freezing river. He attempts to open his door but the central locking is jammed shut.

Again the car groans but this time it lurches forward. In desperation Ricky wrestles with his safety belt but cannot budge it. Suddenly he stops struggling and relaxes.

*RICKY*

What the hell anyway? No job, no wife, no Bedford Falls. Merry Christmas Ricky

The car begins to slide a little more

*RICKY (CONT’D)*

I don't mind the drowning just spare me the flashbacks

The car continues to edge toward the river

*RICKY (CONT’D)*

Here goes...on my way God. Hey I wonder if he really does look like Santa Claus? Or maybe he's a meanie like old man Potter. George Bailey had Clarence - I got no-one

The car is about 10 yards from the river’s edge and then, inexplicably, stops.

*RICKY (LOOKING UP) (CONT’D)*

Well, well, I never you for a sense of humor big fella

The car remains still for a few moments and then it groans again under the pressure

*RICKY (CONT’D)*

Here goes!

*VOICE*

Hey, you in there!

*RICKY*

What...who's that?

Ricky looks out and sees a black featureless shape in the pitch black night
VOICE
Wait - I'll get you out

RICKY
No - go away

VOICE
Naw, I'm afraid I just can't do that

He feels the driver's door being pulled

RICKY
It won't open. Let it go - you'll get yourself killed too

The attempts stop and all is still outside

RICKY (CONT'D)
Relax Ricky it'll be like falling asleep

VOICE
Hey you inside, listen

RICKY
Will you leave me be? Can't a man drown in peace?

VOICE
Lean into the wheel, turn your head the other way and close your eyes

RICKY
Are you gonna serenade me to death?

VOICE
Just do it!

Ricky obeys. Seconds later the driver's window Smashes and glass showers him. A rock hits him in the shoulder. A man leans in toward him out of the blackness outside

RICKY
Couldn't you let the water kill me you lunatic, it'd be kinder

The man tugs at the safety belt

RICKY (CONT'D)
I've tried that for Christ's sake. Don't you think I would've tried that?
VOICE
What the hell kinda fancy belt you got here?

RICKY
Can't we discuss that later?

VOICE
Sorry mister but I thought you was committing suicide.

RICKY
What am I an imaginative Lemming?

VOICE
But you told me to go away

RICKY
Okay, yeah, but I hadn't considered the benefits until now

VOICE
I'm confused mister

RICKY
So am I but don't worry only one of us will be in thirty seconds

VOICE
No, I can't let you - it's a sin

RICKY
Okay God, I get it; drowning isn't enough, you gotta lecture me too

The car moves again, inching its way on its final journey to the water.

VOICE
Move to the left. I can pull you up and through the window

RICKY
Don't I get a say in how I die?. If I change my mind I'll swim okay?

The man grabs him and begins to pull. Ricky can feel some purchase

VOICE
Push up with your legs now - come on - help me. It's difficult to hold my position with the car moving in the snow
Ricky moves in compliance. Between them, they manage to manoeuvre Ricky’s head and shoulders through the broken window, however as the man pulls Ricky back, the car moves forward. Inside Ricky’s right foot becomes entwined in the safety belt and he begins to become stretched.

RICKY
OOOW! Is this a rescue or a murder?

VOICE
Aw quit moaning

RICKY
Just my luck - I need Oscar Schindler and I get the Marquis De Sade

VOICE
Just stay there - for one moment?

RICKY
Really? Aw and I was going for espresso

The man reaches in, his legs leaving the ground to attempt to unwrap Ricky’s foot. His weight adds to the car’s propulsion toward the foaming river.

RICKY (CONT’D)
Oh, have you decided to tag along?

With difficulty he unwinds the belt and gets back behind Ricky again to pull on his shoulders. Ricky’s bottom is through but the front wheels of the car are over the edge and the vehicle is pointing down toward the river.

As the car finally releases its hold on the earth, the man hauls one last time and the rest of Ricky is tugged away from danger. The car hits the water and at once begins to sink and race down river. For a moment they are both standing on the snow breathing huge clouds of breath into the ether. Ricky is leaning back on his rescuer his eyes fixed on the vehicle. He shouts at it

RICKY (CONT’D)
Et tu Brute!

He turns to face the dark shape behind him

RICKY (CONT’D)
I'm gonna miss that car
He collapses

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SNOW BANK: NIGHT

The man and Ricky are lying face up in the snow; Ricky slightly atop. It is pitch back and they can barely see each other.

VOICE
Are you hurt anywhere?

RICKY
Easier to say where I don't

There is a pause as both men look upward at the stars

VOICE
It's been a weird night. What sorta car was that?

RICKY
It's a company car...it belonged to an asshole. Pity he wasn't sitting in it

VOICE
Looked like some kinda space ship compared to my old Dodge

RICKY
Why did you risk your neck - you could've been drowned?

VOICE
Not much chance of that tonight - too many folk trying to beat me to it

RICKY
What's stopping me getting my breath back and walking back down to the river?

VOICE
Why wait and get it back if you're that determined to give it up? You go on and stroll down there mister, I'm too plain tuckered out to try and stop ya.

Ricky exhales deeply
RICKY
And I'm too tired to try. Maybe tomorrow eh?

VOICE
Just let me know where you're gonna be and I'll be somewhere else

RICKY
That's a rotten attitude for a guardian angel

VOICE
Aw don't you start, I've had angels up to here tonight

RICKY
You know it's funny...maybe my ears are full of snow but your voice sounds...Do I know you?

VOICE
If it's any help I'm the town chump

RICKY
Not tonight - that's my privilege. Say was that you up there on the road?

VOICE
I just heard a screech and turned around. Next thing I see you heading down the bank

RICKY
Jesus, I remember now. Hey was there someone with you?

VOICE
Yeah, and hey fella go easy with the cuss words

RICKY
Cuss...

VOICE
He was kinda tagging along talking all kinda nonsense.

RICKY
Was he a small pudgy guy?

VOICE
Squashy? Yeah
RICKY
I think I may have hit him

VOICE
You hit him!

The stranger rises, an anonymous tall skinny Greek deity silhouetted against a backcloth of stars.

RICKY
I didn't mean to. I swerved to avoid hitting you

VOICE
So it was my fault. Seems most of the problems in this little town are down to me. Say just exactly what was on your mind tonight, suicide or murder?

RICKY
Do you think he's dead?

VOICE
Poor old Clarence. I know he was a little nuts but he didn't deserve to go that way

RICKY
But he might need help

He searches his pockets

RICKY (CONT'D)
Damn, my cell must be in the car

VOICE
Cell? The only cell you're likely to see belongs to Bert the sheriff

RICKY
What about you?

VOICE
Don't implicate me mister, I've been busy saving lives not taking them!

RICKY
Hey, it was an acci...wait a minute...did you say Clarence?

VOICE
That's what he called himself
RICKY
A short little fella

GEORGE
Yep

RICKY
I saw him just before...but I thought I was seeing things

VOICE
I sure know how you feel, all sorts of strange things have been happening since I pulled him out the river.

RICKY
You pulled him out the river!

VOICE
You having trouble hearing me mister; you sound like you got a trick ear? I used to have one of them when I was a kid; lost it jumping in to save the little guy. ’Bout the only good thing I ever got for helping someone?

RICKY
No, no, this can't be real; this just isn't possible: Clarence, Bert the Sheriff and trick ears.

Ricky grabs him and pulls him up the snow bank toward the street light

VOICE
Whoa, hey, just a cotton-picking minute mister; who you man-handling here?

Both men step under the street light. Ricky staggers back in fear and amazement

RICKY
Oh my God – you are George Bailey!

DISSOLVE:
EXT. ROAD: NIGHT

George is pacing around; Ricky is sitting on a snow mound with his head in his hands

GEORGE
Now are ya sure you actually hit him, 'cause if you did you must've knocked him clear over the county line 'cause there ain't no corpse here that I can see.

RICKY
Sure? (scoops up a snowball) This feels like snow so I'm fairly sure it's Winter; the sky's dark so I'm pretty sure it's nighttime but you're George Bailey and you don't exist

GEORGE
Now don't you start with that! You suicidal types, you never heard of the phrase 'thank you'? If I don't exist who do you think pulled you outta the goddamn car?

RICKY
Who's cussing now?

GEORGE
Well, you got me all riled up

Ricky stands up, his feet slipping on the ice

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Maybe we should get a drink

RICKY
That's how I got here; maybe a double will send me back

GEORGE
Where you from? I don't recognize you from Bedford Falls

RICKY
Hey, that's it! I am dead. This is the answer to my prayer. I am in Heaven but for me Heaven is Bedford Falls, the place I've always wanted to live
GEORGE
Heaven - Bedford Falls? You're nuts. Bedford Falls ain't done me no favours, though I done it plenty. What you grinning about?

