

"WONDERFUL"

The Battle Behind The Classic Holiday Movie.

By Stephen Anderson

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"Wonderful"

CAST: (5-7) (*The author encourages diverse casting*)

Women (2)

- Frances Goodrich - A screenwriter battling everyone in Hollywood to write this movie that has touched so many lives.

- Lillian Hellman - Target of the FBI, Frances's close friend and confidant.

Men (3-5)

- Albert Hackett - Frances's reluctant husband and writing partner who wants out.

- Frank Capra - Hollywood director. The fate of his new studio may rest in the hands of the FBI.

Double Cast

Dashiell Hammett - Friend of the Hackett's, has-been author, Lillian Hellman life partner, now dying in Hollywood.

FBI Agent - He is out to save America and stop this anti-American movie from ever being made.

Jimmy Stewart - Suffering from the trauma of war, ready to give up on Hollywood and it's fantasies.

TIME: December 1945

SETTINGS: - Writers' bungalow; Frank Capra's office; Hotel bar.

Authors Note: When there is a slash in the middle of a line / the next actor begins to speak.

EPISODE 1: "HELLO, JOSEPH, TROUBLE?"

SFX: OLD PROJECTOR

SFX: CINEMATIC SONG

MOVIE TRAILER VOICE OVER

"Never before has any film contained such a full measure of the joy of living, the drama of living, and above all, the glorious romance that makes this such a wonderful life."

ALBERT (AS GEORGE)

(Fiercely)

Now you listen to me! I don't want any plastics! I don't want any ground floors, and I don't want to get married - ever - to anyone! You understand that? I want to do what I want to do. And you're...and you're...Oh, Mary...Mary

FRANCES (AS MARY)

George...George...George

HOST

Welcome to the first episode of "Wonderful".
The Story Beyond The Story.
A historical fiction anthology podcast series.

A note to listeners, this podcast contains adult language, well, you know Hollywood.

"It's a Wonderful Life" is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy film produced and directed by Frank Capra, based on the short story "The Greatest Gift", by Philip Van Doren. It was initially a major disappointment and confirmed, at least to the studios, that Capra's career was most likely finished. It's a Wonderful Life is now considered one of the greatest films of all time.

SEGMENT 1:

A TYPEWRITER TYPING FURIOUSLY

HOST

It's 1945, we are in the writers' bungalow on a studio lot. Screenwriter ALBERT HACKETT types as FRANCES GOODRICH his wife and writing partner looks on.

A COLD WIND HOWLS - ICE CRACKS ON
THE RIVER

ALBERT (AS GEORGE)
 (shivering, to himself)
 How long can a man stay alive in a river.
 I'm so dizzy.

I just have to put one leg over...the railing/ and then...

MAGICAL BELL RINGS OR A HARP?

FRANCES (AS ANGEL)
 I wouldn't do that.

ALBERT (AS GEORGE)
 Would't do what?

FRANCES (AS ANGEL)
 What you were thinking of doing.

A PAGE BEING RIPPED OUT OF THE
 TYPEWRITER

FRANCES
 What is this?

ALBERT
 What are you doing?

FRANCES
 Trying to save you.

PAPER BEING RIPPED UP

ALBERT
 Stop, that's the opening scene.

FRANCES
 You're just copying his story. I want this adaptation to be
 our own.

ALBERT
 I beg your pardon.

FRANCES
 That scene is verbatim from the Van Doren story. I want this
 to be our voice, our art.

ALBERT
 You think you can do better?

FRANCES

With my eyes closed one hand tied behind while I jitterbug. Come on, we need to work! We're meeting with Capra tomorrow morning!

ALBERT

Fine, it's all yours Frances. Good luck with this piece of crap movie no one's ever going to see.

CAPRA'S LARGE OFFICE - IN THE NEXT
ROOM PHONES RING / OUTSIDE
CONSTRUCTION SOUNDS ?

HOST

The next morning. We are in Director Frank Capra's office at "Liberty Films" on the RKO Radio Pictures Studios in Culver City, California.

FRANCES sits with several scripts on her lap, ALBERT wanders around looking at Capra's awards.

SOUND OF ALBERT'S FOOTSTEPS -
PACING

FRANCES

Would you just stop. Sit. Read this.

SOUND OF RUSTLING PAPER

Would you look at the script? If we don't hook Capra he'll bring in more writers, and we'll be stuck working with Connelly or Swerling. I want this to be a Hackett movie. Here's the rewrite.

(reading)

"George looks around one last time. There's nothing here for him."

METAL TROPHY SCRATCHES AGAINST WOOD
SHELF

ALBERT (OFF)

(reading the award)

Look at this award. The "Mussolini Cup". Capra even got an award from Mussolini.

FRANCES

Listen!

(reading)

"He puts one leg over the railing, then the other",

(to Albert)

You'll take it from here.

ALBERT (OFF)

You know, you should write this script yourself. "The Greatest Gift". Can you believe that title?

FRANCES

Myself? No. Read, read! He is going to be back any minute. Take this,

SOUND OF RUSTLING PAPER.

you need to sell it or Capra will turn on us/ like a...

ALBERT (ON)

(moans)

All-right.

(moans again than reads)

"He stares down at the water, desperate, trying to make up his mind."

FRANCES

What do you mean write it myself? It's gonna be a "Hackett" script.

ALBERT

Why not a, "Frances Goodrich script"? You're ready.

FRANCES

Write by myself?

ALBERT

You are one of the best writers in Hollywood.

FRANCES

(yelling)

I don't want to do this by myself. Who would I yell at? Now read. What are you...get down off his chair! If Capra/ sees...

ALBERT

(improvising)

And then, and then George...HE JUMPS!

A LOUD SPLASH AS GEORGE JUMPS INTO
THE RIVER. SOUNDS OF THRASHING IN
WATER.

FRANCES

No. You forgot the part/ about the...

ALBERT (FADES)

The icy current grabs him and pulls him down, (gurgles).

FRANCES

Albert!

ALBERT

(gasping)

His head bobs to the surface only to be smashed by jagged blocks of ice.

FRANCES

Oh god...

ALBERT

Again, and again, over and over until his face is an unrecognizable mutilated mass of flesh.

FRANCES

(to herself)

Come back to/ me...

ALBERT

George sinks below the water,
(fades)
one last time, (gurgling).

FRANCES

(to herself)

I've lost you.

ALBERT (ON)

A man beaten and broken, now lost to the world. "THE END".
(pause)
And, we're out of here. Turn in the script.

FRANCES

--

ALBERT (CONT'D)

You didn't think that was funny? Was it my acting? Oh look his award.

(acceptance speech)

I'd like to thank the/ Academy...

FRANCES

Don't touch his academy/ awards...

ALBERT

and all the little nameless people behind/ my...

FRANCES

OK, so you got that all out? All done? Now can we get back to work?

ALBERT

(pause)

Frances, there's been a change of plans.

FRANCES

You don't want to go to Greenblatt's for lunch?

ALBERT

No. I got a call from the Shubert Theater in New York.

FRANCES

I thought you turned them down?

ALBERT

They have a slot for my play.

FRANCES

The play you haven't written?

ALBERT

They want to do it for the Holiday slot after "Foxhole in the Parlor" closes.

FRANCES

With Montgomery Clift? You know he's coming out to Hollywood. He is so handsome.

ALBERT

(swooning)

I know.

(beat)

Anyway I spoke to them this morning they got the theater and a big name director.

FRANCES

Six months ago you said no.

ALBERT

I can't do this again.

FRANCES

With me?

ALBERT

With anyone. I need to write my own story. The producer needs an answer today.

FRANCES

Well it's "NO", we're working.

ALBERT

I'm telling Capra I'm not doing the movie. I need you on my side.

FRANCES

That's, why you want me to write by myself?

SEGMENT 2:

A DOOR BANGS OPEN, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS

CAPRA (OFF)

Which award is that?

ALBERT

(reading from award)

"Prelude To War"

CAPRA (ON)

My first Academy Award for a documentary. Put it back.

A SQUEAKY OFFICE CHAIR PULLED BACK

Oomph. (sitting)

Which ones did you two write on?

ALBERT

Frank, there's something I need to /tell...

CAPRA

You know some of my boys on the set caught grief we weren't overseas fighting. You overseas?

ALBERT

I was too old /to...

CAPRA

Anyway. I said to them, "Some carping ass-holes will accuse you of fighting the "Battle of Hollywood".

THE MUFFLED SOUNDS OF WWII PLANES
AND ARTILLERY.

Well you just tell them this is a total war, your weapon is film, your bombs are ideas! And let me tell you, they gave me everything they had. Now everyone sit down, Albert sit.

ALBERT

Frank, I came /here to...

CAPRA

That's one reason I started this studio. My boys needed jobs.

ALBERT

I came here to tell you I'm not going to be/ working on...

FRANCES

(to Albert)

Oh, tell him about your brilliant idea for the scene with George and the angel.

ALBERT

(teeth gritting)

That was your idea, sweetie.

CAPRA

That scene is flat, humorless, needs the Capra touch. See what I think, what we need is kind of a sassy angel. Probably a girl.

FRANCES

Oh, a kind of, Jean Arthur or Barbara Stanwyck character.

CAPRA

Exactly. And she says something like. Get this down, Frances.

(imitating a woman)

"George, you have plain, decent, everyday, common rightness, and this country could use some of that. You just make up your mind you're not gonna quit."

ALBERT

It almost writes itself.

FRANCES

Oh, Frank, that's just, that's just wonderful.

CAPRA

(embarrassed)

Well, you get the...

FRANCES

(to Albert)

Tell him what you came up with, honey.

ALBERT

That was all /your...

CAPRA

Alright, so what do you have?

SCRIPT PAPERS RUSTLING

FRANCES

OK, listen to this.

(reading)

"Suddenly, George looks over and sees a man standing on the other side of the bridge. About to jump."

TENSE MOVIE SCORE MUSIC PLAYS

ALBERT

(reading)

"George looks over, and sees a body hurtle off the bridge, and land in the water."

A LOUD SPLASH THEN SOUNDS OF
THRASHING IN WATER.

FRANCES

"There's a loud splash! George looks down! He's horrified! A voice from the river."

ALBERT (OFF)

"Help! Help!"

FRANCES

It's the angel. In the water.

ALBERT (ON)

George quickly takes off his coat.

FRANCES

And dives over the railing.

ALBERT

Into the water.

ANOTHER SPLASH AS GEORGE JUMPS INTO
THE RIVER.

CAPRA

The angel? No, no, that's too dark. Why would the angel jump?

FRANCES

So George has someone to save.

FRANCES / ALBERT

He has to save his own guardian angel!

CAPRA

(pause)

I get it. Now you got some Capra comedy in that scene. See, that's what I'm lookin' for.

FRANCES

(to Albert)

What did I tell you Albert.

(to Capra)

He's still got it, right Frank?

CAPRA

I love it! Now that's why I hired you two.

ALBERT

I'm not going to be writing with Frances on this picture.

FRANCES

What are you /talking...

CAPRA

(to Frances)

Something wrong with you Frances? You're not pregnant? No, not at your age.

FRANCES

(to Albert)

What are /you talking about...

ALBERT

No, it's me. I have to do this. I'm going to be writing my play.

(pause)

I'm going to New York. Tomorrow.

FRANCES

Tomorrow? Why does it have to /be...

CAPRA

I have a contract with you two.

ALBERT

I need to do this, now. I can't keep writing this cornball, after what this world has been--

CAPRA

Cornball? Is that what /you think...

FRANCES

He didn't /mean...

ALBERT

Yes I did.

FRANCES

(to Albert)

Tomorrow? This is how you tell me /you're...

CAPRA

(to Albert)

Oh wait, I know what this is about. You're scared.

ALBERT

No, I need to make a change.

FRANCES

New York.

CAPRA

(to Albert)

Well, let me tell you, you're not alone.

(pause)

I know it's frightening to come back, you haven't written anything in four years. You think you've gone rusty, lost your touch.

ALBERT

I haven't lost my touch.

CAPRA

I know what you're feeling.

FRANCES

(to Albert)

Just like that, you're /going to...

CAPRA

Listen. I've had the same knot in my stomach from the first day I started this new studio. Sit down.

(Motions for Albert to sit)

"Does anyone want to see my pictures? Do I have anything left to say? Will the critics say I'm washed up?" Is this my last chance?

FOOTSTEPS AS ALBERT HEADS TO THE
DOOR.

ALBERT (OFF)

Well, I'm leaving. Tomorrow!

FRANCES

No, / Don't...

CAPRA

The hell you are.

FRANCES

You're going to walk away from /our...

CAPRA

I said sit down!

THE ROOM ECHOES AND REVERBERATES.

I hired "The Hacketts" god damn-it.

ALBERT (ON)

Frances is perfectly capable /of...

CAPRA

I didn't hire "Frances". I didn't hire "Albert," I hired the god-damn "Hacketts"!

FRANCES

Apparently, he isn't in love, with...with Hollywood, anymore.

