

MERCY STREET

Character Descriptions (alphabetical order by character)

Lisette Beaufort (Lyne Renée)

Lisette Beaufort, an alluring French anatomy artist, is loosely inspired by the few daring female photographers and artists of the time. Lisette has been tasked with creating medical art for an anatomy book and has come to Virginia to document the wounded. It is no accident that she chooses Mansion House Hospital to begin her assignment. She knows Dr. Foster (Josh Radnor) too well; she met and had a brief affair with him in France and there's still chemistry between them, mixed with animus over their failed romance. Sensuous and bohemian, bold and outspoken, Lisette quickly creates a stir in the hospital...

Lyne on Lisette:

"I think Lisette is truly different than anyone else in this world she enters. We are in war time. She is someone who is very disarming because she doesn't care about rules and traditions and she speaks her mind. In that time, that was very different from how women would carry themselves. Also, funny enough, I am an artist myself. I draw classical portraits and I paint. For my audition, I actually did a portrait of Mary. It has really made it easier to portray Lisette, I think. As an actress, you can pretend to sketch, but in my scenes, I was truly looking and taking in my subjects."

Matron Brannon (Suzanne Bertish)

Matron Brannon is the formidable Irishwoman who knows and sees all at the hospital. Her loose job description seems to encompass not only housekeeping, but keeping the staff and volunteers in line. Behind her tough exterior and sharp wit is a secret vulnerability born from a hard-lived life. Season two offers a glimpse into her past and reveals a new softer side to the forceful Mansion House matron.

Suzanne on Matron Brannon:

"I love Matron for her endurance, and her honesty. She doesn't take any crap from anyone, and she has to be pretty self-aware to be perceptive in the way she is perceptive. I also like her dry sense of humor. I think she has had a lot of suffering in her life – Ireland, the famine, coming to America – she is a survivor, and she is tough but with a heart."

Samuel Diggs (McKinley Belcher, III)

Samuel Diggs is a black laborer harboring a secret knowledge and ability in medicine, which he learned as a boy servant in an enlightened doctor's household in Philadelphia. He is qualified for much more than he knows anyone would allow him to do at this point. A black man with education and talent, he is caught between two worlds and two modes of thinking about the future.

At the start of season two, Samuel is ready to risk everything to follow Aurelia, the laundress he has fallen in love with. When circumstances change, he returns to the hospital more determined than ever to pursue a medical career. An encounter with a feisty former slave-turned-activist named Charlotte Jenkins will make him question everything he believes in. She turns his attention to the plight of the

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contrabands—refugees who have fled the horrors of slavery only to find themselves living on the streets of Alexandria, destitute, hungry and sick. Thanks to Charlotte, Samuel soon finds himself at a crossroads with a difficult decision to make.

McKinley on Samuel:

“I think I am someone who appreciates hard work, and I love that about Samuel. I love that, day in and day out, he is here, and especially for a man who doesn’t have to, he has chosen to engage in this place as a laborer just to be in this place, with these people, and to learn more about medicine and be close to where change is happening. I also really admire his perseverance – that he doesn’t take “no” for an answer. I feel like a lesser person, given the sorts of expectations that are launched at him about who he should be, and how he should behave around white people, might fold under all that. The fact that he stands his ground and finds a way to chase his own dream, regardless of the hurdles he has to jump over – I find that commendable.”

Jedediah Foster (Josh Radnor)

Jedediah Foster, now an Army surgeon and captain, is an innovative and progressive surgeon trained in Europe by the best minds in medicine. The son of a wealthy Maryland landowner, he grew up in a privileged slave-owning household. (Maryland was a “border state” during the war and did not secede from the Union.) In season one, Foster was focused on the welfare of his patients, the advancement of medical science and reforming the worst abuses of the army’s medical department.

As season two begins, Foster is feeling the influence of staunch abolitionist Mary Phinney, who has caught his attention in more ways than one. She has not only captured his heart, she has made him question his political and moral beliefs. Foster is in many ways like the country itself: slowly awakening to the fact that slavery (a system that provided him a comfortable life) cannot continue and learning to accept the idea of emancipation and all that it entails.