RICKY
I was just thinking if this is Heaven that makes Pottersville hell.

GEORGE
Pottersville?

Ricky's eyes widen as something has just occurred to him

RICKY
Whoa! Your trick ear...

He points at George's ear

GEORGE
Not any more

RICKY
But that means...

GEORGE
We were on our way to Martini's...

RICKY
Clarence has granted you your wish

GEORGE
What wish? All I want is a drink

RICKY
That you've never been born

GEORGE
That was just a load of old baloney

RICKY
What about your trick ear? You can hear out of that for the first time since you saved Harry

GEORGE
Sure, but I just told you that...hey how did you know about Harry?

RICKY
You lips stopped bleeding too
GEORGE
Hold on now mister, I had this same conversation with the little guy half an hour ago. Are you another shapeshifter?

RICKY
George, I've watched that scene between you and Clarence oh, two dozen times

GEORGE
Mister, you're either cussing or making no sense at all. I need a good stiff drink. I'll be in jail tomorrow.

RICKY
George - Clarence has fixed things - everything's different now

GEORGE
Sure is for Clarence. Claimed to be an angel and you sure made him one

George turns to go but Ricky grabs his arm

RICKY
You don't belong here George

GEORGE
Now don't you start! I know where I come from - sure ain't anywhere you'd know with your fancy threads

RICKY
This isn't Bedford Falls

GEORGE
Well it don't look like New York City to me, not that I'll ever get to see the place. I'm gonna get that drink

George looks long and hard at Ricky and then runs off. Ricky sits back down against the snow drift and closes his eyes

CUT TO:
EXT. ROAD. HALF AN HOUR LATER

Ricky wakes up stiff like a figurine in a Juneau garden. He struggles to open his eyes and tries to rub some warmth into them.

RICKY
God, that was some dream. How many did I have?

He stands up and looks down the embankment. He can see the tyre tracks leading down to the river

RICKY (CONT'D)
Ah shoot! I did lose the car - must've been thrown clear. Where is this? Don't look like any part of Ascena Heights I know.

A MAN in a black coat walks out of the gloom heading toward a large brightly lit house

RICKY (CONT'D)
Can you help me?

The figure stops reluctantly

MAN
What do you want?

RICKY
What part of Ascena Heights is this?

MAN
Have you been drinking?

RICKY
Forget the sermon eh? - I lost Straker's...my car. That's worse than jail time

MAN
This town is bad enough without crazy nuts like you driving around drunk. I hope you live fifty miles away mister and have to walk every foot back

RICKY
Easy now - I ain't (pause) killed anyone. Just point me toward Plum Street
MAN
You're either still drunk or very lost; ain't no such place in Pottersville. Get outta here before I call the cops

Man hurries toward house

RICKY
Oh my God it's not a dream, but...it...can't be

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S BAR 10 MINUTES LATER

Ricky is standing in front of the bar

RICKY
I gotta be imagining this. Maybe I've overdosed - I've seen that goddamn film too many times; I've become a Capra junkie and this is my cold turkey. Maybe I'm really George Bailey

A shadow moves behind him

VOICE
Oh no - you're not George; you're still Ricky

Ricky doesn't turn but answers

RICKY
And you must be the Wicked Witch of the West

The figure chuckles

VOICE
Oh, no,no, my name is Clarence

Ricky turns to see a small pudgy guy with a thick overcoat, wearing a trilby and spotted bow tie. Ricky walks up to him and pokes him in the chest

RICKY
So I didn't kill you and you are real?
CLARENCE
Oh, tish, tish, you can't kill an angel

RICKY
Even a second class angel

CLARENCE
How did? (looks up) Joseph have you been telling?

RICKY
Listen cut the crap will ya? You can't exist

CLARENCE
And yet here I am. Why don't we have a drink?

RICKY
Won't Joseph disapprove?

CLARENCE
Probably

They go in

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S BAR. NIGHT

The bar looks the same to Ricky as in the Capra film: crowded, noisy and with a PIANO PLAYER and two HEAVIES at the end of the bar. They sit down. NICK walks over to serve them

NICK
What'll it be?

RICKY
Bourbon Nick

NICK
You know me?

RICKY
Well this is Nick's isn't it?

CLARENCE
Not where I come from

Clarence points to the floor
RICKY
It's okay Nick - I found him outside. I think he's bumped his head or something

NICK
You'll need a stiff drink then old timer; you want a little brandy?

CLARENCE
I was just thinking...of a flaming rum punch...no, no, it's not nearly cold enough...

RICKY
Give him a brandy

Nick gives them both a queer look. Ricky whispers to Clarence

RICKY (CONT’D)
Don't talk like that

CLARENCE
Like what?

RICKY
You were going to say mulled wine and cinnamon cloves

CLARENCE
Yes I was Do you like it too?

RICKY
They don't serve...for God's sake Clarence - you're an angel you should know how this ends

There is an abrupt silence across the bar as Ricky is overheard

RICKY (CONT’D)
It's a pet name...angel

NICK
You give guys a pet name you only just met?

RICKY
He's a sorta neighbour of mine

NICK
Not this neighbourhood
RICKY
He's a little eccentric

NICK
You related then?

The bar customers start to laugh and resume what they were doing

CLARENCE
Back in my day people were a little more civil my man

NICK
Oh I do beg pardon...would you gentlemen like a napkin with your drinks?

CLARENCE
That's...

RICKY
It's fine Nick really

Nick slams their drinks onto the counter and moves off to serve someone else.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Look you wanted to come in here so drink your Brandy and help me try to figure this all out; isn't that what you're all about?

CLARENCE
You can't

RICKY
I have to - I can't stay here, even if there seems to be no logical reason for me being here at all

CLARENCE
We have to help George

RICKY
How? He could be anywhere by now

CLARENCE
Yes, pity, I thought it was going quite well up to that point.
RICKY
Hey you wanna start pointing
fingers Clarence direct them
upwards. I didn't plan to land in
Pottersville.

CLARENCE
But I'm not here for you Ricky, I'm
here for George

RICKY
But what if you're too late this
time? What if he has gone and
killed himself.

CLARENCE
He can't. He doesn't exist

RICKY
Well if he doesn't exist how can we
help him? How does anybody even
talk to him or touch him? Are you
saying he's the product of another
immaculate conception?

CLARENCE
You mustn't say that

RICKY
Yeah, I know - Peter and Joseph but
it still doesn't explain

CLARENCE
Ricky - there's a difference
between the body and the soul.
It's the soul of George Bailey that
doesn't exist anymore

RICKY
Sounds like a cop out to me

CLARENCE
Der mentsh trakht un got lakht

RICKY
Sounds like another in Hebrew. So
he could jump in the river again,
after all no soul, no sin

CLARENCE
I'm not jumping in again

RICKY
Then you don't get your wings
Nick records a sale on the till

CLARENCE
Someone just has. Everytime you hear a bell...

Ricky looks at Nick. He is following every word

RICKY
It's okay Nick he watches too much television

NICK
You gotta television? You making fun of me? Only one man in town got that kinda money and that's old man Potter

CLARENCE
He can't take it with him

NICK
Potter will. He'll bribe St Peter at the Pearly Gates

CLARENCE
Not if I know St Peter

NICK (WHISPERING)
Is he listening?

CLARENCE
Of course. He's the one that sent me here

NICK
I don't know what you two pixies have been drinking before you came into my bar but it's time for you to leave, out through the door or through the window

The two heavies grab them

RICKY
It's just a joke Nick

NICK
And that's another thing. Where do you come off calling me Nick? I don't know you from Adam...

Suddenly the bar opens and MR GOWER staggers in.
RICKY

Oh God I can't watch this

NICK
Hey you! Rummy! Come here! Come here!

He grabs the soda syphon

NICK (CONT’D)
Didn't I tell you never to come panhandling around here?

RICKY
Don't do it Nick

NICK
Stay outta this. Be thankful you ain't picking glass outta your teeth

RICKY
You don't know him - he really is a decent man

NICK
Decent? He poisoned a kid

RICKY
Only in Pottersville...oh sh...

NICK
Is that a fact? Maybe we should bus him all over the state then, even things out

RICKY
No, no, I mean it was an accident

GOWER (SLURRING)
Thash right; I wash drunk

NICK
You were drunk on the tit

GOWER
Bad newsh - my shon - dead

NICK
Murdering your own now

RICKY
You've got it all wrong
NICK
This is my bar and in my bar I'm right. I don't know what's worse: an old pathetic drunk who murders kiddies or a crazy nutcase trying to defend him. Hey Rummy - come over here and sit down. You can have your drink.

