

## ***CIVIL SISTERS***

Script Treatment

By: Emily Hansen, Jenny Mack,  
Stefanie Gerber, and Melissa Pederson

- AUDIENCE:** Ages 12 years and above.
- LENGTH:** 30-40 minutes
- PLACE PERFORMED:** Quaker Meeting House, Conner Prairie.
- SETTING:** The Armstrong family farm near Corydon, Indiana. July, 1863.
- ACTORS:** Three females and two males:  
Rose Armstrong: early to mid thirties  
Prissy Taylor: mid twenties  
Thomas Taylor: early twenties  
Eleanor Taylor: early twenties  
Emanuel Armstrong: early to mid teens  
Nathan Armstrong: approx. 10 years old
- GOALS:** To illustrate the strength of women during the Civil War:  
1) By demonstrating how women balanced the absent men's work with their own domestic duties.  
3) By demonstrating how women dealt with the emotional stress created by the uncertainty of the safety and wellbeing of loved ones.
- CONTENT:** Maintaining home and family requires great strength under ordinary circumstances, but imagine if you were forced to single-handedly watch over your extended family and sustain an entire farm during wartime. With husband William off at war, Rose Armstrong must care for her farm, watch over her four children, smooth relations between her sister and sister-in-law, take care of her wounded brother, all while remaining alert for the dreaded arrival of the Confederate army.  
The play opens as sisters Prissy and Rose enthusiastically welcome home their brother Thomas from war, but are dismayed to find that he has married a Southern nurse, Eleanor.  
Rose and Prissy debate whether or not Eleanor may be trusted in their home. Eleanor attempts to win their trust by pledging her loyalty to the family and promising to take part in the family farm work.

Rose and Eleanor discuss the disturbing changes that have taken place in Thomas's personality since he has returned home from war.

Tragedy strikes the Armstrong farm as Rose discovers that her son, Emanuel, has gone to fight Morgan's Raiders against her will, and as Prissy learns that her fiancé has died in battle.

A letter arrives from Emanuel describing the Battle of Corydon. Prissy experiences a change of heart and decides to deliver supplies to wounded soldiers at the Presbyterian Church.

Finally, Rose writes a letter to her husband William describing her feelings of fear, exhaustion and weakness, but wonders whether William will return from war changed like her brother Thomas.

#### **SCENARIO:**

The play is set at the Armstrong family farm near Corydon, Indiana in July of 1863. It was at this time that the Indiana militia battled Morgan's Raiders as they passed through southern Indiana. This setting was chosen to show how the Civil War directly affected typical families in Indiana.

Rose Armstrong, married to William Armstrong, is the oldest sister of the Taylor siblings living on the Armstrong farm. Strong, determined and practical, Rose has resolved to take on duties traditionally reserved for men in order to maintain the family farm. Without Rose's strength, the family and farm would fall apart.

Prissy Taylor, fiancé of Joseph Collins, is the second oldest sister of the Taylor siblings. Prissy visualizes herself as delicate and refined, but Prissy's family perceives her as self-centered and lazy. Prissy provides dramatic conflict as the play progresses and resolution at the closing of the play.

Thomas Taylor, husband of Eleanor Taylor, is the youngest of the Taylor siblings. Recently reunited with his family, Thomas struggles to deal with painful emotions triggered by battle, injury and sickness. Thomas's character may provide the audience with a new understanding of the physical and emotion effects of war on a soldier.

Eleanor Taylor, a nurse from the South, is the newest addition to the Taylor family. Eleanor strives to win acceptance from her sisters-in-law with her natural gifts of patience, caring and kindness. In addition to dramatic conflict, Eleanor provides that special link that will help the sisters understand the changes that Thomas had undergone while away at battle.

Emanuel Armstrong, son of Rose and William, is the older of two Armstrong sons. Emanuel has inherited his mother's strength and determination, which spurs him to run from home to fight with Indiana's militia. Emanuel's adventures allow the audience to discover more about battles that were fought here in Indiana.

***CIVIL SISTERS***  
Educational Concept Document  
By: Emily Hansen, Jenny Mack,  
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To fulfill the educational goals of *Civil Sisters*, the authors took advantage of the educational theories of Davis and Gardner, Hein and Piaget. The goals of *Civil Sisters* are to illustrate the strength of women during the Civil War by demonstrating how women balanced the absent men's work with their own domestic duties and by demonstrating how women dealt with the emotional stress created by the uncertainty of the safety and wellbeing of loved ones.

Davis and Gardner's *Open Windows, Open Doors* introduces the educational theory of Multiple Intelligences. The theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that individuals have eight different intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. Each individual may have strength in one or more of these intelligences, but not all people have the same capabilities in any one intelligence (p.99).

Davis and Gardner acknowledge that traditional education emphasizes the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences (p.99), so *Civil Sisters* uses the theory to educate people in an informal setting using a wider range of intelligences. *Civil Sister* caters to the bodily kinesthetic intelligence by physically placing learners amidst the action of the play. The play accommodates spatial intelligence by presenting learners with a living, moving picture of history. *Civil Sisters* channels interpersonal intelligence by depicting the interpersonal relationships of a family during the Civil War. Finally, the script works for those who have strengths in

linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences because it includes pertinent facts and dates.

In addition to Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, the *Civil Sisters* script makes use of George Hein's educational theory. Hein introduces four different types of knowledge and learning in museums, specifically concentrating on constructivism. According to Hein, a constructivist museum provides an "opportunity for the visitor to make connections with familiar concepts and objects. In order to make meaning of our experience, we need to be able to connect it with what we already know" (p.77). The *Civil Sisters* script provides numerous opportunities to relate family life during the Civil War to the modern audience. While watching the play, visitors may compare and contrast familiar modern concepts such as domestic responsibilities, family relationships and wartime hardship with the experiences of the *Civil Sisters* characters.

