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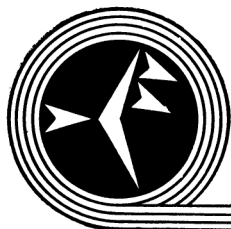
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Dramatic Publishing



HARTZELL SPENCE'S

One Foot in Heaven

DRAMATIZED BY
ANNE COULTER MARTENS

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

One Foot in Heaven

**Comedy. Adapted by Anne Coulter Martens.
Based on the book by Hartzell Spence.**

Cast: 8m., 10w. The rundown parsonage at their new parish comes as a shock—but that's only the beginning. Reverend Spence finds the church building coming apart, the congregation split into warring factions and the choir “a cross between the devil's grandmother and a swarm of mountain wildcats.” Eileen and Hartzell, his teenage children, are disgusted at having been yanked out of a comfortable parsonage and a fine high school. But then Hartzell meets pretty Louise, and Eileen is introduced to the football captain. The humorous complications that result make even more difficulties for Reverend Spence. His struggle to build a new church, organize a new choir, and crush intolerance leads to a pitched battle among his flock and then the very threat of being dismissed from the clergy. On the day he is to leave for a conference at which he must defend himself, Reverend Spence has a minor accident that puts him in bed. At the same time, Hartzell's personal complications have led him not only to the brink of romantic disaster, but right into the local jail—just when the entire future of the Spence family depends on him! The surprising conclusion brings down the curtain on an evening that both entertains and lifts the spirit. *One int. set.*

10 ISBN: 0-87129-224-6

13 ISBN: 978-0-87129-224-7



9 780871 292247

www.dramaticpublishing.com

Code: O-14



printed on recycled paper



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DRAMATIZED BY

ANNE COULTER MARTENS

FROM THE NOVEL BY

HARTZELL SPENCE



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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Based upon the book, “One Foot in Heaven”
by HARTZELL SPENCE
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(ONE FOOT IN HEAVEN)

ISBN 0-87129-224-6

One Foot in Heaven

A Play in Three Acts

FOR EIGHT MEN AND TEN WOMEN

CHARACTERS

REVEREND WILLIAM H. SPENCE	<i>a minister</i>
HOPE SPENCE	<i>his wife</i>
HARTZELL	<i>their son</i>
EILEEN	<i>their daughter</i>
DR. ROMER	<i>a good friend</i>
LOUISE	<i>a pretty miss</i>
MARIA	<i>a pretty Mexican girl</i>
MOLLY	<i>a crusader</i>
RONNY	<i>her brother</i>
LETTY	<i>a pest</i>
MRS. SANDOW	<i>a proud woman</i>
MRS. DIGBY	<i>a choir singer</i>
GEORGIE	<i>her son</i>
MRS. CAMBRIDGE }	<i>church workers</i>
MRS. JELLISON }	
MAJOR COOPER	<i>a man of sixty</i>
BISHOP SHERWOOD	<i>a just man</i>

* * *

REVEREND FRASER SPENCE *Prologue and Narration*

PLACE: *The little town of Laketon, Iowa.*

TIME: *About 1910.*

ACT ONE, Scene One: *Mr. Spence's parsonage. Early afternoon in April.*

Scene Two: *The same. A rainy afternoon in June.*

ACT TWO, Scene One: *The same. An hour later.*

Scene Two: *The same. A Saturday afternoon in September.*

Scene Three: *The same. Afternoon, a few days later.*

ACT THREE, Scene One: *The same. Afternoon, a few days later.*

Scene Two: *The same. A Sunday morning in June of the following year.*

PROLOGUE AND NARRATION: *Pulpit of the Reverend Fraser Spence's church in Laketon, Iowa. Time: the present.*

MUSIC: *Church music can be used between scenes throughout the play to suggest mood and tempo. Suitable hymns are suggested at the close of each scene.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

FATHER: He is a practical, forthright minister with deep sincerity, a quick wit and a twinkling eye. Throughout the play he is always immaculately dressed in the style of the period.

MOTHER: Mother is gentle, youthful and understanding, but shrewd, and with a ready sense of humor. She dresses simply but neatly, and wears her very best dress in the final scene of the play.

