

MERCY STREET

Character Descriptions (alphabetical order by character)

Matron Brannon (Suzanne Bertish)

MATRON BRANNON is the formidable Irish head nurse who sees and knows all at Mansion House. To the outside world, she seems like the toughest one of all, but she harbors a secret vulnerability.

Suzanne on Matron Brannan:

I think she suffered quite a lot in her life, and I think she's tough but has a heart. Yeah. She's had a tough life, so she's resilient, a survivor, but she has a good heart.

She is on the go all the time. Always up to a zillion different things. There were wounded and dead, and then there's the politics of the hospital, which she observes. She knows everything that goes on. I wouldn't say much misses her.

I mean, what Lisa Wolfinger, our executive producer and co-creator, said to me on the first day was that I had lost my husband and sons, and that Dorthea Dix would have placed me here. Now, the Irish were known for their nursing skills, and so I think my story was that my sister had been a nurse in Ireland. Nursing at this time was not formalized and Dix was trying to formalize it. She took pity on me. And I have a job.

Silas Bullen (Wade Williams)

SILAS BULLEN is the hospital steward, a scheming, conniving, morally bankrupt man who knows all the inner workings of the hospital and is constantly playing one side against another to his own advantage. Whatever you need in the hospital, from medicines to bandages to other medical supplies to food and anything else ... you have to go through Silas to get it. And going through Silas can mean paying a price of any and every kind, because Silas does no deal that does not directly benefit himself. His basement kitchen is a den of secrets, lies and betrayals — a netherworld he rules with an iron fist. He will stop at nothing to keep and wield his power and line his pockets.

Wade on Silas:

He's like the quartermaster for the hospital. He is in charge of all the drugs, the apothecary, changing all the sheets and bed linens, procuring all the food and resources, making the food, taking care of the patients in small ways. If you need anything, you go to Silas Bullen to get it. He's the guy that has the key to the lock.

Silas serves the story as a villain. Various characters come down to his lair to advance their own nefarious plots and he is happy to facilitate as long as he gets a cut of the action. I see him as someone who got into this war not for a cause, but to make money. At the heart of it, Silas is a businessman.

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Samuel Diggs (McKinley Belcher III)

SAMUEL DIGGS is a free black laborer who works in Mansion House Hospital and harbors a secret knowledge of and ability in medicine that comes from having grown up as a servant in the enlightened household of a Philadelphia doctor. He is qualified for much more than he knows anyone will allow him to do at this point, and with the story taking place prior to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, he would not have been permitted to work in the hospital as a doctor anyway. Samuel is proud, strong, principled, and has an undeniable attraction to laundress Aurelia Johnson. He knows who he is and what he wants, yet he lives in a society where he can't openly pursue those things.

McKinley on Samuel:

I think it's really interesting that he grew up in a household of a physician, so he almost had an informal apprenticeship, but no one knows that. So he arrives here under the guise of being a laborer, and I feel like he's a very single-minded man. He knows what he wants to do with his life, he knows who he is falling in love with, but the society around him doesn't allow him to do those things.

It's really exciting because in every scene I do there's a balance to be struck between what I show and what I actually know. I think it's a beautiful challenge to have. It's really true to the time — to have a certain intelligence and comfort in the field that you've chosen to be involved in, but not to be able to reveal all of that. It's almost like you're playing a character of yourself in that you say, "This is what is expected of me from other people and this is who I am."

Tom Fairfax (Cameron Monaghan)

TOM FAIRFAX is Alice Green's childhood friend and secret beau. A Confederate soldier, Tom is wounded at the Battle of Williamsburg and brought back to Mansion House for treatment. His medical condition is complicated by what was then known as "irritable heart syndrome," commonly recognized today as PTSD.

Cameron on Tom:

I read a lot about the war, specifically on the Confederate side, and it was striking how young so many of these boys were and how unprepared most of the people involved in the war were psychologically at the start. People were coming to the initial battle with picnic baskets and blankets. No one yet had quite an idea of just the seriousness and the carnage that would be experienced, and I think it was very much the same situation for Tom. He went with a sense of honor and a sense of pride in protecting his country, and you know, he ended up seeing his best friends get taken away.