CAPRA

Which one of you wrote the screenplay for "The Thin Man"?

FRANCES

We /both...

CAPRA

Who wrote, "After the Thin Man"? "Another Thin Man"? And all your other plays and movies that I can't remember?

FRANCES

(louder)

The Hacketts.

CAPRA

So it's either "The Hacketts", or I rip up the contract! And hire someone else! Is that what you want?

ALBERT

(to Capra)

Now let's get this thing straight. I'm leaving. I'm leaving right now. I have a name, and I want people to know it.

FRANCES

(To Albert)

"I have a name". I thought we had a name.

CAPRA
Oh, these god-damn headaches.

FRANCES
Can I get you something?

CAPRA
Maybe a hot washcloth. They're over...

(Capra points to a sink and starts
to get up.)

FRANCES (OFF)
Sit, sit, I'll get it.

FOOTSTEPS - FRANCES WALKS TO THE
SINK.

CAPRA
(whispers)
You walk out on me and you will never work for this studio
again.

ALBERT
(whispers)
So what.

CAPRA
And I will make damn sure, Frances never writes again.

ALBERT
There are other studios.

CAPRA
And that she never gets another writing job from anyone in
this town.

ALBERT
You son /of a...

CAPRA
Is that what you want for her?

ALBERT
No, I could never do that to her. This is not /about...

CAPRA
You know what it's like for women writers in this town. You
want her back in some secretarial pool?

ALBERT

She is one of the best writers in Hollywood and you know it.

CAPRA

And you want to take this away from her? You may not be in love with this town anymore, but Frances still/ loves...

FRANCES RETURNS.

CAPRA

Good. Now, you two go back and finish that first draft.

(Capra gets up holding his head and starts leading them out of his office.)

FOOTSTEPS HEAD TO THE DOOR

FRANCES

(to Albert)

I thought you said you /were...

CAPRA

(to Frances)

No, no, we're all good again.

(to Albert)

Now, don't you worry, you'll do a fine job. We're all trying to figure out this new world. Let me show you out.

(to Frances)

Isn't that right Frances?

FRANCES

Apparently.

AGENT

Excuse me. Mr. Capra?

FRANCES

Who's that? Another writer?

CAPRA

No, No, just the ah, see the, ah, "bank examiner". Has to know how every god-damn penny's being spent.

CAPRA SHOWS THEM OUT.

CAPRA

(calling)

I'm expecting a "Capra-esque" script, you two!

SEGMENT 3:

CAPRA

Agent.

(beat)

Like I said on the phone, I don't have any names.

AGENT

Who are those two?

LOUD CLICK - CAPRA BUZZES HIS
INTERCOM.

CAPRA

Nobodies. They're writers.

(to intercom)

Jeanie. Are you there?

AGENT

They have names?

CAPRA

The Hacketts.

PENCIL SCRATCHING IN NOTEBOOK.

AGENT

"Hacketts". They have first names?

LOUD CLICK - CAPRA BUZZES AGAIN.

CAPRA

What does it matter.

(to intercom - turn head)

Jeanie, where the hell are you?

PENCIL SCRATCHING IN NOTEBOOK.

AGENT

Members of the Screenwriters Guild?

CAPRA (ON)

They all are.

LOUD CLICK - CAPRA BUZZES AGAIN.

JEANIE (MUFFLED)

(from intercom)

Yes, Mr. Capra?

CAPRA

(to intercom)

Now you're there. Get ah, Joe Swerling and ah, Dorothy Parker on the line. I'm gonna need some more writers.

JEANIE

Right away, Mr. Capra.

CAPRA

(to himself)

Ass-hole writers.

(to intercom)

And Jeanie, Albert's an ass-hole.

JEANIE

Yes Mr. Capra.

CAPRA

(to intercom)

Write that down in the log.

JEANIE

Right away Mr. Capra.

CAPRA

If Albert thinks he jerk me/ around...

AGENT

Mr. Capra, Director Hoover has instructed the Los Angeles Field Office to probe the film industry for signs of Communist subversion. He wants names.

CAPRA

What do you want from/ me...

AGENT

Now this is all classified, we are not looking for our investigations to become public knowledge.

CAPRA

I don't know /any...

AGENT

Mr. Capra, we know that Communists have infiltrated the Screen Writers Guild.

JEANIE

(intercom)

Mr. Capra, I have Dorothy Parker on the line.

CAPRA
 (to Agent)
 I don't know any Communists.
 (to intercom)
 Put Joe through first.

AGENT
 Do you know what this means?

CAPRA
 Cheaper writers?

AGENT
 You make a joke. But this may put them in control of the entire movie industry.

CAPRA
 I don't think the Communists could run a projector much less the whole film industry.

AGENT
 Through their control of the Writers Guild, the Communists will be able to write pictures that advance the Communist agenda.

CAPRA
 Who's gonna watch those?
 (pause)
 Listen, Agent...I didn't catch your name?

AGENT
 Richard Head. Agent Richard Head.

CAPRA
 Like I said Agent, "Head", I don't know any "Communists" and I have a lot of...
 (to intercom)
 Jeanie get me.

THE AGENT PUNCHES THE INTERCOM

CAPRA (CONT'D)
 What are you...get away from my intercom.

AGENT
 Director Hoover now views Hollywood and its pampered pinkos as the central battleground in the fight against Communists here on our soil.

CAPRA
 Why are /you...

AGENT

You're finally on the front lines "Colonel Capra".

CAPRA

What do you /want me...

AGENT

It's your turn now, Mr. Capra.

(pause)

Your turn. Give me their names. These Hacketts.

END EPISODE ONE

EPISODE 2: "YOU WANT THE MOON?"

HOST

Welcome to the second episode of "Wonderful".
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podcast series.

"It's a Wonderful Life" is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy
film produced and directed by Frank Capra. It was initially a
major disappointment and confirmed, at least to the studios,
that Capra's career was most likely finished. It's a
Wonderful Life is now considered one of the greatest films of
all time.

A note to listeners, this podcast contains some adult
language.

SEGMENT 1:

HOST

It's 1945, we are in a small writers' bungalow on the studio
lot of Director Frank Capra's "Liberty Films" in Culver City,
California.

THE SOUND OF A MANUAL TYPEWRITER.

HOST

Screenwriter FRANCES GOODRICH types as fellow screenwriter
and husband ALBERT HACKETT snores on the couch.

SOUND OF HIGH-HEELS

FRANCES

Albert.

ALBERT

(He snores.)

FRANCES

Albert! Are you asleep?

FRANCES MAKES A LOUD NOISE

ALBERT (OFF)

Why are you kicking the/ couch...

FRANCES

You bring it up in front of Capra before we even have a
chance to/ discuss....

ALBERT (ON)

I've been telling you for months I was thinking of going back to New York. Then I get a call from the Shuberts this/ morning...

FRANCES

I thought that was you, just "thinking".

ALBERT

And I thought you would join me in New York after you finished this shit movie.

FRANCES

I'm staying here.

ALBERT

You mean you're stuck here.

FRANCES

(pause)

Is there, someone else?

ALBERT

What?

FRANCES

You heard me. Is there someone else? Is that why you're so anxious /to...

ALBERT

That's ridiculous. I can't deal with one woman. What would I do with two?

FRANCES

If you've met someone, just say it. Be a man.

ALBERT

(beat)

Do you realize I am the same age as Fitzgerald was when he died five years ago, today.

FRANCES

What are you talking about? What does that have/ to do...

ALBERT

Hollywood killed him.

FRANCES

He had a heart attack.

ALBERT

This town turned him into an alcoholic.

FRANCES

He was a broken man before he /got to...

A FLASHBACK - CAFETERIA/RESTAURANT
SOUNDS

ALBERT

The last time I saw him he was sitting alone in the MGM commissary, he just sat there, not ordering. And his eyes, he looked like he was in hell. He just sat there, clutching his suitcase. But he couldn't leave.

FRANCES

That's why you don't want to write this movie?

You're afraid you're going to end up like...

ALBERT

If I stay here.

FRANCES

But you're not Fitzgerald. We're writing a new movie, you're working on your play.

(trying to cheer him up)

Which you haven't told me about. What are you calling it?

ALBERT

Something like, "Our Life".

FRANCES

Like, "Our Town"?

ALBERT

It's nothing like "Our Town". It's the story of the rise, failure and decline of a once successful writer.

FRANCES

Where is it set?

ALBERT

A lot of it takes place in a cemetery.

FRANCES

Like "Our Town".

ALBERT

No! I mean yes, we are in a cemetery,

ALBERTS IMAGINATION - A SPOOKY WIND
HOWLS

OK we see tombstones of all these famous dead writers/ but...

FRANCES
Act three from "Our Town".

ALBERT
(beat)
No! You don't understand.
(walks away)
Maybe a drink would help.

FRANCES
I don't need /a...

ALBERT
I was thinking of me.

LIQUOR CART BOTTLES RATTLING.

Four weeks.

FRANCES
Four weeks?

ALBERT
And then I'm done.

FRANCES
You're giving me a "four-week notice"? After twenty years. So thoughtful.

(beat)
OK, fine. OK, "four weeks". So, let's work

SEGMENT 2:

A DOOR CRASHES OPEN - IN STUMBLES A
VERY DRUNK DASHIELL HAMMETT.

DASH (OFF)
Is she here?

FRANCES
Dash. You're back, again.

ALBERT
Hide the booze, Frances.

FRANCES
 (to Dash)
 Honey, we're trying to write.

DASH (ON)
 Is Lillian here?

FRANCES
 No. I think/ she's...

DASH
 She said she was coming to the coast.
 (a burp)
 I just can't remember which one.

FRANCES
 Dash, sweetie, we're on deadline, we really need /to...

ALBERT
 (to Dash)
 Let me fix you a drink.

ALBERT MIXES DRINKS.

FRANCES
 (to Albert)
 I think he's had enough.

DASH
 (to Albert)
 Thank you my friend.

FRANCES
 Albert! No. Dash has to go, and find Lilly.

ALBERT
 (to Dash)
 Women. Always saying "NO".

DASH
 Never been my problem.

ALBERT
 Old friend, I have a proposition.

DASH
 No thanks. I've already been propositioned today.

ALBERT
 Listen, I need to get back to New York, and I suspect you
 could use a little income.

FRANCES
(to Albert)

No!

ALBERT
I thought you could maybe do some writing on this sappy movie.

FRANCES
(to Dash)
We are doing just fine.
(to Albert)
How dare /you...

DASH
Isn't it just another adaptation? It's not one of mine, is it?

FRANCES
Dear, you haven't written anything since your "Sequel to the Thin Man".

DASH
You two should really be writing something original.
(emotional)
Like my Lilly.

ALBERT
(to Frances)
See! That's all this town thinks we are, just adaptors.

(to Dash)
You know, you can write a Capra picture completely plastered. Here, why don't you sleep it off in the bedroom.

ALBERT CLOSSES THE BEDROOM DOOR AND
RETURNS

Segment 3:

FRANCES
That is just wonderful. Dash in our back room sleeping one off - you just know Lillian can't be far behind. And Jimmy's supposed to stop by. We're never gonna get any writing done.

ALBERT
So write.

FRANCES

(beat)

You really want me to write with someone else?

ALBERT

--

FRANCES

Do you want to write with someone else?

(pause)

Maybe a man?

(pause)

For a change?

ALBERT

What?

FRANCES

Is that why you are so anxious to get to New York?

ALBERT

I have no idea what you're trying to say.

FRANCES

So, you could actually see doing this, with a different partner?

ALBERT

Well, certainly not this. That's for sure. I thought we were going to write?

PAPER RUSTLING

(looks at script)

So, the drugstore scene. Little Mary/ says...

FRANCES

So now you want to write? I want to fight.

ALBERT

I honestly can't tell the difference anymore.

FRANCES

Well, this is fighting.

ALBERT

I'm ignoring you. So Mary says:

(as Mary)

"Is this the ear you can't hear on?

George I'll love you till the day I die.

George doesn't respond."

FRANCES

George doesn't respond. Poor Mary. Men. You're /all...

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

I told you!

THE DOOR IS OPENED

ALBERT (OFF)

Jimmy!

JIMMY STEWART (OFF)

I hope I'm not barging in on anything.

ALBERT (ON)

Not when you've been married as long as we have. Get in here.

FRANCES

Welcome back.

FOOTSTEPS AS JIMMY WALKS IN.

ALBERT

I hear Frank's trying to lure you back to this phony town.

FRANCES

Albert. "This town" has been good to us.

(to Jimmy)

How long are you here for Jimmy?

JIMMY STEWART (ON)

I just came to tie up some loose ends with my agent and accountant.

ALBERT

I hear you're not so sure about doing this picture?

JIMMY STEWART

I'm, I'm not sure about this whole town. This whole god-damn business.

ALBERT

I'm with you.

JIMMY STEWART

Are you?

ALBERT

I'm not so sure about it anymore myself.

JIMMY STEWART

I'm glad to hear someone else say that. Everyone tells me I'm, I'm crazy not to renew my MGM contract.