HARTZELL: He is in his teens, a homely, gawky boy with whiskbroom hair and a genius for getting into trouble. At times brash, tender, thoughtless and bewildered, he has reached the age where he is fumbling for his true personality. He dresses in typical teen-age boy fashion of the period, and is scrubbed especially fresh and clean in the last scene of the play.

EILEEN: She is a year or so younger than Hartzell, pretty and unspoiled. Eileen, too, is continually learning to adjust herself. Both children are motivated by a deep loyalty to their father. She wears simple but attractive clothes, and has on her best dress in the last scene of the play.

DR. ROMER: He is a good-humored, slightly cynical country doctor, well past middle age. Being a country doctor and on constant call, he is not as fastidious about his dress as Father.

LOUISE: Louise is Hartzell's age, a very sweet, unaffected girl. Throughout the play she wears fetching clothes of the period.

MOLLY: Molly is fifteen and a crusader—1910 version. She wears glasses and is very intent and serious in everything she says and does. Her clothes are definitely utilitarian, for Molly likes to get around in a hurry, and dislikes anything that prevents her.

MARIA: She is a small, dark-haired Mexican girl of Eileen's age, with a loyal, unswerving attachment to both Eileen and

Louise. Her clothes are always plain but neat, but her charm compensates for that.

RONNY: Ronny is an easy-going, good-natured boy of Hartzell's age. He and Hartzell are staunch friends, although Ronny likes to tease Hartzell. Ronny wears typical clothes of the period.

LETTY: Letty is a rather silly, boy-crazy girl, who giggles too much. She is forever getting a "crush" on someone, but it is seldom reciprocated. Her clothes are somewhat frilly, with lots of bows and hair ribbons.

MRS. SANDOW: She is a wealthy woman of about seventy, accustomed to deference from everybody. Her hair is thinning, and she wears a switch of a slightly different color. The large hats she always wears partly hide the switch, but the hats are continually slipping to one side. Her clothes are expensive and well made, but not in the latest style.

MAJOR COOPER: He is a man of sixty. His opinions are narrow, and he takes great pride in his dress.

MRS. DIGBY: Mrs. Digby is a woman of about forty, who will brook no interference in the whiphand control she has over the church choir—that is, until she comes up against Father. She tends to overdress for a woman her age.

MRS. CAMBRIDGE: She is a capable, middle-aged woman, talkative, and bossy. Her appearance is neat and homey.

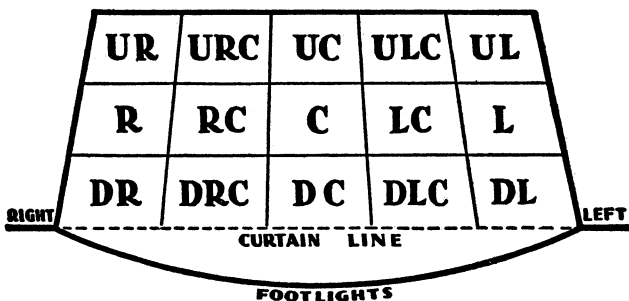
MRS. JELLISON: She is about the same age as Mrs. Cambridge, and pretty much the same type. The two women are rivals in church work, and sparks fly whenever they are together. She, too, is neat and homey in appearance.

GEORGIE: Mrs. Digby's son is a plump, lazy boy in his teens. He dresses childishly for a boy of his age.

BISHOP SHERWOOD: The Bishop is a shrewd, kindly man with graying hair and a quiet voice. He carries the weight of his position with self-assurance and dignity.

