

CLARA + BARTON

Battlefield Nurse

Jeannette Covert Nolan

CHARACTERS

Captain Neal, of the U.S. Army
Medical Corps

Sergeant Fisk

Pvt. Joe Brown } orderlies
Pvt. Carl Jenkins }

Mrs. Almira Fales

Clara Barton

George, Clara's handyman

Courier

Messenger

Offstage Voice

Time: *The evening of December 13, 1862.*¹

Setting: *A room in a small building on the grounds of Lacy House,² a plantation mansion in Falmouth, Virginia.*

At rise:³ *Captain Neal sits at table, going through stacks of paper. Sergeant Fisk looks out window. Bursts of gunfire can be heard intermittently.*

1. **December 13, 1862:** the Battle of Fredericksburg, one of the early important battles of the American Civil War, was fought in and near Fredericksburg, Virginia, on December 13–15, 1862. Confederate troops defeated Union troops during this battle.
2. **Lacy House . . . Virginia:** During the Battle of Fredericksburg, a Union army hospital was established at Lacy House, a mansion not far from the fighting.
3. **At rise:** as the curtain rises.

Captain Neal (*suddenly*). What's this?

Fisk (*turning*). Sir?

Captain Neal. This packet of letters.

Fisk. Letters the men in Lacy House want sent to their families, sir. They're for the return mail tonight. A courier is coming from Washington, as you know.

Captain Neal (*irritably, breaking in*). How should I know? I arrived here only yesterday, and I don't have the hang of things yet. I begin to wonder if I ever will! (*leafs through letters*) They're all in the same handwriting.

20 **Fisk.** Clara Barton's handwriting, sir. Those men are among the worst wounded; they can't write, can't hold a pen. They tell Miss Barton what to say, and she writes it down for them.

Captain Neal (*with exasperation*). Miss Barton? I might have guessed! That woman is a nuisance!

Fisk (*surprised*). Clara Barton, a nuisance, sir?

Captain Neal. An infernal nuisance! She has no respect for rank or discipline, no official capacity—no right to be here. Yet she behaves
30 as though she had invented the place!

Fisk. Well, sir, in a way she did. She's been in Falmouth more than a week, working round the clock, organizing the hospital, ever since our troops started assembling.

Captain Neal. That's her usual procedure. If a battle is anticipated, Miss Barton moves in with the vanguard regiments.⁴ Or if the skirmish occurs without forewarning, she moves in as soon as the news reaches Washington. In
40 either circumstance she rushes into the field, establishes herself and assumes control of the situation.

Fisk. She brought five wagonloads of supplies with her, sir. Food, blankets, bandages, medicines—

Captain Neal (*in scoffing tone*). She always brings supplies.

Fisk. They say she buys them with her own money.

50 **Captain Neal.** Yes, and with donations solicited from her friends all over the country. She's not timid. She'll stop at nothing. (*abruptly*) Sergeant, are you married?

Fisk (*taken aback*). Married? (*proudly*) Why, yes, sir.

4. **vanguard regiments:** the troops moving at the head of the army.

5. **Patent Office:** a government office that grants patents, documents giving inventors exclusive rights to make, use, or sell an invention.

Captain Neal. And how does your wife spend her time?

Fisk. Why, minding the house and the kids, sir.