ALBERT

I don't think so.

FRANCES

(to Jimmy)

I hope you give that some more thought. I mean Jimmy, where else can/ you...

JIMMY STEWART

I'm thinking of going into aviation.

FRANCES

But, your career was just taking off.

JIMMY STEWART

Well it would serve MGM right. There was a time when they wouldn't give me a contract.

ALBERT

Those bastards.

JIMMY STEWART

If you hadn't got me in your "Thin Man" movie, I'd, I'd still be back working at my Dad's hardware store.

FRANCES

You'll never guess who's sleeping it off in the next room. The thin man himself.

JIMMY STEWART

Hammett?

ALBERT

Yep.

JIMMY STEWART

No kidding. Is he still writing?

ALBERT

Not since he got to Hollywood. This town killed him, that's for sure.

FRANCES

Shhh! Albert, he might hear.

ALBERT

Not in his condition.

JIMMY STEWART

Well that's what has me worried. You know the way this town builds you up and, and then slams you down after you do one lousy picture.

FRANCES

This town loves you. They want you. Go right now, over to Capra's office, sign that contract.

JIMMY STEWART

Frances, I've invested in Southwest Airlines. A big company like that always needs writers like you. They have an office in New York, Albert can write his /plays...

FRANCES

Why is everyone trying to get me to leave Hollywood?

ALBERT

(to Frances)

We're trying to save you. We all know this town is dying, that's why.

FRANCES

(to Jimmy)

Hold on Jimmy. I think you're making a mistake. I really think you should do the picture.

JIMMY STEWART

You do?

ALBERT

(to Jimmy)

Trust me, you're not making a mistake.

JIMMY STEWART

I mean this picture, "The Greatest Gift"? It sounds a little screwy. No offense Frances, but I mean the way Frank explained the story. I don't get it, there's "Angels"?

SOMETHING MAGICAL

ALBERT

Angels. Can you believe it?

JIMMY STEWART

And what, I'm in a small town, things aren't going so well and I wish I'd never been born?

ALBERT

At least that part's believable.

JIMMY STEWART

And then, and then I decide to commit suicide? But, but an angel comes down from heaven and saves me?

ALBERT

Jimmy, you're right.

FRANCES

No he isn't!

ALBERT

Yes he is! This picture stinks!

(to Jimmy)

Be strong now. Go back home, get on with your new life.

FRANCES

Well, that's Capra's take. I have a few ideas. We're not writing Capracorn, believe me.

JIMMY STEWART

You see, but it just seems kinda silly for today's audience. I mean, after what we've all gone through? I, I can't imagine anyone believes in angels.

FRANCES

I think that's right.

ALBERT

See Frances, Jimmy agrees with me, this doesn't work.

FRANCES

(to Jimmy)

Um, we haven't written a lot yet, but the way I kind of see it, it's more a sort of, ah, story about, well,

(pause)

growing up, and giving up on your dreams.

ALBERT

Boy, that sounds familiar.

FRANCES

No that's it, a, ah, ah a story of being trapped. Um, compromising, watching others move ahead of you. Of coming to a realization that it is, really, a dark, disappointing world.

JIMMY STEWART

(he stops)

Well, now that's kind of interesting.

ALBERT

Depressing, that's what it is.

FRANCES

Sure. See the way I see it,
 (improvising)
 OK, at the end of the picture, George almost dies, right
 Albert?

ALBERT

It's your story now honey.

CINEMATIC SCORE

FRANCES

Yeah, and then he sees the world from a whole new
 perspective.

(pause)

It's not so much that he's seeing the world that would have
 existed had he never been born. I think he's seeing the world
 as it does exist.

(light bulb moment)

Bedford Falls was the fantasy. Pottersville is where we
 actually live.

A BAR CROWD

(pause)

Think about it. Crime, prostitutes, drunks, cheating, lying.
 Bedford Falls was just a dream he has been having.
 George is actually at war. Get this down Albert, get this.

WWII BATTLE SOUNDS

George is actually lying wounded on a, on a beach. Maybe in
 the Philippine Islands. And it's hot, he's shot, there are
 maggots all over him, oh god. He's dying.

(emotional)

And, and, all he can do is dream, of the snow-covered streets
 of Bedford Falls.

(pause)

As his life slips away.

JIMMY STEWART

Wow.

ALBERT

(sarcastic)

Wow.

(pause)

That's the screwiest idea you've had. The "Philippine
 Islands"?

FRANCES

Well, where's your brilliant ideas? You haven't had one
 /good...

JIMMY STEWART

No, no, I get it now, Frances. You can never go back, once your eyes are open. You /know...

ALBERT

Of course you can go back.

FRANCES

Let him talk Albert.

JIMMY STEWART

I, I, don't think I've told more than a few friends about my war experience.

WWII BOMBERS ON A MISSION

(pause)

You know, we all flew to war with nothing but confidence.

(pause)

But at, at twenty-five thousand feet, the cold kills, the air is unbreathable.

(emotional)

Froze men's hands, legs, even their eyeballs!

(he stands up)

I lost a lot of good...

(long pause)

You know, we were sent to bomb targets in populated cities. "Women and children treatment," they called it.

(pause)

I saw asphalt streets burst into flames, fuel oil spill into canals causing them to ignite. We put on oxygen masks so we wouldn't vomit at the smell of burning flesh.

(pause)

Over forty-thousand, men, women, children, all...

(emotional)

How do you go back to this life, after you've seen...

(Jimmy stops, too upset to continue.)

FRANCES

(long pause)

So much sacrifice.

JIMMY STEWART

I can't do this anymore.

FRANCES

No, Jimmy, that's why you have to.

JIMMY STEWART

I, don't know if I can...

FRANCES

Coming home to your life.

(pause)

That's the gift you give, to those who can't.

(They all sit taking it in.)

JIMMY STEWART

I thought I was just stopping by to say goodbye, but maybe I need to give this some more thought.

JIMMY GOES TO THE DOOR.

FRANCES

Good Jimmy, good.

ALBERT

But /Jim...

JIMMY STEWART (OFF)

Good night everybody.

SEGMENT 4:

THE DOOR CLOSES. ALBERT MIXES A DRINK.

FRANCES

I can't believe you're trying to sabotage this movie.

ALBERT

Oh, this thing is never gonna get made and you know it. The script's not working, Jimmy's out, Capra's nuts. Face it, it's over.

FRANCES

You promised me four weeks of working together. This is not working together.

ALBERT

OK, fine. Let's do the next scene.

FRANCES

Fine. Skip ahead, page twenty, the dinner scene, that we still haven't written.

ALBERT

(looking around room)

God, I couldn't face being cooped up for the rest of my life in this shitty little office working on this crap.

FRANCES

Albert. That's good, that's it.

ALBERT

(confused)

What? What's good /about...

FRANCES

Say that again, what you just said, but like it's George talking to his father.

ALBERT

(he gets it.)

Oh, like...

(as George)

Oh, now, Pop, I couldn't. I couldn't face being cooped up for the rest of my life in a shitty little office.

FRANCES

Maybe "shabby" office. OK, then he stops. Right. He realizes that he has hurt his father.

FRANCES TYPES MADLY. CINEMATIC
MUSIC RISES

ALBERT

Right, right he feels bad, he says something like,

(as George)

Oh, I'm sorry, Pop. I didn't mean that remark, but this business of working on these nickel and dime projects and spending...

(reflecting)

all your life trying to figure out how to build someone else's house, I'd go crazy. I want to do something big and something important.

FRANCES

That's it, that's it, that's exactly what's eating away at him, and it's tearing him up. This is good Albert.

ALBERT

OK, OK then "Pop" says? What does "Pop" say?

FRANCES

Um, um...How about,

(as Pop)

You know, George, I feel that in a small way we are doing something important. Satisfying a fundamental urge, um, um...for a man to want a home he can call his own.

ALBERT

Then George says,

(as George)

I know, I wish I felt the same but most of my friends have already finished college, they've made a name for themselves. I just feel like if I don't get away, I'll burst.

FRANCES

OK, OK then Pop says, ah,

(as "Pop")

This town is no place for any man unless he's willing to crawl to Potter. You've got talent, I've seen it. You get yourself an education, then, then, get out of here.

(They both stop, excited, as the scene climaxes.

They collapse on the couch.)

MUSIC REACHES A CRESCENDO

ALBERT

(breathless)

Wow! That writing, that was really...

FRANCES

Ohhh, I know, amazing.

ALBERT

You were.

FRANCES

See! See what we can do together. Do you have a cigarette?

ALBERT

You don't smoke.

FRANCES

Right, right. Um, that was really good.

(Albert stops, then comes back to his old self.)

ALBERT

I don't know...Poor George though, right? Trapped in that town his whole life.

FRANCES

"Poor George"? What about the Mary character. A homemaker? Talk about trapped. Maybe, maybe she could be a librarian?

ALBERT

Just leave it. What do you think women are doing after the war?

FRANCES

A lot of us are still working.

ALBERT

Leave it. She's a homemaker.

FRANCES

Don't tell me to leave it. In fact...

(defiant)

Maybe Mary, is the protagonist. Not George. I mean George has already decided he is leaving Bedford Falls.

ALBERT

Oh god.

FRANCES

When you think about it, he's kind of a whiney, sad-sack. Why would we root for him?

(looks at Albert)

But Mary, um. See, if George leaves, she's stuck with the kids, no job, George's mother's kind of a bitch. How does she survive? Without a man. Now that's an interesting story. Do you see that Albert?

ALBERT

Oh god, that's stupid. This isn't a "woman's picture"! Who's going to want to see a story about that?

FRANCES

Oh, I don't know, maybe every woman in this country.

ALBERT

And not one man in this town's gonna make it.

(beat)

You know it's George's story, don't try /to...

FRANCES

OK, So, what does your "George" want?

ALBERT

He doesn't know for most of the story. He feels he's lost his way.

(pause)

He's afraid he may have lost his talent.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. FRANCES WALKS
TO THE DOOR

FRANCES (OFF)
Oh, really? He does? He feels he's lost his...

FRANCES OPENS THE DOOR.

DELIVERY BOY (OFF)
That's eight bucks Mrs. Hackett. Two bottles of gin, one
vermouth, one whiskey.

(Frances takes the liquor bottles,
and hands him the money.)

FRANCES (OFF)
(to delivery boy)
I've told you it's "Goodrich"...never mind, keep the change.

DELIVERY BOY (OFF)
Thanks Mrs. Hackett.

FRANCES CLOSSES THE DOOR. THE
BOTTLES CLANK

ALBERT
Oh good. Lunch. I've always enjoyed your cooking.

FRANCES (ON)
(back to story)
So, George is still young, what does he really want? He must
know.

ALBERT
A quick roll in the bushes with naked Mary?

FRANCES
(playing along)
Oh no, you know the production code these days.

ALBERT
Darn. Now I have to rewrite that scene.

FRANCES
Seriously, what does he want?
(beat)
Why is it always "what does HE want". God-damn it, when are
we going to write a picture where we get to ask "what does
SHE want?"

ALBERT

OK, I'll bite. What does SHE want?
What did you want when you were a young girl?

FRANCES

No one asked. Everyone assumed they knew.

ALBERT

So, I'm asking.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(proper English)

"Nutley", New Jersey.
River town, green fields large homes,
social clubs, outdoor teas,
all doctors, layers, Social Register types.

FRANCES

Summers in Rhode Island with well-off dilettantes.
Private grade school, finishing school and Vassar.

ALBERT

Her love of acting was sadly not enough to land her the lead
in "Arms and the Man".

FRANCES

I fought tooth and nail for that/ part...

ALBERT

Her father used his "Player Club" connections to get her into
Summer stock in Southampton.

FRANCES

"Northampton". You were close. I was desperate to leave my
little town, to see my name in lights.

ALBERT

And all I wanted, was a porch light, a home.

FRANCES

I'm sorry, I know wasn't easy for you.

ALBERT

On stage at the age of five to support my mother. Oh it was a
piece of cake.

(theatrical)

Each season, three-hundred one night stands.

FRANCES

And all I wanted was to leave my father's drafty old home
and,

(theatrical)
act on the world's great stages.

ALBERT
"Nutley" New Jersey, a family, sounds pretty good to me.

FRANCES
But you - you had the life I wanted. Even as a teen you were in demand, film roles started coming your way, then Broadway. Me, I was getting older and desperate to leave father's nunnery. I needed a ticket out.

ALBERT
So, husband number one. An actor, naturally you followed him to Broadway.

FRANCES
And watched from the wings. For me, only small parts, my name never mentioned in reviews. At home most nights, him in the bars.

ALBERT
It was time to fold that show.

FRANCES
I made sure the second one was a teatotaler.
(beat)
But you, you must have been a catch in your day. Young, handsome, in the company of beautiful eligible actresses, you must have been drawn to some of them?

ALBERT
I loved the work.

FRANCES
Just the work? That is so monastic.
Well, until that older woman came along.