Ricky smiles

NICK (CONT’D)
And you can have one too

He sprays the syphon all over Ricky and Clarence

NICK (CONT’D)
Get rid of 'em

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S. EVENING

Ricky and Clarence are ejected into the snowy roadside

RICKY
This has to be the single most depressing moment of my life

CLARENCE
What about Diane?

RICKY
How did you?

CLARENCE
Your eyes betray you

RICKY
Save the philosophy for George

CLARENCE
You were beginning to sound like him back there (pause)

RICKY
What's happening Clarence?

CLARENCE
I'm not sure.
RICKY
Can't you get some advice, I mean you gotta have a hotline straight to the big guy

CLARENCE
I wasn't sent here for you. I won't get my wings if I don't save George

RICKY
So you gonna desert me then? How do I get home then?

CLARENCE
Oh it is a mess. Pity you don't have your own guardian angel

RICKY
What happens if I help you get George back?

CLARENCE
Well it was my idea in the first place so I guess I'd have every right to expect them to give me...

RICKY
No, not you. I mean me. If I help George go home...couldn't I go with him?

CLARENCE
Without Diane?

RICKY
There's no Diane anymore and don't tell me you don't know what she wrote

CLARENCE
I don't think that's quite the done thing.

RICKY
Clarence, I come out of a bar and crash my car. When I wake up not only am I in a town that doesn't really exist, the town that does exist with the town that doesn't exist only exists in a old black and white film. Are you gonna quote heavenly protocol at me?
CLARENCE
I'm not your Guardian Angel Ricky

RICKY
Well send for one - like at the start of the movie.

CLARENCE
I can't - I haven't got my wings

RICKY
I used to think that line was funny, now I know how George feels

CLARENCE
But you just can't order up a guardian angel. Have you ever tried praying?

RICKY
The last time I spoke to 'Him' George turned up instead

CLARENCE
Really? I see...oh but yes, yes, that must be it.

RICKY
What are you babbling on about?

CLARENCE
It's George. George is your guardian angel.

RICKY
But he isn't even dead and you told me he can't try suicide again

CLARENCE
God works in mysterious ways his wonders...

RICKY
He's certainly surpassed himself tonight. We passed mysterious an hour ago, we need to get real

CLARENCE
Boy oh boy this isn't going to be easy
RICKY
Whoa time out little angel - you're not going to suggest I've never been born are you?

CLARENCE
Well it would've worked...

RICKY
We're in Pottersville now, where the goddamn will we end up next?

CLARENCE
Tut, tut; Matthew 5:37 - plain language is enough - no need to cuss

RICKY
Clarence if you don't want the air around you and every Angel first, second or economy class, as blue as a Montana sky, you'd better stop quoting scripture and come up with a plan.

CLARENCE
First step I suppose is to find George

RICKY
Don't you know where he is?

CLARENCE
No, why should I?

RICKY
Don't they issue Guardian Angels with some kinda tracking device or something?

CLARENCE
Until I get...(Ricky scowls) ...until I'm fully developed, then, I have to rely on Joseph

RICKY
What? He picks you up and puts you down? What is this - Star Trek for the Bible Belt?

CLARENCE
I lost George when you ran me over
RICKY
Are you telling me I did kill you?

CLARENCE
No, no - he just took me back

RICKY
The Trekkies would love this sequel
Star Trek meets Touched By an Angel

CLARENCE
Ssh, they might be listening

RICKY
Good. (He looks up and shouts)
Where's George?

CLARENCE
That won't work. We'll have to do it together. I failed.

RICKY
Why? I ran you over. They should've seen that one coming - they're the ones with wings

CLARENCE
Shall we go. I expect George will probably need us now. He has nowhere to go in Pottersville. He'll be scared

RICKY
But that's good isn't it - that's what convinces George his old life was worth fighting for

CLARENCE
With a little bit of persuasion on my part, yes, but I'm not there now am I?

RICKY
So all bets are off?

CLARENCE
He'll be in Pottersville and he won't be hard to find. We'd better take it from there
RICKY
Okay Clarence I got nothing to look forward to so I may as well go back, back with George, and you my dear Clarence, St Pete and St Joe and anyone else who ever grew wings, are gonna make it happen, because if I can somehow be in Pottersville, then I can be in Bedford Falls.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. POTTERSVILLE. NIGHT

Ricky and Clarence are standing next to the town sign

RICKY
This is creepy

A snowball is fired from somewhere behind them, hits the sign and smashes through the 'O'

RICKY (CONT’D)
What the...

He bends down and picks up the snowball. There is a stone inside it. They look behind them and see a group of kids laughing. A small child in the middle is preparing to launch another snowball

RICKY (CONT’D)
Throw that at me you little bastard and you'll have stones coming out of your ass

Clarence covers his ears. The children run off. Ricky looks at Clarence

RICKY (CONT’D)
Take your hands down for God's sake

CLARENCE
It's for his sake I'm covering them

RICKY
How old did you say you were?

CLARENCE
I didn't
RICKY
Of course, we never got around to that bit

CLARENCE
293 next May

RICKY
Well grow up

They walk on

CLARENCE
The children seem to be a little lively in Pottersville

RICKY
Where I'm from some of them are psychotic

CLARENCE
Is is that bad?

RICKY
This is just Howdy Doody where I'm from

CLARENCE
Don't they play any nice games?

RICKY
Yeah, sure - Grand Theft Auto, Resident Evil - shoot 'em up and shoot 'em down. Anything that disassociates them from the real world, except in some cases it becomes the real world and then they bring it into ours

CLARENCE
That's all gobbledygook to me

RICKY
Maybe it's not such a leap from stony snowballs.

CLARENCE
What is?

RICKY
Murder

CLARENCE
Heavens No
RICKY
Say just what exactly do they let you see up there?

CLARENCE
I suppose when I get my wings I'll see it all but I'm not quite sure I want then now

RICKY
Never mind the sensibilities - besides which if we get George back to Bedford Falls I won't have to worry about lunatic kids growing into crazed fanatics will I? Pottersville is nothing more than a dry run for modern America; your idea was hardly original.

CUT TO:

EXT. POTTERSVILLE, MAIN STREET. NIGHT

They walk up the main street. They come to a halt outside the 'Dreamland Dime a Dance' There's a kerfuffle outside and a girl has been arrested.

RICKY
I think I know where George is? In the film that girl should be Violet Bick and it isn't

CLARENCE
Film?

RICKY
Of course, all this is real to you

CLARENCE
This is real because George doesn't exist, just as Bedford Falls is real because he does

RICKY
You're giving me a headache - can we just go in

CLARENCE
Oh no, not me! A bar is one thing but I don't think Joseph will approve of me attending a brothel
RICKY
It's not but even if it was you'd
still be going in - move

Clarence has the look of a lost puppy. Ricky gathers in the
leash and drags him in

CUT TO:

INT. DREAMLAND DIME A DANCE. NIGHT

The decor is dark and garish and the dance floor
occupies the central space with a glitterball hovering above.
Underneath couples claw at each other. It gives the
impression of an ante chamber that one must visit prior to
incarceration into Hades. There is a bar at the far end with
two sofas positioned at either end. They are occupied. There
is a bar stool vacant and Ricky heads for it and tells
Clarence to stand at the right hand side.

RICKY
Clarence, look out for George but
don't, don't say a word to anybody

At the bar two couples sit either side. In the
middle an attractive, long-legged and dark haired girl RITA,
is draped over the counter like a discarded shawl. Ricky
approaches her. She turns.

RITA
Hello Gorgeous. Wanna dance?

RICKY
I'm looking for someone

RITA
I could be someone honey, it's your
dime

RICKY
No, I want somebody specific

RITA
I do specific too. You like Ava
Gardner? - I can do her

RICKY
Violet Bick

RITA
She does herself well enough.
Besides she's busy. She's always
busy. I'll be your lover
RICKY
Who's she with?

RITA
A big tall gangly guy - he's kinda cute but...

RICKY
She call him George by any chance

RITA
Didn't catch it. He seemed a little crazy when he came in here, yelling that everything was different - that it shouldn't exist. The doorman was gonna throw him out but Vi stopped him. It was kinda strange, almost as if she knew him but I'd never seen him before, not round here. She straightened it out, said she'd look after him.

RICKY
That's what you do isn't it?

RITA
Hey mister, you make it sound dirty. With me it's a dance, that's all, some guys are lonely. You want extra, there are places for that too

RICKY
Listen I'm in a hurry - I don't mean...what do you mean she knew him - she can't he doesn't exist

Ricky bites his lip

RITA
Looked real enough to me

RICKY
Where'd they go?

RITA
The guy was mumbling something about Lake Bedford but he'd have to drag Vi up there
RICKY
What is he doing. He should be scared witless not running off with Vi and leaving Mary

RITA
Married eh? Only makes them more attractive to Vi. Mary who?