Finally, Broderick and Blewitt's *The Life Span: Human Development for Helping Professionals* was used to gain a better understanding of Piaget's theory of human development, and how human development might affect the audience's ability to achieve the educational goals of *Civil Sisters*. According to Piaget, most people under the age of twelve are not capable of abstract thought (Broderick and Blewitt, p.11). In order to fully comprehend *Civil Sisters*, appreciate the complexity of the relationships between characters, understand the trials that the characters face, and recognize connections between the characters' lives and modern life, the viewer must be capable of abstract thought. Because most children under twelve

are not capable of abstract thinking, the script treatment recommends that the audience consist of people over the age of twelve. .

## Works Cited

- Broderick P. C., and Blewitt, P. (2006). *The Life Span: Human Development for Helping Professionals*. Upper Saddle Rive, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Davis, J. and Gardner, H. (2005). Open windows, open doors. In *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. London: Routledge. 99.
- Hein, G.E. (2005). The constructivist museum. In *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. London: Routledge. 73.

## **Scene 1**

*[Rose and Prissy enter. Rose carries a basket of eggs, Prissy holds her dress.]*

- P: Well Rose, all I'm saying is that you can never be certain about what's going to happen, so you just might want to consider what would happen to us...er...you, if William doesn't come home. You can't run this farm by yourself forever! This is no way for a woman to live!
- R: Prissy, that's why I have two strong boys helping me right now. More than I can say for you sometimes...If you made the slightest attempt to earn your keep around here instead of whining and complaining all day long, I might have a little easier time of it.
- P: Rose, that's not fair! You were the one who told me I could stay until Joseph returns and we get married. I never asked to get up at the crack of dawn and be forced to throw grain at chickens and to tiptoe my way through pig wallows or to spend hours hunched over, picking vegetables or sweating over a hot kettle just to boil yet more tomatoes for pickling...I shouldn't be expected to do farm chores! It's just not right! Someone has to maintain some dignity and remind people that the Taylor girls were raised to be

ladies, for goodness sake! Have you forgotten where you came from?

R: Prissy, may I remind you that I'm an *Armstrong* girl now, and may I remind you that since my husband, William Armstrong is off fighting this war, I will protect and manage the *Armstrong* farm as best I can, whether it's ladylike or not, and whether you like it or not. And I will not sell the *Armstrong* farm. And I have *not* forgotten where I came from, but I certainly know who I am now. Now make yourself useful and shell the stupid peas!

*(scowling and half-heartedly picking up a pea pod)*

P: Well, you don't have to get so upset. I'm just trying to look out for you...

R: I can look out for myself quite well, thank you. And I can look out for this family...what on earth?

*(Shouting and yelling from offstage. Rose and Prissy put their work down and peer out the window.)*

R: Now who could that be?

*(Nathan running in to the kitchen and then running back outside.)*

N: Mama! Mama, come quick! It's Uncle Thomas! He's come home!

*(Rose and Prissy shout together...)*

R & P: Thomas!

P: Baby brother's come home!

*(Rose and Prissy rush off stage)*

*(Thomas limping back in with the women huddled around him. He uses a crutch but Eleanor supports him under one arm and Nathan under the other. Rose carries two large bags, but Prissy carries a small knapsack.)*



T: I couldn't even remember what was happening, just musket fire all around me and falling into the dirt. When I came to, it was hot and dark, but I knew I'd somehow made it back to camp...

P: Oh, Thomas, what you must have been through! How dreadful! The sooner this war is over, the better! I don't want to hear one more word about it; it's just too awful to think about. Oh, there, now. Just up one more step...  
*(Prissy gives directions as Rose and Eleanor help support Thomas up the stairs into the kitchen).*

R: Thomas, I'm just so thrilled to have you home. The last we'd heard from you was your letter from outside of Nashville, but that was over a month ago! We've been heartsick, not knowing your whereabouts or your condition.

*(Rose makes him comfortable on the bench in the kitchen and hands him a jar of water, which he quickly drinks. Eleanor keeps trying to step in and help him and Rose finally acknowledges her presence).*

I'm sorry...and you are...?

T: Well, Recovery was slow at the hospital. You know I'd been there for two months. It took me that long just to be well enough to travel. There was an infection, and they thought they might have to amputate the leg

*(Prissy swoons in the background, but Rose doesn't budge).*

But now, except for the fact that I can't walk, I'm tough as a knot. I had myself one angel of a nurse watching over me, and she was with me the entire time I was in the hospital.

*(He coughs softly and looks up at Eleanor, who has been silent and unnoticed until now. Thomas holds out his hand to her.)*

Prissy, Rose...I want you to meet Eleanor. Eleanor Taylor. My wife.

*(Rose and Prissy gasp.)*

P: Thomas, you're joking! How could you? Your wife?

R: Prissy, calm down. Thomas, how could you do this? You're wounded! You can't even walk on your own! How could you get married?

T: We had the preacher marry us two weeks ago. I knew from the moment I saw her she would be my wife. She's the kindest, gentlest, most beautiful woman I have ever met. Never mind that her family's from Nashville...

P: She's Southern? You married a southerner? Oh, Thomas...

R: Thomas, this is too much! I don't know what to say...

*(Thomas struggles to stand and Eleanor helps him up. The other two women reach out to help him, but he leans on Eleanor.)*

T: Well, how about 'Congratulations, Thomas?' or 'It's a pleasure to meet you, Eleanor.'? This is my *wife*, after all. I love her. That's all there is to it. It doesn't matter where we met or how long we've known each other. She's my wife, and I want to protect her.

P: Thomas, you couldn't even protect yourself well enough to not get shot! And then to come home and bring a southern woman with you? That's just too much! I mean, what if she steals our things and goes back to her family? I've heard about those southern women. They're all loose and conniving and...

*(Eleanor stepping into the conversation)*

E: ...standing right here. May I speak? Rose, Prissy

*(Eleanor looks deeply at each of them)*

Thomas has told me so many kind things about the two of you. He spoke of you constantly. He assured me that we would both be welcomed into your home until we had the means to make other, more appropriate arrangements. I would never want to be a burden on you, and I fully intend to contribute and assist around your home as much as I can. I realize that since you didn't receive the letter that Thomas sent notifying you of our arrival, we now find ourselves in a bit of an awkward situation, but I assure you that my heart and my intentions are true. I love your brother very

much and I want only to support him, to help him heal, and to love him.