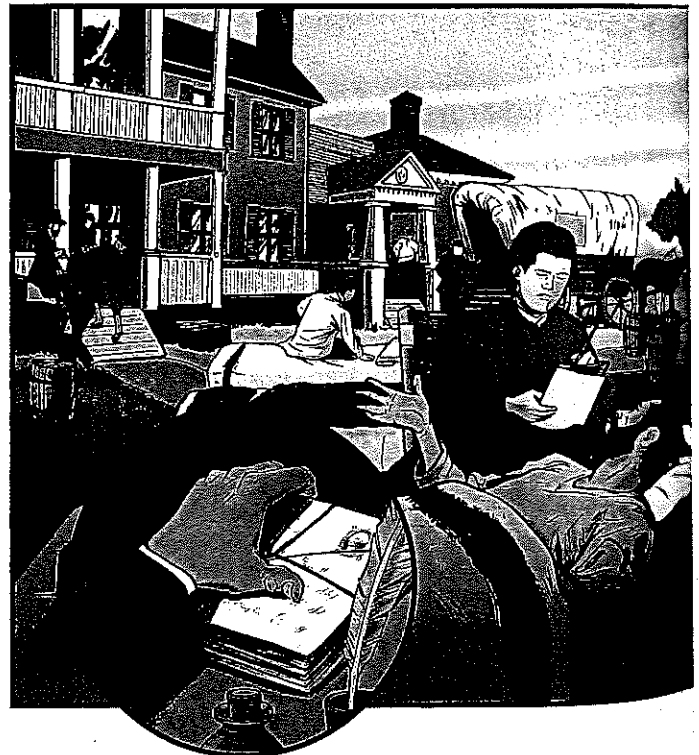
Captain Neal. As well she should! I'm sure your
60 wife wouldn't dream of neglecting her home and family to make a spectacle of herself on a battlefield, picking up the dead, nursing the injured. Nor should mine!

Fisk. But Miss Barton isn't married, sir.

Captain Neal (*sharply*). What has that to do with it? I know plenty of unmarried ladies who are content to stay in their homes, where they belong, and leave the rough tasks to men.

Fisk (*slightly puzzled*). They say Miss Barton
70 never was much of a homebody, sir. She had a job in Washington before the war; she was a clerk in the government Patent Office.⁵

Captain Neal (*interrupting*). And she ought to be there now. Instead, she traipses down to Falmouth, takes over the Lacy Plantation House, (*pointing to door, left*) turns it into a hospital—and proposes to manage it!



Fisk. Without any permission at all?

Captain Neal. Oh, she probably obtained
80 some sort of permission, but with or without
permission, it wouldn't matter to Clara Barton.
She never stands on ceremony. She just rushes
in with her wagonloads of supplies, her handful
of volunteer assistants—

Fisk (*more puzzled*). She accomplished a lot of
good, sir.

Captain Neal. What's good about a woman on
the field? It's against nature, against Army rules!
(*impatiently*) She seems to bewitch people to
90 do her bidding. They seem to be in awe of
her. But I am not! I officially represent the
Medical Corps at this post now, and I will not
be bluffed by a fussy little woman like— (Pvt.
Joe Brown *enters up right, carrying huge covered
basket. As he opens door, explosion of cannon is
heard off.*)

Brown. Whew! That was a whopper! Those
Confederate gunners—⁶

Captain Neal. Shut the door, soldier!

100 **Brown.** Yes, sir. (*shuts door and sets basket on
floor*)

Captain Neal. Where have you been, Brown?

Brown. Out trading with neighborhood farmers
for fresh milk and eggs. Fared right well, too.

Captain Neal. Did I say anything to you about
fresh milk and eggs?

Brown. No, sir. Miss Barton did. She said I
was to take some of that canned stuff from her
stores and trade it for—

110 **Captain Neal** (*coldly*). Let me remind you,
Brown, that you're a Medical Corps orderly,
not Miss Barton's errand-boy.

Brown (*in confusion*). Yes, sir—no sir—(*pauses
as another explosion is heard off*)

Captain Neal (*rising; anxiously*). Fisk, go see
what's happening in Fredericksburg! Get me
a report! (*as Fisk nods*) No, nevermind, I'll
go myself! I have to know what's going on—
(*exits quickly right*)

120 **Brown.** Air's pretty thick in here, eh, Sergeant?

Fisk (*nodding*). Pretty thick, Joe

Brown. The old man's sure got his dander up.

Fisk. I think he's worried.

Brown. Everybody's worried. The Johnny Rebs
are giving us Yanks⁷ the very devil.

Fisk. Captain Neal's brother is in the midst
of it. His artillery battery⁸ is in an exposed
position that the Confederates have been
shelling for hours.

130 **Brown.** Lieutenant Ralph Neal? I know him.
He's just a boy.

Fisk (*sighing*). A boy of nineteen. (*pause*) How
old are you, Joe?

Brown. Twenty—but a veteran. (*steps to
window, looks out*) Every man out there is
somebody's brother or son or sweetheart.

Fisk. And another thing—the Captain is at
odds with Miss Barton.

Brown. What about?