FRASER: He is a tall, pleasant-looking young minister with a ready smile.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

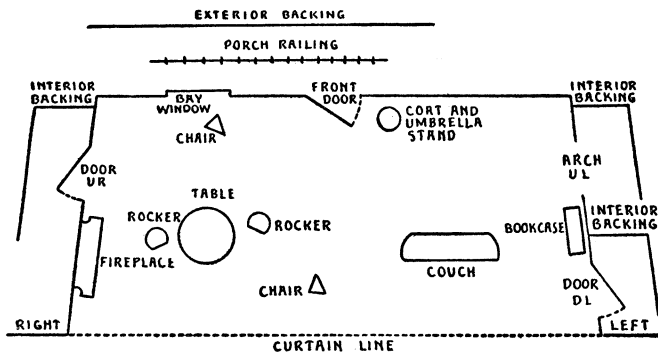


STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

STAGE CHART



PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Pulpit on movable platform (with book stand and lamp); luggage, paper bags and parcels and lunch baskets (for family to bring in at opening of play); portrait over fireplace; high-backed couch; two rockers and a round parlor table; hand-painted globe lamp on table; bookcase; hall tree, complete with umbrella stand; straight chair; rickety, spindly-legged chair; wall telephone; well-worn rag rug; other odd pieces as desired; limp faded curtains on window; frayed green shade on window. The following additions are made for Act One, Scene Two: flowered drapes for window; cushions for couch; colorful flower pots on window sill; pictures on walls; brilliant still life on reverse side of fireplace portrait; books in bookcase; bowl of flowers on round table; Eileen's ukelele on top of bookcase; box of old clothes DR; feather duster on couch; Hartzell's shirt and a sewing box on table. Add the following for Act Two, Scene Three: Father's large suitcase, partially packed; folded shirt (Father's) on couch. Add the following for Act Three, Scene One: Father's crutch; several pillows; Mother's darning basket and socks on couch; Dr. Romer's black bag on table; small book

on table; baby's crib trimmed with lace and blue ribbon (Act Three, Scene Two).

FRASER: Book.

DR. ROMER: Key, handkerchief, pocket watch, folder (plans).

MRS. CAMBRIDGE: Two loaves of bread wrapped in tea towel; umbrella.

MRS. JELLISON: Milk and cheese, umbrella.

MRS. DIGBY: Platter of cold chicken.

GEORGIE: Handkerchief.

HARTZELL: Bucket and mop, notebook and books, cookies, pan of water, empty pans, boiler or washtub, Father's handkerchiefs, Father's suitcase, chair, shoe polish brush.

MOTHER: Watering can, plate of cookies, Father's shirt, large scissors, Father's raincoat, chair.

MAJOR COOPER: Umbrella, canvas sack of money.

RONNY: Notebook and books, ukelele, cookies, empty pans, bath towels, chair.

EILEEN: Umbrella, books, empty pans, peas to shell, dish towel and pan, Father's socks, package of lunch, Father's coat, button, needle and thread.

LOUISE: Umbrella, books.

MARIA: Books.

MOLLY: Umbrella.

FATHER: Handkerchief, jagged piece of wallpaper, hat and umbrella in stand (Act One, Scene Two), small book, papers and folder, sermon notes.

MRS. SANDOW: Notes.

BISHOP: Handkerchief.

Prologue

SCENE: *Reverend Fraser's church in Laketon, Iowa. Present time. No stage setting is necessary, as this short scene takes place before the curtain. The house lights are lowered, and a pulpit is wheeled into position, D L. Organ music is heard softly from offstage during this. The pulpit is mounted on a small platform which is equipped with noiseless casters to enable it to be pushed on and off the stage quickly and with little commotion at the beginning of each scene. Or, if space permits, it may remain in position throughout the entire play. The pulpit is also equipped with a reading lamp that sheds its beam on the book stand in front. FRASER SPENCE takes his place at the pulpit; then the light on the stand comes up, revealing him to the audience. As the music fades out, FRASER bows his head.]*

FRASER: Bless us, O Lord, each and every one who are gathered here to pay tribute to the founding fathers of our church. Give us, their children, the same measure of courage and determination to carry on your great work amid increasing intolerance and violence. Guide us, we pray, in the days that lie ahead. Amen. [*Raising his head, he leans forward a little, and speaks in a friendly tone.*] As you all know, we are gathered here to commemorate another anniversary of the building of this church. While I'm sure the occasion means much to all of you, it is for me a day of special significance. This church represents a dream of my father's. A dream come true. It isn't often that a son has the opportunity to follow in his father's footsteps, but that has been my privilege. I know that Father is vivid in the memory of all of us, but I would like to recall with you some of the struggles that went into the building up of this parish. [*Picks up a book from pulpit stand.*] This book arrived in yesterday's mail—and who do