RICKY
Mary Hatch

RITA
You must've had a skinful suggesting that, but you don't look drunk. Mary Hatch is an old maid. I was at school with her. She used to be pretty but after she came home from college she changed. She didn't like the way the town was going

RICKY
Potter

RITA
Correct - our beloved benefactor and the true name of providence

RICKY
This is...good?

RITA
Better than it was honey - what sorta fun can you get outta crummy movie house and a bar for old men

RICKY
Community

RITA
That costs more than a dime. Listen honey - don't go. If you want...you know...there's a room we can use...

Across the room Clarence is standing awkwardly above a GIRL and a MAN necking but cannot resist looking at them in fascination

GIRL
Hey mister, what are you leering at?
The man spins around

**MAN**

Hey buddy, if you're looking for a girl - she's taken. Take your dime somewhere else

**CLARENCE**

They don't give out money where I come from

**GIRL**

Aw sweetie that's a shame, but the management don't like freebies. Say aren't you a little old for this?

**CLARENCE**

Oh no, I don't want you, I want George

**MAN**

In that case you're in the wrong joint mister and I ain't George.

He rises and is around 5'8" tall and nearly as wide making Clarence feel like he is being confronted by a huge black square

**MAN (CONT’D)**

You queer?

**CLARENCE**

Too be truthful, my good man, I been feeling that way all evening

**MAN**

Well someone outta put you straight

He raises his fist to hit Clarence but it's caught as it descends. He looks at the owner. It's Ricky

**RICKY**

Leave the little fella alone

**MAN**

Who are you - the boyfriend?

**RICKY**

He's just old-fashioned - he's not gay
MAN
Okay so he's miserable - don't mean he parade his perverted ways round here even if that's what makes him happy

CLARENCE
Well I would be if I could find George

MAN
Fags!

Ricky groans. The disturbance has stopped the music and everyone is looking at them. Suddenly the man has the backing of another half dozen. Several ask what the problem is.

MAN (CONT'D)
They're faggots

Some of the women gasp and the expressions on the faces of the group of men harden. Ricky turns to Clarence

RICKY
No wonder you haven't got your...

The Man hits him in the stomach and he doubles up, dropping onto his knees. Everything stops. Ricky catches his breath and looks up at his attacker.

MAN
Get up

RICKY
No - join me will ya?

He swings his arm behind the man's legs and sends him flying to the ground. The gang fly at Ricky arms and fists pumping. One of them grabs Clarence and hurls him across the dance floor. He glides along on his bottom straight through the legs of one of the girls.

GIRL
That cure ya honey?

Suddenly the police come through the door led by BERT the cop.

BERT
What the Sam Hill is going on here?
MAN
Couple of queers looking for trouble

BERT
I only see one

The men are dragging Ricky to his feet

BERT (CONT’D)
WHERE’S THE OTHER?

GIRL
Over here behind me

They look over but Clarence is gone.

RICKY
No wings my butt

He passes out

CUT TO:

EXT. DREAMLAND DIME A DANCE. NIGHT

As Ricky is being hauled outside he regains consciousness. He begins to struggle but he's been handcuffed. He looks across the road and sees George Bailey and VIOLET BICK walking arm in arm toward Potter's Bank.

RICKY
Bert you gotta let me go

BERT
Officer to you boy. You make it sound like we're friends

RICKY
But George is over there with Violet

BERT
Your boyfriend. Well never mind. If he's decided he likes girls it's probably best in the long run. One less body sitting in my jailhouse
RICKY
Bert, you don't understand. There's something wrong with George. He doesn't belong...he's sick.

BERT
Well I wouldn't worry none, Vi's got plenty a' cures

He pushes Ricky into the squad car and drives off

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT

Sparse and uninviting with two cells, a desk and a couple of chairs. Bert sits Ricky down next to a radiator and cuffs him again. In the adjacent cell is a drunk, JOEY, sleeping it off. Bert leans on his desk and looks at Ricky

BERT
I gotta ask you some questions son

RICKY
No Bert, listen to me. You can't keep me here

BERT
You Houdini? No, thought not, you ain't going nowhere. Empty your pockets

Ricky fishes inside his pockets but can find nothing

RICKY
My stuff: my wallet and keys, they've all gone

BERT
A might convenient if you ask me

RICKY
Wait...I crashed my car - I must've lost them

BERT
Crash? Nobody's reported nothing to me. You hurt anyone? Where's the car?
RICKY
No, I just ran off the road. Car's in the river

BERT
I should book you for pollution, natural and otherwise

RICKY
Bert I'm not that way I am...was married for five years.

BERT
Most of your kind are. They tell me the wife's usually last to know

RICKY
Dammit, it's like being lectured by Robert Mugabe.

BERT
Why don't you stick to harmless distractions like old Joey in there? His missus hates him and vice versa

RICKY
He here every night?

BERT
Weekends mostly. Bars are all he's got; still took a man's way of dealing with his problems.

RICKY
Sleeping alone in a jailhouse? You his wife?

BERT
I ain't a mean guy mister but I ain't averse to setting you straight.

RICKY
I'm as straight as anyone could be in Pottersville. I'm Ricky and the little guy is Clarence. We're looking for a friend of ours, George. We think he could be in trouble, that's all. Everything else is a misunderstanding

BERT
Where's the little guy now?
RICKY
Kinda hard to say?

BERT
Must admit from his description you sure seem like an odd couple but yours is an odd business

RICKY
It's odd alright, but not the way you think. There's nothing gay about me and Clarence

BERT
Well if it don't make you happy why'd you do it?

RICKY
What about George?

BERT
He a big lean fella?

RICKY
Yeah I saw him for a moment outside the dime a dance with Vi Bick; but you dragged me away

BERT
Hey I saved you from a beating son.

RICKY
I know, I know

BERT
Well if your friend ain't in trouble now he will be soon. I'm normally dragging Vi outta the dance hall. Is he married?

RICKY
In a way

BERT
Bad news - that's irons to a magnet in Vi's case.

RICKY
She can't be all bad

BERT
Worse. She weren't a bad kid - bit wild that's all - just needed a father figure. Never had one.

(MORE)
BERT (CONT’D)
He ran out on her and her mom when she was 4.

RICKY
She work for Potter?

BERT
We all do - one way or another. Old man's gotta freehand in the town. Clue's in the name

Bert looks over at a plaque hanging on the wall and then looks away

BERT (CONT’D)
My jail and I seem to be answering all the questions

RICKY
Bert all I can tell you is that I don't belong here, and neither does George. We're trying to get home to Bedford Falls

BERT
Bedford Falls, New York state?

RICKY
Yeah

BERT
You being funny with me mister? This is Bedford Falls or at least it was 'till Potter bought everything up

RICKY
How's that possible? Of course - what did Rita say about Lake Bedford?

BERT
It works the way Potter wants even if there's still some things he can't buy

A creak is heard from behind and the jailhouse door swings open slowly. POTTER appears in his wheelchair being pushed by his VALET.

POTTER
That's only because that piece of real estate has no interests for me...yet
BERT
Mr Potter...don't often visit my part of the world

POTTER
I had you installed here - don't mean we have to break bread. (Turns to Ricky) Do I know you son?

RICKY
I know you

POTTER
You do? I think if our paths had converged I might have remembered and had the good grace to cross to the other side of the street

RICKY
Have you got spies everywhere?

POTTER
Let's just say I have interests...everywhere

RICKY
That's a lot of minds to control

POTTER
I'm a little more economical than Mephistopheles. The citizens of Pottersville need guidance - not damnation.

RICKY
Isn't misery another form?

POTTER
Would they be any happier without my jobs? What did Bedford Falls give them that Pottersville can't?

RICKY
Hope?

POTTER
Never saw a starving family raised on hope. Money, food - sure but hope, that tends to give one constipation.

RICKY
Your money - your food
POTTER
More than their beloved benefactor, Peter Bailey, could do for them when his charity ran dry. And how did they repay him when they lowered him into the mud? A miserable half dozen showed up. He gave the lazy good for nothings all he had and what did they give him? - a heart attack

RICKY
He did good for the sake of good - he never asked for a thing

POTTER
How come you claim to know so much about him? Are you the black sheep maybe? Is that why you're here - back for your inheritance because the family sent you away to save them from scandal?

RICKY
Why didn't you get it all?

POTTER
Left all the parasites to me and their debts.

RICKY
Faust again. How much do you want Potter? You have a Loan Company, a Bank, Stores, Bars - when does it stop? When do you own enough?

POTTER
When they stop wanting

RICKY
And as parasites...

POTTER
It's their raison d'être. You call it tyranny. I call it economics.

RICKY
So what's charity?

POTTER
A free lunch. You wanna eat - get a job or buy an allotment. Julius Caesar didn't say I came, I saw, I helped out.
RICKY
That's hardly the point

POTTER
Then don't judge me. Bert are you going to lock this pervert up or what? I have a job for you

BERT
Sure Mr Potter.

