

RADICALS



WRITTEN BY NANCY OSTERTAG & VANESSA RUANE

Episode Guide

This guide is designed to show the trajectory of the story and characters in Radicals. We have laid out the first 8 episodes of a 20 episode story. Further episodes are sketched in with less detail, leaving some character arcs open-ended. We've organized it by episodes without designating season breaks to be flexible for different networks' orders and input.



I. A Fearful Storm



Radicals opens in the middle of the night with a knock on Sarah Brown's door. Sarah follows a messenger to a ship where she meets the charismatic Reverend John Hayden who leads her to a woman in labor hiding below deck with her husband. He tells her they're fleeing north. Sarah helps the woman safely deliver a son, before watching the ship sail away. Last Island survivor, Lizzie Shaw steps off a train clutching her camera, the only thing she saved from a storm. A man with a clipboard looks down a long list of Shaw names. "Anyone else?" She shakes her head no.

Lizzie arrives at her grandfather, Dr. Randolph's infirmary where Sarah treats her wounds, and the two of them bond over a shared interest in chemistry.

Dr. Randolph expects Lizzie to stay home and recover, but she ignores him. She rents a photo studio and makes new friends who inspire her to produce a photo show to tell her story.

Sarah attends a poetry reading at John's church. On the walk home, they kiss for the first time. Soon after, Sarah meets with John's mother and sister to offer her assistance with their underground activities.

When Lizzie starts working in her studio late at night, she is featured in a gossip column, and Dr. Randolph thinks she has hysteria. He grounds her in her room, trying an isolation cure. Desperate, Lizzie begs Sarah for help. Sarah agrees to get a letter to Lizzie's friends.

While on a house call at Justice Taney's home, Sarah overhears him talking about a letter campaign conducted by President Elect, Buchanan to influence the Dred Scott decision. After weeks of confinement, Lizzie's friends finally convince Dr. Randolph to let her do her show. It's a hit, and the photos sell out. That night she attends an after-party, and invites three actresses back to her studio.

At the Church's winter ball, Sarah and John discuss the implications of what she heard at Justice Taney's, before enjoying a romantic night together. When it is almost curfew, Sarah decides to stay. At dawn she wakes up in John's arms, both of them still dressed. She tears herself away to go get changed for another call at Justice Taney's apartment.

Topsy from drinking champagne all night, Lizzie sees the actresses silhouetted by the sunrise, and takes a photograph. The ladies slip out of their shifts and start kissing. One of them reaches out, pulls Lizzie into the group, and they all tumble into bed together,

When Justice Taney falls asleep in his study after his treatment, Sarah stokes the fire to heat up the room, then steals a look at his desk, and reads a draft of the Dred Scott opinion. She is appalled at what she reads. She stands there, still holding the poker from the fireplace, looking down at Taney, seething with rage.





2. A Path of Flame and Fire

The National Theater burns down, and Lizzie and Teresa hold a fundraiser for the out of work actors. Sarah and her friend Charity host a meeting with the DC midwives to enlist their help to get people out of Washington before the Dred Scott decision is announced. Dr. Randolph continues to disapprove of Lizzie's obsession with photography. They argue over her unwillingness to entertain suitors. Lizzie and Jack sell prints of her titillating picture to Mary Ann. Sully moves in with Jack, and they ignore the rest of the world for a week.



3. The Bay of Bloodhounds

Sarah and Lizzie devise a new faster photo chemistry that Lizzie uses to photograph the inauguration and capture a cutting-edge image of the crowd below Buchanan.

Dr. Randolph's attitude towards Lizzie softens when Teresa convinces her to let an eligible congressman escort her to the inaugural ball, but her date is annoyed when Lizzie spends all her time dancing with Jack, Sully, and her actor friends. While most of Washington is at the inauguration, Sarah and the midwives escort formerly enslaved people out of the city to John's ship. At the ball, Tempe and Reed join in the dancing. Lizzie invites everyone back to her studio for an after-party.