ALBERT
"Chains". The play where we met.

FRANCES
You said you loved my acting.

ALBERT
I meant it. And I know I made an impression on you.

FRANCES
I thought you had the most irritating voice I had ever heard on stage.

ALBERT

Thank-you darling. But back to twice divorced husband number two.

FRANCES

I was lonely and he had a brain.

ALBERT

Now thirty-seven, divorced again. What would father have said? So, who's lucky husband number three?
Oh right - me!

FRANCES

A sophisticated actress ten years your senior, asks you to help her revise her play which I called -

ALBERT

"Such A Lady"!

FRANCES

You destroyed it.

ALBERT

It needed a lot of work.

FRANCES

We spent more time fighting then writing. How did we ever stay together?

ALBERT

It's called collaboration.

FRANCES

(pause)

Fifteen films in seven years.

ALBERT

We never worked alone again.

FRANCES

We developed a reputation with MGM. "The Hacketts could deliver".

ALBERT

(pause)

What would life have been like if we had never met.

FRANCES

Would either of us had a name?

ALBERT
(softly)

I don't know.

FRANCES
"Frances Goodrich, who with her husband, Albert Hackett, wrote numerous films and plays"...that's how my obituary begins.

ALBERT
"Albert Hackett, Half of Prolific Drama Team". That's my headline.

FRANCES
The "Hacketts". That's how we will be remembered.

ALBERT
(long pause)
You know I was sure, when the war ended, I would finally get back to New York and my plays.

FRANCES
Yes. Yes, I know.

ALBERT
I always knew what I wanted to write.
I knew what I was going to write tomorrow, and the next day, and the next year, and the year after that. I had a million ideas.

(pause)
Now...

FRANCES
Listen, if we can finish this script, there'll be more contracts. We can buy a house out here, maybe I can have a garden, things will settle down, you can write your plays. We have wonderful friends. Each other.

(pause)
Isn't that enough?

ALBERT
I don't know anymore...

FRANCES
What's left? The moon? You want the moon? Is that what you want?

ALBERT
We took the money.
(pause)
Now, we'll never have the moon.

(singing)
*Say, it's only a paper moon
 Sailing over a cardboard sea
 But it wouldn't be make-believe
 If you believed in me.*

(pause)
*It's a Barnum and Bailey world
 Just as phony as it can be...*
 (fading out)
But it wouldn't be make-believe
 (pause)
If you believed in /me...

FRANCES
 That's good. That's it.

ALBERT
 Thank-you.

FRANCES
 No. Not you.

ALBERT
 Well, excuse me.

FRANCES
 "It's a Barnum and Bailey world."

ALBERT
 Got that right.

FRANCES
 No. That's his last name.

ALBERT
 "Barnum"? His last name is Pratt.

FRANCES
 No, "Bailey".

ALBERT
 "Bailey"?
 (pause)
 "George, Bailey"? Naw, that's dumb. No one's going to
 remember that name.

END EPISODE 2

=====

EPISODE 3: "MARY IT'S GEORGE, DON'T YOU KNOW ME?"

HOST

Welcome to the third episode of "Wonderful".
The Story Beyond The Story. A historical fiction anthology
podcast series.

"It's a Wonderful Life" is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy
film produced and directed by Frank Capra. It was initially a
major disappointment and confirmed, at least to the studios,
that Capra's career was most likely finished. It's a
Wonderful Life is now considered one of the greatest films of
all time.

A note to listeners, this podcast contains some adult
language, well that's Hollywood.

(beat)

It's 1945, we are in a writers' bungalow on the studio lot of
Director Frank Capra's "Liberty Films" in Culver City,
California.

SEGMENT 1:

LILLIAN (OFF)

Did someone say "Bailey's"? I'll have scotch.

FRANCES

I knew it. Here she is. Now we're never going to get any
/work...

LOUD HIGH HEELS AS LILLIAN HELLMAN
STORMS IN.

ALBERT

Lilly!

FRANCES

Are you out here for the revival of "Little Foxes"?
We didn't know you were coming.

LILLIAN (ON)
(yelling)

Where is he?

FRANCES

Well, hello to you, too. He's in /the...

LILLIAN

Dash, where are you? I smell cheap scotch, I know you're
here.

ALBERT

So what brings /you to...

LILLIAN

Hacketts, I know he's here, so stop fuckin' with me.

LILLIAN WALKS QUICKLY AROUND THE
ROOM.

ALBERT

Let me fix you a drink.

FRANCES

(to Albert)

We're busy, no drinks.

(to Lillian)

We thought you were in New York. What brings you /out...

ALBERT MIXES DRINKS

LILLIAN (OFF)

One, I want to kill that cheating little thin man.

FRANCES

You know he's probably back at his /hotel...

LILLIAN (OFF)

And two, Columbia Pictures just offered me a multi-year contract.

FRANCES

That's fantastic. Not the cheating part, the/ other...

ALBERT

Hollywood doesn't deserve "Lillian Hellman".

LILLIAN (ON)

I told them they could stick it up their asses.

ALBERT

That's my girl.

FRANCES

No, Lilly, tell me you didn't.

LILLIAN

Those sons of bitches. The contract included a loyalty clause.

ALBERT

"A loyalty clause"? What's that?

FRANCES
 (to Albert)
 Loyalty isn't a bad thing.

LILLIAN
 They want me to sign a statement that I have never been a member of the Communist Party.

SOUND OF ICE IN GLASS

ALBERT
 Have a drink Lilly.

FRANCES
 That's a "loyalty oath"? I thought we just beat the fascists.

ALBERT
 That's not even constitutional.

LILLIAN
 So have they pressured you two to sign?

ALBERT
 Not yet.

LILLIAN
 It's probably because you're just working on another adaptation.

ALBERT
 (to Frances)
 See what have I been telling you/ Frances...

LILLIAN (OFF)
 If you're smart, you'll get out of this shit town before it's too late.

FRANCES
 You know a good adaptation is as is much of a creative challenge as an original story.

LILLIAN OPENS THE BEDROOM DOOR.

FRANCES
 Lilly, where are you going? That's our/ bedroom...

LILLIAN (OFF)
 Aha! There's that little dick.
 (to Hacketts)
 And you two Judas'.

A LOUD THUD

DASH (OFF)
Ouch! You threw your shoe/ at me...

ALBERT
Dash you're here? We thought you had gone back to the hotel.

DASH COMES STUMBLING OUT OF THE
BEDROOM.

LILLIAN (ON)
(yelling at Dash)
Who was that woman that answered the phone?

DASH (ON)
I don't know what /you're...

LILLIAN
And don't tell me the maid! Not at three o'clock in the
morning!

FRANCES
Wouldn't you rather have this conversation back at your
hotel?

A GLASS HITS DASH IN THE HEAD,
FALLS AND BREAKS.

DASH
OUCH! Now you throw a glass?

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Lilly, that hit him!

DASH
Don't tell me you haven't been sleeping with every Leninist
you meet.

ALBERT
Dash, your head is bleeding!

DASH
(to Lilly)
Come here Lilly.

LILLIAN
Get away from me!

FRANCES
 (to Dash)
 There's blood all/ over...

DASH
 (to Lilly)
 Get over here Lill.

DASH LUNGES AT LILLY, SHE RUNS AWAY
 - HE CHASES HER.

LILLIAN (OFF)
 Get away from me.

FRANCES
 Albert, hide. World War Three just broke out.

ALBERT AND FRANCES RUN FOR SAFETY.

FRANCES
 (panting / calling)
 Everyone. Please! This is our office.

LILLIAN (OFF)
 (yelling)
 Touch me and I'll cut your dick off! You'll never screw
 anyone again!

FRANCES
 (hushed to Albert)
 See what you've done Albert?

ALBERT
 (panting / hushed)
 Me?

FRANCES
 Wait, this could be a scene, listen.

DASH (OFF)
 I know one person I'll never screw again!

ALBERT
 (to Frances)
 This dialogue is great. Well, maybe not for a Christmas
 movie.

(Dash catches her. Lillian
 struggles to free herself.)

FRANCES

The nightmare sequence.

CINEMATIC HORROR MOVIE SCORE

ALBERT

Mary doesn't recognize George! He says something /like...

DASH (OFF)

What's happened to us?

LILLIAN (OFF)

I don't even know you anymore. Let go of me.

FRANCES

Write that down.

DASH (OFF)

I'm your partner, damn it.

LILLIAN (OFF)

Is that what you are to me? I don't need a damn "partner".

ALBERT

Then George says something like, "Mary, it's George! Don't you know me?"

DASH (OFF)

Please, Lilly, don't do this to me. I need you.

FRANCES

Or, "Please Mary, help me. Please Mary, I need you.

ALBERT

Really? You think he'd say "I need you"?

LILLIAN (OFF)

Let go of me!

DASH (OFF)

Please! I need you!

LILLIAN (OFF)

Get off!

DASH (OFF)

It's your Dash...your Dash.

LILLIAN ESCAPES DASH AND RUNS TO
THE DOOR. DASH GIVES CHASE.

ALBERT

OK, maybe.

(excited)

This could be a really good scene.

FRANCES

And then Mary runs away, and George chases after her, and /then...

ALBERT

Right, right and then the crowds hold /George...

FRANCES

The cops show up. They grab George.

LILLIAN RUNS OUT THE DOOR PURSUED
BY DASH.

DASH (OFF)

Come back here!

THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT

FRANCES

They're gone, lock the door.

ALBERT

(realization)

But then he gets away. He gets away. He runs, he runs for his life.

(pause)

Wait, I see what you're trying to do here.

FRANCES

What?

ALBERT

Trying to seduce me back into writing this crap, and this life.

FRANCES

I'm not /doing...

ALBERT

Every time I take a step, you try and pull /me...

FRANCES

I don't know what /you're...

ALBERT (OFF)

Well it's not going to work. I'm leaving!

ALBERT STORMS OUT THE DOOR.

FRANCES

Albert, come back!

SEGMENT 2:

CAPRA'S OFFICE

JEANIE

(intercom)

Mr. Shearman here to see you, Mr. Capra.

CAPRA

(to intercom)

Send him in. And get Dorothy Parker on the line.

(back to phone)

I'm meeting with my special effects guy.

CAPRA HANGS UP.

CAPRA

What d'ya got?

SPECIAL EFFECTS GUY

Here's the cereal for the snow scene.

CAPRA

No, no, no! I am not using the god-damned painted cornflakes again.

CRUNCHING AS CAPRA STICKS HIS HAND
IN THE BAG.

Listen what do you think it sounds like when I walk on them.

CAPRA WALKS AROUND LOUDLY STAMPING
THE CORNFLAKES WITH HIS SHOES.

What do you think that sounds like when I do a close-up?

The snow represents the dark night of the soul. I can't have it sound like someone's eating breakfast. Find something else!

THE SPECIAL EFFECTS MAN WALKS AWAY.
CAPRA'S PHONE RINGS

(Capra on phone)

I'm not goin' to have my set shut down because of some stupid
ass child labor law. Get on it!

(pause)

How hard can it be to find two midgets in this town?

(pause)

Stand-ins, for the child actors!

CAPRA HANGS UP. THE PHONE RINGS
AGAIN.

CAPRA

Of course Ginger Rodgers was my first choice to play Mary.

(The Agent takes a seat in front of
Capra's desk.)

She says "It's not a good part, the girl doesn't have
anything to do, she's colorless."

(pause)

You know what? The girl doesn't matter. She's just a
housewife.

(pause)

The war's over, what do you think women are doing?

AGENT

(coughs)

--

(Capra looks up, startled to see
the Agent.)

CAPRA

What the...What are you...did Jeanie let you...

CAPRA PUSHES THE INTERCOM

Jeanie!

(no answer)

Jeanie, God-damn it.

(to Agent)

Did we have an appointment?

AGENT

Mr. Capra, do you read the "Hollywood Reporter?"

CAPRA

Does it look like I have time for that rag?

AGENT

Interesting column today. Look.

THUD - THE AGENT PUSHES THE ROLLED
UP PAPER HARD INTO CAPRA'S GUT.

CAPRA

(in pain)

Ouch! You poked me in the gut with your paper.

AGENT

The column, entitled, "Red Beach-head".

CAPRA

I have no idea what /that...

AGENT

It's a list of names. Color-coded.

CAPRA

Color-coded?

AGENT

"Red" indicates the individual is a card-carrying communist.
"Pink" - they have communist sympathies.

CAPRA

Oh god.

AGENT

(snarling)

That's right. Do you want to know who is on this list?

CAPRA

I have /no...

AGENT

John Lawson, Guy Endore, Lester Cole, Dalton Trumbo, a number
of your writers.

CAPRA

They're not my/ writers...

AGENT

Now, those two writers of yours.

(reads from a notebook)

"Albert Hackett and Frances", is it Good-rick?

CAPRA

I told you, they're the "Hacketts". What about them?

(The Agent leans over the desk
menacing Capra.)

AGENT

Did you know they are very close to prominent Communists Dashiell Hammett and Lillian Hellman? What do you know about the Hacketts?

