

# Girls not allowed!

Nurse Ethel wants to be a doctor, but only men can back in 1909

## Casualty 1909

SUNDAY 9pm BBC1 Drama

It sounds crazy today, but just 100 years ago, women weren't allowed to be doctors!

And for Ethel Bennett, a real-life nurse who worked in The London Hospital and whose life is dramatised in this show, that meant learning about medicine in secret.

"Ethel is very ambitious and very intelligent and wants to be a doctor," explains Charity

Wakefield, who plays her. "But in 1909, that was a totally unrealistic ambition. So, on the sly, she's having lessons from Dr Culpin."

In episode two of the six-part series, Ethel fears Matron Luckes (Cherie Lunghi) is on to her, because she orders her out of the hospital to nurse private patients.

This was a way for the hospital, which was treating poverty-stricken Londoners for free long before the NHS was created, to make money.

However, Ethel is distraught that she will be leaving the excitement of the Receiving Room – what we now call A&E.

"Massaging a bad-tempered duchess's knee or lancing boils doesn't interest her," adds Charity, 28. "She feels Matron wants to split her and Culpin up."

"He's an incredibly enigmatic man, and sparks definitely fly between them!"

● Words by  
Gemma Quade

Ethel does not want to nurse private patients (inset)