We get a sense that Tom and Alice were childlike in their affection, and that Alice is in many ways still that little girl who hasn't been jaded or changed yet. Tom knows he is not all there, and seems to want to protect her from all that, which is kind of beautiful and tragic.



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Jedidiah Foster (Josh Radnor)

JEDIDIAH FOSTER, the son of a wealthy Maryland landowner, grew up in a privileged Southern slave-owning household. His passion for medicine has taken him far and wide, to Philadelphia, Paris and London, and brought him in contact with the best medical minds of the time. In the midst of the most polarizing time in American history, Foster is focused not on right or wrong or gray or blue, but on the welfare of his patients and on reforming the worst abuses in the Army's medical department — a mission that often lands him in trouble.

Josh on Jedidiah:

I think he has a legitimate passion for research and for helping people. He feels like he is on the brink of breakthroughs, like he can smell a medical revolution coming and he wants to be at the forefront of it.

He has a kind of stereotypical surgeon's coldness, but there is this warmth that starts to come through him. I think the war humanizes him and softens him up a bit. His counterpart, Dr. Hale, doesn't want us to be treating Confederate soldiers, and Foster is of the opinion that everyone should be treated equally. As he says, "Blood is not gray or blue." He believes there is only one kind of patient — a sick patient. So beneath the bluster, there is a great humanist and someone who really does take his oath very seriously.

Belinda Gibson (L. Scott Caldwell)

BELINDA GIBSON was a house slave on the plantation of Jane Green's family, until young Jane married James and brought Belinda up north with her. Belinda has been a loyal and trusted servant to the Green family ever since, for as long as the children can remember. The war has turned her world upside down and yet, despite Jane's offer of freedom and the lure of new opportunities, she chooses to stay put out of loyalty, love and a practical realization that freedom may not be all it's cracked up to be. At least here in the Green home she has respect, three square meals a day and a roof over her head. The main drawback, now that many of the servants have left, is that Belinda must fulfill a multiplicity of duties: lady's maid, seamstress, cook, laundress and housekeeper. Sometimes, she wonders if she has made the right choice, and continues privately to ponder her options.

L. Scott on Belinda:

With Belinda and the Greens, she obviously chooses to stay. When she is told that she's free, she makes the choice to stay with this family. The alternate choice to staying would be leaving, going elsewhere and starting a life elsewhere, but once the word free was put before her and many others, it's like, well, what do I do now?

Our story is going to follow some young black people on their journey towards freedom, and they'll also, at the same time, be looking at Belinda, who's standing kind of almost in cement, and I think the audience is probably going to be rooting for Belinda to shake off the cement and move towards something.



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Alice Green (AnnaSophia Robb)

ALICE GREEN is Emma's younger sister. Initially frivolous and naïve, she is more focused on pretty dresses than the harsh realities of the war. But soon the circumstances in Alexandria, and the unique set of circumstances in which the Green family finds itself in the spring of 1862, will make Alice the most fervently committed member of her family.

AnnaSophia on Alice:

I think the reality of war and the hardship Alice endures and the heartbreaks she encounters sort of sober her up. I think the suddenness of everything just pushes her to the edge.

She is on the brink of womanhood without realizing it. She's trying to find her place in the world, and in a way, she sets herself up to fail by looking at the world as she wants to see it.

Emma Green (Hannah James)

EMMA GREEN is a 19-year-old Southern belle. She is beautiful, opinionated and becoming increasingly agitated by her family's treatment by the Union leadership and troops. Emma sneaks away from her family's home to Mansion House Hospital, the site of her family's luxury hotel, in search of her beau, Frank Stringfellow. When she discovers another family friend there, she gets a firsthand look at the true ravages of war as well as the inequality between the treatment of Union and Confederate patients. Emma decides to volunteer as a nurse to provide care and comfort for the Confederate boys, a process that makes her grow up in ways she could never have imagined. Emma's story parallels and contrasts with that of Mary Phinney, offering two distinct windows into the story and into the early days of nursing during the Civil War.