140 **Fisk.** I think he resents the fact that she was
here before he was, and he doesn't like playing
second fiddle.

Brown. Jealous, eh?

Fisk. Maybe. He's certainly critical of
everything.

6. Confederate gunners:

7. Johnny Rebs . . . Yanks; slang for Confederate soldiers (Rebels) and Union soldiers (Yankees).

8. artillery battery: an army unit responsible for cannons and other big guns.

Brown. But why? Miss Barton—why, Sergeant, she’s an angel!

Fisk. Captain Neal isn’t a bad fellow.

Brown. I’ll take Miss Barton!

150 **Fisk** (*grinning*). You’re one of those people she’s bewitched, Joe.

Brown. I’m one she nursed back to health last year. There are hundreds of us; we owe our lives to her. (*Knock is heard at right door. Fisk opens it to Mrs. Almira Fales, dressed in traveling costume and carrying a small valise.*)

Mrs. Fales. I’m looking for Miss Barton. Do you know where she is?

160 **Fisk.** In the hospital, ma’am. Will you have a seat? I’ll call her for you. (*exits left*)

Mrs. Fales (*sitting on bench, puts valise on floor*). What’s the news, young man?

Brown. Not very cheerful, ma’am. The day seems to be going badly for us.

Mrs. Fales. I feared so. Well, I suppose we can’t win every engagement.

Brown. No, ma’am. Though that would be nice, wouldn’t it? (*glancing appraisingly at her*) Traveling’s kind of inconvenient in these times
170 for a lady.

Mrs. Fales. Oh, I travel whenever and wherever I please.

Brown. Are you some kin to Miss Barton?

Mrs. Fales. No. But I know Miss Barton—and admire her. (*smiling reminiscently*) Miss Barton and I met on the way to a battlefield. It was in August, at Bull Run.⁹ You see, Mr.—

Brown. Brown—the name is Joe Brown, ma’am.

180 **Mrs. Fales.** You see, Mr. Brown, my sons are soldiers. I knew they were at Bull Run. Somehow I had the notion they’d been

hurt, perhaps killed. There was no reliable information about the battle, no list of casualties. My husband and I were frantic. Finally I decided I would just go down there and find out about our boys. It was on the road I met Miss Barton. I had heard of her and the magnificent service she’s performing.
190 I asked if I could work with her at Bull Run. She had a few men working with her, but we were the only women in the outfit. (*shaking her head*) And how we worked! The battle was over, the ground literally strewn with human wreckage—and not enough doctors from the Medical Corps.

Brown (*shaking head*). There never are enough, ma’am.

Mrs. Fales. We had several days and nights of
200 it, working at top speed in the most adverse conditions. At last we got the field cleared, the dead buried, and the wounded shipped by train to hospitals in the surrounding cities. I learned most about nursing from Miss Barton. She is an expert.

Brown (*fervently*). An angel!

Mrs. Fales. Yes, she seemed just that. Then, a week ago, when I heard she was in Falmouth, I made up my mind to come and help—if she’ll
210 have me.

Brown (*enthusiastically*). Oh, I reckon she will, ma’am, and gladly. (*tentatively*) But—your sons?

Mrs. Fales. They survived Bull Run. So far they’ve been spared, thank goodness! (Captain Neal *enters right*. Brown *salutes*.)

Brown. Mrs. Fales is here to see Miss Barton, sir.

Captain Neal (*nodding gruffly*). Madam.

220 **Mrs. Fales.** How do you do, sir?

9. **Bull Run:** the site of a famous early Civil War battle, in which Confederate forces defeated Union forces and nearly 5000 men were killed, wounded, captured, or gone missing.



Captain Neal. Well, Brown, is this your rest period? Be off!

Brown (*clicking his heels*). Yes, sir. (*moves toward door*)

Captain Neal. What about your milk and eggs?

Brown. Oh, yes, sir! I almost forgot. (*Exits with basket. Captain Neal eyes Mrs. Fales curiously, then sits at table and busies himself with pen and paper. Clara Barton enters left.*)

230 **Mrs. Fales** (*rising*). Clara!

Clara. Almira Fales!

Mrs. Fales (*pleased*). So you remember me?