*(Thomas pulls her close, and Rose and Prissy just stare at her.)*

R. I'll go gather Emanuel's things from the Thomas's old room. You two can sleep in there, and we'll move Emanuel and Nathan back into the other room. Prissy, kindly come upstairs and help me.

*(Prissy pouts and glares at Eleanor, then storms upstairs after Rose. Nathan and Eleanor begin to help Thomas up the stairs).*

*[It is later that evening. The kitchen is dark, except for a few candles. Rose is drying dishes and stacking them in the cabinet. Prissy absently wipes the same dish over and over, sitting at the table. Rose notices a letter sitting on the cabinet.]*

R: What's this?

P: Oh, I meant to look at that earlier. Nathan brought it in when Thomas and what's her-name arrived. What is it?

R: Why, it's a letter from Thomas, dated June 12<sup>th</sup>, two weeks ago! It's postmarked from Nashville.

P: Well, what does it say?

R: "Dearest sisters, I am only now able to write to you and tell you of my upcoming return home. The infection in my leg has eased and the doctor tells me I will soon be suitable for travel, so I should be arriving home in Corydon by the second week in July. I know I have mentioned a nurse named Eleanor in previous letters, and I hope by my words and expression that you can discern my feelings for her. Rose, I feel like I should ask your permission (you being the oldest, and all), but my heart tells me that I don't need to have anyone's approval, and I should go ahead and marry this beautiful woman, and so tomorrow I shall. I plan to bring her with me when we return home, and I know you will both love her.

I know that times are difficult with William being away and Prissy staying with you, but I can assure you that Eleanor will do whatever she can to aid you in your daily work, and as soon as I am fit to walk, I will assume whatever duties I can until I am well

enough to return to active duty. Eleanor has pledged to stay by my side and help me get better, but she is strong and quick and I know she'll be a great help around the farm. You'll love her, I just know it..."

*(Rose buries her head in her hands).*

## **Scene 2**

*[Rose sits at the table. Prissy stands at the other end of the table. Rose feverishly rubs lard on eggs while Prissy absent-mindedly goes between rolling out dough for biscuits and flipping through the pages of a mail order catalog; most likely looking at wedding-related goods.]*

R: I know it's all very sudden, Prissy, but Eleanor is kin now. Believe me, the very last thing I need in this house is yet another mouth to feed and someone else to worry about, but she's a part of this family, and we have to accept that. Thomas, in whatever state of mind he may have been in, must have found something good in her, and we ought to try and find that good to.

P: But, Rose! They just waltzed in here without so much as a letter telling us he was coming home...

R: In all fairness to Thomas, he *did* send a letter...it just didn't arrive until after he did.

P: Well, I don't care. I don't like her.

R: Prissy, you don't even know her. She's only been here for a few days.

P: Well, I've heard stories about those *nurses*. What respectable woman would willingly put herself on the battlefield amid all that horror and violence and blood...ugh!

*(Rose stops what she's doing and glaring at Prissy)*

R: I'd give a fair amount of respect to any woman who did that. And don't forget about the respect due to the women who stay home tending their husband's farm and looking after a sister of questionable usefulness, a wounded brother and his mysterious

new bride, two rambunctious boys, and a barn full of animals! And never mind keeping tabs on the hogs that are running about, the bandages that have to be rolled, gardens that have to be weeded...and now this talk I hear about some southern general named Morgan who has his eye on Indiana, and that's *all* I need to worry about right now...

P: All right, Rose. All right. You've had your say. I don't appreciate being called "of questionable usefulness", and I still don't like Eleanor. I don't sit here week after week and watch you gather what precious little extra supplies we have to send around here to send away as provisions, just to have someone to look at us and call us a bunch of copperheads. We have no idea what her motives are for coming home with Thomas!

R: You know nothing about Eleanor's sympathies towards the south, Prissy. Just because they met in Tennessee...

*(Rose pauses and sighs, realizing that Prissy might have a point)*

And now she's living in our home...well, that just doesn't out-and-out mean that we're copperheads...

*(Eleanor enters from upstairs with a basket of clothing)*

E: I can assure you that my sympathies lie with my husband, upstairs in bed, wounded by a Confederate bullet. You have nothing to be concerned about. I am loyal to Thomas, and as he is loyal to his family, so too will I be.

R: That's kind of you to say, Eleanor. The washtub is out back if you want to scrub that clothing.

P: I hope you don't expect to be waited on, Eleanor. It takes all of us to keep this farm running, and now that you're here, you'll be no exception.

*(Rose raises her eyebrows and gives Prissy a "look")*

E: I find that I do best when I can be helpful. That's why I became a nurse. I couldn't bear to just sit around and watch this war unfold in front of me.

*(Prissy huffs and scowls at her).*

I needed to be *doing* something. Please, Rose, do let me know how I can be of help.

R: Well, there's other laundry upstairs that you can scrub, for a start. And make sure you scrub this stuff extra-hard

*(Rose points to the clothes in Eleanor's basket and wrinkles her nose).*

It's filthy!

E: It's Thomas's uniform. That's the battlefield you smell. I don't reckon I'll ever be able to get that smell out of the clothes.

R: Well, you can certainly try. Prissy, please go upstairs and bring down the boys' washing.

P: Rose, I'm rolling biscuits!

*(Prissy makes herself look busy all of a sudden).*

R: Prissy, I'll thank you kindly to go get the boys' clothes.

*(Prissy pouts and wipes her hands on her apron and storms upstairs).*

E: She doesn't hide her feelings, does she?

R: Prissy is a difficult one. She's so caught up in awaiting Joseph's return so she can get married and move on with her life. The sooner he comes home, the sooner they find their own piece of land and she's out of my hair. Don't get me wrong...I love my sister, but she's not one to raise much of a hand to help.