you suppose wrote it? [*Holds up book.*] "One Foot in Heaven," by Hartzell Spence. You remember my brother Hartzell? A kind of homely, gawky kid, with whiskbroom hair and a genius for getting into trouble. I never dreamed Hartzell would write a book. It's all about Father and Mother and us kids, and the church and a lot of people you know are in it. [*Opens the book and searches for a page.*] For instance, right in the second chapter, he tells about the day the family arrived here in Laketon. [*Reads.*] "The trip from Selbyville was fun, but when we walked into the run-down, dilapidated parsonage at Laketon, it was quite a shock. It looked like a place the County Poor Farm had abandoned . . . A cat wouldn't be caught dead under the front porch. Moths would starve to death, and mice would smother in the dust." [*As he reads, light goes out on pulpit and it is wheeled noiselessly offstage.*]

ACT ONE

Scene One

SCENE: *The Laketon parsonage, about 1910. It is a cluttered and dismal room containing an assortment of nondescript furniture. In the right half of the back wall is a wide but shallow bay window, through which can be seen part of the front porch and a rickety railing. The door to the front porch is U C. A small arch leading upstairs is in the L WALL, U L. Another door, leading to the kitchen and cellar, is D L. There is a fireplace in the R wall of the room. Upstage of the fireplace, U R, is a door leading to the study. On the wall over the fireplace, in a gilded frame, is a large, ugly portrait of a formidable, bearded man. [NOTE: The space behind this portrait should be treated so that it shows up lighter than the rest of the wall when the portrait is removed.] There is an old-fashioned high-backed couch at L C, facing the audience. Two rockers and a round parlor table are R C. On the table is a hand-painted globe lamp. Between the two doors in the L wall is a bookcase. A hall tree, complete with umbrella stand, is left of the door U C. In front of the bay window is a straight chair. Slightly D C stage is a rickety, spindly-legged chair which looks definitely unsafe. A wall telephone is left of the bay window. On the floor is a well-worn rag rug. Other odd pieces of the period may be added as desired. Limp, faded curtains hang at the window, and there is a frayed green shade which is pulled down.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *It is early afternoon in April. DR. ROMER can be seen on the porch outside the bay window. He crosses to the front door, followed by MR. SPENCE and his family. DR. ROMER is a good-humored, slightly cynical country doctor, well past middle age. MR. SPENCE—referred to hereafter as FATHER—is a practical, forthright minister.*

with deep sincerity. MRS. SPENCE—referred to hereafter as MOTHER is gentle, youthful and understanding. HARTZELL is the teen-age son. EILEEN is his pretty teen-age sister. All wear clothes of the period. They are loaded down with bags, paper parcels, and lunch baskets, and stand waiting offstage as DR. ROMER grapples with the front door lock.]

DR. ROMER [*offstage, shaking doorknob*]. Just a minute, and I'll have this door open. [*Sound of key in lock; then he jerks door.*] Looks like it's stuck . . . h'm. This isn't the right key, but, shucks, any key in town'll open it. [*Rattles knob vigorously.*] That's funny—last preacher lived here couldn't keep it shut—wind blew it open all the time. [*Gives it a terrific shove; door bursts open; comes in, wiping his brow with a handkerchief.*] There! Come right in, folks. Welcome to the Laketon parsonage!

[MOTHER, EILEEN and HARTZELL come in, followed by FATHER. They are hot and travel-weary, and too appalled by the sight of the place to do anything but stand and stare.]

FATHER [*looking around*]. H'm . . .

DR. ROMER. I'll admit it isn't much—but I don't suppose you expected a mansion.

FATHER [*noncommittally*]. No, no, we didn't, Dr. Romer.

DR. ROMER [*cheerily*]. Well, just put your things down and make yourselves at home. [*Goes to bay window to pull up window shade, while the family put down their luggage.*] The Parsonage Committee is going to be mighty put out when they learn you've arrived two days early. They were planning to get the place all cleaned up and serve a welcome supper over in the church basement.