4. Starving, But Not For Bread

Dred Scott is announced, and bounty hunters flood Washington, staging raids throughout the city. Lizzie and Dr. Randolph pretend to be enslavers when they see a colored man being harassed by a group of masked men. They get him safely back to the infirmary, but Dr. Randolph doesn't know what to do next. Sarah reveals she can help. Mary Ann commissions more racy photos. She hosts Jack, Sully, Lizzie, and the actresses for a week-long debaucherous shoot at her farm. With the raids escalating, Dr. Randolph offers his house to hide three midwives who have falsified documents and need to get out. Lizzie receives a telegram from Teresa with the news that she has arranged a private portrait session for her to photograph President Buchanan.



5. And Nets of Sin Where'er I Tread

Anthony Comstock is visiting his older brother. His brother's friends mock him, needling him to have a drink and join them at cards. Feeling morally superior, Anthony declines.

One of the guys tells him to lighten up, tossing him a print of "actresses in their shifts." Alone in his room, staring at the photo, Anthony almost succumbs to temptation. Instead, he pulls up his pants and runs out of the apartment. He races to an evening prayer meeting, makes a speech loudly denouncing the photo and the sinners who made it, before throwing it into the fire.

Teresa's hosting her regular Thursday night dinner. Sully and the actresses from the photo finish a song from his new hit play. Teresa and Phillip Key are all over each other, not hiding their affair. Lizzie ignores yet another suitor who is clearly just after her father's estate, and sits with Jack when they all go in to dinner.

Tempe comes to the infirmary after hours and confesses to Sarah that she was scared to get pregnant again, so she took pills that were advertised in the paper. Now her period hasn't stopped for two weeks. Sarah tells her to throw away the pills, prepares a treatment to reverse their effects, and teaches Tempe the rhythm method.

Teresa's dinner turns contentious when Lizzie's date picks a fight with Jack over politics.

Lizzie takes Jack's side and her date leaves in a huff.

Everyone goes to Mary Ann's after the dinner. Jack, Lizzie and Mary Ann talk business, including the rising cost of ether and other photo supplies cutting into their margins. Virginia gets jealous when Lizzie makes out with one of the actors and leaves with him. Sarah and Lizzie work on a new photochemistry mix that uses less ether. Lizzie asks for more birth control. Sarah tells her to slow down.

On Sunday morning, Sarah watches John preach, along with Meg, Alice, and Dr. Randolph. Harold stands guard in case of a raid. John's sermon details new citywide restrictions placed on people of color. Afterwards, Sarah and Meg sell herbs from their expanded medicinal garden in the lot next door. John and Harold leave for a pick-up run.

Lizzie arrives at her studio to find the door unlocked, the place trashed, and Virginia, drunk, sitting on the floor smashing glass plates.



6. A Stranger on the Threshold

Teresa is waiting at her window for her lover, Phillip Key to give his signal, then excitedly gathers her things and meets him down on the street. They laugh and hold hands as they walk to their rented love nest. Lizzie tells Sarah about Virginia trashing her studio. Sarah helps her hide a crate of glass plate negatives in the infirmary's hideaway. John and Harold come back from their run with several men. It turns out one of the men is Sarah's father who was kidnapped into slavery 25 years earlier. Meg and Sarah are overjoyed to be reunited with him, but are devastated to learn that Sarah's older brother died during the kidnapping. Lizzie takes a risqué portrait of Teresa and her lover, and gives each of them a print. John surprises Sarah with a wedding ceremony and reception. Lizzie and Dr. Randolph attend. After the party, Meg leaves to go north with Sarah's father. Buchanan declares a National Day of Prayer. Anthony Comstock comes to Washington and gives a fiery speech on the steps of a church. Standing with him, and hanging on every word, is Virginia.