Meanwhile, Foster’s resolve is tested in a variety of ways. A new hospital chief arrives on the scene, bringing unexpected challenges for the entire staff. A health care crisis involving the contraband population in Alexandria puts him in a difficult position and forces him to deal with his own racial prejudices. And his feelings for Mary are put to the test as he deals with the dissolution of his marriage and an unexpected visitor from his romantic past.

Josh on Jedediah:

“I always think that Foster is a man of great feeling. But he’s got a lot of armor up around it. You see that he’s got a rough home life in many ways, and I also think it is a function of being a doctor. I think he really believes he has to keep his emotions out of it. But I think he has fallen quite hard for Miss Mary Phinney, but there are these complications, and some confusion about what they should be.”

Belinda Gibson (L. Scott Caldwell)

Belinda Gibson was born into slavery and grew up on Jane’s family plantation as an enslaved house servant. When Jane married James Green and moved north, she brought Belinda, her personal maid, with her. Belinda has been an integral part of the Green household ever since.

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In season one, Belinda pushed her master and mistress to emancipate her and make her a paid employee. This season, although she has chosen to remain with the family—partly out of loyalty, partly out of financial necessity—she begins to realize that there may be new opportunities for her outside the Green home. She takes a part-time job in the kitchens of Mansion House Hospital, where she confronts the kitchen staff and volunteers her time in the quarantine tent helping sick and destitute contrabands working alongside the formidable Charlotte Jenkins.

L. Scott on Belinda:

"Of all the characters in the series, Belinda is the one that has the most to gain from everything that is happening around her. She is newly emancipated. I think she is starting to ask herself what the real difference is between free and slave. I think what Belinda is coming to in season two is that the opposite of slave is master, and she is starting to become the master of her own fate, so to speak. That is a very big responsibility. It's so new that she doesn't even realize that is what is happening to her when she opens her mouth at any given time to speak her truth. That is what I find so interesting about her—that she is not exactly conscious of how she is moving to freedom."

Alice Green (AnnaSophia Robb)

The death of her secret beau Tom Fairfax has inspired a profound transformation in young Alice Green. Once a spoiled child of privilege, Alice has grown into a driven and determined young woman who will do almost anything to further the Confederate cause. She becomes the most radicalized member of her family, but is soon caught up in a web of deceit that threatens to overwhelm her.

AnnaSophia on Alice:

"This season we get to see Alice enter into the darker side of the Confederacy. It's a world where she's very excited and very passionate, and driven to be part of something bigger than herself, and to make a difference. Women at this time did not have a lot of agency, and even though it may not be for good reasons, Alice sees herself as helping the young men and helping her country and her South. She is exposed to the horrors of war and lying to her family, and she is constantly trying to find reasons for why she makes the decisions she does, and I think it becomes harder and harder for her to justify her actions."

Emma Green (Hannah James)

When we first met Emma Green, she was an entitled young woman who had seen little hardship in her privileged life. Now, the extreme effects of the war on her family and on the life she had known have fundamentally changed her and hastened her transition into womanhood. After volunteering at Mansion House Hospital as an act of defiance against her family and as a way to help the Confederate wounded, Emma is finding a calling in her work, seeing beyond Blue and Gray and discovering a shared purpose with Mary Phinney and the other nurses. This evolution finds her questioning her relationship with her beau and noted spy Frank Stringfellow, especially as she learns more about his terrorist activities. It also forces her to confront her growing attraction to the chaplain, Henry Hopkins.

Hannah on Emma:

"I think I admire Emma's strength most of all. She has a lot of ideas and opinions and goes with her gut. When she really believes in something, she doesn't back down, even if she has to move on from other

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people who maybe have different opinions, and even if she has to move away from things she believed, or was taught to believe, when she was growing up. Her [childhood] morals have grown and changed and evolved into something that is more in line with who she is as a young adult moving into womanhood. We see her moving further away from her family as she defines herself and how she wants to move forward in life."

James Green, Jr. (Brad Koed)

James "Jimmy" Green, Jr. is the self-proclaimed black sheep of the family. Prevented from fighting for the Confederate cause due to a club foot, Jimmy's fight on the home front is largely for his father's approval. With his father locked in jail, Jimmy seeks his own moment in the sun. But his machinations to free his father, keep the business afloat and restore the Greens' reputation will have profound consequences for the entire family.