Hannah on Emma:

Emma takes a big journey almost immediately in the series. She begins as the sort of stereotype of a Southern belle — flirtatious and coy and gentle and kind — then quickly becomes an independent, strong woman. She's very strong-minded, feisty and determined, and I think represents a lot of the women, or the young girls, who made that switch during that time, especially those who turned to nursing to give them a purpose in their lives.

There's a huge contrast between her being a Southern belle and wanting to uphold that, but also having a very strong feeling towards the Confederacy. Her loyalty lies there, and it lies with Frank, and she has a real fire in her to show that.

James Green, Jr. (Brad Koed)

JAMES GREEN, JR. is the scion, working alongside his father in the family businesses when he desperately wants to be on the front lines fighting for the Confederate cause. Born with a clubfoot that would keep him off the battlefields, James is resentful of his father's desire to keep him home and working for the family. Like the rest of his family, he grows wary of his father's efforts toward appeasement, and



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he is often the target of scorn from his increasingly committed sisters for not standing up to his father and doing what he can to help the war effort.

Brad on James, Jr.:

Jimmy Green Jr. is in a very difficult position. He's a Southerner unable to fight as a soldier. He's the heir to the Green estate, so most of the show takes place on his property, which has been occupied by Union soldiers, so he's constantly surrounded by the enemy. He's overlooked by his family and he's very passionate in fighting for his honor. He is full of rage. He is insecure. He's passionate and there's a fire underneath him and a yearning to be the man of the house and to be the Southern gentleman that his forefathers more or less were.

I like his passion. I like that he never takes no for an answer. I respect his adversity in a range of challenges that face him and I think he's a really eloquent, interesting character. He's educated, he's suave and he's good under pressure, and he's a little bit of a hothead in an exciting way.

James Green, Sr. (Gary Cole)

JAMES GREEN is the patriarch of the Green family and one of the richest men in Alexandria. He is a noted entrepreneur who owns Green and Brother Furniture Factory and the Mansion House, renowned throughout the region as Alexandria's most luxurious hotel, featuring spacious and elegant rooms, fine cuisine and breathtaking views of the Potomac River. Few in the city felt the impact of the Union invasion as strongly as Green and his family did. Some six months after the occupation began, Union officials took over his hotel to create Mansion House Hospital and occupied his stately home, all the while coercing him to sign an oath of allegiance to the Union and causing ever-growing discord in his Confederate loyalist household.

Gary on James:

If there's a basis of his character, at least early on, it is to make the best of an undesirable situation. But he starts out with the attitude that there is really nothing he can do about it, that it is out of his hands. And in order to hang on to what he's got, his first choice is to appease and work with and try to charm, if you will, the enemy while still maintaining some kind of integrity. And as the story goes on, that's what becomes more difficult for him to do, both for himself and for his family.

His relationship with his son is filled with a lot of tension. His son feels a deep kind of anxiety, regret and even bitterness for not being able to serve in the conflict due to a physical handicap, while James, Sr. is more interested in him staying to help with the businesses. So you have this family in a captured community, and even though they are at the moment allowed to live on the premises, they do so with everyone else sharing it. So he has to spend a lot of his time saying things he doesn't truly believe in and just kind of capitulating.

Jane Green (Donna Murphy)

JANE GREEN is the quintessential Southern matriarch, a fiercely protective and caring wife and mother of



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three and a staunch supporter of the Confederacy, a combination that begins to cause a widening rift in her marriage. Jane, like her husband, wants very much to hold onto the life and the lifestyle they have built as members of the Alexandria upper crust. But the city they once knew is changing by the hour. They are left desperately clinging to a world that is disappearing around them as they face the daily indignities of occupation.

Donna on Jane:

My two daughters are just coming out of their teens and my son James, Jr. is 22. He has a big chip on his shoulder for a variety of reasons. Jane runs the household. And while James, Sr. is a very strong man and he makes a lot of the big decisions for the family, you get the sense that there are not a lot of decisions made without some kind of conversations between them. And when that doesn't happen, she's not a happy camper.