MOTHER. Oh, that's all right. We didn't expect a big welcome. [*Puts some of her things on table R C and then moves to fireplace.*]

DR. ROMER. [*tugging at window shade*]. You can't get out of it. They'll welcome you or bust! Especially since they've got a

family in the parsonage again. Our last preacher was a bachelor.

FATHER. So that's why the parsonage has been closed up.

DR. ROMER [*getting up on chair to get a better grip*]. Yep. Roomed up at Sister Jellison's. [*Suddenly, shade comes rattling down on his head; FATHER rushes to his rescue.*] Oops! These new-fangled shades they got at Sylvester's fire sale. [*With FATHER's help, he tosses off folds and throws shade into a corner.*] Just leave that for the Parsonage Committee. [*Gets down from chair.*]

FATHER. I can't account for the Committee's not knowing of our arrival. I sent a wire.

DR. ROMER. A wire? But, shucks, old Elia, the station agent, can't get anything straight. Lucky I happened to be down there taking his blood pressure when the train came in.

MOTHER. It was very kind of you to drive us up here. [*HARTZELL and EILEEN move to L stage, looking around in bewilderment and dismay.*]

DR. ROMER. Coming this way, anyhow. Have to stop and have a look at Maude Tucker's varicose veins. Maude owns that little hemstitching shop down at the end of the street. [*Points out window.*] You can see it from here.

MOTHER [*looking to be polite*]. Oh, yes.

DR. ROMER [*pointing again*]. Then that place down there is the Cambridge bakery. Sister Cambridge is head of the Ladies' Aid.

FATHER [*cementing the name in his memory*]. Sister Cambridge. I see.

DR. ROMER. Better bake your own bread—she'll talk an arm off you. [*Points again.*] Right kitty-corner there is Jellison's creamery. Sister Jellison's treasurer of the Foreign Missionary Society. If you can jolly her a little, she's good for butter, and a pound of cheese on Saturday.

MOTHER. My, that's quite an item.

DR. ROMER. Lots of the other stores belong to members of our congregation. Some of the folks are nice and some are trouble-makers. Just like every place, I guess. [*Points again.*] That's the courthouse, across the street.

FATHER [*looking*]. A good substantial building.

DR. ROMER. More'n you can say for the church and the parsonage, eh? [*Chuckles.*] Yep, we're proud of the courthouse. Marriage license bureau on the second floor. [*Eyes them shrewdly as he says this.*]

FATHER [*interested*]. Indeed!

DR. ROMER. Joe McAfee, the clerk, is a solid member of the church.

FATHER [*beaming*]. That's fine!

DR. ROMER. Yep. When bridal couples ask where's the nearest preacher, you can count on it that he'll send them to you.

FATHER [*as he and MOTHER exchange elated glances*]. Did you hear that, Hope? [*MOTHER nods, well pleased with the news.*]

DR. ROMER [*amused*]. Sort of makes the parsonage look better, eh?

FATHER. Let's say it brightens the economic horizon. As for the parsonage . . . well . . . [*Moves to C and looks around again.*]

[*EILEEN and HARTZELL look at each other, sigh, and sit on couch.*]

DR. ROMER [*stamping on floor at C*]. Now, take the floor, for instance. Good, solid. [*Floor gives a warning crack.*] Might need a new board here and there. [*Goes again to window.*] And then you've got this wide expanse of window. See everything that's going on. [*Tugs at window, trying to raise it.*] Ought to have a little fresh air in here.

MOTHER [*sniffing*]. You're very right.

DR. ROMER [*pushing from another angle*]. H'mmm. Great carpenter work in these old homes . . . everything tight as a drum. [*Strains impatiently.*] I know it opens . . . I distinctly remember it being open the year Teddy Roosevelt was elected.

Preacher leaned out of it to watch the parade. [*Wooden frame of window suddenly comes loose in his hands; calmly sets it on floor.*]

HARTZELL. Oh!

EILEEN [*warningly*]. Sh!