Brad on Jimmy:

"I'd say that this season, Jimmy finds his mojo. Last season we saw him trying, in many different ways, to become the man, and I think he finally figures out in a very drastic and terrifying and exhilarating and exciting way how to do that this season. It's been really fun to play that side of Jimmy."

James Green, Sr. (Gary Cole)

James Green, Sr. is the patriarch of the Green family and the keeper of its fortune. At the start of season two, James Sr. is in jail and his family is spiraling apart. As the season progresses, James' travails only intensify. He is forced into various nefarious schemes and cover-ups in an effort to protect his family. He is at constant war with his conscience, and his world is slowly crumbling. Helpless to stop it, he is soon forced to question his own relevance in a universe turned upside down.

Gary on James:

"In the first season, I think James was really somebody who thought the war would be over very quickly. It didn't make a big impact on him in that I don't think he understood what was actually taking place in the country. Now he is coming to believe that in order for anything to stop the momentum of this conflict, it's going to require a lot from not only him, but everybody in the Confederacy."

James Green is a guy who keeps schmoozing, conniving and trying to make a deal so often that he is not being his authentic self in front of the enemy, the Union. Everything he is doing is, to me, to almost benefit himself more than the cause, though the two are linked. I think he is a good example of what a lot of this show is about, which is how people, and specifically civilians, are forced to behave in ways and are asked to do things and go to levels they would not normally go to in order to save all kinds of things, including their independence. And just to survive. I think this shatters their psyches in a way, and that is the story taking place with the entire Green family."

Jane Green (Donna Murphy)

Jane Green is an entitled Southern belle whose entire world has been turned upside down by the war. She first believed the family could stand its ground until the war blew over, but has found herself fighting a losing battle on all fronts. Her daughters are asserting their independence in very different and

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dramatic ways, her rebellious son is looking to finally prove himself and her beloved husband is struggling to regain his footing amid ever-shifting realities. At the same time, the enormity of the conflict swirling around her is making it clear that the life they once knew is forever changed, and has made her question her moral center.

Donna on Jane:

"I think for Jane, this season is about 'desperate times, desperate measures.' War is horrific and unimaginable until you are in it, or you or your family are affected by it, or until you are looking at carnage. The ground that you stand on has crumbled. You are existing in chaos, and you will grab at anything to survive. That means different things to different people, and in this case it is not just about Jane's survival, it is about her children's survival, and her family's survival and future."

Dr. Byron Hale (Norbert Leo Butz)

Dr. Byron Hale has always given the impression of being an old-school Army surgeon, everything by the book, no matter how archaic or inefficient. His obstinacy and inflexibility have fueled his rivalry with the radical, progressive Dr. Foster. In season two, Hale reveals some surprising vulnerabilities and proves to be a skilled and versatile surgeon. Hale and Anne's relationship hits a road bump with the arrival of the new chief and Hale must find new allies. As the war evolves, Hale does too, as he comes to recognize that his very survival depends upon it.

Norbert on Dr. Hale

"What is really exciting about Hale this season is that the audience sees that while he is no saintly doctor, he is actually really, really good at his job. He is a very good surgeon, even if his ways are a little arcane, and I get to show off a little of his expertise. One of the things I love about Hale is the way he is out for his own survival in this war. War is a hideous, awful thing, but it highlights a person's natural intelligence and survival instincts. He is going to get through this war, in comfort if he can help it. One of my favorite scenes from last season was when Hale and Anne are in bed, in a very private moment, he is having a cigar and she a sip of whiskey. And we both sit there like, 'How are we going to make this war work for us?' It is such a fun and funny scene, but there is something so truthful about it."

Nurse Anne Hastings (Tara Summers)

Nurse Anne Hastings is a controlling and seductive Englishwoman who is unafraid and unapologetic about manipulating those who stand between her and the things she wants. Trained by the great Florence Nightingale, she believes herself to be superior to her archrival, head nurse Mary Phinney, and has spent much of season one trying to get rid of her. In season two, Anne reveals a softer and less calculating side as she tends to a sick colleague. She also finds herself at odds with her partner and lover, Dr. Hale, over her relationship with the new hospital chief. Season two gives Anne the opportunity to travel outside of the hospital and confront a difficult chapter in her past.