*(chuckling a little bit)*

E: So I gathered. Thomas described her as being very ladylike. I don't suppose farm work is much to her liking.

*(Rose softens a bit, but still stern and up-front)*

R: Indeed, no. But I'll warn you, Eleanor. Just watch what you say to her. When she said that it takes all of us to keep this place running, she did mean it. I do expect you to lend more than a hand, Eleanor. You seem very capable and willing to help out, and Thomas has said as much. You must also be strong, too, and there's hard work to be done on this farm. I'm sure you're no stranger to that, having spent that time in the hospital and in the field. I have no doubt you've done a fine job caring for Thomas, but I also can't afford to have you staying all day at his bedside. I need you down here, helping me. I expect that of you. I'd expect that of anyone.

*(Eleanor looks quietly at the floor, as if accepting her fate. She does not seem unhappy about it, though).*

E: Of course, Rose. You have my word that I will help in whatever ways I can. And now, if you would just kindly tell me if there is lye and bluing to use for the wash, I'll get started.

R: In the washhouse out back. I'll send Prissy out with the other wash as soon as she's done sulking and comes downstairs.

E: Rose? I just wanted you to know how highly Thomas has always praised you. I am honored to be allowed in your home, and I do thank you. You seem like a fine sister to him, and I'm glad I can call you my sister-in-law. Thank you for accepting me. I know it's still sort of a shock, to have Thomas and I here...and married. But I do appreciate your hospitality. I do hope we can become friends, after the surprise of being kin wears off.

*(Eleanor grins and picks up the laundry basket).*

R: Hmm. The washhouse is out back that way.

*(Rose Points out the back door and Eleanor exits with the basket. Rose wipes her forehead and sighs and begins to roll the dough where Prissy left off.)*

### **Scene 3**

*[Nathan and Thomas sit at the kitchen table. Rose washes the dishes in the basin while Emanuel dries them. Eleanor massages Thomas's leg and Prissy sits idly, looking bored. Nathan plays with a small game by himself at the table.]*

Em: Ma, can I talk with you a moment?

R: Emanuel, certainly. What's troubling you?

Em: I was in town yesterday, picking up the supplies you had for me, and I talked a bit with the boys that were down at the general store and they were talking about some Johnnies coming close to town. They're saying its some general named Morgan and he's stealing horses and supplies. Ma, they say Governor Morton up in Indianapolis has put a call out for militiamen. I'm able-bodied and strong, Ma, and I've made a decision. I want to go. Please. I want to join them.

*(Rose shakes her head vehemently)*

R: Absolutely not, Emanuel. Your father is out there somewhere and I know nothing of his health nor his whereabouts, your uncle has returned from battle scarred and wounded, and I am not about to send you out there to face the same fate. You're fifteen years old and you are too precious to me, and I need your strength around here to help me keep this farm going. It'll be your farm someday, you know...

Em: But Ma, I want to be out there where the real excitement is! It's no fun "contributing to the war effort" by milking stupid cows and pulling stupid garden weeds all day. I want to go, Ma. Please, let me go and fight!



R: It's every bit as important that you fight this war by pulling weeds! How do you think we'd survive if we didn't have this farm? How do you think our boys would have food if I didn't send you into town with those extra baskets of supplies? There's much more to fighting a war than being out there and shooting a gun, Emanuel. And my son, you need to understand that this is a war, not a game. It's not supposed to be *fun*. You saw what happened to your Uncle Thomas. And he was lucky. Many, many boys your age aren't so lucky. No, Emanuel. You're too young and I need you here. I don't want you talking to those boys down at the store anymore, either, if these are the ideas they're going to put into you head...

Em: But Ma, the governor issued an order..."all able-bodies white male citizens of the several counties south of the National Road"...that's me, Ma. He's asking me to fight!

R: Then you tell Governor Morton that he needs to come down here in person and kindly ask me to give up my oldest son, the strongest set of hands here on my farm, and the best protection I have. And once he does that, I will kindly offer him a glass of lemonade and politely decline his request. End of conversation, Emanuel. I will not let you go.

*(Emanuel huffs and puffs, and Prissy finally takes notice.)*

P: What's all this fuss about?

Em: Governor Morton called for all able-bodied men to start drilling so we can protect the town from General Morgan. Ma says I can't go.

P: Well, Emanuel, you're only fifteen. I would daresay that makes you "able-bodied". The battlefield is no place for boys like you. It's just too horrible for someone so young...or anybody, for that matter.

*(Emanuel snorts at her and finally storms off).*

R: Prissy, he may be young, but between this war and the work he has to do around here, I'd certainly say he has a man's share of responsibilities. I just can't accept sending him off to meet his fate like that, especially when I need him so badly to help here. But you don't have to tease him about it. That just makes it harder on him.

*(Prissy shrugs her shoulders)*

P: Well, he's your son, Rose, and I don't want to say that I told you so, but I did say that you ought to be raising gentlemen, not farmers. Heavens, for all you know that wild child would sneak off in the night, heedless of what you say!

*(Rose bristles at the comment and starts to become angry)*

R: Now that's quite enough, Prissy. I think you give an awful lot of advice on raising children for someone neither married nor with children of your own. When I need your advice, I will kindly ask you for it. Until then, why don't you let me make the decisions regarding my own children and the danger I willingly allow them to walk into? It's one matter to have your husband volunteer and leave you to work his farm and support the family, but it's another thing to knowingly sacrifice your son.

*(Prissy speaks quietly at first, then getting angrier)*

P: Do you forget, Rose that I, too, am waiting for *my* soldier to return? Did you forget that I'm in the middle of trying to plan a wedding? Not even knowing when--or if-- the bridegroom will come back? Joseph's last letter was postmarked a month ago...do you think you're the only one waiting for someone to come home and take care of them? I was never meant to work on a farm! I never asked to live this way! As soon as Joseph returns to me, we'll buy our own farm and won't have to burden you any longer. But until then, please don't think that you're the only one troubled by this war.