Clara (*warmly*). As if I ever could forget! (*clasping Mrs. Fales' hands*) Is it possible you've come to volunteer?

Mrs. Fales. Yes, I have.

Clara (*happily*). Oh, I'm so grateful! Do sit down. I'm so happy you're here.

Mrs. Fales (*sitting with Clara on the bench*).

240 You're looking well, Clara.

Clara. I am well. Always tired, but well. (*smiles*) My health seems to thrive on abuse.

Mrs. Fales. And still wearing that red bow in honor of your father.

Clara. In memory of him, now. My father died recently.

Mrs. Fales (*sadly*). Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.

Clara. Thank you, Almira. (*sighing*) Red was his favorite color; it's mine, too.

250 **Mrs. Fales.** The badge of bravery. (*leans forward, intently*) You are so often in danger, Clara! Are you never afraid?

Clara. Afraid? Constantly! I just try to hide my fear—with a bright red ribbon.

George (*entering left, carrying wooden tool kit; gruffly*). Miss Barton, I've built those extra bunks you were talking about.

Clara. Thank you, George. I'd like you to meet Mrs. Fales, a good friend of mine, and
260 a good nurse. (*to Mrs. Fales*) George is my right-hand man.

George (*grinning cordially at Mrs. Fales*). You'll be welcome, ma'am. (*to Clara*) I made space for the poor chaps. Reckon we'll get 'em, too. The stretcher-bearers are out now.

Clara. I'll inspect the bunks. Will you come with me, Almira? (*They rise and exit left. George starts to follow, but Captain Neal stops him with a gesture.*)

270 **Captain Neal.** Are you a carpenter?

George (*with a laugh*). Carpenter, porter, chief cook, and bottle washer, jack-of-all-trades.

Captain Neal. I have some carpenter's chores for you to do, at your leisure.

George. Well, sir, I don't have much leisure—and I'd be obliged to ask Miss Barton.

Captain Neal (*sharply*). No, you would not! I am in charge here. Miss Barton has no connection with the Army—

280 **George.** She's tried to connect herself with the Army, sir, but those people in Washington won't let her do what she wants to do.

Captain Neal. Nor will I, here at Lacy House.

George. So you're one of 'em? Well, sir, you'll just have to get your own carpenter. I'm working for Miss Barton! (*exits quickly through door right*)

Clara (*reopening door left*). The bunks are fine, George. . . . Oh, George is gone?

290 **Captain Neal** (*dryly*). Yes, he's gone—quite suddenly,

Clara. Well, I must get Mrs. Fales settled.

Captain Neal. Just a moment, Miss Barton! Why is that lady in Falmouth?

Clara (*smiling*). I think you know why. Weren't you eavesdropping?

Captain Neal (*incensed*). Miss Barton, I do not intend to have Lacy House turned into an institution for interfering females!

300 **Clara.** Oh, Captain, how I wish there were more interfering females. They make such splendid nurses.

Captain Neal. Then they should enlist as nurses in the Army.

Clara. I thought of doing that, but those women are sent to work in city hospitals; they can never go into the field. I would like the Army to sponsor me as a field nurse, where I know I'm most effective.

310 **Captain Neal** (*sternly*). Where you have no authority to be. The Army does not approve of women in military encampments. The battlefield is not a place for women.

Clara. How silly! So many lives are sacrificed because of the Army's rigidity.

Voice (*offstage*). Miss Barton! Miss Barton is needed!

Clara. Excuse me, please, Captain. (*exits*)

Captain Neal. Miss Barton is needed! All 320 day, by everyone! But if I have my way, Miss Barton may soon find there are such things as rules and regulations.

Fisk (*entering*). Excuse me, Captain, but there's heavy firing on our artillery positions.

Captain Neal (*anxiously*). How bad is it?

Fisk. A great many casualties, it would seem. (*goes to window and looks out*) The stretcher-bearers are busy with the wounded. (*Guns boom in distance.*)

330 **Jenkins** (*entering right*). Sergeant, where do we take these Graycoats?

Captain Neal. Graycoats?

Jenkins (*noticing Captain Neal, salutes him*).

Yes, sir. The Confederate Johnnies. Are they to be put in the hospital with our boys?

Captain Neal. Who said they were to be brought to Lacy House?