7. And Sin is the Consort of Woe

Washington has become an armed camp. The new Provost Marshall orders a raid on all the brothels and parlor houses. Mary Ann is arrested and forced to march with the other owners to the city jail. Lizzie and Jack are in the field photographing new recruits, and selling illicit pictures, when they get a message from Mary Ann asking them to get cash for bail. Teresa's husband catches her with her lover. He forces Teresa to sign a confession before shooting Phillip in the head. The scandal is in all the papers. Teresa is humiliated and her family keeps her locked away. Jack and Lizzie return to bail out Mary Ann and learn of the murder. Sarah and Dr. Randolph clash with the Sanitary Commission when they attempt to take over the clinic and pharmacy. Teresa's husband's trial begins. Jack gets dozens of offers for Lizzie's photos of the couple, but she refuses to betray her friend, and gives Teresa everything. John comes home from a recruitment drive and tells Sarah he has enlisted in the Navy. Everyone is shocked when Teresa's husband is found not guilty by reason of temporary insanity.



8. At the Portals of the Future

Lincoln tasks the Sanitary Commission with managing healthcare in Washington, and nationalizes the Telegraph Lines. Tempe is sent home, Reed is sent to work with the Telegraph Corps. To keep them from shutting her down, Mary Ann allows the Union to use her house and farm to pass intelligence. Jack wants to join the army, but Sully doesn't want him to leave. Jack tells Mary Ann and Lizzie that he has enlisted. Lizzie assures them she can keep it all running, but they are doubtful. The Sanitary Commission assigns a doctor to oversee Sarah and Dr. Randolph's clinic. Dr. Randolph falls ill leaving Sarah and Lizzie to figure out sealing up the hideaway. John and Sarah spend a romantic night together before he ships out. Lizzie dresses as a man and gains entry to Mary Ann's house without anyone recognizing her. When she reveals herself Mary Ann and Jack concede she can visit the forts alone. Mary Ann procures her forged papers. While caring for a declining Dr. Randolph, Sarah shares the hopeful news that she is expecting. Jack joins his unit and Anthony Comstock is there giving an abstinence lecture to his fellow soldiers.

Episodes 9-12 The Civil War



With the clinic under the Sanitary Commission's control, Sarah and the midwives volunteer as nurses at the Freedman's hospital. They teach hygiene and secretly distribute birth control to the incoming refugees. Lizzie goes on regular missions dressed as a man for the Union and Mary Ann. Tempe gets a job at the armory to help make ends meet. Jack continuously enrages Comstock by selling erotica and liquor to their fellow soldiers in Florida. Tempe's husband, Reed goes missing from a remote telegraph outpost. John joins the navy. When his ship is hit with cholera, Sarah races to care for him and his crew. Tempe is killed in a tragic explosion at the Armory so Lizzie sets out on a dangerous mission to bring Reed home to his daughter.

Episodes 13-16 Reconstruction



During Reconstruction, with the rise of the AMA, and Dr. Randolph's declining health, Sarah is forced to close the infirmary. Lizzie and Jack start publishing her work themselves after Comstock shuts down their NY publisher. Sarah attends Howard University, and writes a textbook on birth control that Lizzie illustrates with photographs. Mary Ann retires, and sells her house to Lizzie who partners with Sarah to turn it into a women's dispensary. They are instantly the target of protests led by Virginia and funded through Comstock's anti obscenity league. Tempe's husband Reed runs for the new city council and wins a seat.

Episodes 17-20 The Comstock Act



Lizzie and Sarah get involved in the Suffrage movement. Lizzie attempts to vote in the city council election, causing a scene and embarrassing Reed during his run for reelection. Comstock grows more powerful after his law is passed. He burns Lizzie's library of prints and smashes her glass plates in a violent raid on her studio. He arrests her and charges her with distributing erotica. Comstock tries to arrest Sarah and close her clinic but with help from Reed and Lizzie's other powerful friends, she manages to stay out of jail and save her business.