THE INTERCOM BUZZES.

JEANIE

(from intercom)

Casting wants to talk to you about your fairy, and Mr. Sherman from special effects is /here again...

CAPRA

I can't talk. And it's not a "fairy", it's a god-damn angel! And I'm busy.

JEANIE

(from intercom)

I'll send him right in Mr. Capra.

AGENT

No.

CAPRA

(to intercom)

Damn it, I said I was busy Jeannie.

AGENT

Now, about these "Hacketts". What do you know?

CAPRA

What's there to know? Just a couple of adaptors.

AGENT

Mr. Capra, are you going to help your country?

CAPRA

What are you talking about?

AGENT

I am now talking about your loyalty.

CAPRA

God-damn it! I don't have any evidence of these writers' involvement in the Communist Party. Besides, who cares about the "Hacketts"? They're nobodies, how does that get Hoover on the Newsreel?

AGENT

You should know that the House Un-American Committee is going to be issuing subpoenas.

CAPRA

What does that have to do with me? If Hoover wants to do something for this country, he should look into MGM or Columbia. Have you seen the pictures they're making? That's the real crime. I'm just a little fish in this pond.

AGENT

Let's see.

(reads from notebook)

"In 1938, you were a member of a Communist-inspired picket line against a local newspaper. Here's a photo of you with the commies.

(throws a photo on his desk)

In 1941, you were the National Chair of the Russian Orphan Relief. Here is another photo of you with the Reds.

(throws another photo down)

CAPRA

You people have all gone crazy. You spread your poisonous lies. Just who are you fighting?

AGENT

We're fighting for America, Mr. Capra. Who are you fighting for?

CAPRA

What did you do in the war? Did you even serve?

AGENT

I was too old.

(beat)

Mr. Capra, to be named in a subpoena, well, it can be very damaging.

CAPRA

How dare /you...

AGENT

To be pursued by the IRS, going back over decades of returns.

CAPRA

You people /are...

AGENT

I need a name. I need to know he didn't die in...

(catches himself)

I need a name!

CAPRA

After all I gave for my county, this is how I am treated? What did you give for the country?

AGENT

(pause)

My brother.

(pause)

I lost my brother.

Give me a name.

I'm not going to lose the country he died for.

(beat)

And you need this picture.

(pause)

I think you understand collaboration.

FOOTSTEPS MARCH OUT - THE DOOR
SHUTS.

JEANIE

(intercom)

Mr. Capra, Miss Parker hung up. Said she's too busy to hold.
She said

(reading)

"Tell him, I am too fucking busy--or vice versa?". I don't
get it.

CAPRA

(to intercom)

Is she still using that old line? Get her back!

(Capra holds the washcloth to his
head in pain.)-----
SEGMENT 3:SOUND INDICATING WRITERS' OFFICE -
ALBERT PECKS AT THE KEYBOARD.

A SCRATCHY RECORD PLAYS.

ALBERT

Shit!

ALBERT RIPS OUT THE PAGE FROM THE
TYPEWRITER AND TEARS IT UP.FRANCES ENTERS. SHE MOVES THE
NEEDLE, THE SONG STOPS.

FRANCES (OFF)

That old record? Again?

(Albert does not respond.)

You know, it's been two weeks Albert, since we've written any scenes together.

ALBERT
(a little drunk)

Has it?

FRANCES (ON)
I'm writing my ass off, staying up half the night trying to finish this first draft.

ALBERT RETURNS TO THE TYPEWRITER
AND PECKS AWAY.

ALBERT
That's nice.

FRANCES
And I think my scenes are good, really good. I'm finally writing a story I want to tell.

ALBERT
That's nice.

FRANCES
Anyway, Capra called, furious, wants to see us.

ALBERT
I'm not going.

ALBERT GETS UP AND POURS HIMSELF
ANOTHER DRINK.

FRANCES
Are you telling me you're done /with...

ALBERT
I called the Shuberts in New York.

FRANCES
Oh?

ALBERT
I told them I would raise the money for my new play.

FRANCES
You raise the money? No, that's not happening. We have never put our money in a show. Wait - have you finished it?

ALBERT
I have a good start.

FRANCES
The cemetery play?

ALBERT
It's not a cemetery play!

FRANCES
So what's the play about?

ALBERT
OK. Well, this is really good. OK. OK, listen. I just finished this scene. Ready?

FRANCES
OK...

ALBERT
(reading)
"Scotty wanders like a lost soul among the tombstones".

THE SPOOKY CEMETERY WIND BLOWS

FRANCES
In a cemetery?

ALBERT
I guess so.

FRANCES
Wait, the main character's name, is "Scotty"?

ALBERT
Yes! Do you want to hear it or not?

FRANCES
Go on.

ALBERT
(reading)
"Close Shot: a tombstone.

FRANCES
I thought this was a play? Why would you write "close shot"?

ALBERT
Just listen! Upon it is engraved a name. Feverishly, Scotty scrapes away the snow covering the inscription, and we read: IN MEMORY Frances Scott Fitzgerald, 1896 to 1940.

FRANCES
No, you can't do that! That is so upsetting.

ALBERT

Why, because I use his real name?

FRANCES

No. You're just stealing Dickens! It's "A Christmas Carol". I knew it /sounded familiar...

ALBERT

It's not from a Christmas Carol.

FRANCES

It's the same scene.

(beat)

But wait, wait, wait a minute, let's go back, you're going to raise the money for the play? I thought you said the theater had already identified backers?

ALBERT

They have some they just need...what difference does it/ make...

FRANCES

"What difference"? How are you going to pay for...

ALBERT

The savings.

FRANCES

Our savings? That's the house fund!

ALBERT

Who wants to live out here with all /these...

FRANCES

That was our plan.

ALBERT

That was your plan.

FRANCES

No, it was /our...

ALBERT

I withdrew the savings.

FRANCES

(upset)

You what!

ALBERT FLIPS THROUGH A WAD OF CASH.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

How could you? That's all the money we have.

ALBERT

If I don't do this now, I may /never...

FRANCES

We are absolutely not investing our money in some half /baked...

ALBERT

Is that what you, is that what you think of my plays?

FRANCES

I don't know what to think. You haven't written it! Give me the money!

ALBERT

Frances. This is my moon. My moon. You know that.

FRANCES

Well then, get your own lasso. That's money I earned with you, with my sweat, my talent.

ALBERT

I'm not doing this anymore.

(Frances stops, stunned.)

FRANCES

So, this is the last time we write together?

ALBERT

I didn't say that.

FRANCES

You're going to New York. To write your plays.

ALBERT

Well, yes.

FRANCES

I'm not.

ALBERT

Not until you finish the Capra script.

FRANCES

No, not ever.

ALBERT
Not ever?

FRANCES
I'm staying in Hollywood.

ALBERT
Hollywood?

FRANCES
In, Hollywood.

ALBERT
So, this is the last time, we write together?

FRANCES
I love this life! I'm good at it, and I'm not giving it up.

ALBERT
It's always about you.

FRANCES
Always about me? Have you forgotten I adapted my life to yours? You wanted to act in reviews, we stayed on the road. You wanted to do some serious acting, we moved to New York. YOU wanted to write for the pictures. We moved to Hollywood. And now it turns out, I'm good at this.

(beat)

And now Hollywood won't hire a woman unless there's a man's name on the script. You leave and you force me to give up my career.

ALBERT
Your career! All you can think about is your own, your own security.

(beat)

I guess that comes from being married three times.

FRANCES
Don't you ever throw my marriages in my face. At least the first two were,

(pause)

Real men!

ALBERT

FRANCES
I'm sorry, I didn't mean it to come out /like...

ALBERT

Don't worry about it.

(pause)

Oh, and here's your half of our money. And good luck with this movie, that's never gonna get made!

(OFF)

And I like that record, and I'm gonna play it as much as I want!

RECORD RESUMES

FRANCES

Well here's what I think of it!

FRANCES GRABS THE RECORD, IT
SCRATCHES - SHE VIOLENTLY SMASHES
IT.

ALBERT

You broke my favorite record.

FRANCES WALKS OUT THE DOOR AND
SLAMS IT SHUT.

Where are you going?

END EPISODE 3

=====

EPISODE 4: "YOU SPIN YOUR LITTLE WEBS."

HOST

Welcome to the fourth episode of "Wonderful".
The Story Beyond The Story. A historical fiction anthology
podcast series.

"It's a Wonderful Life" is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy
film produced and directed by Frank Capra. It was initially a
major disappointment and confirmed, at least to the studios,
that Capra's career was most likely finished. It's a
Wonderful Life is now considered one of the greatest films of
all time.

A note to listeners, this podcast contains some adult
language, well that's Hollywood.

(beat)

It's 1945, we are in Director Frank Capra's office on the
studio lot of "Liberty Films" in Culver City, California.

SEGMENT 1:

HOST

Frank Capra is on the phone as Screenwriter FRANCES GOODRICH
walks in.

CAPRA

(to phone)

Of course Stanwick was my first choice,

FRANCES

(whispers)

No!

CAPRA

(on phone)

No, Rodgers turned down the film.

FRANCES

(whispers)

"Donna Reed".

CAPRA

Rodgers says it's a bland part.

FRANCES

(whispering)

No it is not. What about "Donna Reed"?

CAPRA

Of course I talked to de Havilland.

FRANCES
(whispers)

Terrible choice.

CAPRA
Dvorak. All of them. Wait, I just had an idea, maybe "Donna Reed". Call her agent.

(pause)
I know, she might just work.
(hangs up - to Frances)
Where's Albert?

FRANCES
(mumbling)
Probably at the bar. So you had an idea?

CAPRA
Bar?

FRANCES
Oh no, he's doing research, you know the tavern scene we discussed.

CAPRA
(to Frances)
What am I paying two of you for anyway?
Goddamn it, I hired a writing team, not a script girl.
(Best)
Where's the script?

FRANCES
I have a new draft.

CAPRA
(to himself)
Stewart's not on board! No leading lady. That Agent breathing down/ my...

FRANCES
Agent?

CAPRA
(catches himself)
"Hollywood Agent", ah you know...never mind!
(beat)
Listen, maybe it's good you're here alone. There's something I've been wanting to talk to you about.

FRANCES
Same here.

CAPRA

(beat)

You know, I'm turning fifty next week.

FRANCES

Oh, /happy...

CAPRA

My creative days are, I suppose, limited.

(pause)

Now, there are a lot of people who would like to see me fail.

FRANCES

I know what you mean.

CAPRA

You do?

FRANCES

Sure, they don't trust you to do a job you have been doing for twenty years, a job you're better at than most men, one you are not paid enough for or given full credit.

CAPRA

That is exactly right!
You know I could work for any studio I wanted to in this town.

FRANCES

Of course we could.

CAPRA

But I want to make my own pictures.

FRANCES

You don't need a partner.

CAPRA

Right, these pictures are mine.

FRANCES

This is my art.

CAPRA

They're Capra pictures.

FRANCES

I have a name!

(Capra stops, gives Frances a look.)

CAPRA

Anyway, you may have heard about this whole House Un-American thing going on in Washington.

FRANCES

It's disgusting.

CAPRA

Right. So here's the thing. They're getting all up in arms about some of the people in this town.

FRANCES

Those fascists.

CAPRA

Right. So we just need to be careful because the wrong names on the picture will make it very difficult to get financing.

FRANCES

I don't understand what you're saying.

CAPRA

Bankers have no spine, you know that.

THE INTERCOM BUZZES

JEANIE

(intercom)

Mr. Capra, Mr. Stewart is here to see you.

CAPRA

(to intercom)

Was he on /my...

JEANIE

(intercom)

No, he just stopped by.

FRANCES

Oh good, he's come in to /sign...

JIMMY STEWART

(on intercom)

Listen, Frank, if, if, you're too busy, well I can, I can /come back...

CAPRA

(to intercom)

No, no Jimmy you come right in. Jeanie, show Jimmy in right now!

(to Frances)

This picture doesn't get made without him.

JIMMY STEWART COMES WALKING
CAUTIOUSLY INTO THE OFFICE.

CAPRA (CONT'D)

Jimmy, come in, come in.

JIMMY STEWART (OFF)

I didn't mean to barge in /and...

CAPRA

Nonsense. I was finishing up.

(Capra grabs Stewart's hand.)

I think you know Frances. She and Albert are working on the screenplay.

(Jimmy gives Frances a big hug.)

JIMMY STEWART (ON)

Know her! I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the Hackett's. Say, I think I spotted Albert at the Hollywood Hotel bar as I was leave--

CAPRA

Bar? /What's...

(Frances signals Jimmy to clam up.)

FRANCES

Research. I told you, research...

CAPRA

Research, my ass!

JIMMY STEWART

So Frank, it was the Hacketts who got me to Hollywood.

FRANCES

Jimmy, you had the talent.

JIMMY STEWART

(pause)

Well, see, that's, that's what I'm worried about.

CAPRA

What are you worried about?