Jenkins. Miss Barton, sir.

Captain Neal. The hospital is crowded!

340 Jenkins. Not too crowded, Miss Barton said.

Captain Neal. Go outside and wait there!
(Jenkins *salutes and exits.*) Fisk, call Miss Barton.

Fisk. Yes, sir. (*exits*)

Captain Neal (*to himself*). Now she has gone too far. Much too far. (*After a moment, Fisk reenters, escorting Clara.*) I'll talk privately with Miss Barton, Sergeant. (*Fisk exits right.*) Miss Barton, since when have we adopted a policy of

350 rescuing our sworn enemies?

Clara (*calmly*). I have always done it, Captain.

Captain Neal. You have done it?

Clara. I have never withheld aid to any man lying on any battlefield, merely because his uniform was gray rather than blue. I never stop to ask him his race, politics, or religion, either. If he is a human being—suffering, I give him all the help I can.

Captain Neal (*angrily*). This is ridiculous. Do
360 you for an instant suppose that our men who fall on a Southern battlefield are shown such mercy?

Clara. Of course, I suppose that! I know it is true! And you must surely know it, too. I think the Confederates' ideas and convictions are wrong. But I am not so deluded as to think they aren't human!

Jenkins (*opening door; thrusting in his head*).
Miss Barton, the Sergeant said you were in
370 here. Shall we take the Rebs into Lacy House? It's getting dark and raining a little.

Clara. Yes, Jenkins.

Captain Neal. Just a minute, orderly. We cannot accommodate those men.

Clara. We can accommodate them, Captain. And we must!

Captain Neal. Our facilities are limited.

Clara. George built more bunks—and he can build more, many more.

380 Captain Neal. By taking in these Confederates, we may be depriving men who fell inside our lines.

Jenkins. These men fell inside our lines, sir.

Clara. Indeed, Captain, should we have allowed them to lie there and die? How could we turn them away? (*to Jenkins*) Take them into Lacy House! (*Jenkins has been looking bewilderedly from Clara to Captain Neal, he exits.*)

390 Captain Neal (*furiously*). Miss Barton, this situation is intolerable! (*Fisk enters.*) Sergeant, didn't I tell you—

Fisk (*apologetically*). The mail, sir. The courier from Washington. (*stands aside*)

Courier (*entering, placing mail pouch on table*). Anything to go back, Captain?

Captain Neal. Yes. (*He picks up packet of letters that Clara has written for the soldiers, tosses it to Courier, who salutes and exits, followed by Fisk.*

400 *Glancing briefly through contents of the mail pouch, he pounces upon one letter, opens and scans it hurriedly. Holding the letter, Captain Neal turns to Clara.*) Miss Barton, I am not a cruel man—

Clara. Oh, I'm sure of that. Merely short-sighted and old-fashioned in your prejudices. And obstinate. But I am obstinate,¹⁰ myself.

Voice (offstage). Miss Barton! Miss Barton is
410 needed!

Clara. Excuse me, Captain. (*starts toward door left*)

Captain Neal. Since the moment of my arrival in Falmouth, I have known there would be this crisis.

Clara (turning back). Crisis?

Captain Neal. Between us. I have seen it as inevitable that while you were here, some members of the small staff in Lacy House,
420 perhaps most of them, would ignore me and look to you for direction—

Clara (quietly). Only because I was here first.

Captain Neal (raising his voice). You are everywhere first, Miss Barton! It is uncanny. (*more calmly, with an effort at controlling his temper*) Therefore, I have known that one of us must go. And I have not doubted which one it would be.

Clara (matter-of-factly). Is that your opinion?
430 Mine is just the contrary, Captain. I don't see why we both can't remain, and on good terms, too. If there is a crisis between us, it is not of my making.

Captain Neal (with sarcasm). Oh, no?

Clara. I wish only to work with you—with anyone who serves the end of justice and mercy. Very often I've been thrown into contact with a man like you—prejudiced, suspicious of me and my methods, even my
440 motives; but still we have worked together well enough. And sometimes we have become fast friends. I have many friends among the Medical Corps doctors. I don't see why you and I can't arrange some sort of compromise—
Captain Neal (harshly). It is too late for compromise.

Voice (offstage). Miss Barton!

