

Sister Evangelina

Sister Evangelina is a robust and older no-nonsense nun, but does have a soft side. Born Enid Atwood in late 19th century Reading, she grew up one of eight children in impoverished working class conditions. Her mother was a homemaker and father a dock worker. Her father was loving and forgiving, while her mother ruled the roost and actually controlled much of the finances, stretching every earning as far as possible – including small side sales of homemade handknits. She had little patience for dawdling, claiming any task could be done in ten minutes. During Christmastime the children improvised by trading gifts each year, so that each might have something “new.” Though young Enid helped at home cooking and caring for her siblings quite a bit, she still managed to make good marks in school. The family, however, had no money for private education. Having benefited from the services of nuns and the church herself growing up, Enid felt natural in an environment run by women. And seeing a younger brother born helped seal her calling as a nun and eventual midwife, though in her early career she pitched in serving other populations as needed, such as soldiers during the Great War. She could probably run Nonnatus House if not for her brusque nature, like her mother, allowing no excuses for anything less than full effort – from patients, Sisters and nurses. She does, however, understand and sympathize with the people of Poplar better than any one else in Nonnatus and defends them tirelessly.

Sister Julienne

Sister Julienne, born Louise, was raised by an upper middle class family. The oldest of four children, she was always fairly independent and able to get things done. She was well educated and even studied for a time in France. When she was a teen she began caring for a sick distant cousin who came to live in the area to be closer to hospital. She enjoyed seeing the nurses work and picking up on skills, and most of all, being able to help. This pushed her into studying nursing. She was certified and cared for her cousin, who at this point had progressed quite a lot. In spending time getting to know him, she began to develop feelings she hadn't had for any other boys. She played it off since they were related, although he seemed to share the fondness for her. With his complications, she looked to religion for some peace, if not understanding, of why he should go through this so young. When he died with Louise by his side, she vowed she'd never love again. Seeing the convent as a good solution, she took her vows and joined Nonnatus House under the eventual leadership of Sister Monica Joan. After Sister Monica Joan became increasingly forgetful in her older years, Sister Julienne stepped in and became Sister-in-Charge. The work with the underprivileged population has fortified her faith and she has found great meaning in serving them. Because of her forbidden formative love, she finds it very hard to judge others, and insists upon this acceptance from the nurses she guides.

Sister Bernadette

Sister Bernadette is a bright and attentive nun and midwife in her 30s. She grew up in a middle income family outside Glasgow, Scotland. Slightly on the bookwormish side, she had few friends growing up, but was quite close with them. She excelled in religious parochial school. Nuns always told her she'd be an excellent addition to the cloth as she was faithful and diligent. Since she hadn't really been told anything else, she never seriously considered any alternatives. The youngest nun by far in every order she's been to, she originally tried a rural convent in Northern England, but the pace of life and casework was too slow and mundane. She eventually came to London because it bears the more urban, busy environment she's used to, and the East End because it's a community in need. Though at first she saw her future self as a mature nun à la her Nonnatus sisters, with whom she fit in well, with the continued arrival of new nurses her age, who are serving those in need and yet free to be young and have fun, a future only in convent is beginning to give her the slightest pause. She pushes it off for now by focusing on her patients, equipment, and prayers. Should someone show her affection, however, it might be enough to cause her to consider other possibilities.

Sister Monica Joan

Sister Monica Joan was raised by an aristocratic, leading family. Her mother constantly criticized the child for her infinite curiosity and desire to play in the dirt outside. To her defense, she was often left to play on her own, and this plus her devouring of classics and other readings – including her own zodiac chart drawn in secret by her Grandmother, spurred on her imagination. As did nature itself - in a fort made under garden hedges, she kept a chrysalis and watched it over time form into a butterfly. Ever since that magical transmutation, she's been drawn to the spiritual, the ethereal. To her utter dismay, her mother, who often had trouble locating the child, ultimately found and destroyed the special refuge, taking out all the trinkets and baubles the child had collected. With her mother's increased mental instability, eventually requiring bouts in hospital, and with her father often travelling, a significant endowment was made to a small convent, securing a discrete arrangement where the child could be cared for during weeks on end without burdening the rest of the titled family or making public knowledge the mother's mental health issues.

The nurturing environment of the convent, where she had seemingly infinite mothers -- some kind, some less so -- but all of whom paid her attention, combined with her thirst for knowledge and ethereal truths lead Sister Monica Joan to follow a path of devotion to the Lord, joining her fellow sisters, but not before becoming one of the first women in England to qualify as a midwife in 1906 -- much to her Grandmother's happiness and mother's chagrin. The sanctity and miracle of life was made all important to her in that little hedge in her garden, and to assist in the arrival of new lives was most fulfilling. That this upset her family, who couldn't conceive of her relinquishing title and status, was just icing on the cake. When she arrived at Nonnatus, though eccentric, she was

quite an astute asset, and came into leadership when the older Sister-in-Charge passed. She lead quite efficiently for a time, although some questioned her implementing inventive new policies, such as cake days and solstice observances. Once she started becoming forgetful, stoking her own insecurities of what happened to her mother, she willingly stepped down, but was happy that Sister Julianne insisted on keeping her as part of the order. Though she knows of one other sister, she actually has a third from an affair she never knew about.