*(Prissy storms off stage. Nathan, Thomas, and Eleanor look at her, waiting for a response. Rose sighs, wipes her forehead, and begins to prepare some food.)*

R: Well, it seems I just can't do right by anyone tonight, can I?

N: Did it hurt when you got shot, Uncle Thomas?

R: Nathan! What a terrible question!  
*(Rose turns around and acts incredulous).*

T: It just felt like an explosion. I was thrown off my feet and I blacked out. When I came to, I was being dragged across the ground towards a tent they had set up towards the back of the line of combat. It hurt like hell, let me tell you.

*(Nathan grins wickedly)*

E: Thomas! Watch your language in front of Nathan!

T: Well, it *did* hurt! I still have one of the bullets, too! Sawbones saved it for me.  
*(Thomas fishes a small bullet out of his pocket and hands it to Nathan, who rolls it around in his hand. The women shake their heads.)*

N: Who's Sawbones? And I thought you were only shot once...

E: It's a terrible name they give to most of the medics who work out amidst the battlefields. They're terribly brave men. I can't even imagine the horror they must witness, over and over...

T: And so I got shot full of buckshot. Those damn Johnnies...never enough that they shoot you with just *one* bullet. They've got to go and just pump you full of 'em. But the good news there is that they're easier to get out. The minies we use? Now *those* will take your leg off for sure.

*(Rose clears her throat and looking threateningly at Thomas)*

R: Another subject, perhaps? Something a bit more cheerful?

T: That particular doc...he was a good one. I saw so many boys come out of his tent with one fewer leg than they went in with. Course, so many of them were better off without it, the way they all got torn up out there. They said that the faster a leg or an arm came off, the better job the docs had done. Most of those boys were lucky, too, because they'd get chloroform to numb the pain. Me? I just bit down on a leather strap while he dug around in my leg and fished out all those little bullets. Blood everywhere. And you know why so many of those boys get so close out on the battlefield? It's because our blood's mixed. Those docs don't even have time to wash off their knives before going from one patient to another...

R: Quite enough, Thomas! A different subject, please!

*(Thomas suddenly gets very angry and upset)*

T: Rose, you just don't know! You have no idea what it was like out there! I relive those days every moment I'm awake now! Seeing my friends and your neighbors get their heads blown off right in front of you?

*(everyone gasps)*

You can't expect a man to go from fighting out there and living a soldier's life to coming home and having to have his wife and sister help move me from the bed to the chair and back to the bed every single day! This is no way for me to live. Do you think I like watching you do a man's work? My own sister! I'd rather die than have you doing all this work yourself! It's no job for a woman...no job at all...and here I sit, useless. I can...

*(he winces and strains to stand)*

barely walk by myself. I'm useless! You told Emanuel he couldn't go out to help defend his home, but what good does it do him if he

can't be useful? Would you rather have him sit around here like me? Let him go! Let him be a man!

*(He painfully and awkwardly tries to limp upstairs, and Nathan follows, silently and obediently helping him. The women just sit and stare after him).*

E: I'm sorry, Rose. He...he gets so upset sometimes. I know he's just thinking about what he's been through and thinking about the others that he had to leave behind...

*(Rose very quietly and sounding confused)*

R: He never used to get angry like that. Thomas was always so peaceable, so agreeable. Now...now he's completely changed. He would *never* have said anything to upset me, talking about Sawbones and bullet wounds, yelling at me to send my child off into battle. And now...

E: A lot of those boys are like that, Rose. They charge onto the field so fresh and innocent and scared. They come back as men, hardened and angry...blackened inside and out...

*(Rose speaks with her back to the audience so we cannot see how scared she is)*

R: And to just think that my Emanuel could be out there with them, doing Lord knows what, charging into his *own* battle and coming out a man...

*(she turns to face Eleanor)*

Oh, Eleanor. If something were to happen to him...Just seeing what this war has done to Thomas and knowing that Emanuel is still just a boy. I don't think he could handle that.

*(she pauses for a moment, reconsidering)*

Maybe I've sheltered him too much. I've kept him from these horrible things, these realities of our life and times, and maybe I shouldn't have...

*(Eleanor puts her hand on Rose's arm)*

E: Rose, that's nonsense. Nobody should *ever* have to see the things that I've seen, the things that Thomas has seen...such terrible, terrible things. There are images that will never leave my mind. I

too, think about them all the time, anytime my mind wanders away from the safety of this little farm. This war is so, so ugly, Rose. It's a tragedy. And yet, when Thomas first came to the field hospital where we met, he still had a twinkle in his eye. He smiled all the time whenever I would come over to his cot to clean his wound. It was a horrible wound, too. Did he tell you that about two months after he was wounded, he got gangrene and almost died? It's a miracle he didn't succumb.

R: He did mention the infection it in a letter. And he did mention you several times, you know. Little did we know...

*(Both Rose and Eleanor smile, relaxing a bit)*

*(Rose comes and sits down next to Eleanor at the table)*

E: He really was so brave, Rose. You'd have been proud of him. He was so strong and I know how much his wound must have hurt him, all the time. The other boys...they would cry late at night. I would hear them. During the day they acted so strong and so brave, and at night when I would make my rounds, I would hear them crying. Some of the cried for their mothers or their wives, and it broke my heart. Thomas never cried, though. He and I would sit together at night and he would tell me about you, about Prissy and the children. He said he'd lost touch with William and he didn't know the whereabouts of Joseph, either. He thought it was odd that the three of them had been separated, that he missed his "brothers" so badly, but perhaps better that way, since the casualties at Brentwood were so high. 300 boys died in that battle. I know that doesn't sound like much, but when you're in the thick of it, their arms all reaching out to hold your hand, their eyes blank and staring...it's a wonder that out of all of those poor boys, I managed to find dear Thomas...

R: I don't know how you did it, Eleanor. I don't know how you endured all those things.