He puts George into the other cell

POTTER
Now Bert, as my role as 'Arch Demon' or as I like to put it, the only man that gets things done in this town I have acquired another 'soul' or employee, to use the customary terminology, recommended to me by Violet Bick.

RICKY
George!

POTTER
Friend of yours? George Brady

RICKY
Brady? Are you sure?

POTTER
According to Vi Bick

RICKY
Why would George...he's all mixed up

POTTER
He didn't seem too mixed up about the 20,000 dollars a year

BERT
Jeez that's more than I get for 5 years policing

POTTER
Policing? Throwing Joey here in Jail every Friday night is hardly gold shield detective work besides if you were that good at your job I could trim my payroll
RICKY
George'll change his mind - let me talk to him

POTTER
You're going nowhere but you could be right. Funny - after he shook my hand he started mumbling something about always hating me. Seemed kinda familiar. Still that's fine by me. Never hired anyone to like me; can't build an empire on love.

RICKY (WHISPERS)
George did

POTTER
What's that? Never mind. Bert I have appointed this George as our new bailiff and have given him a task to perform tonight to which you will lend support

BERT
What's the job?

POTTER
That garlic eater, Martini, he owes two months rent. He's being evicted tonight

RICKY
But it's Christmas Eve - how can you be so heartless?

POTTER
Two months rent? Too soft with scum like him - that's my problem. I should have slung him out on the street in November. Promised me he'd find a job. Not my fault the guy can't keep his word

BERT
There ain't no work here Mr Potter

POTTER
Pottersville isn't the only town around here. There's work if you want it
BERT
Martini hasn't got a car - how could he?...

POTTER
I'll let you into a little secret history of mine Bert. Might be worth you thinking on it next time you challenge my authority. My father worked from nothing. Came in from Ireland on a boat like a lot of these good for nothings - only difference is he got a job, no, tell a lie he got several jobs. Took a single room tenement next to the Second Avenue Line. Got used to the noise; got used to the smell; got used to the work - hard work. He didn't complain about the wages or the hours. Knew that one day he'd be the man setting the wages and the hours. Saved enough to buy his first store. Took on the competition, despite threats and made a success. Bought another shop and another. He didn't eat another man's food - he learned how to cook. By the time he sent me to the Collegiate, one of the finest schools in New York, he owned six stores all over Manhattan. One day I came home and I asked him why I didn't get any pocket money like the other kids. You know what he did? That night he told my mother to send me to school without my lunch but to give me a note. On that note was an address of a Deli in Upper Westside about 10 minutes from the school. Like a fool I thought he had an account, thought I was turning up for a pastrami on rye - turned out he'd got me a job delivering groceries. I had a three hour shift after school five days a week and six hours on Saturday. I got home and asked him why. He said you want to eat - that's fine, I'll feed you. You want to eat and have pocket money too - you work.

RICKY
I can see how you inherited his philanthropic nature

POTTER
I spent seven years in that school
and I can honestly say that Keynes,
Malthus, and all those other so
called monetarists never inspired
me more than that simple lesson.
Best education a boy could buy.

RICKY
So you built Pottersville without
his help?

POTTER
Sure I did. He was long dead

RICKY
But what about his stores?

POTTER
I sold them all and started buying
land out here.

Potter breaks into huge guffaws. Ricky sits back in the cell

POTTER (CONT’D)
Why concern yourself son? If I
were you I'd spend the night trying
to think up some rational excuse
for your lewd behavior. Why do I
have to support people who
deliberately dig themselves a
financial hole by having too many
kids under the foolish notion of
safety in numbers? - Have enough
kids and chances are one of them
will make good - a sports star or a
doctor - and support us in our old
age is that it? And when this
over-breeding strategy backfires
they ask me to sponsor their
irrational irresponsibility.

RICKY
How selfish of them

POTTER
You see - I'm practically a martyr.
You got any money

RICKY
I'm broke
POTTER
Bert - let's say we need the space in here - how much of a fine would we give this lecher? Ten dollars?

BERT
Maybes

Potter pulls out his wallet and takes out a bill and thrusts it toward Ricky.

POTTER
Take this. You can either give it to Bert and go free or I can give a dollar to the first ten bums I see hanging round town so they can get liquored up.

RICKY
I need to get out - you know that

POTTER
Then your need is greater

RICKY
How far would you really go Potter? How many lies would you be prepared to tell in order to...

Ricky stops mid-sentence. Potter takes the ten dollar bill away

POTTER
Looks like a stone just hit the glasshouse. Get me out of here. I've dealt with enough losers for one day. Just you be there Bert, as insurance, in case this guy gets cold feet

Potter's valet wheels him around

RICKY
George won't do it

POTTER
Only a fool would turn his back on 20,000 dollars for someone he doesn't know

RICKY
You can't turn Martini out - he's a part of Bedford Falls
POTTER
This isn't Bedford Falls anymore

He exits followed by Bert

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT. AN HOUR LATER

Ricky is flitting between sleep and wakefulness. Behind him Joey is snoring. Ricky jerks awake like a tired driving coming out of a cat nap at the wheel of a car. Clarence is facing him on the other side of the cell bars.

CLARENCE
Are you hurt?

RICKY
You didn't hang about long enough to find out did you?

CLARENCE
It wasn't my fault; Joseph took me

RICKY
And left me behind

CLARENCE
He can't interfere with you, besides they're not happy with you up...you know

RICKY
I'll apologize next time I go to confession. Have you found George?

CLARENCE
Yes, but you're not going to be happy

RICKY
Don't worry about dampening my mood I left happy several hours ago

CLARENCE
He won't talk to me

RICKY
He must've sobered up
CLARENCE
He's convinced I'm a figment of his imagination. He told me I don't exist

RICKY
That's three of us then. By morning we may have killed off half of Pottersville

CLARENCE
It's worse I'm afraid

RICKY
You can top non-existence and without your wings?

CLARENCE
He says he's in love with Violet Bick and wants to marry her

Ricky grabs Clarence by the collar

RICKY
He can't. He's married to Mary

CLARENCE
Yes but only in Bedford Falls

RICKY
Silly me, I forgot. How can you commit bigamy when you don't exist. I hope they have kids. I really want to see what they turn out like.

CLARENCE
What can I do? This wasn't part of the plan

He lets him go

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
All I can do is influence - George has to choose to go back to Bedford Falls

RICKY
And that's another thing. This town used to be Bedford Falls - how the hell does that scenario play out?
CLARENCE
Why shouldn't it have been?

RICKY
It's not logical

CLARENCE
It's perfectly logical. 'We are near waking when we dream we are dreaming' Novalis

RICKY
If I punched you really quickly would they see it coming?

CLARENCE
We both come from different eras but it seems to me that for most human beings the pursuit of wealth is the path most sought out

RICKY
Not for George?

CLARENCE
George is no different to you or I. He wants all those things that we want - to be rich; to have no cares in life. Unfortunately for him, like for most of us - fate or circumstance has thwarted his desires, or at least that's what he thinks.

RICKY
No that can't be right. Potter offered him a job in Bedford Falls and he turned it down

CLARENCE
Why? If Straker had offered you the same what would you have done? Large fixed salary - not having to rely on commissions - the Holy Grail?

RICKY
I...forget me...answer the question

CLARENCE
It was the handshake that did it remember? George had fallen hook line and sinker for Potter's offer right up until he shook his hand
RICKY
But what does that mean?

CLARENCE
Hard to say - what we do know is
that Pottersville has altered the
equation somewhat

RICKY
You gotta get me out Clarence

CLARENCE
I can't interfere physically, you
know I can't

RICKY
Damn your heavenly procedure - we
can't just sit back and let George
fall under Potter's spell. Get me
out

He grabs the bars and shakes them in frustration- the cell
door opens

RICKY (CONT’D)
That didn't hurt did it?

CLARENCE (SMIRKING)
That wasn't me - perhaps Bert
forgot to lock it

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND JAILHOUSE. NIGHT

They are walking toward the main street. Ricky is
still remonstrating with Clarence. A taxi drives by. It's
ERNIE with Violet and George visible in the back

RICKY
Clarence - look. That's Ernie's
taxi and George and Vi are in it

CLARENCE
Oh dear they must be on their way
to Martini's house in Potter's
Field

RICKY
Damn now we'll have to wait until
they come back
CLARENCE
I think it might be better to stop them. I don't know how George will react if he actually goes through with it

RICKY
Get Saint Joe to beam you over

CLARENCE
That won't work - I told you George won't talk to me

RICKY
Send us both

CLARENCE
I can't - he won't do it

RICKY
Then you'll have to steal us a car

CLARENCE
Oh no - rules are rules. I can't commit a crime trying to win my wings - why I'd be disqualified.