Camilla “Chummy” Fortescue-Cholomondely-Browne

Despite, or perhaps because of, a very cold and distant upbringing, Camilla “Chummy” Browne is one of the most warm-hearted, calming and accepting nurses at Nonnatus. Now in her late 20s and from a very upper crust family, Though Chummy saw the world (traveling to India) and dignitaries (knowing princesses on a personal basis), all was not perfect as her parents were on different continents, and her brothers were miles away at Winchester. She found some comfort in the fact that they were always at least given stamps and an address to write to. Even in person, however, her mother was very cold and distant, visibly disappointed that her only daughter was not a prim and proper replica of herself. Her constant criticism bore a hole of doubt into Chummy’s self confidence, and her stature and at times clumsy nature have rendered her fairly awkward in all situations, despite her well-educated and mannered upbringing. Not impressed with pomp and circumstance, she genuinely cares for all people and is incredibly calming, caring, and competent, and keeps a good sense of humor. This comes in handy as she actually handles the grime and grittiness of Poplar with much more aplomb than any of the other nurses on first exposure. Her challenges and friends in the East End have afforded her more confidence in handling all manners of her life – from midwifery, to love, to standing up to her mother for what she believes in.

Jennifer “Jenny” Lee

An only child, Jenny Lee enjoyed a privileged upbringing, going to boarding school, traveling to Paris and the South of France. She had many close friends growing up and was the apple of her parents’ eye. She did well in school, and had several schoolyard suitors, prior to attending an all girls boarding school, but nothing too serious. She cared deeply for animals, and enjoyed horseback riding, as well as training and playing with the family dogs – three over the years. When one of them ran-away as she was returning from boarding school for the summer, she found him at the estate of family friend and neighbor Gerald Stanley Wells, a Member of Parliament from her district in the “home counties” – the wealthy suburbs of London - representing the Conservative Party. A lover of all things France, he now had much in common with the now matured young lady Jenny and they made up various reasons to see each other. As their affections grew, the relationship came to the breaking point when both were forced to decide for their futures. When he did not agree to leave his wife, Jenny chose for

own sake to flee, and to her parents' bafflement decided to move to the East End of London. This was in part to spite Gerald, who had long disparaged the impoverished there, citing them as a blight on the face of England, and stated the whole area should have been blotted out. When Jenny finds she's not in a private hospital in the area but at a convent, she gets more than she bargained for, but in her exposure to the people and the way they must live as well as to the Nonnatus who serve them, she genuinely comes to care for and understand them. This increasingly sets her apart from her former friends, including Jimmy, though she had held out hope she might be able to change Gerald's mind about the population. At any rate, the experience has been formative and opened her heart even further.

Beatrix "Trixie" Franklin

Trixie comes from a middle class family close in London. The baby of five, she was very doted on and eventually acted out more than her "perfect" older sister. Always one to choose fun over responsibility, she got into trouble with an early pregnancy. When her family found out, she faced either being kicked out on her own or giving up the newborn. Riddled with guilt, but more afraid to be alone raising a child, she decided to put the baby up for adoption. This was a sort of wake-up call for her and from then on she concentrated more in school and better respected her curfew. She decided to help other babies and women, got certified as a nurse and moved away to the East End right after graduation. To this day, although coquettish and a sort of "love cheerleader" for her fellow nurses, Trixie keeps things flirty but casual with beaux to this point, keeping her distance. She picks up on subtleties well and relishes being in others' business.

Cynthia Miller

Cynthia is a polite and timid midwife in her early twenties at Nonnatus. Her family had slightly less income than Jenny or Trixie, but her physical necessities were always met. Her father, however, was verbally abusive to her mother when he stayed out late drinking with friends after work. She and her younger siblings would hide in a closet as she covered their ears or tried reading them stories by candlelight or singing songs. She only ever saw her father get physical once, and her mother stopped it immediately by hitting him with an iron. After that he cleaned up his act somewhat, but by then Cynthia had become quite a quiet child, not wishing to disturb anyone or set off a temper. She never told any of her friends or instructors at school. She studied nursing to be able to help those in need, and has since worked at overcoming her shyness. She worked for a private hospital for a year to stay close to home, and then heard about a need for help in the East End. Initially shocked by the conditions, she empathizes deeply with the people of Poplar. While the other girls date and flirt, Cynthia hasn't ever dated, always having felt a need to care for her family instead, and now at Nonnatus feels more drawn to focusing on her patients. She worries about doing a good job in caring for the babies and mothers and their families – and once she has, still worries whether it was good enough.