

Guadalcanal or any place else. I've been working in a shipyard for the last year. I've never received medals of any description—naturally since I've never fought— Uh, two days ago I—I—decided to come home and since I'd wrote to my mother that I was overseas—I—I—had to have some ribbons so I—I bought some in a hock shop. When I was all dressed up I—I—met some real Marines and I fooled them just as much as I did the rest of you . . . not that I really wanted to fool any of you—I—I—just wanted to come home. I've told you this because too many men have bled and died for you and for me to live this lie any longer. I guess that's why I told you. I certainly didn't mean to when I came in—I'm going home now to pack my things so this will probably be my last chance to say goodbye to you. I know my mother will give you back the mortgage and I hope you won't hold it against her that her son didn't quite come through. There's no use telling you I'm sorry—because I wish I was dead. I—uh—that's all.

INFO It's a Wonderful Life

RKO/Liberty Films (Produced by Frank Capra), 1946
 Screenplay by Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett,
 and Frank Capra
 Directed by Frank Capra

Time: 1930s

Place: Bedford Falls, a small New England town

It's a Wonderful Life is the story of George Bailey, who, in a moment of crisis, wishes he'd never been born and decides to kill himself. Just as George is on the brink of suicide, Clarence, his guardian angel, is dispatched from heaven to rescue him. He shows George what life would

PAGE 1 of 2

have been like in Bedford Falls if, in fact, he hadn't been born. In so doing, he proves to George how valuable his life has been and how he's enriched the lives of everyone with whom he came in contact.

In a series of flashbacks we see episodes of George's life starting from boyhood. In one of these George is about to embark on a trip to Europe and then go off to college. His plans are upended, however, when his father, Peter Bailey, has a sudden stroke and dies. George must cancel his trip to Europe and spend the next few months straightening things out at his father's company, Bailey Brothers Building and Loan.

The day that George is finally to leave for college, there's a meeting of the board of the Building and Loan to appoint a successor to Peter Bailey. As George is about to leave the meeting and hop into a taxi, Old Man Potter, the richest, meanest, and most powerful man in town, announces to the other board members that he doesn't think the Building and Loan is necessary to the town. He makes a motion to dissolve the institution. He accuses Peter Bailey of having been a poor businessman with so-called high ideals. George responds to Old Man Potter.

Start

GEORGE

Just a minute—just a minute. Now, hold on, Mr. Potter. You're *right* when you say my father was no *business* man. I know that. Why he ever started this cheap, penny-ante Building and Loan, I'll *never* know. But neither you nor anybody else can say anything against his character, because his whole life was . . . Why, in the twenty-five years since he and Uncle Billy started this thing, he never once thought of himself. Isn't that right, Uncle Billy? He didn't save enough money to send *Harry* to school, let alone me. But he *did* help a few people get out of your slums, Mr.

Potter. And what's wrong with that? Why . . . here, you're all businessmen here. Doesn't it make them better citizens? Doesn't it make them better customers? You . . . you said . . . What'd you say just a minute ago? . . . They had to wait and save their money before they even ought to think of a decent home. Wait! Wait for what? Until their children grow up and leave them? Until they're so old and broken-down that they . . . Do you know how long it takes a working man to save five thousand dollars? Just remember this, Mr. Potter, that this rabble you're talking about . . . they do most of the working and paying and living and dying in this community. Well, is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms and a bath? Anyway, my *father* didn't think so. People were human beings to him, but to you, a warped, frustrated old man, they're cattle. Well, in my book he died a much richer man than you'll ever be!

[POTTER

END

I'm not interested in your book. I'm talking about the Building and Loan.]

GEORGE

I know very well what you're talking about. You're talking about something you can't get your fingers on, and it's galling you. That's what you're talking about, I know.

(to the Board)

Well, I've said too much. I . . . You're the Board here. You do what you want with this thing, just one thing more, though. This town needs this mean one-horse institution if only to have some place where people can come without crawling to Potter. Come on, Uncle Billy!

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre

Warner Brothers (Produced by Henry Blanke), 1948

Screenplay by John Huston

Based on the novel by B. Traven

Directed by John Huston

Time: 1948

Place: Mexico

Two drifters join forces with Howard, a down-and-out old prospector, to search for gold in the Mexican hills. They ask him if there really is gold to be found. Howard responds.

HOWARD

(the old man)

Gold in Mexico? Sure there is. Not ten days from here by rail and pack train, a mountain's waiting for the right guy to come along, discover her treasure, and then tickle her until she lets him have it. The question is, are you the right guy . . . ? Real bonanzas are few and far between and they take a lot of finding. Answer me this one, will you? Why's gold worth some twenty bucks per ounce? A thousand men, say, go searching for gold. After six months one of 'em is lucky—one out of the ten thousand. His find represents not only his own labor but that of the nine hundred ninety-nine others to boot. Six thousand months or fifty years of scrabbling over mountains, going hungry and thirsty. An ounce of gold, mister, is worth what it is because of the human labor that went into the finding and the getting of it. There's no other explanation, mister, in itself, gold ain't good for anything much except to make jewelry and gold teeth. Gold's a devilish sort of thing anyway.

(He has a faraway look in his eye.)

When you go out you tell yourself, "I'll be satisfied with