

A CROWDED CONSCIENCE

by Carmel Garvin Hearn

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: Chris, a faithful church volunteer, has been asked to pitch in yet again. As she contemplates her decision, characters from her inner self “pop in” to give their advice on the subject. In the end, she realizes there is only one source she should consult.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: Timing will be very important, as many of the characters' lines overlap each other. When should the actors all speak at once? How do you stop them and move on with the scripted lines? How can the scripted lines be heard if everyone is ad-libbing? Timing, and the bigger problem of stage focus (see Theatre Term Definition) requires two critical factors:

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 5

TOPIC: Prayer, Church Life

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 100:2, Galatians 5:16-17, Philippians 4:13

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon Illustration; Evangelism

CHARACTERS:

CHRIS—a faithful church member (written for a female but can be a male)

DEVIL—classic “devil on shoulder” type

ANGEL—classic “angel on shoulder” type

SCHEDULER—efficient secretarial type

WAREHOUSE WORKER—a salt-of-earth, blue-collar type

PROPS: Stool; cordless phone; day planner; cumbersome cardboard box

COSTUMES: Classic “devil” and “angel” costumes may be used, but are not necessary. The DEVIL should at least wear a red shirt and sport little plastic red horns, and the ANGEL should wear white/tinsel halo; SCHEDULER/contemporary business attire; the WAREHOUSE WORKER should look like the UPS guy or any kind of delivery person, Chris/casual.

SOUND: Wireless microphones

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: Living room/kitchen

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As the lights come up, CHRIS, seated on a stool, is in the middle of a phone conversation.

CHRIS: So...you thought about me right away. Gosh, I would have imagined a lot of people who could handle this better than me. Like Gloria Goodman...oh, going to visit grandkids in California...for the whole month? Gee, that's too bad...I mean that's great for Gloria but...HEY, what about Agnes Dayton? Didn't she do this thing like three years running? Surely she has more experience than...yes, I suppose you're right...How is she recovering since her triple bypass surgery? Slowly but surely...O-KAY. Well, there must be SOMEBODY else...I'm the last person on your list of hopefuls? How about Sue Sussman! Bob Baker? Penelope *(Gets cut off)* ...Mark *(gets cut off...starts to say another name but can't get in a word...becomes dejected)* Everybody, huh? Well, I'll have to check my calendar, um...I mean, pray about it, and I'll let you know by Sunday. Okay? All right. See you then. *(Hangs up)* Why is it that every time a job needs to be done around church the first person anybody thinks of is ME? I've been a Sunday School teacher, I've sat on just about every committee, I sing in the choir, I've even ushered. You'd think they'd think enough is enough. But I guess until I say it, they'll keep piling on the chores. The only way to get out of it will be to move my membership or kick the bucket.

DEVIL "pops in" from behind the backdrop and props elbow on CHRIS' right shoulder.

DEVIL: You said it, sister. You don't need to put up with all the junk they give you to do! How many people are in that church, anyway? I'll bet most of them just darken the door on Sundays, whenever they feel like it, while the faithful few like you do all of the work.

CHRIS: What?

ANGEL "pops in" from behind the backdrop and places hand on CHRIS' left shoulder.

ANGEL: Wait a minute! Don't listen to him! He's full of gloom and doom, always seeing the worst in every situation and always trying to get you to think, not of others, but only of yourself.

DEVIL: And what's wrong with that?

CHRIS: Oh, I get it. It's the classic devil on one shoulder and angel on the other. Well, guys, it's not a simple decision between good and bad. It's not a black and white thing like doing drugs or killing somebody. This is a definite gray area. No matter how I decide, someone will end up getting hurt.

SCHEDULER "pops in" from behind the backdrop and stands next to DEVIL.

SCHEDULER: I couldn't have said it better myself!