I like her strength. I like that she's trying to hold onto something that's really important that she doesn't want to lose. But I also like that she is — she's hearing and seeing what's going on around her and she's trying to respect her husband's point of view. She's challenging her daughters, but she also can't help but hear the truth of what each of them is saying at different moments, which is very difficult. I'm getting goose bumps talking about this. It's painful for her because for her to let that in means that she's going to have to give up what she's holding onto. In addition to giving them up as being little girls, they're becoming independent women at a time that is really hard. But she has a line where she says to Emma, "You know, a parent can be both angry and proud of a child, towards a child, for the very same thing." And it's so true.

Surgeon Byron Hale (Norbert Leo Butz)

BYRON HALE is an old-school Army surgeon. For him, everything must be done by the book, no matter how archaic or inefficient that book might be. He has little patience for medical advances and newfangled ideas about anesthesia or surgical techniques. When Foster questions him on why he is not using anesthesia on a patient, he replies that "pain is cathartic." Hale has a roving eye for the ladies, especially Mary, but he has an ongoing relationship with nurse Anne Hastings.

Norbert on Byron :

Dr. Hale is kind of the antagonist of the piece. He's a Union doctor, very ambitious, rather narcissistic, egocentric, but a lot of fun. He and Foster have a classic rivalry, with Foster being the new kid on the block, with no military training, which I find very suspect as a military man. And a lot of the drama and the comedy of the series comes from pitting these two personalities against each other. The show is really smart in that it has found a balance between the real horror of what it would have been like for these people, but there are injections of levity as well. I really love the scenes I get to do with Tara Summers, who plays my significant other, Anne Hastings. They are these great characters because they sort of present themselves as one way, and behind closed doors there's a whole other story going on between them.



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Anne Hastings (Tara Summers)

ANNE HASTINGS is a proficient, well-bred English nurse whose claim to fame is her experience working with Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War. She constantly lords her expertise over all the wards, employing a posh accent and putting on airs while leaving the more menial nursing tasks to others. Hastings is romantically involved (behind closed doors) with Dr. Hale. She finds an immediate rival in Mary Phinney, who is sent to Mansion House with no experience, yet is her superior. She juggles both an attraction to and distrust of Dr. Foster, who is continually bucking the hopelessly archaic system she and Hale work so hard to protect.

Tara on Anne:

Anne Hastings is a very professional and very proficient nurse, who studied under Florence Nightingale and delights in telling everybody that all the time. She ends up in this hospital, and then Mary comes in and is appointed official head nurse, which really does not make Anne happy. In fact, Anne is perpetually upset! I hope that people take away a better understanding of the Civil War, because we know a lot about the history of it, but no one has ever shined a lot on this particular aspect. Life in a military hospital was really hard, and the doctors and nurses fought really hard to keep these people alive.

Henry Hopkins (Luke Mcfarlane)

HENRY HOPKINS is a hospital chaplain with a dark past who is newly committed to God and to his work. His integrity and worldly wisdom make him an appealing figure to staff and patients alike. In addition to praying with the soldiers and engaging in what would today be considered more traditional talk-therapy sessions, Hopkins also helps them write letters, an important service, as many of the wounded are unable to read or write. He deeply cares for the soldiers and feels their pain and their struggles acutely.

Luke on Henry:

Chaplain Hopkins attends to the souls of the wounded and anybody else who really needs any sort of spiritual guidance, which was an important time or an important thing for these men. This is a time when people were a lot more religious than they are nowadays. So I'll read Bible verses. I'll read from the Book of Common Prayer. I'll do the services. So many of the men in this hospital were at a point in their lives where they badly needed spiritual guidance. Some of them are at the end of their lives and they need to make peace with God, or try to make some kind of peace. So he's definitely a welcomed figure in the hospital.

Aurelia Johnson (Shalita Grant)

AURELIA JOHNSON is a stoical “contraband” (escaped slave living behind Union lines) who is employed as a laundress at the hospital. Her “freedom” comes at a price — she has left her family behind in the hopes of reuniting one day soon. While she left behind a life where she endured difficult and even unimaginable things, life at Mansion House is not much better than the one she fled. She is forced into an abusive arrangement based on a false promise to bring her family north, and while she shares Samuel’s obvious attraction and interest, the realities of her life and the crushing weight of her situation and her concerns leave her unable to reciprocate and accept the kind of love she truly deserves.