RICKY
Not very modern are they? Couldn't they just give you points on your...wing licence or something?

CLARENCE
Wait - look

Clarence spots Bert moving toward his squad car.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
We can go with Bert

RICKY
Are you nuts? He thinks I'm in his jailhouse.
    (pause)
Hey that gives me an idea

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET POTTERSVILLE. NIGHT

Clarence walks toward Bert who is sitting in his squad car about to move. The engine is running.
He stands by the driver's window staring in at Bert. Bert sees him and winds down the window

BERT
You want something?

CLARENCE
I believe you are looking for me

BERT
Why?

CLARENCE
You have my friend locked up

BERT
You Clarence? Listen I gotta job to do - you come back in an hour I need to see you

CLARENCE
My, my, policing has changed since my day. Do you normally let fugitives roam around endangering the public.

BERT
You don't look dangerous to me. You do your worst until I come back - My boss'll give me more trouble in one night than you could give me in a lifetime.

CLARENCE
Oh dear - I was hoping it wouldn't come to this. Joseph don't look

Clarence shuts his eyes and jabs Bert in the nose. Bert flies out of the car and grabs Clarence forcing his arm behind his back. He begins to frogmarch Clarence to the jail. Behind him the squad car engines rev. He turns around to see Ricky driving off. Automatically he releases Clarence to chase the car but realizing it's a useless task turns back to Clarence but he has vanished.

BERT
What the Sam Hill?...

CUT TO:

INT. BERT'S POLICE CAR. NIGHT

Ricky is driving looking for the Taxi
RICKY
Aw shoot...I just realised I don't know how to find Martini's

CLARENCE
Take the next left my man

Ricky jumps out of his seat. Clarence is in the rear of the car

RICKY
Are you trying to make me an angel too? Couldn't you have stood by the side of the road and hailed me down?

CLARENCE
We don't have time to stop

RICKY
This is hell

Clarence frowns

RICKY (CONT’D)
Why so sensitive. You live next door don't you?

CLARENCE
We don't like to mention the 'H' word - it causes unhappiness

RICKY
I would have thought having your ass one end of a toasting stick would be unpleasant not flying, or in your case, strolling around plucking on harps.

CLARENCE
We are happy but some of us have loved ones that were no so...lucky

RICKY
I thought Hell was for the wicked, not the unlucky

CLARENCE
Doesn't mean they're not missed...or loved

RICKY
Who do you know in Hell? An abusive father maybe?.

(MORE)
RICKY (CONT’D)
Might explain your timidity.
Probably getting wasted with my old man.

CLARENCE
My wife

RICKY
She's in Hell. I would have
canonized her. What's she do?

CLARENCE
Poisoned me

RICKY
I'm warming to her already - no pun
intended

CLARENCE
I miss her regardless

RICKY
Don't you get weekend passes? Take
her to dinner? Food would be warm
at least.

CLARENCE
Oh no you can't cross the periphery

Ricky lowers his eyes

CLARENCE (CONT’D)
What's wrong?

RICKY
I guess Diane must've been tempted
with me at times

CLARENCE
Miss her?

RICKY
How can I? She probably doesn't
even exist now
(pause)
Yeah...I do.

CLARENCE
She won't be in Bedford Falls

RICKY
And she's not in Ascena Heights
either, is she? If I could go to
Bedford Falls - I know I'd be happy
CLARENCE
A dream world? How would you live and work?

RICKY
I'd get by - you're bound to in a place like Bedford Falls. It's a community - someone would give me a good job.

CLARENCE
What happens if that 'good' job is working for Potter, he'll still be there?

RICKY
I could help George in the Building and Loan

CLARENCE
I doubt if he could afford you and your ambition

RICKY
This is my ambition

CLARENCE
'God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into its nest'

RICKY (POINTING UPWARDS)
Bet you got that first hand. Listen Clarence I just need you to help find George. I'm not likely to be lured by Potter here or in Bedford Falls

CLARENCE
Unfortunately Potter has a wallet where he should have a heart

RICKY
You mean soul?

CLARENCE
No. Souls are funny things. A man can harden his heart to all kinds of sufferings but his soul retains its goodness

RICKY
Isn't this a bit...revolutionary?
CLARENCE
Take Saul. Was there ever a harder heart in man? Was God's voice appealing to him from without or within?

RICKY
So some sort of Damascene conversion is required for Potter in order to save George?

CLARENCE
Everyone will get their chance of salvation - but it's not Henry Potter's time yet. We've got to appeal to George's soul, his heart isn't listening anymore

Ricky slaps himself in the face

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
What did you do that for?

RICKY
For a moment I thought I'd reached that point in a dream when the level of unreality is so great you simply have to wake up

CLARENCE
This isn't a dream

RICKY
Or maybe we haven't got to that point yet...whoa, just wait a minute. Maybe Pottersville and Bedford Falls aren't that dissimilar after all

CLARENCE
You have a plan?

RICKY
A theory at least

CLARENCE
Will it work

RICKY
Ask Saint Joe

CUT TO:
EXT. POTTERSVILLE SUBURBS. NIGHT

Ricky catches up with Ernie's Taxi on the outskirts of town. He puts on the siren and lights. Joe stops. Ricky and Clarence get out. Ricky runs toward the vehicle. Joe stays in the cab but winds his window down. He stretches out as Ricky approaches looking at the police car

ERNE
Where's Bert? That's his car ain't it?

RICKY (IGNORING HIM)
George - get out

Ernie runs off toward town

VIOLET
Who you pushing round mister?

George says nothing. He looks drunk and stares out of the cab

RICKY
You can't...oh my God you're Gloria Grahame

VIOLET
I can be Gloria honey, if that's what you want

George reacts

GEORGE
Hey, what sort of game are you playing - I thought you were sweet on me?

VIOLET
Oh don't mind me sugar - that's just Vi's little roulette routine. Don't go cashing in your chips yet Georgie Porgie.

Ricky forces himself away from his distraction with Gloria Grahame

RICKY
George - Martini's your friend, remember? You helped him buy his house in Bailey Park
VIOLET
You drunk? No such place. You must have the wrong guy - we're going to Potter's Field

GEORGE
We gave them bread and salt

RICKY
That's right and wine too. You and Mary, when they moved in

VIOLET
Mary who?

RICKY
Mary Hatch, his wife

VIOLET
She's an old maid

GEORGE
Hey where's the little fella?

RICKY
Clarence is here

He looks back but Clarence has gone again

RICKY (CONT’D)
Why is that guy so obsessed with wings? He don't need 'em

VIOLET
Listen out, even if George here is married I'm the one that's looking out for him. I even got him a job

RICKY
Kicking a family out on Christmas Eve - that's a job?

George and Violet get out

GEORGE
She's right. When did anyone in this hick town ever do anything for me? Besides which I ain't married - not here. I can do what I like in Pottersville. I can be as greedy as Sam Wainwright and as promiscuous as dear old Violet here, or even as grasping as Potter.

(MORE)
GEORGE (CONT’D)
There's no guilt, no Heaven, no Hell

VIOLET
Am I really promiscuous Georgie?

RICKY
It isn't a compliment. What can Potter offer you?

GEORGE
Big bucks, big house and the prettiest girl

RICKY
Kinda similar to what you told Mary when you were going on vacation

GEORGE (WHISPERS)
Mary... (pause)

GEORGE (CONT’D)
...and if I remember I never made it. I spent the day saving that worthless Building and Loan for what? I stood there all day handing out my money and all they left me was two lousy dollars. Well it don't exist here so one less thing to concern myself with. All my life I worried 'bout losing my job, losing my house, my family but in Pottersville I literally have nothing to lose. There's no guilt, no caring, no conscience...

RICKY
No George Bailey

VIOLET
Bailey? He said his name is Brady

GEORGE
George Bailey doesn't exist anymore - that's what that blasted angel wanted - well that's okay by me - I don't wanna exist

VIOLET
You a Bailey, like Peter Bailey? I thought you seemed familiar
GEORGE
Another sucker - is that what you mean?

VIOLET
No lover. If you say Brady I'm happy

GEORGE
Good now we can move along just fine. We gotta job to do.

VIOLET
Yeah but we ain't got a driver

GEORGE
I'll drive. Sooner the job's done - sooner I get paid

RICKY
You sound like an insurance salesman I used to know

VIOLET
What do you know about it mister?

GEORGE
Maybe Martini should've took some out - might still have his house

RICKY
Maybe you are George Brady now or even George Potter

GEORGE
Well if I am don't see what concern it is of yours. By rights you shouldn't even be here

RICKY
But George Bailey saved me. Lucky he got to me before he changed his name

George pushes past Ricky toward the driver's door and looks in

GEORGE
He's took the keys. How far is it to walk?

