

# THE DOCTOR IS IN

*By J. Michael Shirley*

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## **SYNOPSIS**

If humor is the best medicine, get ready to feel great! Slade, new to the hospital housekeeping staff, has just been given his cleaning duties in a patient's room when a lovely nurse mistakes him for a new doctor. She thinks his bumbling is just a little professional humor and even calls in student nurses to watch him administer a suppository.

After blowing up a rubber glove like a balloon and conning all the nurses into exercising the patient's limbs while singing, "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," the poor patient finally crawls from bed just to escape. Lots of visual gags will keep your audience in stitches.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 m, 2 w, 6 flexible parts)*

**DR. VANDOFF:** Hospital administrator.

**MRS. KINGSLEY:** Patient's wife.

**MR. KINGSLEY:** Patient, very sick.

**CROWELL:** Head of hospital housekeeping.

**SLADE:** A joker, new to housekeeping.

**NURSE:** Thinks Slade is a doctor.

**STUDENT NURSE 1:** *(Male or Female)*

**STUDENT NURSE 2:** *(Male or Female)*

**STUDENT NURSE 3:** *(Male or Female)*

**STUDENT NURSE 4:** *(Male or Female)*

## **PROPERTIES:**

Hospital bed, bedside table, chair, coat rack, blue smock, white lab coat, note pad, patient chart, broom or mop, stethoscope, telephone, medicine tray and cup, water pitcher and glass, bed pan, surgical gloves, foiled wrapped suppository, bandages for patient's head.

## SCENE 1

*(AT RISE: The scene is a hospital room, one bed with a bedside table on one side, a chair on the other, and a coat-rack DSL. The only entrance is SL. MR. KINGSLEY is in the bed. DR. VANDOFF, the hospital administrator, is talking with a tearful MRS. KINGSLEY about her husband's condition.)*

DR. VANDOFF: I'm very sorry that things are the way they are Mrs. Kingsley. We're doing all we can do, I assure you.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Yes, Dr. Vandoff, I understand. It's just so hard to see him in this condition ... yesterday, so full of life and now...

DR. VANDOFF: Yes, comatose. I wish I could say something, do something. I guess the best thing is for you to get some rest. Why don't you go home and lie down for a while. You'll feel better, I'm sure. There's really nothing you can do right now anyway.

MRS. KINGSLEY: I suppose you're right. I'll go home for an hour or so. Maybe something will happen ... maybe he'll respond.

DR. VANDOFF: That's right. Go home, just relax. I'll come back and check in with you this afternoon.

*(MRS. KINGSLEY exits. DR. VANDOFF writes on the patient's chart at the end of the bed, crosses to the door, takes off his/her white lab coat and hangs it over the blue smock already hanging there. Exits. Enter SL, CROWELL, supervisor of fifth floor housekeeping, and SLADE, the newest addition to the housekeeping staff.)*

CROWELL: Now, since this is your first day on the job, I'll instruct you as to the rules and regulations we, in housekeeping, must adhere to. *(In a hushed voice.)* First of all, we must perform our duties without disturbing the patient.

SLADE: Perform ... duties ... without disturbing. (*Making note in HIS little notepad.*)

CROWELL: Looks like it might take quite a bit of disturbing to disturb this one. Next, you check for any trash or anything, under the bed. Now, if the patient is awake you might better tell 'em what you're doin' 'cause if you crawl under there for some reason and they don't know you're there and then they decide to lower the bed or something (*Laughs.*) Heh heh ... well, we might be cleanin' up around you down in the trauma ward!

SLADE: (*Still making notes.*) Lower bed ... trauma. Oh, yeah, I know what you mean. You can count on me, sir! (*Or ma'am.*)

CROWELL: Yeah, well, the rest is pretty easy. Just sweep the floor real good, clean the bathroom and all that stuff. (*Sternly.*) Now listen up, Slade, I want you to do your work and do it well. No foolin' around. Quietly in, clean up, and on to the next room... understand?

SLADE: Yes, sir. I understand, sir!

CROWELL: In each room there is a housekeeper's coat that you wear while you're in that room. When you come in, you put it on and get to work, when you're finished, hang the coat back up and proceed to your next task. (*Makes HIS way to door preparing to exit.*) You'll get the hang of it. Just remember, no foolin' around, you hear?

