

# Whitney, Martha

WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Now here, on the wards, since you will have a lot of corpsmen to assist you, you will be responsible, Captain, for three hundred to three hundred and fifty patients in all. And, as supervisor you will be expected to care for the sickest patients yourself.

MARTHA. (*Staggered.*) Three hundred and fifty patients?

WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Night duty is the hardest, of course. People die at night. And wounded people, Captain, get very frightened at night. They moan, they cry out—here—here—this way please—

MARTHA. (*To audience.*) She was right—my chief nurse stateside—I don't have the experience for this—

*(THEY stop by a bench.)*

WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Now, your job will include all the routine things, of course—reading the charts, checking the IVs, the dressings, the casts—

MARTHA. (*To audience.*) Suction! Respirators! Infusing fluids! Catheters! Tubes! Drains! I don't know what I'm looking at! I can't find the patient here!

WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Don't think about it in that way! What you must do is focus on the facts. And write the data down.

MARTHA. But I've never seen anything like this in my life!

WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Captain please! Just keep on checking the charts, the dressings, the IVs and the casts. Think only of what you're checking. Shut out all the rest! Build a psychological wall! Now, come on Captain—we'll go to the next ward—

*(SHE starts walking, MARTHA trailing.)*

MARTHA. (*To audience.*) Please God—don't let there be so many horrible things wrong on the next ward—

WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Here are the more seriously injured men—our intensive care patients—come along—

MARTHA. (*Stops.*) I can't take anymore!

~~(WHITNEY turns to regard her.)~~

~~WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Stuff it, Captain! Behind that wall! Or you will never function or be of use!~~

~~MARTHA. But there are so many injuries—and the kinds of injuries—and the—~~

~~WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE. Interrupting.*) The Medical Corps motto is: "Conserve the Fighting Strength!" Your work is to patch up the soldier so he can get back to the battle field—~~

~~MARTHA. Yes, ma-am—~~

~~WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Keep walking—briskly—ward to ward to ward. Walk!~~

~~MARTHA. (*Starting to briskly walk ahead of WHITNEY as THEY march one way, turn, march back again.*) Yes—I—I'll just have to keep walking along—~~

~~WHITNEY. (*As HEAD NURSE.*) Walk and don't think! Write and don't think! Don't think! Don't think! Don't let those thoughts come through that wall! Stay behind your wall!~~

~~(WHITNEY and MARTHA continue to march across stage, turn, march back again as:)~~