VIOLET
Walk? It's about another quarter mile straight ahead.
GEORGE
Let's go

VIOLET
I ain't walking - not in these shoes.

GEORGE
Okay - suit yourself

VIOLET
I thought you were different. I thought you was a gentleman

GEORGE
And I thought you were the convent type. I am different but I ain't no gentleman

He begins to walk. Ricky follows

GEORGE (CONT'D)
You working for Potter too?

RICKY
Can't I keep you company?

GEORGE
Just don't get in my way

VIOLET
You're gonna leave me here alone George?

GEORGE
You won't be alone long

They walk off. Vi looks upset. She gets back in the cab and slams the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. 320 SYCAMORE STREET POTTERSVILLE. NIGHT

The wind has become bitter and both George and Ricky have their collars over their faces against the gale. Their progress is slow. Ricky looks to his left and sees the Old Granville House. He picks up a stone out of the snowy ground and throws it at the windows. A smash is heard

GEORGE
What was that?
RICKY
Just smashing windows and making wishes

GEORGE
What?

He looks around and sees the house. He stops facing it

GEORGE (CONT’D)
It seems like a lifetime ago

RICKY
You and Mary

GEORGE
Yeah...how'd you know that? I get it now. You are a shape-shifter. You're the angel. What's this another plan?

RICKY
I'm no angel and I've never had a plan

GEORGE
Well dragging me past here ain't gonna help none

RICKY
This had nothing to do with me

George walks toward the house with Ricky in tow

GEORGE
Look at it - draughty, run-down - what the hell I ever saw in...over there - Bert and Ernie serenaded us on our wedding night

RICKY
Remember the posters to make up for the honeymoon you lost?

GEORGE
Another Bedford Falls trick

RICKY
It's gonna be a problem for you George isn't it

GEORGE
I told you this is my brand new start.

(MORE)
GEORGE (CONT’D)
There aren't any problems here
unless it's what plane I'm gonna
catch on my next business trip

RICKY
George Bailey and Bedford Falls may
not exist here but you can't
eradicate your memories of them

GEORGE
20,000 dollars is a mighty big
sedative

RICKY
You can't stay numb forever George.

GEORGE
Who are you?

RICKY
I honestly have no idea anymore

GEORGE
Why are you so concerned about me?

RICKY
All my life I wanted to live
somewhere like Bedford Falls

GEORGE
Why? I've been in Pottersville
five minutes and I have more than I
slaved for all my life in Bedford
Falls

RICKY
What? No Mary, Tommy, Pete - no
Jane nor Zuzu?

GEORGE
Not long ago I was about to throw
myself in a river and if I recall
you were too. Now you want to
lecture me on living? What makes
you the expert?

RICKY
Pottersville's not the way out

GEORGE
Neither was Bedford Falls

Ricky is about to speak then pauses as if divine inspiration
has shot through his brain like electricity
RICKY
But that's it. That's the answer.

GEORGE
What was the question?

RICKY
You belong in Pottersville

GEORGE
You trying some kinda double bluff?

RICKY
And you belong in Bedford Falls

GEORGE
You belong in a nuthouse

RICKY
All your life you wanted to see the world and build things but for one reason or another it never worked out

GEORGE
You talking 'bout fate? Call it by its real name - The Building and Loan

RICKY
It wasn't fate or the Building and Loan

GEORGE
You forget it's my life, my memories.

RICKY
You stopped you

GEORGE
Me? Must be the old Bailey guilt inherited from my father

RICKY
You think you hate Bedford Falls but its not the town you hate its you. You could've left at anytime. You chose not to. When your father died the Building and Loan should have died with him. What difference did it make to you what happened to Bedford Falls? You were leaving it behind.

(MORE)
RICKY (CONT'D)
When Harry got married you chose not to make him keep his promise because he had a job with his father in law. Do you really think that job wouldn't have been waiting for him regardless?

GEORGE
What's the bottom line here?

RICKY
Pottersville is the incarnation of all that repression you've been storing for thirty-five years.

GEORGE
Come on Mister are you trying to tell me Pottersville is the bad me and Bedford Falls the good?

RICKY
No. That's too simple. I think Clarence conjured up Pottersville as the extreme consequence of your ambition, unfettered, without restraint, but Bedford Falls is the real deal, tempered, targeted, philanthropic if you like, you just can't see it

GEORGE
Cloud Cuckoo Land more like it

RICKY
It's not bad to be ambitious, to want to make a living, to create and not to struggle

GEORGE
I agree

RICKY
Do you? Why didn't you leave then?

GEORGE
Hold on mister if I had where would half the town be? No Building and Loan, no Bailey Park. Where would Ernie and Martini be...

RICKY
Potter's Field? You built Bailey Park but what's there is more than bricks and mortar.

(MORE)
RICKY (CONT'D)
It's the hopes and ambitions of others. It's the house George. You, Mary and the house - they're all connected.

GEORGE
All of a sudden I miss her

RICKY
Funny how all the little things you lose leave the biggest holes.

GEORGE
You married

RICKY
Ha...I think so but she needs a better man

GEORGE
I gonna find Mary. Stuff Potter

A car engine is heard behind them

RICKY
It's Bert and Ernie

They get out of a borrowed car and run toward Ricky and George. Bert sees Ricky and pulls his gun out of its holster

BERT
You? Who let you?...

RICKY
You were careless Bert

BERT
Don't try telling me my job. Potter let you out? He's the only one who's got a spare set. You working for him too now?

RICKY
No and neither is George

BERT
That right? You got cold feet?

ERNIE
Potter's gonna be sore

RICKY
Maybe he should feel a little pain now and then
ERNIE
You don't understand. If Potter gets crossed we all hurt. If he knows about this he'll raise my rental

RICKY
What he owns the cab company?

ERNIE
Sure

BERT
And the town's gonna need a new sheriff

GEORGE
I'm sorry boys - seems like I let you down again

BERT
No you don't. There's something strange going on here and I'm as sure as Hell gonna find out what happened in my jailhouse but you're gonna make good on your promise to Potter. If you wanna tell him to where to go you do it tomorrow morning after we conclude the business tonight.

GEORGE
I can't do it Bert

ERNIE
You gotta friend - Potter will make us all suffer. Stores, bars - he'll cut our wages and raise prices.

BERT
Ernie's right. The only way outta this mess is to evict Martini. Listen son it ain't the nicest of jobs kicking a family out on any night least of all Christmas Eve but its either them or all of us

GEORGE
Then you do it

BERT
I ain't empowered to evict nobody - it's gotta be the bailiff
RICKY
I thought Potter took care of everything

BERT
If there's one thing Potter can't buy is State Law. It's gotta be legal

GEORGE
There's only one family I want to see and it's called Bailey

ERNIE
Bailey - I thought you said his name was Brady, Bert?

BERT
You some relation to old Peter Bailey?

GEORGE
I was his son

ERNIE
Can't be right - he lost his only boy when he was just a kid

RICKY
No - George saved Harry, didn't you George?

BERT
Don't tell me my business son. I was the one who had to drag the kid out. I don't know what stunt you're both trying to pull but if George here is shunning his official duty I'm gonna lock both of you nutcases up

GEORGE
Is it really that simple?

RICKY
What?

GEORGE
One life...take one life out of a world full of a billion souls and it ends up like this?
RICKY
Find Mary George - she'll be at the Library

BERT
How'd you know that?

RICKY
An angel told me

ERNIE
If there's an asylum round here it's missing two residents

BERT (TO GEORGE)
Now why don't you be a good kid and we'll take you to the doctor. Everything's gonna be all right

RICKY
I recognize that - that's what you say - hey we might just pull this off

GEORGE (WINKS AT RICKY)
Don't listen to him Bert - he's an angel too

Bert lifts his gun to hit George with

BERT
I hate to do this fella but...

Ricky grabs Bert's arms

RICKY
Run George

George sprints as fast as he can. After a minute Bert gets the better of Ricky and pins his arm against his back, but George is long gone.

RICKY (CONT'D)
What you gonna do Bert lock me up? You know there ain't a prison in Pottersville that can hold me

ERNIE
Hold on Bert I want a fare outta the guy before you haul him away

BERT
How much?
ERNIE
Way I see it - inconvenience and all - three dollars outta do it

BERT
Pay the man

RICKY
Who am I - Houdini? Besides which you searched me - I got nothing - money, ID, driver's licence

ERNIE
That's just great - getting stiffed on Christmas Eve while that loafer Martini gets another rent free night.

Ernie looks down at Ricky's pants

ERNIE (CONT'D)
Hey what's the bulge there?

BERT
You holding out on me son?

Bert lets Ricky go and he puts his hands into his pockets and finds his wallet.

RICKY
How the...Clarence was that you?