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Shalita on Aurelia:

I would describe Aurelia as a woman who is trying to live her best life in spite of society and incredibly complex personal challenges. She is a free woman, but freedom for a lot of ex-slaves was not truly freedom without family. So she comes to Mansion House and reaches out to this man to help her, and he takes advantage of her. Then she meets a man who is free and black and capable, and it seems like it could be viable, but there are just so many things that keep it from being so.

My relationship with Samuel is unfortunate. It is fraught. He is so open and so generous and wants to love her, and she can't because if she does she could lose everything.

Nurse Mary Phinney, Baroness Von Olnhausen (Mary Elizabeth Winstead)

NURSE MARY PHINNEY, BARONESS VON OLNHAUSEN is an attractive, feisty New Englander in her 30s. She is the recent widow of a German Baron and an ardent abolitionist and feminist rebel who is not afraid of hard work. After nursing her husband through his illness, Mary looks for a purpose in her life, for a way to make a difference, and perhaps for a way to deal with the guilt that came from being unable to save him. This desire, along with her strong anti-slavery views, leads her to volunteer as a nurse in the war effort. She receives training from the formidable Dorothea Dix, superintendent of Army nurses. Arriving at Mansion House Hospital with no real experience, Mary is understandably overwhelmed by the scenes of carnage and chaos she encounters. She finds that she is anything but welcome in the male-dominated hospital, where nurses, and women in general, are treated like second-class citizens. She has to adjust to, and open herself up to, a world where not everyone shares her views.

Mary on Mary:

Mary walks into a world that is much more chaotic and messy and wild than what she was anticipating, so it is kind of a whirlwind for her when she first gets there and sees how things really work. She's a little bit set in her ways, a little bit uptight.

I think she believes that her way of thinking is the only possible and right way, and she is forced to open her eyes to a lot of different points of view and a lot of different types of people, and also to let go a little bit of her past and her own experiences and accept this new world she is in.

Chief Surgeon Alfred Summers (Peter Gerety)

CHIEF SURGEON ALFRED SUMMERS is a career Army surgeon who has risen to the rank of major by virtue of his age, not his skill. He is in no way equipped to run a large organization, and he's continually cranky at the chaos and inefficiency that surrounds him. He feels strongly that women should not invade the traditionally all-male preserve of the Army hospital. Summers is an unapologetic misogynist.

Peter on Alfred:

He's the head surgeon, and in the Civil War, those were mainly the people that ran the hospital. He's in charge. He thinks of himself as being very, very competent, even cutting-edge, but in fact he's rather inept,



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but with all the best motivations at heart. He's just beset by a number of problems that no sane man could function very well under.

And like most of the surgeons in the beginnings of the Civil War certainly, he kind of resents the presence of women, because he doesn't think they're very well-trained. They're a distraction. They get in the way, and he didn't ask them to come, and he's running the place. So the fact that they are insinuating themselves into his hospital is something that he handles badly.

Frank Stringfellow (Jack Falahee)

FRANK STRINGFELLOW is a Confederate spy who is betrothed to Emma Green. Unbeknownst to his fiancée, he is on a covert mission to Alexandria disguised as a dental assistant. Dashing, idealistic and reckless, Frank, known in real life as “Lee’s own scout,” was caught up in the thrill of intrigue and torn about what he loved more — the Southern cause or Emma.

Jack on Frank:

A big word that we've been using to describe Frank is fanatical, and I think that was in line with the times. There was this sort of energy that these young men felt, and that's why they ran to enlist, and they wanted to fight. They wanted to go to war. I think they soon found out how horrible the war really was. I saw a lot of that fanatical energy in the letters between him and Emma that I was able to find at the Virginia Historical Society right in Richmond. I think there was this tension in our story between his allegiance to the cause and his love for Emma. The fact that I was able to hold those letters in my own hands was pretty insane, and really made me realize how real the story is that we are telling.

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