JIMMY STEWART

What Frances just said.

(pause)

She just said, "You had the talent". See it's the, the "had" part that worries me.

FRANCES

(to Jimmy)

No, I didn't mean..you /know I...

CAPRA

(upset at Frances)

She didn't mean that.

JIMMY STEWART

Well, well, Frank, I'm thinking of not doing the picture /and...

FRANCES

You're not?

JIMMY STEWART

I mean I've been talking to friends like Albert and Frances, I mean she has some interesting ideas for the film, George dying on a beach in the Philippine Islands, /and...

CAPRA

(to Frances)

What the hell have you been telling him?

FRANCES

I, I,...

CAPRA

Listen to this, this will get you on board. So here's what I'm planning. We play up your war record, we use it to promote the movie and your return to Hollywood.

JIMMY STEWART

I don't think so, Frank!

CAPRA

Oh sure, audiences will /eat...

JIMMY STEWART

I said NO! You're not selling my life! Is that clear? And I'm not doing your god-damn picture.

CAPRA

What?

JIMMY STEWART

(pause)

I, I don't, think I have what it takes.

FRANCES

That's not true. You have it. You just need a chance to prove it to yourself. Once you're on the/ set...

JIMMY STEWART

I don't know...

FRANCES

Here, try a scene with me. I'll show you.

FRANCES TURNS THE PAGES OF THE SCRIPT.

JIMMY STEWART

It's, it's been five years since I, I can't...

FRANCES

Do it for me.

JIMMY STEWART

I don't think I can do it anymore.

FRANCES

Jimmy, I need to hear if this scene works. Please.

OK, from the nightmare segment, um...

TENSE MOVIE SCORE MUSIC

(reading)

"Exterior, Bailey home. George rings the bell and taps on the glass, when his attention is caught by a sign on the wall reading, Ma Bailey's Boarding House. The door opens and a woman appears".

(emotional)

"It's his mother, but she has changed. Her face is harsh, and tired. In her eyes, once kindly and understanding, there is now cold suspicion. She gives no sign that she knows him."

(Frances as Ma Bailey)

"Well?"

JIMMY STEWART

(reading as George)

"Mother."

FRANCES

(cold, as Ma Bailey)

"Mother? What do you want?"

JIMMY STEWART

(as George)

"Mother! It's me. George."

(emotional)

"I thought, I thought sure you'd remember me."

HORROR MOVIE MUSIC

FRANCES

(as Ma Bailey)

"George who? If you're looking for a room, there's no vacancy.

(reading stage direction)

She starts to close the door, but George stops her."

(Jimmy is into the scene now,
emotional, raw, in distress.)

JIMMY STEWART

(as George)

"Oh, Mother, Mother, please help me. Something terrible's happened to me. I don't know what it is. Something's happened to everybody. Please let me come in. Keep me here until I get over it. Please, let me come back!")

(Jimmy breaks down.)

FRANCES

(reading)

"George's mother slams the door in his face. George stands a moment, stunned. Then turns and runs out to the sidewalk. He sees the angel leaning against the mailbox.

MAGICAL ANGEL BELLS OR CHIMES

(Frances as Angel)

"Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when,

(she nods at Jimmy)

he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"

JIMMY STEWART

(devastated)

"Help me! Oh help me! Please help me."

(Capra applauds loudly.)

CAPRA

Wow! Jimmy. Wow.

(Jimmy pulls himself together.)

FRANCES
(to Jimmy)

You see.

CAPRA
With that performance and our publicizing your war record,
this is going to /be a...

JIMMY STEWART
I said NO publicity about my war record!

CAPRA
Well, maybe a /little...

JIMMY STEWART
And I want that in my contract. Or I don't do the picture!

CAPRA
All right, I can arrange that.

(Jimmy turns to Frances and gives
her a kiss.)

JIMMY STEWART
Frances, thank-you. And Merry Christmas.

FRANCES
Come over for dinner, we can talk more.

JIMMY STEWART
I would like that. Give my best to Albert when he gets back
from...

(OFF - to Capra)
Good-bye, Frank. And ah, Merry Christmas to you too.

CAPRA
Oh yes, and a Happy New Year to you! You go on home, I'll
take care of everything.

FOOTSTEPS - JIMMY EXITS.

(yelling)
I'll send the contracts over later today.

(Capra turns to Frances.)
Yes! He's on board. I knew I could convince him.

FRANCES
It was my script /that...

CAPRA

Now, let's wrap up our business. I'm glad we're alone.

FRANCES

(uncomfortable)

What is it you wanted? Because I guess, Albert should really /be...

CAPRA

Listen, I need to head off any attacks on my studio, people saying I'm using leftist writers, or there won't be a studio, and you won't have a job.

FRANCES

We're not leftists.

CAPRA

Finish the script.

(pause)

And I'll put my name on it.

FRANCES

You'll what?

CAPRA

I'm trying to protect you.

FRANCES

Just your name?

CAPRA

This way people will focus on my name, yours will still be there, maybe, under mine.

(mumbling)

Tiny print.

FRANCES

You're trying to take credit for /my...

CAPRA

Hear me out. What I'm thinking is,

(bullshitting)

I'd like to give you a shot, at maybe, someday, ah, directing. Have you thought about that?

FRANCES

Well, yes I have. There are so few women directors. But wait, your name, /on our...

CAPRA

(All BS)

And I'm not talking about some short, I'm talking about a major picture. Starting out as an, ah, assistant director, maybe a multi-year contract, eventually maybe the director's salary that goes along with it.

FRANCES

But what about the script for /this...

CAPRA

Oh, confound it, are you afraid of success? I'm offering you a shot at directing. Is it a deal or isn't it?

(Frances is silent.)

Take twenty-four hours to think it over.
You go back to the office, talk about it with Albert. Let's shake on it.

(Capra grabs Frances' hand and shakes it. She feels a physical revulsion. She pulls her hand back and wipes it on her dress.)

FRANCES

No...no...no, let get go of my hand! Now wait a minute here! I don't have to talk to anybody! I know right now, and the answer is no! NO goddamn it!

(she's fierce)

You studio heads, you sit around here and you spin your little webs and you think the whole world revolves around you and your money. Well, it doesn't, Frank. In the... in the whole vast configuration of things, I'd say you were nothing but a little weasel.

CAPRA

What did /you...

FRANCES

You're just trying to beat back the writers, to claim credit for yourself.

CAPRA

They're all my pictures. Mine alone.

FRANCES

No they aren't! They're the writers'.

CAPRA

Writers!

FRANCES

It's our lives, our pain, our suffering that's spilled on the page. Not yours.

CAPRA

Without me, these movies don't exist.
How many Oscars do they have? Huh?

FRANCES

It's not /about...

CAPRA

How many do you have? What have you done? Who knows your name?

FRANCES

For your information, I am writing this script, by myself!
Albert's not involved. So you're getting my script!

FRANCES THROWS HER SCRIPT AT CAPRA.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Look at it. And in this script, Mary's the hero. Here, take it.

CAPRA

Hero? A woman?

FRANCES

And she beats the banker fat cats and all the men, and all the weasels trying to hold her down!

(Frances begins to walk out. OFF)

Weasels! That's all you are!

FRANCES STORMS OUT.

SEGMENT 2:

A BAR - THAT NIGHT.

DASH

Bartender, another round for a pair of has-been writers.

ALBERT ANGRILY SCRATCHES OUT
EVERYTHING ON THE PAGE.

ALBERT

Shit - shit - shit!

DASH
Scratch it all out. Got em' all Albert?

ALBERT
God-damn, shitty, shit writing.

DASH
Did you kill them all?
(points to the page)
You missed one. Let me see.

DASH GRABS THE PAGE
A play set in a graveyard?
(looks at page)
F. Scott Fitzgerald and two gravediggers?

ALBERT
Dash, give it back.

DASH
(reading)
"Gravedigger: If the man goes into the water and drowns himself, he is the one doing it."

ALBERT
Give /me...

DASH
"Fitzgerald: But if the water comes to him and drowns him, then he doesn't drown himself."

ALBERT
Give me the page.

ALBERT GRABS THE PAGE OUT OF DASH'S
HAND AND RIPS IT UP.

DASH
Really? This is your play? Gravediggers talking? Where have I heard that?

ALBERT
It's all dead, lifeless.

DASH
A lifeless corpse.

ALBERT
It died, that's for sure.

DASH

(beat)

Lilly says the day after I die she is going to write my biography.

ALBERT

Trust me, if Lilly writes your biography, you will at best be a minor character.

DASH

I tell her, no need to wait, I've been dead for years.

ALBERT

No, don't /say...

DASH

I stopped writing not long after we met. After she published "The Children's Hour".

ALBERT

Well, you were already the hottest thing in Hollywood.

DASH

After that, I don't remember much.

ALBERT

You got sick.

DASH

(beat)

You're lucky.

ALBERT

Yeah, right.

DASH

You need each other.

ALBERT

That's lucky?

DASH

Lilly doesn't need me to write.

ALBERT

She says she can't write without you.

DASH

She doesn't need me to write. Not like you and Frances. Where is Frances?

ALBERT

Back at the office. Lilly's giving her notes.

DASH

I loved my Lilly's notes. They were vicious.

ALBERT

I don't even know if I can do this, alone, anymore.

DASH

(a wink and a nod)

You don't have to be "alone". This is Hollywood. You think Chuck Laughton, Tyrone Powers, Noel Coward are, "alone"?

ALBERT

I didn't mean it like that...I mean "alone", as a writer.

DASH

Oh, I thought...OK Listen, you're drunk, and I'm drunk, and I'm just exactly drunk enough to be honest.

ALBERT

Am I any good at this? Tell me the truth.

DASH

No.

ALBERT

No?

DASH

No. You're half good.

ALBERT

(pause)

Half a writer.

SEGMENT 3 -

THE WRITERS' OFFICE - THAT NIGHT.

LILLIAN

What about the draft I read, the one you wrote with Albert?

FRANCES

It's the worst thing we've ever written.

LILLIAN

I wouldn't say that. I've read /other...

FRANCES

Oh, thanks a lot.

LILLIAN

What's wrong with it?

FRANCES

Where do I start? Oh my god! The George character is nothing but a pain in the ass to Mary.

The soda shop scene? He talks her ear off, doesn't ever ask her anything about her life? Her dreams. It's all about him.

They walk home together in locker room clothes, Mary loses her bathrobe and has to hide in a bush. George refuses to give her the robe!

LILLIAN

That's not cute, that's a bully taking advantage of a vulnerable woman.

FRANCES

That's right! George does not deserve Mary.

Then four years later, Mary has just graduated college, that's a big deal for a girl in 1932.

George finally decides to stop by Mary's. He belittles her life, her home, her drawing! How dare he! Then they get married. What? Why?

LILLIAN HOLDS UP FRANCES'S SCRIPT.

LILLIAN

So good for you, you wrote a new draft. What's the title?

FRANCES

"She's Wonderful".

LILLIAN

I like it. And I like your main character, this "Mary", the librarian, you made her strong.

FRANCES

She is strong.

LILLIAN

Of course she is, she left her worthless drunk of a husband.

FRANCES

Damn right.

LILLIAN

And you made her stand up more to this banker, this Potter shithead, not be so powerless. But you need to go further. She needs to organize, take control of the library board, give the power back to the people. And make sure she gets paid for what she's worth.

FRANCES

I like that. I'm going to put that in the next draft.

LILLIAN

And make her a Socialist.

FRANCES

That might be a little dangerous.

LILLIAN

Don't be a pussy, make her a goddamn Socialist!

FRANCES

Oh, it feels good to write this way.

LILLIAN

By yourself.

FRANCES

My story. For once.
I gave a draft to Capra.
I don't need a man to write with. I guess I'm like you. You don't need Dash.

LILLIAN

(pause)

I could have never written without Hammett.

FRANCES

What? You? You with all your awards? "Lillian Hellman" needed a man, to write?

LILLIAN

And he was always so critical. After he read one of my first plays, he said, "Tear this up and throw it away. It's worse than bad- it's half good".

FRANCES

That's terrible.

LILLIAN

I walked out on him.

FRANCES

Good for you.

LILLIAN

I came back a week later, and rewrote it.

(remembering)

He read it as I slept on the couch. I woke up, Hammett was sitting beside me, patting my hair, grinning at me, nodding.

FRANCES

I don't think anyone knows that about you.

LILLIAN

And when he wasn't around, which was frequent, my writing stalled. I was afraid he didn't need me.

(weepy)

And now, I'm losing him.

FRANCES

Like my Albert.

LILLIAN

Don't let that happen.

FRANCES

I mean, I don't really need him, you know for...

LILLIAN

Of course not. This is 1940s Hollywood. You think Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Claudette Colbert, need a man?

FRANCES

No, no. I'm not...I meant, I don't need a man to write with.

LILLIAN

Oh. Oh, listen, It's not about that. It's about, not being alone.

DASH COMES RUNNING IN

DASH (OFF)

(to Lillian)

Have you seen the papers?