BERT
I don't know if you're Houdini, or the Angel Gabriel himself and I care less. You're going back to my cell and you ain't getting out if I have to sit on you all night. Now pay Ernie what you owe him.

RICKY
Three dollars you say?

Ricky hands Ernie a ten

ERNIE
I can't split th...hey this don't feel...this ain't American...look

Bert takes the bill
BERT
Counterfeit money - since when did Hamilton's head get so big?

RICKY (WHISPERS)
Damn. I forgot.
(pause)
It's okay they're a new print. Haven't you seen these yet?

BERT
Potter's bank gets all the new bills first.

RICKY
That's where I got them - this morning

ERNIE
He's lying Bert.

RICKY
Can I have another look?

Ernie tries to give him the note back but Ricky drops it.

BERT
Pick that up Ernie - it's evidence

As Ernie bends down to pick it up Ricky pushes Bert over his arched back and takes off

RICKY
Jeez didn't they ever see Hope and Crosby?

As Bert and Ernie untangle themselves Bert is already drawing his gun. He aims at Ricky's rapidly disappearing back and then fires into the air

ERNIE
Why didn't you nail him? I've seen you make harder shots than that

BERT
I dunno

ERNIE
He could be wanted in any state pushing dirty money.
BERT
No - that wasn't dirty money. It was too obvious, besides which he ain't my state. He's just a guy trying to get back to wherever he belongs.

ERNIE
You let him go because you were sorry for him.

BERT
No - cause I envy him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW BANK: NIGHT 30 MINUTES LATER

Ricky is slowly walking back to the place he first met George.

RICKY
Is this really still the same night?

He sits down on the snow bank.

RICKY (CONT'D)
And still no sign of the Clarence the hapless harpless angel.

Out of the gloom comes George.

RICKY (CONT'D)
You see her?

George sits down next to him and nods.

GEORGE
Why is she an old maid in Pottersville? Mary was the prettiest girl I ever saw - makes no sense.

RICKY
That part always bothered me.

GEORGE
You met Mary?

RICKY
From the film I...look I've been thinking about that.

(MORE)
RICKY (CONT’D)
Mary went away to college but unlike you all she wanted was to come home to Bedford Falls. She was married to the town long before she married you. Potter destroyed her town, her world, her dreams...maybe that's the answer

GEORGE
But she could have left

RICKY
Like you could have left?

GEORGE
I need Mary. I've always needed her. If I have a guardian angel it's her

Ricky looks up at the street light.

RICKY
You seemed to be blessed with them. I only want one

GEORGE
Ain't you an angel? Can't you send me back?

RICKY
Clarence will send you back but you need to go to the bridge - where it all began

GEORGE
Let's go then

RICKY
No George - I'm not coming

GEORGE
But you...

RICKY
I spent my whole life wishing I could find a place to live like Bedford Falls but now that it's so near it doesn't feel right

GEORGE
I could get you a job
Bedford Falls is your town, not mine. It didn't just happen or appear like it seems to do in the movies. It took a lot of hard work.

What's your town like?

Like most places. Good and bad, I suppose, can be defined, identified even understood but indifference, insouciance - they're the real evils.

So what you gonna do open your own Building and Loan?

Naw, I thought I'd start small and see what happens.

Well I guess I'd better go. Hey I don't have to throw myself in this time do I?

Good God no - I'd hate to think where we'd end up.

We'll this is goodbye then.

Maybe, maybe not.

You'll come see us in Bedford Falls?

I promise - every Christmas Eve.

George runs off toward the bridge. Ricky watches him disappear into the gloom. After a minute or so he is out of sight. Ricky feels something cold hit his cheek. It's snowing.

He's home.
CLARENCE
And you've got your wish

Ricky swings around and Clarence is there

RICKY
Couldn't they, just for once, drop you back in front of me? What wish?

CLARENCE
You're in Bedford Falls

RICKY
So I am but that's hardly down to you is it?

CLARENCE
That's not strictly true

RICKY
Whoa there Trigger. You're not actually gonna take credit for this are you?

CLARENCE
Well it was my idea

RICKY
Very intuitive Einstein but don't you recall I got beaten up, arrested, incarcerated and shot at, and where were you half the time? Stealing all the plaudits just to get those wings of yours?

CLARENCE
But I haven't got my wings quite yet

RICKY
But George has gone back hasn't he?

CLARENCE
Oh that's all back on schedule. He'll be finding ZuZu's petals very soon now but it was you that made the difference with George

RICKY
Are you telling me I've got your wings

Ricky lifts his arms as if checking
CLARENCE
In a way - not that way though -
you're still very much alive

RICKY
I don't understand

CLARENCE (WHISPERS)
Can I let you into a little secret?

RICKY
Won't Pete and Joe hear anyway?

CLARENCE
You really must stop calling them
by those names - they're really
sensitive you know.
(pause)
I didn't lead a bad life but I took
too much for granted. I had ideas,
plans, dreams if you like, but it
all seemed too hard, too much
trouble. You don't always have to
wait until you're dead...

RICKY
What's the catch? Was George
always the key?

CLARENCE
We are all keys

RICKY
Many mansions then?

Clarence smiles

RICKY (CONT'D)
So you get another mission do you?

CLARENCE
Oh no, I'm done now. A nice fluffy
cloud to lay my weary head on will
do nicely.

RICKY
Without your wings?

CLARENCE
They'll be here soon - once I send
you back
RICKY
Are you really trying to tell me all this was planned? I thought George was my guardian angel.

CLARENCE
He was in a way. Ricky...you thought you could inherit Bedford Falls like someone receiving a precious heirloom passed on after a favourite aunt has died but you never appreciated the hard work behind the achievements before now and that's why you turned your back on Bedford Falls. Even better than the Bailey idea I think

RICKY
You don't really expect me to believe that...

CLARENCE
No need - look out!

Ricky wheels around to see Bert's police car heading straight for him. Ricky is knocked over and down along the snow bank.

EXT. SNOW BANK, ASCENA HEIGHTS. EARLY MORNING

Ricky wakes up slowly. He winces in pain. He has cuts and bruises but is otherwise in one piece. He's alone. Behind him his car is ploughed into a huge snow drift half way down the hill and practically invisible with the night's snowfall cover. He doesn't notice but instead drags himself to his feet and struggles back to the road

RICKY
Clarence! Clarence!

A house light comes on across the street. A window opens and the RESIDENT sticks his large red face out into the cold morning air

RESIDENT
Quit shouting asshole - it's five o'clock Christmas Morning. Go home and sleep it off

RICKY
Asshole? Asshole?
Ricky runs down the road about 100 yards. There's a road sign.

RICKY (CONT'D)
This is it. Ascena Heights. It's gone. I let Bedford Falls go

CUT TO:

INT. RICKY'S APARTMENT. CHRISTMAS MORNING

Ricky is on the phone. He has a screwdriver in his free hand

RICKY
I'm not asking you to pick it up today - I know what day it is - but when can you? Okay, okay, I'm sorry. Thursday is fine

He hangs up. Someone knocks on the door.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Hold on I'm coming

He puts the screwdriver in his pocket and goes to answer the door. Diane is standing there

DIANE
Don't get the wrong idea Ricky, I just forgot a few things.

She sees the bruises on his face

DIANE (CONT'D)
That looks sore and, before you say it, if you got drunk because I walked out on you it makes no difference

RICKY
Straker fired me

DIANE
He did? He didn't beat you up first did he?

RICKY
No - I got drunk because you left me
DIANE
It's too late for sympathy - too
much of our relationship was based
on that

RICKY
I agree

DIANE
And sucking up to me won't work
either

RICKY(SMILING)
I agree

DIANE
Where's Mom's picture? I forgot it
in the rush yesterday

Ricky says nothing. She walks past him toward a cupboard
underneath the stairs.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Have you thrown it out?

RICKY
No...actually I...

DIANE
Don't lie to me

Something on the wall catches her eye. It's her
mother's picture sitting on a small shelf. She goes toward
it and tentatively prods it. It stays put

DIANE (CONT'D)
Who'd you get to do it - Rob next
door?

Ricky pulls out the screwdriver from his pocket

DIANE (CONT'D)
Why, now?

RICKY
Why not?

Behind them the TV bursts into life with the opening titles
of 'It's A Wonderful Life'

RICKY (CONT'D)
Sorry I'll turn it off
DIANE
No leave it - sit down - watch -
it's a tradition isn't it?

RICKY
I don't need to

Diane goes into the kitchen and returns with two drinks

DIANE
Maybe I do

RICKY
A kind of last date maybe?

DIANE
Maybe a first

They sit down to watch. After a moment Diane moves into Ricky's shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. SHELF

Behind the picture of Diane's mother the spine of a book is visible 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' Somewhere a bell rings

END