SLADE: Oh yeah, no fooling around. Yes, sir. I can do it. You can count on me, sir! (*CROWELL exits during this line, SLADE mumbles to himself as he tries to remember everything he's been told. He refers to his notebook as he does this.*) Check under bed ... trash ... do not disturb. (*Looks at PATIENT and uncomfortably addresses HIM.*) Oh, I hope I'm not disturbing. I'm the new housekeeper on the fifth - (*Realizing that the PATIENT is unable to respond.*) - floor. (*Looking back at book.*) Housekeeping coat, housekeeping coat. (*Goes over to coat rack where the two jackets hang, housekeeping blue under white lab. HE only sees the white coat; that is the one he quickly dons.*) Now then, Mr. Official Housekeeper, it's off to work we go.

*(HE goes over to bed and says a very quiet "Excuse me" and proceeds to look under bed. As he kneels beside the bed he reaches underneath to remove something. At this time MR. KINGSLEY'S arm is apparently jarred from it's position and slips off the side of the bed with his hand coming to rest atop SLADE'S head. Slade gently pushes the arm back up on the bed but it limply falls again. And again. The third time Slade holds the arm at the wrist and rises to try and place the arm back on the bed. As he does, he is startled by a young NURSE entering. )*

NURSE: Oh, excuse me, I didn't realize ... do you need me to help you do anything?

SLADE: Well, I ... I ... *(Holding the wrist.)* I was just -

NURSE: Oh yes, taking vital signs. Here I'll do that. I'm sure you doctors have more important things to do.

SLADE: *(Is even more startled to find that SHE thinks HE'S the doctor.)* No, you don't under -

NURSE: That's all right. Just go ahead and I'll take the pulse. You must be the new doctor they told us about. In the staff meeting, they said you'd be here sometime this week.

SLADE: B-B-B-But - I don't think ...

NURSE: One thing they didn't tell us though ... how nice looking you'd be. Yep, seems like the doctors around here get younger and better looking all the time.

SLADE: Better looking? Yes, oh yes, they ... uh ... we do seem to be making progress. Tell me, Nurse, are you ... well ... I mean... your being a very nice nurse and everything ... are you...?

NURSE: Am I finished? Oh, yes, Doctor. This pulse is seventy-four. I can take his BP if you like.

SLADE: Oh, no, Nurse, I think there are other people around here to take care of the bed pans. A lovely young lady like yourself shouldn't be having to -

NURSE: Bed pan! No, Doctor, I was talking about blood pressure! But you knew that, didn't you? Oh, I get it, you've got a sense of humor too! Now that's nice!

NURSE: *(Continued.)* So many of the doctors I have to work around are real grumps, if you know what I mean.

SLADE: Yes, yes, I know exactly.

NURSE: You don't seem like a doctor at all.

SLADE: I don't?

NURSE: No. You seem ... quieter, more the professional type. Most doctors around here treat the nurses like "gophers." "Gopher this, gopher that." And there's always the flirty ones. I like a doctor who looks professional. *(SLADE straightens clothing, smooths down hair, etc.)* Acts professional. *(SLADE "struts" a little, striking a professional pose.)* And sounds professional. That's the kind of doctor I'd go out with or even marry!

SLADE: Excuse me. *(HE goes to telephone and picks it up. SHE doesn't notice that he's not really making a phone call.)* Hello, operating room, this is Slade - Doctor Slade. Yes, tell me, what is my surgery scheduled for today. Uh-huh. O.K. Brain surgery at eleven, triple by-pass at eleven forty-five, in-grown toenail at twelve-fifteen. Can I what? Oh, yes, I can do that. Just put me down for the face-lift and knee surgery at the same time. I can handle it. This time please see to it that the operating tables are closer together. Last time I had to run back and forth and back and forth. It'll help if I can just turn around. O.K.? Thanks. Oh, and you can double my schedule tomorrow. Check you later! *(HE hangs up, brushes his fingernails on his lapel, and turns toward the bewildered NURSE.)* Oh, the price we pay for being professionals!

NURSE: Wow! What a schedule! My goodness! Where ... what school did you go to, to learn all that?

SLADE: Uh, school? Well, uh oh, I attended "Muckwack State School of Professional Medical Technology and Bedside Mannerism." One of the largest schools of medicine in, uh, North Alaska.

NURSE: What about your residency?

SLADE: Oh, it's only about three blocks away, on Evans Avenue. Sir Michael's Apartment for Unwed Doctors. You ought to come over after work and ...

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