Well, you're not the only ones the FBI's after. Listen.

(reading newspaper)

"Drawing upon writers named by Hollywood insiders,

LILLIAN

Traitors!

DASH (ON)
(reading)

"The House Un-American Activities Committee subpoenaed persons working in the Hollywood film industry to testify at hearings."

LILLIAN
Who'd they get?

DASH
(reading)
Um, "Rapf, Cole, Koch, Buchman, Trumbo".

LILLIAN
Bastards! They're trying to split us up, divide us, they think we'll turn on each other.

FRANCES
(gasp)
Harry's son has polio. Amy Cole has cancer!

DASH
The Guild needs to set up a fund.

FOOTSTEPS AS ALBERT WALKS IN.

ALBERT (OFF)
How much do we need? I've got four thousand dollars right here.

(Everyone turns and sees Albert.)

LILLIAN
I thought you had deserted.

FRANCES
You're back?
(beat)
Wait, that's the money for your play?

DASH
That's fantastic old man.

ALBERT (ON)
Well, I hate to quit now when the writings going so well.

FRANCES
Really? Going so well?

ALBERT
But ah, goddamn it, we have to stop this McCarthy thing.

FRANCES

So you're not going? You're not...

(to everyone)

And, I am going to match Albert's donation.

(Everyone applauds.)

LILLIAN

What I want to know is, how's the FBI getting names, who's talking to them?

DASH

That's easy. Capra's giving names.

LILLIAN

To that goddamn Agent.

FRANCES

Albert! That "bank examiner", waiting for Frank, outside his office...

ALBERT

Do you think he's /the...

FRANCES

Capra, mentioned an "Agent", I thought "Hollywood agent", but no.

DASH

Of course it's him.

LILLIAN

Oh Dash, you haven't lost it. You solved it! You're still my favorite dick.

DASH

(to Frances)

Lillian told me about your latest draft. You better not let Capra get his hands on it.

FRANCES

(panicking)

Oh no.

ALBERT

What draft?

DASH

Capra will use it to take the heat off himself. The FBI needs names.

FRANCES

(dawns on her)

My scenes with Mary organizing workers against the banker.
He's setting us up.

DASH

That's right.

FRANCES

(panicking, to Albert)

Albert, we need to get out of here. Let's go to New York,
right now, let's just go, go...

ALBERT

What's the matter? What happened? Tell me.

FRANCES

He has it.

ALBERT

He has what?

FRANCES

My script. Capra has it.

ALBERT

The script? We're still/ writing...

FRANCES

No. My script. I gave him my script. The one I wrote, without
you.

(beat)

That bastard's going to give it to the FBI.

END EPISODE 4

=====

EPISODE 5: YOU SEE, GEORGE, YOU REALLY HAD A WONDERFUL LIFE.

HOST

Welcome to the final episode of "Wonderful".
The Story Beyond The Story. A historical fiction anthology
podcast series.

"It's a Wonderful Life" is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy
film produced and directed by Frank Capra. It was initially a
major disappointment and confirmed, at least to the studios,
that Capra's career was most likely finished. It's a
Wonderful Life is now considered one of the greatest films of
all time.

A note to listeners, this podcast contains some adult
language, well that's Hollywood.

(beat)

It's 1945, we are in Director Frank Capra's office on the
studio lot of "Liberty Films" in Culver City, California.

SEGMENT 1:

HOST

Screenwriter FRANCES GOODRICH and husband ALBERT HACKETT sit
nervously. Capra comes in covered with fake snow.

A DOOR CRASHES OPEN

CAPRA

What's this about? I'm in the middle of testing the new/
snow...

ALBERT

We need our script back.

CAPRA

On Christmas Eve?

(pause)

Oh. That.

FRANCES

You know exactly what /we're...

CAPRA

That's what the FBI was calling about.

FRANCES

Where is it?

FRANCES MOVES TO CAPRA'S DESK AND
STARTS LOOKING MADLY THROUGH HIS
PAPERS.

CAPRA

Get away from my/ desk...

ALBERT

The FBI? That didn't take you long.

FRANCES (OFF)

Where's my script?

CAPRA

Get your hands off my/ papers...

ALBERT

Get your hands off my/ wife...

ALBERT VIOLENTLY PULLS CAPRA AWAY
FROM FRANCES.

I said don't touch/ her...

CAPRA

Your script? "She's Wonderful"? They wanted to know who wrote it. There were no names on the draft.

FRANCES

I'll bet they called you.

CAPRA

Terrible title by the way.

(beat)

Anyway, they said they were sending an agent. Said they were looking for you, Albert. I guess they assumed you wrote that draft. Full of socialist rantings against bankers and capitalism?

FRANCES (ON)

Frank, I take full responsibility for that script.

ALBERT

(to Frances)

What? No, we are in this together. Whatever happens.

FRANCES

We'll give you back what we've been paid, with interest, just return /the...

CAPRA

I don't know. I'm a little concerned myself with this Communist threat we are facing.

ALBERT

Bull shit. You just want to use this to get the FBI off your back.

CAPRA

Or maybe, I just love my country a little more than you do. I didn't notice you two putting your lives on the line during the last war.

FRANCES

(last chance)

Frank, please, you have to know what this will mean!

CAPRA

You wanted to write your own story, you wouldn't take my notes, well, are you ready to pay the price?

FRANCES

I am. But I will not put Albert through this.

ALBERT

Frances, no!

FRANCES

He didn't write it. It's my story. You have to tell them.

ALBERT

Frances!

CAPRA

I see. I've suddenly become quite important to you.

(condescending)

Look at you. You used to be so cocky! You called me a little weasel. What are you two but frustrated, miserable little studio writers crawling in here on your hands and knees and begging for help.

(pause)

Well, the Agent should be here any minute, maybe he can help you.

FRANCES

I'll have you know the last thing Albert wanted to do was come begging. That was /my...

ALBERT

(to Frances)

We need to get out of here.

CAPRA

(to Albert)

You mean "crawl" out, don't you Albert?

ALBERT PULLS FRANCES OUT OF THE OFFICE.

FRANCES

I'll have you know, he's bigger than everybody in this /town...

ALBERT (OFF)

Come on, Frances hurry we need to get out of here.

CAPRA

So you want to be a "name"? Well, here's your chance. Now you see, you've been named.

ALBERT OPENS THE DOOR AND FREEZES.

(In the doorway stands the Agent.)

CAPRA (CONT'D)

Look who's here for/ you...

AGENT (OFF)

(to Albert)

Are you, "Albert Hackett"?

CAPRA

See, they finally know who you are, Albert.

(to Agent)

Yes, that's him. Take him, take him.

AGENT (ON)

You need to come with me.

ALBERT

Why? What have I done?

AGENT

Don't make me arrest you.

(The Agent takes Albert by the arm.)

FRANCES

Take your hands off him!

AGENT

Who are you now?

CAPRA

She's the wife.

AGENT

I just need the writer.

FRANCES

You have no right, you fascist. Besides, I'm the writer. Arrest me.

AGENT

(to Albert)

Oh, she's feisty.

ALBERT

You have no idea.

AGENT

Let's go.

FRANCES

No, take me. I'm the writer. It's my work. It's me you should be arresting!

THE AGENT PUSHES ALBERT OUT THE
DOOR - IT SLAMS SHUT.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(calling)

Albert! Albert!

SEGMENT 2:

A FEW HOURS LATER - BACK AT THE
OFFICE.

FRANCES

(on phone)

Just listening to the radio.

(pause)

Lilly, I can't talk I want to keep the line open. I'll call if I hear from him.

FRANCES TUNES IN A RADIO SHOW

ANNOUNCER ONE

It's time for "My Favorite Husband" starring Lucille Ball.

LUCILLE

Jello, everybody.

ANNOUNCER ONE

Yes, it's the new family series starring Lucille Ball with Richard Denning, brought to you by the Jello family of desserts.

SINGER

J-E-L-L-O.

FRANCES

Come on phone, ring, please ring.

ANNOUNCER ONE

And now Lucille Ball with Richard Denning, as Liz and George Cooper, two people who live together, and like it.

FRANCES FLIPS THE RADIO DIAL.

ANNOUNCER TWO

Ah, ah, ah don't touch that dial, listen /to...

DAGWOOD

(screaming)

Blondie!

A LOUD KNOCK ON THE DOOR. FRANCES JUMPS.

AGENT (OFF)

(loud)

Open up. FBI.

FRANCES TURNS OFF THE RADIO

I said, open up. I know you're there!

SFX: HORROR MOVIE MUSIC SCORE

Don't make me bust this door down.

BOOM! THE AGENT BUSTS THE DOOR DOWN AND CRASHES IN.

Put your hands up, and come out!

Get up!

THE AGENT VIOLENTLY GRABS FRANCES.

FRANCES

Ouch! What do you want? Let go of me. Where's Albert?

AGENT (ON)

Be a good girl now and he doesn't get hurt.

FRANCES

I want you to release Albert. Right now.

AGENT

I read his communist inspired script. My report will kill your movie, and your careers. Is that what you want?

FRANCES

That's ridiculous! There's nothing in that script that's un-American.

AGENT

That's not what my report will say. It's gonna say, listen to this.

FLIPS THROUGH NOTEBOOK PAGES

(reads from his notebook)

"It is a rather obvious attempt to discredit bankers. The Potter character is the most hated man in the /picture...

FRANCES

Of course, he's destroying the town.

AGENT

A common trick used by Communists. Deliberately malign bankers, the upper class, the backbone of America.

FRANCES

He's not the backbone. The backbone is the everyday American who's fighting /against...

AGENT

The script is subversive. You want to kill the picture? If not, give me some names. Maybe those commies, Hellman and Hammett. Then you write an American movie, with your name on it. How does that sound. Two birds.

FRANCES

I will /never...

AGENT

If you don't, there is no movie, we shut it down. So no come-back for your Jimmy Stewart, no Capra picture, no Union jobs for the crew, no "Frances Goodrich" name on the screenplay. Is that the world you want?

FRANCES

No.

AGENT

If you want your movie, and your Albert, I need to bring back a name.

(pause)

What about Capra?

FRANCES

Capra?

AGENT

We know about his, involvement with un-American groups.

FRANCES

He was in the war.

AGENT

It's a shame when they turn.

FRANCES

Oh, how I would love to see that man get his...

AGENT

Yes, that's right.

FRANCES

(to herself)

Think what I could do to him.

AGENT

Do your duty as an American.

FRANCES

Kill this picture.

AGENT

That's right.

FRANCES

We could leave this god-awful town.

AGENT

That's the spirit. What do you have for us?
What do you have on him?

FRANCES

(long pause)

Nothing.

AGENT

So, no names? Not even Capra?

FRANCES

NO! Lilly's right. You think you can divide us, turn one American against another. No!

AGENT

(beat)

Alright then, let me try one last thing.
I hate to put a lady in this position, but it's for the good of the country. Look at these photos.

(Frances takes a photo, turns it sideways, and twists her head. She throws it back down.)

FRANCES

You people are despicable.

AGENT

And your Albert? And what he's doing here in this photo. With men? This is the husband you want to protect?

FRANCES RIPS UP THE PHOTO.

Don't rip that...That's FBI evidence.

FRANCES

I'm sure you have plenty of "evidence" like this for your entertainment.

(The Agent picks up the torn photo and waves it at Frances.)

AGENT

I'm wondering why you would even want to be with a man like this. If you can even call him that. Give me Albert.

FRANCES

Albert is a thousand times better American than all you people put together. How can you do this? How can you?

AGENT

I'm fighting for the country I love.
(emotional)
For the men, we lost.

SENTIMENTAL MUSIC

FRANCES

(to herself)

The man I've lost.

(pause)

I wish we had never come to Hollywood.

AGENT

What'd you say?

FRANCES

I said I wish I had never come to this town.

AGENT

Hmm, that's an idea.

FRANCES

Where has it gotten me? I try to do something on my own, write my own story, and now what? I've put Albert in danger.

AGENT

So you don't want to be a Hollywood writer?

FRANCES

I just want Albert/ back...

AGENT

OK, well, here's an idea. Admit you're a Communist, and, poof, you've got your wish. You're no longer a Hollywood writer.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

(In comes Dash.)

FRANCES

Dash! You shouldn't be here.

DASH (OFF)

(to Agent)

I thought I might find that FBI agent here.

AGENT

(to Frances)

So, one of your commie writer friends.

FRANCES

Dash, what are /you...

DASH (ON)

(to Agent)

I want you to know, I wrote that script!

AGENT

So it was you.

FRANCES

Dash, no!

(to Agent)

He didn't write it. He's just trying to /protect...

DASH

Take me in. Release Albert, I know for a fact he had nothing to do with it.

AGENT

OK. As long as you're ready to talk.

THE DOOR BANGS OPEN. LILLIAN STORMS
IN.

LILLIAN (OFF)

(to Agent)

There you are, dick face.

FRANCES

Lillian, be careful what /you say...

AGENT

It looks like a Communist cell meeting now!