Clara. Too late, Captain?

450 **Captain Neal.** This letter—

Brown (opening door at left). Miss Barton, that fellow with the malaria¹¹ has got a chill, a violent chill—

Captain Neal (shouting). Get out! Get out!

Clara (above Captain Neal's shouting). Give him a dose of quinine,¹² Brown. See that he swallows it. I'll come presently.

Brown. Yes, ma'am. (*closes door*)

Captain Neal. Miss Barton, I've received a letter
460 from Washington. (*holding up letter*) From my superior officers. It is the reply to a telegram I dispatched last night—just twelve hours after my arrival. I am lucky to have a reply so promptly.

Clara (uneasily). And what does it say?

Captain Neal. The tone of this letter is unequivocal.¹³ It states very definitely that you are to be relieved of all duty in the Falmouth area. At once. In plain words, Miss Barton,
470 you are dismissed.

10. **obstinate:** stubborn.

11. **malaria:** a disease transmitted by mosquitoes.

12. **quinine:** a type of medicine.

13. **unequivocal:** clear; unquestionable.

Clara (*incredulously*). You wired to the War Department, complaining of me?

Captain Neal. I did.

Clara. You complained of my skill at nursing?

Captain Neal. Not that. You may be a very good nurse.

Clara (*vehemently*). I am a good nurse!

Captain Neal. I complained of you as a meddler.

480 Clara (*angrily*). In plain words, Captain, you let your dislike of me override your judgment regarding the welfare of this hospital.

Captain Neal (*emphatically*). There is nothing more to be said on the subject. You are relieved of all duty. I'll have a wagon made ready to convey you safely to the railroad station. Of course, the other lady, Mrs. Fales, will accompany you.

Clara (*angrily*). But I won't go! I can't desert the men, the wounded men in Lacy House, I know them—know them all by name!

490 Captain Neal (*firmly*). You will go, Miss Barton. Under the circumstances it would be most awkward for you to remain. Your dismissal is from Washington, and it is specific and urgent.

Clara. Who will do the work in my place? I've snatched back from death's door many patients whom your doctors and nurses had given up as lost.

Captain Neal (*sneeringly*). I'm not interested in a recital of your triumphs.

500 Clara (*angrily*). How absurdly, blindly biased you are, Captain!

Captain Neal (*with controlled anger*). Sergeant Fisk will fetch a wagon. You must have a bag, or something to pack?

Clara (*sadly, realizing her defeat*). Yes, I have a bag. (*starts toward left door, speaks over her shoulder*) I came with five wagon-loads of supplies. For days they were the only supplies available, and they're not yet exhausted. I 510 hope you will accept what's left—for the sake of the hospital. Lint, medicines, muslin sheets—such articles have value, even if I have none.

Captain Neal (*stiffly*). I will accept them, Miss Barton. (*As she exits, he paces up and down, muttering.*) A strange woman. Most women would have cried. She didn't. No tears. She has courage—the courage of a man!

520 Fisk (*entering from door right*). May I come in, sir?

Captain Neal (*barking*). Why not? (*a slight pause, as sound of cannon is heard off*) You're to fetch a wagon and drive Miss Barton and the other lady to the railroad station. They're catching the night train.



Fisk (*regretfully*). I'm sorry, sir. Miss Barton was so set on staying.

Captain Neal (*wryly*). More eavesdropping!

530 **Fisk** (*meekly*). Well, I was just at the door, sir, I couldn't have avoided—

Captain Neal. No matter. Go fetch a wagon.

Fisk (*lingering*). It does seem too bad, when Miss Barton's so popular with everybody—

Captain Neal (*roaring*). Fetch a wagon!

Fisk. Yes, sir. (*turns toward door right and collides with Messenger, who rushes in, breathless*)

Messenger. Captain Neal? I'm from General Burnside's headquarters. We are in full retreat across the bridge, sir, falling back on all fronts. The Rebels have swept everything before them. (*pausing, panting*) And your brother, sir—

Captain Neal. My brother!

550 **Messenger**. Lieutenant Neal—

Captain Neal. What about him? (*seizing Messenger by the sleeve*) What about Lieutenant Neal?

Messenger. Shot, sir.

Captain Neal. Killed?

