

DANCE HALL GIRLS

by

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(Teaser of Pilot Episode)

DANCE HALL GIRLS

Teaser

FADE IN:

EXT. NEBRASKA TERRITORY, 1863 - MAY, EARLY DAWN

Establishing shot of the beautiful, vast, open and seemingly never-ending FIELDS of the NEW FRONTIER PLAINS of Stanton County. It's finally good weather for traveling since the Homestead Act went into effect on January 1st, but so far there's no sign of any settled plots of land in site--

Just a lone, DISTRESSED COVERED WAGON trying to make it's way through the TALL PRAIRIE GRASS PULLED BY TWO TIRED WORKHORSES. A BLACK QUARTERHORSE trails behind as it's PULLED along by a ROPE. TWO GOATS and SEVERAL crated HENS are SEEN looking out the wagon's BACK OPENING.

Up front HANNAH BERRY, late 20's, an attractive, well-educated, strong-willed, loyal, and capable independent widow from New Hampshire, wearily STEERS the tattered REIGNS while her sister ELIZABETH (BETH) BERRY, early 20's, a pretty, rebellious, adventurous, skilled, single tomboy-type SWATS away DOZENS of BLACK STABLE FLIES angrily.

BETH

Goddamn these things--

HANNAH

(scolds)

Watch your tongue!

BETH

Why? It's not like anyone can hear me for miles.

HANNAH

I can, and I know you know better adjectives to use than that.

BETH

(still swatting flies, annoyed)
I'm *not* your student anymore, Hannah-- and if you think you're still gonna try to keep teaching me all that boring poetry stuff while we build--

As she SWATS a large FLY AWAY Beth suddenly SPOTS a PEAK forming a SMALL HILL next to a CLUSTER OF TREES UP AHEAD.

BETH
 (yells excitedly)
 Wait-- that's *IT!* That's our LAND!

Overjoyed, her exhaustion-- and annoyance-- suddenly disappears as Beth forgets about the bugs and GRABS the REIGNS, making the wagon go FASTER than Hannah ever would have towards it. It's clear they've waited a long time to get to this spot...

Hannah tries to HANG ON to both her seat and her bonnet as the wagon RIDES OVER the BUMPY TERRAIN.

Beth DRIVES the WORKHORSES as FAST as they will GO STRAIGHT TOWARDS the CLUSTER OF TREES--

Just as she REACHES THEM a LARGE, DARK-SKINNED, BLACK MALE FIGURE suddenly JUMPS OUT from BEHIND one of the TREES-- STARTLING both the HORSES and the WOMEN.

Beth makes the wagon come to a SUDDEN HALT.

They then realize that though he's big he's also young-- about 16-- and obviously not what either of them expected to find out here in the middle of the new frontier.

His arm TWITCHES from BEHIND his BACK, indicating he's HIDING something. Hannah proceeds cautiously...

HANNAH
 Don't be afraid, we mean no harm...
 we just want to know what you're
 doing out here.

ABRAHAM stands confidently as he answers, still concealing what's behind his back.

ABRAHAM
 I was just about to ast you the
 same thin'.

He speaks better than most freed slaves of color from the South in the era do-- but not completely properly, yet.

Beth glances inside the wagon and gages where her Henry Rife is...

HANNAH
 We've just arrived to claim our
 property.

ABRAHAM

(shocked)
Your property?

HANNAH

Yes... we just paid the ten dollar filing fee at the land office in Omaha City for the whole one hundred and sixty acres surrounding this hill.

Abraham looks heart-broken as he slowly lets down his arm, revealing a BOOK-- a black, leather-bound, King James' addition of the BIBLE-- in his hand.

Hannah looks even more shocked...

HANNAH

That's a beautiful bible-- is it yours?

ABRAHAM

Yes. My Pa gave it to me so's I could pray before chores. I come here every mornin' to do that on this here spot. I was gonna claim it for myself when I turned twenty-one. It's right next to my Ma's...

He points to the right towards a VALLEY below. Only the ROOF of a SMALL SOD HOUSE is seen in the FAR OFF DISTANCE.

Several acres of grass on the other side have been CLEARED, ready to plant crops in.

ABRAHAM

I wanted my land to be right beside hers, then my sister could claim that there spot on the far side of the hill when she turned twenty-one and surround us both...

He points towards the LAND he's referring to.

BETH

(almost apologetically)
 I just bought that homestead for myself so I can be next to *my* sister.

Abraham looks like his entire life has just been erased. But, he also shows the look of someone who's known the reality of disappointment before-- a lot-- and has learned how to accept it quickly.

ABRAHAM

If that is what is planned, then
that is the way it needs be...

He immediately opens the Bible and finds a passage.

ABRAHAM

(reads perfectly)

"Then Isaac sowed in that land,
and received in the same year an
hundredfold: and the LORD blessed
him. And the man waxed great, and
went forward, and grew until he
became very great:"

(to Hannah and Beth)

That is what I will now do on
another plot.

Hannah is shocked-- and impressed-- that he can read and uses it as an opportunity to make amends.

HANNAH

Well, we sure didn't mean to get
off on a bad foot with our new--
and closest-- neighbors, but maybe
this was set up to happen this way
for a reason. I was a schoolteacher
back in New Hampshire-- I brought
books with me that you're welcome
to borrow anytime.

He looks interested in this, but also still sad.

ABRAHAM

Thank you, ma'am.

Hannah climbs down from the wagon. Beth follows.

HANNAH

(shaking his hand)

Hannah, Hannah Berry, and this is
Elizabeth Berry--

BETH

(interrupting)

I go by Beth Berry only now.

Beth glares at Hannah as if she should have known that as she shakes Abraham's hand.

ABRAHAM

Abraham... I just go by Abraham
only, now.

Both Hannah and Beth get the underlining meaning of this--
not many freed slaves ever kept the last name given to them
by their Master's once they left the South.

HANNAH

Well Abraham, we'd love to meet
your parents, and sister.

ABRAHAM

My Ma and sister are here, but
you'll never meet my Pa-- he's not
ever gonna come see us, even if he
does come back from the war--

He runs off towards his homestead, upset.

Hannah and Beth both look a bit disillusioned instead of
excited as they look around at their beautiful land, now
tainted by the fact they just took away that young man's
entire family's dream.

BETH

(sarcastically)
You wanted a whole new life, right
Hannah? Well, looks like *your*
prayers were answered...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER.

END OF SAMPLE PAGES OF SERIES