E: And the worst part about it? The boys who survived, the ones who came out alive? Sometimes, I wondered if perhaps it wouldn't have been better if the good Lord had taken their souls on the battlefield.

*(she seems to fade into her own thoughts)*

Their poor, wounded soldier's hearts are never the same after they come back from fighting. Their bodies are broken, but they mend. It's their hearts that can never heal. Some of them would stop talking. Some of them jump every time they hear a loud noise. They talk to themselves, they cry out in the night and suffer horrible nightmares...oh, Rose...

R: And what do you think of Thomas's condition? He doesn't say much these days, and when he does...well, you heard him earlier. He speaks so often of the violence and the fighting. Do you think he can ever recover from this?

E: I hope so. Thank the Lord he has such a strong family to support him. And of course, I will be by his side whenever he needs me. Sometimes it helps to have someone who's been there in some way or another. It helps to have shared the experience with someone, no matter how horrible and experience it may have been.

R: You're a good nurse, Eleanor. As awkward as things have been between us, he's lucky to have you. I thank you for watching over our brother. God willing, time will heal his body and his heart and we'll have our *old* Thomas back. I think you'd find him quite the charmer...

E: Well, *this* Thomas seemed to charm me pretty well. I married him, didn't I?

*(The two women laugh together and then sigh).*

R: You certainly did. You certainly did...

#### **Scene 4**

*[It is midday. Rose and Eleanor are busy putting dinner on the table. Prissy sits and waits to be served.]*

*(Eleanor holds a plate of food)*

E: I guess I ought to bring this up to Thomas. He said between the horrible July heat and his leg giving him a lot of pain, he didn't think he had the energy to come downstairs today.

*(she sighs).*

I think, after yesterday's outburst, he's just losing hope, Rose.

P: He even told me the other day he doesn't want to hear anything more about my wedding plans. I thought that seemed rather rude and unlike Thomas. Usually he'd listen to me for hours and hours.

*(Eleanor and Rose exchange glances and roll their eyes. Eleanor walks upstairs.)*

R: Well, Prissy, the world at this point in time does not revolve around your wedding plans. There are issues of greater concern to be addressed, like getting supper ready, or the war, our men out fighting, this 'raid' they're talking about in town with those johnnies they said were wandering a little too close to Corydon...

*(Rose calls offstage)*

Emanuel! Nathan! Supper's on the table! Why can I never have help around here when I need it most? Oh, good, Nathan. You're here. Did you deliver the eggs to Mrs. Hays like I asked you to?

N: Yes, Ma. I did. She said thank you.

*(One by one, the family assembles at the table.)*

R: Where's Emanuel? Isn't he done putting the horses up?

*(She calls outside to him)*

Emanuel! Nathan, where is he?

*(Nathan looking very nervous and timid)*

N: Ma, I...I promised I wouldn't say anything.

*(Rose stands and leans towards Nathan, holding him by the shoulders.)*

R: Nathan, what do you mean, 'you promised not to say anything'? Where is your brother? Where is Emanuel?



N: He said something about his duty to the boys and his responsibility to protect the town. He said he'd send word as soon as he could. He...he took Black Hawk and rode towards Mauckport.

R: Mauckport? That's where they said they saw Morgan's army coming!

*(Rose collapses in the chair.)*

N: But Ma, he said not to worry. He said that he'd be strong and he'd fight well and he'd come home real soon. Please don't tell him I told you...He'd be so cross with me...

*(Prissy laughs from the table where she is sitting.)*

P: He'd be cross with you? Wait until he has his mother to reckon with when he returns...

*(Rose wearily)*

R: Prissy, that is absolutely enough from you.

*(She snaps out of her exhaustion with new determination and starts busying herself around the kitchen, collecting supplies.)*

Well, that's it, I suppose. It appears we may have to ready our little a farm for some sort of an attack. We have some work to do, then. Nathan, I want you to go right now out to the woods and gather up the hogs, as many of them as you can find, and bring them into the barn. Make sure you get the good sow, too, and check their ears, carefully this time. Don't bring back any of the Gresham's hogs. You remember how irate he got last year when we rounded up one of theirs. Do you understand me? I want those hogs in the barn by sundown. And bring a musket when you go. You be careful with it, but bring it just the same.

N: Yes, Ma. I'll do it. But Ma? Emanuel said that some of the women were going to down to Cedar Glade to hide out. Do you want to go there?

R: And what, leave our house to be plundered and ransacked at the whim of any Johnnie outlaw who comes tearing through here, taking shots at my child? No, we will stay here, thank you. I refuse to leave this farm. Besides, Thomas really isn't well enough

to move, and I can't just leave a wounded Yank here for them to find. Who knows what they'd do with him...Prissy, I want you to go out to the garden and bring a shovel with you.

*(Prissy stands uncertainly)*

P: Whatever for?

R: I need you to dig a hole big enough for the chest containing Mother's silver and her amethyst broche. We don't have many fancy things around here, but I refuse to hand over our valuables to marauders.

P: I'll do it, Rose.

*(Eleanor comes back downstairs and looks confused.)*

R: Eleanor? Can you bring in the horses and make sure the sheep and the cows are all brought in to the barn? And Eleanor, make sure Thomas's uniform is out of sight. Put it at the back of the wardrobe, as hidden as possible. Bring his musket down here. We'll keep it loaded, but out of sight. I don't want to see anyone anywhere near that gun unless we absolutely need to use it. Eleanor, will you help?

E: I will, Rose.

R: Fine, then. I'll be out in the garden gathering everything ripe enough to pick. If we get trapped here and have to eat nothing but tomatoes for the next six days, we'll do it. I don't want to risk losing a single string bean to those Johnnies.

*(They disperse to tend to their assigned tasks. Rose prepares to go outside but Nathan stops her.)*

N: Ma, one more thing. I forgot that this letter came at the post office for Aunt Prissy today. It's from someone named Lieutenant John Anderson. Is that someone we know?

