

Undercover Christmas

By Hope Bunch

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DEDICATION

To William L. Botts, III, Attorney-at-Law, of Fredericksburg, VA. Bill served as Director of Rappahannock Legal Services for over thirty years prior to his retirement in 2011. Rappahannock Legal Services, now operating as Legal Aid Works, is one of ten legal aid offices across the state of VA who provide free legal assistance to low income individuals.

Quoting from the April 2011 issue of Virginia Lawyer, "Botts often dug into his own pocket when the agency's budget fell short. He worked many uncompensated hours. He cut into his own pay to keep staff. In December (2010), he dug in again. He decided to donate \$100,000 to the agency."

Bill is my friend, my former employer and he is the source of inspiration for Undercover Boss.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Doc Nash had a successful medical career in Richmond, Virginia. But five years ago, after losing his wife, he decided to return to his country home in Baynesville, VA. There, he established a free medical clinic where residents of his childhood hometown could receive free medical care. Even with only one johnny-on-the-spot nurse and a bumbling receptionist, this clinic has become a vital part of this rural community. Since its inception, the clinic has been supported with funds from the local government and private donations. However, with recent cuts in funding and a dip in the economy, the clinic is struggling financially. With a stack of unpaid bills and no money in the bank, the future of this little clinic remains uncertain.

Undercover Christmas

- 3 -

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Monday, December 15.

Scene 2: Tuesday morning, December 16.

Scene 3: A short time later.

Scene 4: Thursday, December 18.

Scene 5: Thursday afternoon.

Scene 6: Friday afternoon, December 19, just before the clinic closes.

SETTING

The set is a simple low budget medical office. The set is divided into two separate side-by-side rooms. A waiting room is SL and an exam room is SR. The waiting room is somewhat larger than the exam room. The rooms are divided by an upstage wall that is *only deep enough* to support an interior door. Actors always use this door when moving from room to room. The rooms are separated by the US door and an imaginary wall extending DS.

The exam room has a cabinet on the US wall. An exam table and a doctor's rolling stool are in the center of the room. An office chair is SR of the exam table for family members. Another office chair is SL of Doc's stool. Medical posters or an eye chart fill the empty wall space.

The waiting room has two doors SL and a door opening is USC behind the reception desk. The USC doorway leads to the offstage bathroom, lab and back door. A coatrack stands beside the USC door. A tall stool is placed behind the reception desk. A phone, a cup of pens and a standing file holder for patient charts are on the desk. A patient sign-in book is on the corner of the desk nearest the exterior door. A paper shredder is on the floor behind the desk.

One chair is on the USR wall near the USC doorway. Two chairs are SRC. A small table with some magazines is in front of the chairs. Two pictures hang on the USR wall, slightly askew.

The door to Doc's office is USL and the exterior door is DSL.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 m, 7 w, 2 flexible)

DOC BEV NASH: Retired physician who comes back to his hometown to open a free health clinic. In his late 50s or 60s.
FRANCES: A widowed nurse who works in the clinic, she was Doc's high school sweetheart. In her late 50s or 60s.
MARY ALICE: Inept receptionist, in her 30s with visible tattoos, she looks like Danielle from *American Pickers*.
FRED WILKINS: Patient. Slender build.
CHARLIE CRANE: Patient, recently hospitalized.
DOTTIE JO CRANE: Charlie's well-meaning wife.
DICK ZIMMERMAN: Patient, farmer who has narcolepsy.
AVERY RILEY: (Flexible.) New patient, quirky fellow who obviously has OCD.
MRS. DUGGART: Patient, mother of six children.
VIRGINIA MAE BELL: Patient, about 50 years old.
WILL BOTTS: Patient, about the same size as Doc.
UPS MAN: Simon, the UPS man, in his 50s or 60s.
JENNY DOLEMAN: New patient, in her early 20s or 30s.
CHRIS NICKS: New patient, works as Santa at the mall.
NANCY NICKS: Wife of Chris Nicks, a bit impatient.
ISABELLE MCGUIRE: (Flexible. Can change to Isaac McGuire.) Patient, a bit of a hypochondriac.
LOUIS GRANT: Private Investigator in his 30s or early 40s.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: December 15, Monday morning at the clinic. LIGHTS up on MARY ALICE. She is standing in the lobby with a trash can at her feet, going through the daily mail.)

