

# MRS. HANNAH DURANT

## Sc. 1

INT. DURANT'S CAR - DAY

Lily reads over the shoulder of the Telegraph Operator as he finishes transcribing a message from the clattering machine-

LILY

The Bank of New York again.

The Telegraph Operator looks at his overflowing desk-

TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

How do I file it?

LILY

Threatening. Let's begin answering the Urgent's.

of which there seem to be many, STACKS of TELEGRAMS that are piling up in Durant's absence. Lily picks up a telegram, begins dictating.

LILY (CONT'D)

From Thomas Durant. Sirs, regarding your latest demand for payment-

The DOOR to Durant's car swings open, it's MRS. DURANT-

Mrs. Durant enters, moving through the car which is as familiar to her as her own home. She virtually looms over the Telegraph Operator and Lily, on whom her eyes have been fixed from the moment she walked through the door.

MRS. DURANT

(familiarily)

Hello, Bill.

START →

Bill, the telegraph operator, picks his jaw up off the desk.

BILL

Mrs. Durant.

Now it's Lily's turn to be shocked, before she can say anything, Mrs. Durant offers a cool white hand at the end of a mile of black sleeve.

MRS. DURANT

And you must be Lily. 'The Flaxen-haired Maiden of the West.' Thomas has written me so much about you.

This is a LOT of news for Lily to process- and the end of which she distinguishes the barb of "flaxen-haired" and not "fair-haired." The best she can do to cover is-

HELL ON WHEELS

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LILY

Yes... how is Mr. Durant?

Mrs. Durant's eyes move directly from Lily to Bill's hands which are trying to shuffle the piles of telegrams.

MRS. DURANT

(as if speaking to a child)

Leave those, Bill. I'll have them, please.

(to Lily)

I haven't seen my husband yet.

Lily is surprised-

LILY

Oh. I would have thought you would have gone to him first.

MRS. DURANT

Interesting that you would think that, Mrs. Bell. Thomas' first question to me will be about the immediate state of his railroad.

Mrs. Durant leans past Lily to gather ALL the telegrams; Bill is clearly terrified, Lily is resuming her composure.

LILY

I didn't want to disturb him, some of the news isn't good, I'm afraid.

Mrs. Durant holds the sheaf of telegrams tucked under her arm like it's her favorite Victorian novel-

MRS. DURANT

Then it's best coming from his wife, don't you agree?

She smiles, all gentility and canine teeth as she exits, leaving Bill sweating bullets and Lily dumbstruck.

**INT. UNION PACIFIC OFFICE - DAY**

Durant, propped with pillows on his makeshift, drafting-table bed, does his best to SHAVE himself with a LONG STRAIGHT RAZOR looking into a large HAND MIRROR that EVA is holding.

DURANT

Damn it, girl, hold it steady before I slice off my head.

///  
SDP

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# MRS. HANNAH DURANT

HELL ON WHEELS

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MRS. DURANT SIDES 4/3/12

3.

The reason Eva's hand is not steady stands behind Durant off-camera, then Durant, in his mirror sees over his shoulder

INSERT MIRROR SHOT - the smiling face of Mrs. Durant.

START →

DURANT (CONT'D)

Hannah.

Durant DUMPS everything into a nearby basin, SHOOS away Eva, and quickly wipes his face with a rag, trying to make himself look as presentable as he can to his wife as she comes around him and sits on the edge of his bed.

DURANT (CONT'D)

Thank God you're here.

Durant takes her hand, kisses her fingers and she lets him. Her other hand pushes his unkempt hair out of his eyes.

MRS. DURANT

Oh Thomas. What have you done to yourself this time?

For the first time, we see a crack in Durant's facade; everything, all the pain he has been holding in, the fear-

Durant looks down at his body. Mrs. Durant does not, she keeps her eyes on his-

DURANT

(a slight catch in the voice)

I seem to have lost a leg.

Mrs. Durant, still looking into his eyes-

MRS. DURANT

Yes, you have.

DURANT

I feel like everything is slipping away from me, the railroad, my life... I almost died.