*(He removes the telegram from his pocket and hands it to Rose. She turns it over slowly, realizes what it is, stares at it in a trance, then snaps back to the task at hand).*

R: Thank you, Nathan. You never mind this letter. Now go get those hogs. Be careful. And if you see anyone, anyone wearing grey, if you see anyone who even looks like they might be southern, you come back here as quick as lightning, do you understand me? Do not try to be brave, you just come back here. And don't let them see you, for Heaven's sake!

N: Yes, Ma.

*(Rose kisses him solemnly on the forehead and then shoves him out the door. She looks again at the letter in her hand, wipes her forehead again and takes a deep breath.)*

R: Prissy? Prissy, I need you!

*(Prissy comes back inside with a shovel in her hand.)*

P: What is it now, Rose? It's bad enough I'm forced to go digging through the dirt...what's this? Rose, what is this? Who's John Anderson? What is this letter? Rose, what is this? Why is this man writing to me?

*(She becomes hysterical as she takes the letter from Rose. Her hands shaking, she opens it, reads it quickly, and drops it to the floor, collapsing into Rose's outstretched arms. Eleanor comes back downstairs with the musket and sets it behind the door.)*

E: Rose, what's the trouble? Prissy? Prissy, what's wrong?

*(Prissy only points to the letter on the floor, which Eleanor picks up. She reads it slowly, and then reaches out to embrace Prissy as she cries.)*

## **Scene 5**

*[Nathan runs into the kitchen. Rose, Prissy, and Eleanor are sewing and doing other household chores around the table. Nathan throws a letter on the table.]*

R: Nathan, what is this?

N: It's a letter, Mama. It's from Emanuel. I think he wanted to let you know he's all right.

P: Oh, Rose, what does it say? Where is he? What's happened?

R: "Dear Mama, First of all, please do not worry about me. I am fine. Very strong and very brave. You would be proud. I am sorry that I took Black Hawk. I know he was a good horse—*was* a good horse?—and he was very fast. He and I ran three times back and forth to Mauckport and delivered messages to Captain Lahue's company. I left Black Hawk in a pasture north of here, and Mose Decker told General Morgan's men where he was and they stole him. Sorry, Mama. I know he was a good horse, but please do not be mad. It could have been worse. I do not think the men made it to our farm, so I hope you were safe. After they took Black Hawk, I met up with Captain Heth's company and they gave me a real musket to use! But don't worry, Mama. I only shot it a few times. We watched Morgan's men shoot canons right at the Cedar Glade hotel where many women and children were hiding, but I don't think that was very brave of them to do that. They should have fought like men—oh, that Emanuel. After that, Captain Heth thought it best for us to retreat since we were far outnumbered, so I took to the woods along with Frank Adams. I have learned that there were three men taken to the Presbyterian church, which they have turned into a hospital. Those men died, but there are others who were wounded and are still there. Some of the women from town are helping them. We spoke briefly with them and then continued on. Our muskets became so heavy, so we wrapped them around an oak tree so the johnnies couldn't use them. Uncle Thomas told me about that! We stopped at the Old Stone House and they gave us corn bread and some milk, and though it wasn't nearly as good as your cornbread, Mama, it was still good. Next time I decide to disobey you, I'll remember to bring some provisions. Mama, I want you to know that I am safe and hopefully Frank was able to deliver this back to you at home. I will be home very soon, as we have seen the end of battle here in Corydon and Morgan's men are marching now towards the east, and General Hobson is quickly after him. I will come home very soon to defend our farm from anyone else, but I want you to know

I am safe and I love you. Your son, Emanuel. Oh, my Lord, my Lord. What do I do with him?"

P: Well, thank goodness he's safe! I don't know what that boy was thinking, running off to do battle with a band of no-good Johnnie horse thieves who think nothing of aiming a cannon at a hotel full of women and children! What monsters! And thank the Lord that there were only a few men hurt.

*(She pauses for a moment, visibly comes to a realization, and then turns to Rose)*

Rose, how many bandages have we rolled?

R: Why, I don't know, Prissy. Why do you ask?

P: Well, it just seems like if some of our townsmen are hurt defending our town, or even if there are boys lying somewhere wounded, we ought to help them out. Nathan, gather that basket and bring up a few jars of vegetables from the cellar. Eleanor, are there still any biscuits left from breakfast?

*(Eleanor pulls a parcel of biscuits wrapped in cloth from a cabinet).*

E: There are.

P: Would you please bring them here? Rose, I know William used to keep a bottle of whiskey around here somewhere. Where is that?  
*(Rose blushes).*

R: I...I didn't know anyone knew about that. It's there, under the washbasin.

*(Prissy roots around and pulls out a half-full bottle of whiskey).*

P: I think those boys might need this more than we will for the time being. I'll just put it in the basket here. Nathan, will you be my escort? If any of those horse thieves are still around, I'll need protection.

*(Prissy gathers other objects from around the kitchen and puts them in a large basket. She brushes past the other women, who simply stare at her.)*

E: Prissy, whatever are you doing?

P: Those boys need our help and support. I'm taking Nathan and we're going into town to the church to deliver some supplies. By my own admission, it's about time I started helping around here a little bit more. What better time to start now than now? I might not be a nurse like you, Eleanor, but I can give them a hand to hold, or some food to ease their growling stomachs.

R: Prissy, you mean you're going to ride a horse into town? Do you even know how?

P: What ride a horse? Rose, I'll thank you kindly not to mock me. I may be grieving for my Joseph, but I am not above answering any call of duty that can be suitably answered by a lady in mourning. Nathan, can you bring two horses around?

N: I'll go get them, Aunt Prissy.

*(Nathan looks at Rose as if to see if she will refuse to let him go, but she pauses for a moment, then nods at Nathan. He runs out.)*

*(Eleanor says quietly)*

E: That's very brave and very kind of you, Prissy. We're very proud. Do be careful. We'll have supper for you when you return.

R: And bring whatever news you can of Emanuel. Be careful, Prissy.  
*(Prissy and Nathan exit, carrying the basket of supplies)*

I don't honestly know quite what to make of that. Joseph's death has changed her, for certain. She has always been so loathe helping, to lend a hand...but now...