LILLIAN (ON)

I'm here to turn myself in. I wrote that damn script.

DASH

Lill, I just told him I wrote it.

LILLIAN

Oh, you're too soused to write.

(to Agent)

He hasn't written a word in ten years. There's no way he could have written that script. Arrest me, I'm the author, you son of a bitch.

DASH

She didn't write it. You think she could write that kind of sentimental sap? You know you can't believe a word she says. I'm the author.

AGENT

So who actually wrote this thing?

FRANCES / DASH / LILLIAN

I did!

JIMMY STEWART COMES IN.

AGENT

I need the real writer. Now.

JIMMY STEWART (OFF)

If you have to know, I, I wrote that, that script!

(ON)

Now if you're going to arrest anyone, it's going to be me!

FRANCES

Jimmy, not you too!

JIMMY STEWART

No, no I can play this part.

AGENT

You're "Jimmy Stewart".

JIMMY STEWART

There now, now you got a name. OK, take me, lock me up.

AGENT

Arrest Jimmy Stewart?

DASH

Yeah, how do you think that's going to look?

LILLIAN

Go ahead, lock up a war hero, asshole.

CAPRA COMES BUSTING IN.

AGENT

(confused)

Now, who do I arrest?

CAPRA

Jimmy, I have been looking all over for you. What are you doing here with these, people?

JIMMY STEWART

I'm about to be arrested.

CAPRA

For what?

JIMMY

For writing a script! This is a dangerous country, now Frank.

CAPRA

Oh, hogwash. You didn't write that.

(to agent)

He didn't write that script. He doesn't even want to be in Hollywood.

AGENT

(losing it)

Well, I need a name. I need a name. Who wrote it? If you want this picture, I need a name!

FRANCES/DASH/LILLIAN/JIMMY

I did! It was me. That's me.

CAPRA

(to Frances)

Frances, give him a name, or this picture never gets made.

AGENT

Or I arrest all of you pinkos.

FRANCES

OK, hold on, hold on. I have the real script. The one with our names on it.

AGENT

Give it to me.

CAPRA

I don't know anything about that script.

FRANCES

Of course you don't. It was the draft Albert and I wrote, together. Before I started, writing on my own.

(Frances goes to the desk and pulls out a script.)

CAPRA

What about the script you gave me?

FRANCES

(regretful)

That wasn't a, "Hackett script". Here, this is our script.

AGENT

So this is the real script. Probably more communist propaganda.

FRANCES

(to Agent)

This is the most American movie script ever written and I'll prove it to you.

AGENT

This ought to be rich. I got you two dead to rights now.

FRANCES

That's where you're wrong. The country needs our picture. I see that now. Wait till you hear it, you'll let Albert go.

(pause)

Jimmy, Lilly, Dash, can you help read?

JIMMY STEWART

You're gonna read it to him?

AGENT

A command performance. Good, I want to hear this.

CAPRA

(to Agent)

Like I said, I don't know anything about this.

(Lillian, Dash, and Jimmy walk over to Frances.)

LILLIAN

(to Frances)

Frances, are you sure you want to give evidence to this prick?

FRANCES

We need to tell this story. After all this world's been through...maybe, maybe we can show there is still some, some good...Help me.

(to Lillian, Dash, and Jimmy)

I'll point to your parts.

CAPRA

(to Agent)

Nothin' to do with this script.

(Lillian, Dash, and Jimmy stand next to Frances who holds the script.)

FRANCES

(reading)

"Fade in, night sequence. It is Christmas Eve. We hear voices praying."

MOVIE SCORE MUSIC

LILLIAN

(Gower's Voice)

"I owe everything to George Bailey. Help him, dear father."

DASH

(Martini's voice)

"Joseph, Jesus and Mary. Help a-my friend Mr. Bailey."

FRANCES

(Mary's voice)

"I love him, dear Lord. Watch over him tonight."

JIMMY STEWART

(Harry's voice)

"Keep my big brother safe!"

The Agent breaks as he hears the word "brother".

TIME PASSES - THE READING
PROGRESSES.

FRANCES

(reading)

"Gower, the old pharmacist, starts hitting George about the head with his open hands.

SLAP!

George tries to protect himself as best he can."

SLAP!

JIMMY STEWART

(as Young George)

"Ouch! Ouch!"

LILLIAN

(as Gower)

"What kind of tricks are you playing, anyway? Why didn't you deliver those pills right away? Don't you know that boy's very sick?"

JIMMY STEWART

(sobbing, as Young George)

"Mr. Gower, you don't know what you're doing. You put something wrong in those capsules. I know you're unhappy. You got that telegram, your son died of influenza, you couldn't be with him and you're upset."

FRANCES

(reading)

"George pulls the little box out of his pocket. Gower savagely rips it away from him, breathing heavily, staring at the boy venomously."

JIMMY STEWART

(as Young George)

"Just look and see what you did. Look at the bottle you took the powder from. It's poison! I tell you, it's poison! I know you feel bad... and...don't hurt my sore ear again."

FRANCES

(reading)

"Gower sweeps the boy to him in a hug and, sobbing hoarsely, crushes the boy in his embrace. George is crying too."

LILLIAN

(as Gower)

"Oh, George, George..."

(The Agent hides a tear as Capra cries openly.)

TIME PASSES AS THE READING DRAWS TO A CLOSE.

FRANCES

(reading)

"George wandering like a lost soul among the tombstones, Clarence trotting at his heels."

DASH

(as Clarence)

"Your brother, Harry Bailey, broke through the ice and was drowned at the age of nine."

(The Agent cries.)

JIMMY STEWART

(as Older George)

"That's a lie! Harry Bailey went to war! He got the Congressional Medal of Honor! He saved the lives of every man on that transport."

DASH

(as Clarence)

"Every man on that transport died. Harry wasn't there to save them because you weren't there to save Harry. You see, George, you really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?"

(The Agent and Capra sob openly.)

CAPRA

It's beautiful.

AGENT
He has to live. He has to live.

CAPRA
This may be my best work ever.

AGENT
I wasn't there to save him.

THE AGENT STILL WEEPING, BOLTS OUT
THE DOOR.

AGENT (OFF)
I couldn't save him...I couldn't...

FRANCES
(yelling after Agent)
Wait! What about Albert?

LILLIAN
(yelling)
Run away you little shit!

CAPRA
Jimmy, I need that contract signed.

JIMMY STEWART
Not if the Hacketts are off the picture!

FRANCES
You fire us, we'll sue your ass, and hold up your blasted
movie till your god-damn studio goes broke.

LILLIAN
That's my girl.

DASH
That's telling him.

CAPRA
All right, all right.
(to Frances)
You've got two weeks.

CAPRA STORMS OUT.

FRANCES
I need Albert. I need him.

SEGMENT 3:

HOST

Writers' office - a few hours later.

THE RADIO PLAYS CHRISTMAS MUSIC.

Frances sits nervously by the phone.
She gets up and begins to rearrange all of the decorations on the Christmas tree. She sees the flower petals on the floor and picks them up.

FRANCES

(to herself)

Albert's, flowers.

(praying)

If you're there, which seems a little unlikely these days, but if you are, if you can hear me, help Albert. I don't care what happens to me. Only please, please, bring him home.

She sits in silence.

and then...

ALBERT RUSHES IN.

ALBERT (OFF)

Frances! Frances!

FRANCES

Albert! You're back.

ALBERT

Frances.

FRANCES

Are you OK? Are you hurt?

ALBERT

I had no idea this was happening, in this country.

FRANCES

They let you go.

ALBERT

Yes. They never got a name.

(confused)

The Agent let me go. He said he wanted us to finish writing the movie?

(beat)
 Anyway, we need to get attorneys for all the other writers
 they've arrested.

THEY WALK TO THE PHONE TOGETHER.

FRANCES
 You must have a guardian angel.

ALBERT
 It's you. It's always been you.

FRANCES
 Oh, Albert.

ALBERT
 I have to tell you something.

FRANCES
 Look, I put up our tree.

ALBERT
 They have photos, of me, and some /other...

FRANCES
 Do you like the lights?

ALBERT
 I have to /explain...

FRANCES
 I don't need to hear. I knew what the unspoken deal was when
 I married you. That's your life,
 (pause)
 And this, this is our life.

ALBERT
 I want to stay. I want to fight. With you.

FRANCES
 You want to fight with me?

ALBERT
 You know what I mean, with you, for you, for your stories.

THEY PICK UP THE PHONE AND BEGIN
 DIALING

(to phone)
 It's the Hacketts, calling for Mr. Margolis.

(pause)
Yes, he's our attorney.

FRANCES
I've been thinking, I mean, if you need to go to New York and write plays, that's what we'll do.

(Albert grabs Frances by the shoulders and shakes her.)

ALBERT
Listen to me. I don't need New York, I don't need my plays, I just need you.

(Albert begins to pull Frances to him to hug her - but then stops.)

FRANCES
Oh, Albert...Albert.
(pause)
Wait. This could be a scene.

ALBERT
(pause)
Oh, interesting. Second act?

SENTIMENTAL MUSIC

FRANCES
Yes. Mary's on the phone, with...

ALBERT
The guy she's engaged to.

FRANCES
Sam Wainright!

ALBERT
George's friend that's left town, and made good.

FRANCES
Yes! And George says something like, like you were saying.

ALBERT
(acting)
Ah, "Now you listen to me! I don't want any", what would Sam be telling him to go into?

FRANCES
Ah...we'll think of something.

ALBERT

"I don't want any, something". Maybe plastics?

FRANCES

(as George)

"I don't want any ground floors..."

ALBERT

(as George)

"and I don't want to get married - ever - to anyone! You understand that? I want to do what I want to do. And you're...and you're...Oh, Frances.

(They hug and hold each other.)

SECRETARY

Hello? I have Mr. Margolis on the line. Hello?

ALBERT

You're wonderful.

FRANCES

Yes. We're wonderful.

=====

BONUS SCENE:

HOST

Writers' Office - Two weeks later.
The Christmas decorations have been replaced with a few New Years' hats and streamers.
Albert is hunched over the typewriter. Frances stands holding pages as she acts out the scene.

FRANCES

(reading)

"Ernie hands Harry a glass of wine."

(as "Harry")

"Good idea, Ernie. A toast... to my big brother, George. The richest man in town!"

ALBERT

(reading)

"The crowd breaks into cheering and applause. Janie at the piano and Bert on his accordion start playing. They all sing."

FRANCES / ALBERT

(singing very slowly)

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne!*

(Lillian and Dash enter.)

FRANCES

Lilly, Dash! I'm so glad you're here.

ALBERT

We will never forget what you all did for us.

DASH

And you don't even offer us a drink?

ALBERT

Of course, what am I thinking.

LILLIAN

You done with that rewrite?

FRANCES

Just finished.

DASH

What about that awful title?

ALBERT

We changed it.

FRANCES / ALBERT

"It's A Wonderful Life".

FRANCES

We're handing in the script tomorrow, cleaning out the office, and leaving Capra's studio forever.

LILLIAN

Good. Now, I want to tell you about a manuscript my publisher just received. They think it could be a play.

ALBERT

Oh Lilly, we are so tired.

FRANCES

A play? Albert did you hear?

LILLIAN

I told them to recommend the Hacketts to the Broadway Producer.

DASH

What's the title of the manuscript?

LILLIAN

It's called, "The Annex: Diary Notes".

FRANCES

That's an odd title. Who wrote it?

(Albert pours the drinks.)

LILLIAN

It's a diary. Written by an unknown young Jewish Dutch girl, who died in a concentration camp.

FRANCES

Oh, Lilly.

LILLIAN

The whole family was forced to hide, for two years above her father's business, during the Nazi occupation.

(moved)

Before they were...

FRANCES

(to Albert)

Albert, this would be a play? On Broadway.

ALBERT

Forget it.

LILLIAN

I told my publisher I couldn't write it, I would be too angry. I said if you're thinking of bringing it to the stage, talk to Albert and Frances.

FRANCES

Broadway, Albert.

ALBERT

No. We're staying in Hollywood.

FRANCES

Well, a toast to that young writer then.

LILLIAN

To unnamed writers everywhere.

DASH

Who have given us their lives.

THEY CLINK GLASSES, IT SOUNDS LIKE
BELLS RINGING.

FRANCES

(to Albert)

You know, it might be kind of fun to write a play together.

(to Lillian)

Lill, did you say "annex"? What does it mean, an "annex"?

LILLIAN

I don't know, like an attic I suppose.

ALBERT

(inspired)

The whole play could take place in an attic.

FRANCES

The whole play?

ALBERT

Yes. Hiding, in an attic.

FRANCES

Wow!

Ok. The curtain rises... ALBERT

On an empty attic... FRANCES

Yes. ALBERT

We hear the young woman's voice. FRANCES

ALBERT
(acting)
"Our hiding place was to be upstairs, in the, ah..."

FRANCES
"In the, in the building. Where Father used to have his
business".

ALBERT
(softly)
Wow!

THE PLAY ENDS