Tara on Anne:

"I think we see a bit more humility and a bit more vulnerability from Anne in season two. We've seen a lot of her comedic mishaps, scheming and drunken behavior before, but now we learn more of her back

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story. You understand what has hardened her and what has made her arrive at this point—why she likes to work with the wounded, why she likes to be a nurse and why she doesn't like people very much. You know that expression, 'Everybody's fighting a battle you know nothing about?' For Anne, she is fighting her own battle and I feel like we now are getting to see her true colors."

Chaplain Henry Hopkins (Luke Mcfarlane):

Chaplain Hopkins was drawn to his religious vocation as a way to atone for a dark chapter in his past. In season two, the limitations of his spiritual mission among so many sick and dying begins to wear on his psyche. He yearns for a more active role and pushes for an opportunity to help the wounded on the battlefield. As the war expands, so do Hopkins' internal struggles, and he is forced to consider God's place in the brutal context of war. Meanwhile, he continues to wrestle with his obvious attraction to Emma Green, which only grows as the two find themselves working closely together, united by a common cause.

Luke on Chaplain:

"I think anybody who participated or had a front-row seat to the war was changed by the war, and we start to learn a little more about Hopkins' past. I think, for Chaplain, both for the character and for me as an actor, there is this idea that maybe we have an inherent sense of violence inside of us that we wrestle with. And for him it is about how does a man of faith, who is not supposed to harm anybody, do injury? How does he understand war, and the importance of war, and what it means to kill?"

Charlotte Jenkins (Patina Miller)

Charlotte Jenkins is a smart, capable, feisty former slave-turned-activist who comes to Alexandria to help the growing population of refugees newly escaped from bondage (also called "contrabands") in making the transition to freedom. She soon finds out that they need far more than education. Most contrabands have little more than the rags on their backs and few prospects for employment. The Union Army, tasked with their welfare, does little more than provide basic rations, and those are sporadic at best. (A little-known part of Civil War history, contraband camps existed in a sort of refugee netherworld between free and enslaved, with nowhere to go, no food and no money. Many died of disease due to overcrowding and starvation before ever learning what true freedom meant.)

As soon as Charlotte arrives in Alexandria, she sees the magnitude of the crisis, recognizing the onset of a smallpox epidemic in one of the contraband camps. She comes to Mansion House Hospital seeking assistance and support, only to be met with prejudice and a cold shoulder from the administration. Undeterred, Charlotte turns to Mary Phinney and Samuel Diggs for help. Together they embark on a mission to contain the epidemic. Her alliance with Samuel Diggs sparks a friendship that holds potential for something deeper.

Charlotte's character is inspired by Harriet Jacobs, who famously escaped slavery in the 1840s and became an author, public speaker and a leading advocate for abolition. Jacobs spent the war years as a social worker and educator, helping the contraband populations in Washington City and Alexandria.

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Patina on Charlotte:

"What I love about Charlotte is that she is a strong, self-taught woman who doesn't dwell on the pain she has experienced. She has learned to channel that pain and her history into helping people. She has faced unthinkable atrocities, become a runaway slave, and now is on the other side of it where her place is to advocate for these people and help them go into society and make something of themselves. She is a woman who doesn't stand down from what she believes in.

This is a part of history that people really need to know. I loved history in school but don't ever remember contrabands coming up in class. I am thrilled to be able to do something that is as important and as educational as this because I think it is important for generations to come, especially as we look at the kinds of refugee crises we still see in today's world. I am thrilled that someone is focusing on this part of our history and deeply honored to play this role."

Major Clayton McBurney III (Bryce Pinkham)

As the new head of the hospital, Major Clayton McBurney arrives at Mansion House hell-bent on whipping things into shape. Showing an outwardly visible battle scar and hiding PTSD-related psychological wounds—both suffered in the first Battle of Bull Run—McBurney seeks to advance his own personal agenda as well as meet the strict new standards and regulations of the Army Medical Department. The transition proves anything but smooth, as the tightly coiled and wildly quirky McBurney becomes an antagonist to nearly everyone on the hospital staff.