E: I noticed when I came down this morning all the eggs had already been gathered. I saw her heading out to the barn with a milk pail, too.

- R: I didn't honestly think she even knew how to milk a cow, but apparently she can make herself useful if she just tries.
- E: She knows that you're all she has left. Poor Prissy, so eager to start her new life, and now where does this leave her? Alone...
- R: She'll never be alone. We will always take care of her. We would always look after our own...

## **Scene 6**

*[It is late that same evening. Eleanor, Thomas, and Rose are again sitting at the table. It is set for dinner, but there are three empty plates. Rose fidgets and acts nervous. Eleanor quietly tends to Thomas, helping him bend his leg. He winces a few times, but acts strong.]*

E: Rose, there's no need to worry. They'll be back soon. They're perfectly safe. Morgan's Raiders have moved on, isn't that what Nathan said earlier?

R: I know. But they should have been back by now. It's almost nightfall! Whatever is taking them so long?

T: **Do I hear horses now?**  
*(They all listen for a moment, then Rose rushes outside.)*

*(Prissy, Emanuel and Nathan are escorted in, looking tired but excited)*

R: You're home! Oh, Emanuel, you rotten, disobedient, brave, noble young man! I would take the switch to you if I weren't so glad you're home! Oh, my son...  
*(She sobs into his head as she embraces him).*

*(Emanuel tries to wiggle out of her arms, looking embarrassed)*

Em: I was fine, Mama. Not a single scratch on me, save for here where I got tangled in some blackberry bushes while running into the woods.

*(He points at his arm).*

E: And Prissy, how are you? What did you see?

P: Oh, those poor boys! There weren't too many of them, just a handful, really, but they seemed so sad and worn and tired. And Rose, the worst part...They brought in Henry Steepleton *(Rose gasps)*.  
And I was told that Mr. Glenn and poor old William Heth were both killed as well.

R: God rest their souls.

T: God rest their souls, indeed. Henry Steepleton always was a good shot. He used to bring down deer with a single bullet.

P: They told me that he shot a cavalryman who would have shot Captain Lahue, and just after that, someone else shot him. He wasn't even registered with the militia; he was just following orders from Lahue himself.

T: And what now of Morgan's men? Have they fled?

Em: General Hobson was after them, not even a day's march behind them. They've moved east, away from here. I don't think there's anything else to worry about, Mama. You can unearth the silver from the garden.

*(Thomas laughs, and Eleanor smiles.)*

*(Rose acts embarrassed)*

R: Thomas, I'll thank you kindly to not mock me. I did what I could to protect this home.

Em: You did right, Mama. I heard that Morgan's men weren't very sympathetic. Even Samuel Douglass and Simeon Wolf...you know...

T: Those men living south of Corydon?



*(Prissy interjects and tries to stay in the conversation)*

P: Those are the ones. Those two are *real* copperheads, known sympathizers with the confederates...

Em: Well, even *they* had to defend their homes from Morgan's men. I guess they weren't so sympathetic when it came to having to hand over *their* horses and silver...

R: My, my. What excitement. And quite enough of it, I daresay. Emanuel, take yourself out to the washhouse and clean up. And I want you to *only* go out to the washhouse, not out stealing horses and running off to fight in some battle. You just do battle with a big kettle full of hot water. Prissy, Nathan, do you want supper?  
*(Emanuel exits to the outside)*

N: No thank you, Mama. They had so many provisions at the church, and we helped ourselves to some of those. I'm so tired, all I want right now is my bed.

T: I think we'll retire for the night as well. Nathan, a hand, perhaps?

*(Eleanor and Nathan help Thomas stand up. He winces, but they manage to help him upstairs.)*

P: And I need to get out of these travel clothes. Do you see this, Rose? I got blood on my skirt! Blood! Can you imagine?!  
*(Prissy holds out her stained skirt proudly)*

R: We're very proud of you, Prissy. Bring the skirt back down and we'll soak it. I have wash to do tomorrow anyway.

P: I can do the wash, Rose. I know how.

*(Prissy exits upstairs, and Rose is alone. She wipes her forehead, goes to the cabinet and takes out a pen and some paper. She sits at the kitchen table and begins to write.)*

*(Rose reads aloud as she writes)*

R: My darling William...It has been entirely too long since I have seen any news written in your abominable penmanship. I miss squinting at the paper, trying to decipher your words. It must be difficult to find a surface suitable for writing out there in the field. I forgive you, though if I were a grade school teacher, I would still be forced to give you poor marks!

Such emotional times here on our farm, my love. It grieves me to tell you that Prissy lost her beloved Joseph, God rest his soul. Thomas has returned, however, and has brought with him a new bride. Our house seems full, but there is still such a glaring absence in the empty spot where you should be sitting at the head of the table.

Though there is no comparison to what physical and emotional trials you must endure, each day here brings its own challenges and each day I feel less and less like I am able to meet them. I am thankful for the company but am unsure of how to care for our family and all their varied needs. I cannot know how to counsel Prissy in her grief, and not knowing the whereabouts of my own husband makes it all the more difficult. At your first opportunity, my dear husband, please do try to send word of your location and your health. I long for a letter.

Ah, my William. I must confess that my able-bodied exterior belies the fear and terror I must endure each evening when the light fades away and my mind has time to wander in the shadows. Thomas has put images into my head too horrible to be repeated, and I cannot help but place you in those scenes. How I pray for your safe return, strong in body and in mind.

I wonder every night as I fall asleep if the same fate has befallen you, my dear. When you return, will you still have that same sparkle in your deep brown eyes? Will you still throw your head back when you laugh? Will you still love to play with your sons, now more men than boys? I fear that same distant stare and withdrawn comportment as my brother shows, now that the images and experiences of war have changed him so. Will you promise me when you will still be my same William when you return to me?

Yours faithfully, Rose...

*(She wipes her forehead, puts the letter in an envelope, puts out the candle, and walks upstairs.)*