Messenger. Wounded, sir.

Captain Neal (*tugging roughly at Messenger's sleeve*). Is it—serious?

Messenger. Yes, sir. Serious. But the doctor in
560 Fredericksburg did an emergency operation. They're bringing him to Lacy House, sir.

Captain Neal (*releasing Messenger's sleeve*). Fisk! Fisk!



Fisk (*at door*). Yes, sir. Just off to fetch the wagon, sir.

Captain Neal. Wagon! (*wildly*) Blast the wagon! Fetch Miss Barton! Get her in here! (*shouts*) Miss Barton! (*Clara, wearing her traveling cloak and bonnet, enters.*)

570 **Clara**. Did you call me?

Captain Neal (*rushing to her*). I did call you, Miss Barton. My brother— (*He buries his face in his hands.*)

Messenger. It's Lieutenant Neal, ma'am. Seriously wounded.

Clara. The Captain's brother? Oh, dreadful! But—not dead?

Messenger. No, ma'am. Not yet.

Clara. Well, with proper nursing I'm sure—

580 **Messenger**. That's what the doctor said. With you here, the doctor said—

Captain Neal (*looking up; emotionally*). Miss Barton, my brother is so young!

Clara (*quietly*). Most of them are, aren't they? (*They exchange looks, then slowly, she takes off her bonnet and throws it on to bench.*) The doctor seems to think that something can be done.

Captain Neal. Miss Barton, if you will do your best for my brother—

⁵⁹⁰ **Clara**. I'll give him the same care I give all the men neither more nor less.

Captain Neal. I understand, Miss Barton. I understand—and I could ask for nothing better.

Mrs. Fales (*entering left, in traveling costume, carrying her valise*). Well, Clara, I'm ready, if we must go.

Clara. We're not going.

Mrs. Fales (*puzzled*). Not going?

⁶⁰⁰ **Clara**. We're staying—at Captain Neal's request.

Mrs. Fales. But I thought he—

Clara. The Captain wants us to work with him—and he's in command, isn't he?

Mrs. Fales (*perplexed*). I don't know. And I don't believe he knows either! (*to herself*) A very snappish man!

Clara (*smiling*). Sh-h! We must get into our work uniforms. (*They exit.*)

⁶¹⁰ **Captain Neal** (*to Fisk and Messenger*). Why are you standing there gaping? I have a letter to write. A letter which must be sent tonight. To Washington. (*hesitantly, as if with effort*) A letter acknowledging that I've been in error, and recommending that Miss Clara Barton be permanently attached to the United States Army, as an Army nurse—in the field, or wherever she chooses to be. (*Fisk and Messenger exit right. Captain Neal sits at table and writes rapidly. Lights dim slightly; shot is*
⁶²⁰ *heard off.*)

Clara (*entering at left*). Captain, your brother is in the hospital, and conscious. Would you like to speak to him?

Captain Neal (*springing up*). Will he pull through? Do you think there's a chance?

Clara. I think there's a chance.

Captain Neal. And you'll help him? (*Clara nods.*) I do want to speak to him! (*pauses*) I'd like you to read this letter.

⁶³⁰ **Clara** (*dismayed*). The letter from Washington?

Captain Neal (*quickly*). No, no, it's not the one I received! It's a letter I'm just in process of writing and haven't quite finished. But since it concerns you—(*hands letter to her, then crosses to door left and exits*)

Clara. I do think the Captain's heart is in the right place. (*Sits on bench and reads letter silently. She smiles, still holding letter.*)

⁶⁴⁰ Sometimes I have a vision, or what seems a vision. I see my country whole and healed once more, North and South reunited, one people, never again to be divided by war and hatred. (*pauses*) I see beyond the present, far, far into a future when this humble work of mine has found boundless, universal support. I see the work growing, embracing all the civilized nations of the world through both war and peace. (*During her speech, room has gradually darkened. On rear wall, spotlight*
⁶⁵⁰ *shines on emblem of Red Cross.*)

Voice (*offstage*). Miss Barton!

Clara (*rousing, turning her head*). Yes?

Voice. Miss Barton is needed!

Clara (*rising, standing a moment under Red Cross emblem, then hurrying to exit*). Coming!