MARY ALICE: *(Talking to herself.)* Another magazine from the electric company, *(Tosses it into the trash.)* a flyer from Dollar General. *(Trash.)* Another offer from AARP. I'm way too young for that! Here's a post card from Doc's sister, Tena. *(Reads it aloud to herself.)* "Having a wonderful time in New York. Fred took me to the nicest restaurant last night." Well, ain't that special? *(Sarcastically.)* A Christmas card from the Abbott drug rep. Guess I'd better save these two for Doc to see. The water bill ... *(Grimaces.)* Don't think I paid that last month ... Carolina Medical? Oh, that's our medical supplies, about \$400 worth. *(Beat.)* And the repair bill for the heat pump. At least it wasn't the compressor this time. The maintenance contract from Courtney's Copier Service ... that's another \$600 we don't have. And finally, the last one ... it's from the Treasurer's Office of Westmoreland County. *(Turns the envelope sideways.)* "Open at Once" in BIG red letters.

(FRANCES, with her arms full, abruptly enters from the back door at USC where she bumps into MARY ALICE. Mary Alice inadvertently tosses the treasurer's letter into the trash.)

MARY ALICE: *(Cont'd.)* You startled me, lady! *(Takes off glasses and sets them aside.)*

FRANCES: *(Setting her stuff down.)* Oh, sorry, Mary Alice. Just had my arms full. *(Beat.)* Hey, guess what I just saw going through town?

MARY ALICE: Oh, I don't know. A wagon train?

FRANCES: No, silly girl, I saw a big shiny motorcycle parked near the sheriff's office.

MARY ALICE: Really? What kind?

FRANCES: I just told you. It was a big shiny motorcycle. Looks brand new.

Undercover Christmas

- 6 -

MARY ALICE: Don't know much about bikes, do you?

FRANCES: Nothing, really. Just that they make a lot of noise and they go really fast.

MARY ALICE: Impressive, Frances. You should be a spokesperson for Harley Davidson. *(Beat.)* So, how was your weekend?

FRANCES: Well, I got my tree up but I still have a lot to do before Christmas.

MARY ALICE: Frances, you must have left home in a hurry this morning. Don't you want to freshen up before Doc gets here? Check your lipstick? *(Grins and makes the sound of a kiss.)*

FRANCES: Will you stop it? You know we are old high school friends and nothing else.

MARY ALICE: You *mean* you were high school sweethearts.

FRANCES: That was a long time ago. *(Walks over to the mirror and checks her hair.)* We went our separate ways after graduation when he went to medical school ...

MARY ALICE: *(Smugly.)* Uh huh, yeah, I see.

FRANCES: We're nothing more than coworkers. Now cut it out. *(Continues to check her hair and puts on lipstick.)*

MARY ALICE: *(Like she is day dreaming.)* But, what if ...

FRANCES: Look, Mary Alice, it's kinda late in life for that kind of thing. Anyway, you are the one who needs a man, not me.

MARY ALICE: A man? In this hick town? I just don't see that happening.

FRANCES: You ought to try one of those online dating sites. There's bound to be someone out there who is right for you.

MARY ALICE: Doubtful. Haven't seen anyone who interests me in this Podunk town. I think Baynesville must be the headquarters for Farmers Only dot.com.

(FRANCES laughs. DOC NASH bursts in the door.)

DOC: Good morning, ladies.

FRANCES: Mary Alice has already made the coffee. Can I get you a cup?

End of Freeview

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