DR. ROMER. There we are! Detachable. You get a nice breeze through here from the courthouse park. [*Leans out to reach for shutter.*] And in cold weather you've got these patented storm shutters. All you have to do is pull 'em to, and—[*A crash as shutter falls outside; he jumps back and stands surveying wreckage outside.*] H'm. Probably needs a little putty. [*Abruptly turns and crosses toward study door U R.*] Over here's the parson's study. That'll interest you, I guess. [*FATHER and MOTHER look at each other hopelessly, and follow.*]

DR. ROMER. Built on by a minister we had forty years ago. Did all the carpenter work himself. [*Goes out U R, followed by FATHER and MOTHER.*]

HARTZELL [*getting up in disgust*]. Holy smoke, what an awful bat cave!

EILEEN [*cautiously*]. Sh! He'll hear you. [*Rises.*]

HARTZELL. To think we had to be yanked out of that swell parsonage in Selbyville for this!

EILEEN [*looking at lamp on table R C*]. No gas light. And—Hartzell—I'm very much afraid there's no indoor bathroom. [*This last said in a shocked whisper.*]

HARTZELL. Why can't preachers stay put in one place like normal people?

EILEEN. Sometimes I almost wish Father had become a doctor, like he started out to be.

HARTZELL. Sure. At least when you're a doctor and cure someone, you can send them a bill. But if you want to save their souls you can starve to death doing it. [*Investigates various objects in room as he talks, pausing to wiggle the rickety chair at C stage.*] You'd take your life in your hands if you sat in this chair.

EILEEN [*giggling*]. How *could* they furnish a room like this? [*Looks around again.*] Do you suppose the dining-room and kitchen are as bad?

HARTZELL [*starting for door D L*]. Probably worse. [*Pauses.*] You got nerve enough to take a look?

EILEEN [*moving toward him*]. Eileen, the Lion-hearted, that's me.

[*HARTZELL goes out D L EILEEN is about to follow him when FATHER, MOTHER and DR ROMER re-enter U R.*]

DR. ROMER. Going to do a little exploring, eh?

EILEEN. Yes.

DR. ROMER. Fine big kitchen out there. Stove may be a trifle rusty, after the last rain. [*EILEEN goes out D L. He turns to FATHER.*] You get your books on the shelves, and some little knickknacks around, it'll make a big difference. [*Goes to arch U L.*] Now, another unusual feature are the bedrooms. They're small—not much room for dust. One preacher used to say you had to go outside to turn around in 'em. [*Waits, watching them.*] Joke! [*Chuckles.*]

MOTHER [*who has come to C stage with FATHER*]. I'm sure it was.

DR. ROMER. Yep. You can turn around in 'em, all right. Of course, now, bending over—that's another thing. [*Stops.*] You don't want to look at 'em now, do you?

MOTHER. There's really no hurry.

DR. ROMER [*to MOTHER, coming downstage*]. Tell me the truth—what do you think of the place?

MOTHER [*evasively*]. Well, I do think it has possibilities. A lot can be done with it.

DR. ROMER. Know what I'd do?

MOTHER. What?

DR. ROMER. Burn it down and pitch a tent! [*Taken aback, FATHER and MOTHER exchange uncertain glances, then look at DR. ROMER. ALL burst out laughing; this breaks the tension.*]

FATHER. Dr. Romer, that's the most practical suggestion you could offer.

DR. ROMER [*looking around*]. Just between the three of us, it's a holy mess—a disgrace to the parish.

FATHER [*chuckling, as he pokes back of old rocker left of table R C*]. Guess you could call this an antique.

DR. ROMER. Castoff pieces from the attics and woodsheds of every member of the parish.

FATHER. At least we have a sample of all the germs in town.

DR. ROMER. Got any ideas of what to do about it?

FATHER [*firmly*]. I have. During my ministry here, I'd like to see a new church built. Not on the narrow lot where the old weather-beaten one now stands, but on spacious, beautiful ground.

DR. ROMER. [*interested*]. Say, you may have something there.

MOTHER [*interested*]. A new church, Will? That would be wonderful.

FATHER *And* a new parsonage. What do you think of that?

MOTHER [*softly*]. It's a dream to work for. [*Resolutely.*] I think I can face anything now. [*Looks around again.*] Yes, even this old nightmare. I'll make a home out of it. [*Takes off hat.*]

DR. ROMER. Good for you! [*Looks at pocket watch.*] Better get over and see Maude. Give you all a chance to relax.