MRS. DURANT

Yes. But you didn't, did you?

DURANT

I had wild dreams, about you, about Willie, I couldn't tell what was real...

HELL ON WHEELS

MRS. DURANT

Shhh. Look at me. I am here. And I am going to restore you. I am going to help you accomplish what Destiny has set before you even if I have to carry you on my back, leg be damned.

DURANT

I'm weak, Hannah.

MRS. DURANT

Then regain your strength. The whole world is watching, the nation is waiting, and there are those who would see you fail.

This stirs Durant, word of adversaries.

DURANT

So the wolves are circling at the smell of blood. Who is it? Crane? Hathcock? That weakling Stanford?

MRS. DURANT

All of them. We must get you out of this bed and back at the helm. The railroad will be built. It must be you who builds it.

Durant sits up, seems to have shaken off some of his funk. For the first time, he seems to notice the SHEAF of TELEGRAMS Mrs. Durant has placed near his head.

DURANT

Is that today's business?

MRS. DURANT

Of course.

Mrs. Durant hands him the telegrams, kisses his head primly as he begins devouring the information. She starts to exit-

DURANT

You're leaving?

MRS. DURANT

To arrange your discharge from this hospital, such as it is.

She smiles, Durant smiles for the first time in a long time, a look of REAL AFFECTION between them.

//SOP

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**MRS. HANNAH DURANT**

**2.3**

HELL ON WHEELS

MRS. DURANT SIDES 4/3/12

5.

**EXT. DURANT'S CAR - STEPS - DAY**

Cullen on his way to see Durant about the progress of Doc's pardon, is about to bound up the steps, but-

Mrs. Durant is standing at the top of them. Not moving.

**START →**

CULLEN

Ma'am.

He tips his hat.

MRS. DURANT

Mr. Bohannon.

She's still not getting out of the way. In fact she's staring Cullen down until he offers-

CULLEN

Here to see Mr. Durant on some business.

MRS. DURANT

(cool, level)

Mr. Durant is resting, but I'll happily discuss railroad business with you.

Cullen is reluctant to share the Doc's pardon with her.

CULLEN

I'll come back when his eyes are open.

Cullen takes a step to leave, then-

MRS. DURANT

What was your plan, Mr. Bohannon?

Cullen stops, turns, not understanding the question-

MRS. DURANT (CONT'D)

I'm curious. Where would a man like you go with all that money in the safe?

What the hell?

CULLEN

I didn't have no plan.

MRS. DURANT

Not very prudent not to have a plan, now is it?

**HELL ON WHEELS**

5h



CULLEN

Ma'am, I didn't have anything to do with them guys robbing the safe if that's what you're leaning on.

MRS. DURANT

The outlaws were fellow Confederates, you knew them. You were one of them.

CULLEN

I weren't one of them.

MRS. DURANT

And according to Mr. Durant, it was shortly after you arrived that the explosion occurred and Mr. Durant lost his leg.

This new accusation sets Cullen back- does Durant really think he had anything to do with these things?

CULLEN

Did he mention that it was me who took that load of rail iron out of his back?

MRS. DURANT

Yes. All very noble. And disarming. But that would have been part of your plan. Now you're saying you had no plan.

CULLEN

This is a lot of gruff and you know it.

Cullen's had enough, he starts off, she stops him with-

MRS. DURANT

You don't like me very much, do you?

CULLEN

Don't reckon my opinion holds much water around here.

MRS. DURANT

It would be wise to maintain that sentiment, Mr. Bohannon.

A staredown - her from on high, him from down low. Finally-

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CULLEN

Ma'am.

And Cullen FLICKS the forward brim of his hat with his middle finger, and old gesture of "fuck off." He turns to go.

MRS. DURANT

(to his back)

I'm watching you, Mr. Bohannon.

CULLEN

(mostly but not entirely  
under his breath)

Enjoy the view.

And we see a slight smile on Mrs. Durant's face; she enjoyed this interchange, and also seems to be enjoying the view.

STOP