Bryce on McBurney:

"Major Clayton McBurney is a Princeton man who has been described as an "iron fist in a velvet glove." Initially, his interactions with people at the hospital are very officious and expedient. He is a young man compared to his predecessor, and somewhat inexperienced in life, and hides a deep insecurity about his ability to run this place. Then you throw in the fact that he is a bit of an oddball, with some tendencies toward obsession that are interesting to uncover and relate directly to his experiences in the war. In that way, I hope he can represent a set of people who return from war with PTSD, and who, even if they have not served directly on the battlefield, have returned with wounds that are worthy of attention and care."

Mary Phinney (Mary Elizabeth Winstead)

Mary Phinney is growing into her role as head nurse at Mansion House Hospital after a rocky beginning due to her lack of nursing experience. A staunch New England abolitionist, Mary is sticking to her beliefs while recognizing the complexity of the war and its significant impact on all those around her. Her relationships with her co-workers are evolving, particularly her relationship with Dr. Jedediah Foster, though their ideological differences, personal complications and the social conventions of the era have thus far limited their romance to a slow burn. Mary is a person who craves order, yet encounters continuing chaos at the hospital in the form of mounting casualties, a new and challenging boss and a full-blown refugee crisis just outside the hospital doors that will challenge her in every way.

Mary on Mary:

"I really love Mary's passion and her need to help others. She is not perfect, but I think that is what makes her interesting to play. She has this contradiction within her, which is that she's not really

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interested in looking at herself and her own problems and helping herself at all. She wants to keep the focus on other people and what they need, and that can lead to problems in her personal life. That contradiction, I think, is what makes her so fun to play."

Allan Pinkerton (Brían F. O'Byrne)

Allan Pinkerton was a well-known historical character who founded the Union Intelligence Service under President Lincoln and is credited with creating what we now know as the Secret Service. Inspired by the real character, MERCY STREET's Pinkerton is a pompous man who's something of a legend in his own mind, though he's not nearly as renowned as he thinks he is. Smart and dogged, his job is hunting down rebel spies and malcontents at play. The Scottish-born Pinkerton has a sly sense of humor and a blunt-spoken approach that's similar to Poirot's, but seemingly not as effective, because you can often see him coming a mile away.

The real Pinkerton famously foiled an assassination attempt on President Lincoln in Baltimore. In season two of MERCY STREET, he is traveling with Lincoln during the president's nearly tragic visit to Mansion House Hospital. Pinkerton is unrelenting in his search for the perpetrators, and his digging quickly leads him to the devious dealings of Frank Stringfellow and then to the intricate web of intrigue surrounding the Green family.

Brían on Pinkerton:

"I've often said that the fun thing about historical pieces is that it is the nearest an actor gets to actual time travel. The day we were shooting Pinkerton's introduction to the series, we see Lincoln walk by with that famous silhouette and I can't see the cameras, because they are behind me. Seeing that famous image and all of the characters in costume—it made me think, 'Wow, that must be what it felt like at the time.' That notion that privately you can still be the child and imagine what it was like back in a certain time is a lot of fun."

Frank Stringfellow (Jack Falahee)

Frank Stringfellow is a dashing, idealistic and ruthless Confederate scout and spy, as well as Emma Green's beau. He is under heavy scrutiny following the failed assassination attempt on President Lincoln, and famed and dogged investigator Allen Pinkerton is on his case. As the pressures on him grow, Frank must confront what the war is forcing him to become and reconcile it with his feelings for Emma. Pretending to be other people has provided Frank plenty of cover, but now the rising stakes are making him think about who he really is.

Jack on Frank:

"I love Frank's passion. I think one thing we have to remember as we are making this show about the Civil War is that these boys really believed in what they were fighting for, whether we see it today as right or wrong. Frank was an incredibly passionate person, an incredibly passionate soldier and an incredibly passionate lover who had this amazing life with Emma Green. That is something I feel like I can really connect with, that tug of war we see between the cause and Emma, and a man being torn in two different directions."

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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 surround him. He feels strongly that women should not invade the traditionally all-male preserve of the Army hospital. Summers is an unapologetic misogynist. His one overriding ambition is to leave the mess that is Mansion House behind and secure a cushy desk job in Washington City. The president's visit gives him the perfect opportunity to impress Lincoln and pursue his dream. Unfortunately the visit does not go as planned...

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, 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."