FATHER. Relax? Mother will never relax until she turns this place upside down and shakes the gloom out of it.

MOTHER [*glancing at portrait over fireplace*]. And the first thing that comes down is that horrible monstrosity.

FATHER [*moving toward fireplace, peering*]. What is it, a battleship?

MOTHER. Battleship! It's a portrait. Will, you've got to get yourself some glasses.

FATHER [*crossing even closer, for a better look*]. Nonsense! Just hanging in a shadow, that's all. See as well as I did when I was twenty. [*Gets a good look at portrait.*] Good heavens, yes! Throw it out!

DR. ROMER [*clearing his throat*]. Ah . . . Mr. Spence. First, let's consider the possible repercussions.

MOTHER. What do you mean?

DR. ROMER. That face you see glaring from its gold-leaf frame once belonged to none other than Congressman Sandow, the late husband of your most influential church member, Sister Lydia Sandow.

MOTHER. Well, good gracious, why doesn't she hang it in her own home?

DR. ROMER. She has one in her own home. This one was a gift to the parsonage. It has hung here for the past twenty years.

FATHER [*firmly, as he takes hold of frame*]. Then it's high time it came down.

DR. ROMER [*warningly*]. Mrs. Sandow is a woman to be reckoned with.

FATHER [*as he lifts it off hook*]. I'll not be told how I'm to furnish my own home. [NOTE: *Space under portrait has been treated so that it shows up lighter when portrait is removed.*]

DR. ROMER. Her pledge accounts for a good half of the preacher's salary.

FATHER. Ahem! [*With great deliberation, puts picture back on its hook.*] Er—on the other hand, I suppose we should take a broad view of the matter.

DR. ROMER [*with a slow smile*]. I'm glad to see that you're a practical man.

FATHER [*adjusting picture*]. I am, Dr. Romer. And my family has to eat. [*Looks at picture and considers it adjusted—but it is still a little awry.*]

DR. ROMER. You'll be wise to stay on the right side of Lydia Sandow.

MOTHER. Is she as formidable as all that?

DR. ROMER. Well—intolerance is sometimes hard to cope with. And she's hand-in-glove with Major Cooper.

FATHER. Who?

DR. ROMER. Cooper. He's the head of your Official Board.

FATHER [*coming closer to him*]. Why don't you tell me exactly what's on your mind?

DR. ROMER [*after a little pause*]. I will. Between the two of them, they've encouraged a feeling of racial prejudice in our congregation.

FATHER. But that's unChristian.

DR. ROMER. And inhumane. We've got a little foreign settlement at the edge of town. Some Polish families, some Mexican, who were imported to work in the cement plant, and a few Negroes. There's a movement among some of our self-styled Christians to run them out of town.

FATHER [*pacing over to L C stage*]. This is very disturbing. Something will have to be done.

DR. ROMER. I don't envy you your job, Reverend. I can cope with their bodily ills, but not ructions of the soul and spirit.

FATHER [*gravely*]. I see.

DR. ROMER. So—my advice to you is, tread softly, and be sure of your ground before going ahead. If you want that fine new church—and parsonage—to become a reality, keep on the right side of Mrs. Sandow and Major Cooper. [*MOTHER looks questioningly at FATHER and then moves to him. He considers a moment, then speaks.*]

FATHER. Dr. Romer, when you've diagnosed a patient's illness, but know the cure may be painful, do you hesitate about the bitter medicine, and give him a pink pill instead?

DR. ROMER. Of course not. . . . So that's the way it's to be, eh? [*Chuckles, then holds out his hand, moving to FATHER.*] Good luck to you, Reverend!

FATHER [*shaking hands with him*]. Thanks. I think maybe I'll need it.

[*Now, MRS. CAMBRIDGE can be seen passing the bay window. She is a capable, middle-aged woman. She carries a couple of loaves of bread wrapped in a tea towel.*]

DR. ROMER [*hastily, seeing her*]. Mrs. Cambridge, from the bakery! [*Doorbell rings.*] I haven't time to hear her troubles.