

THE GOLDEN FLEECE
FOURTH SERIES IN
'THE HEART OF STONE SAGA'

SETTING THE SCENE DURING THE TITLES

FADE IN:

4/1 **EXT. MILL STREET, WINCANTON: NIGHT - OCTOBER 1866**

4/1

Trudging down MILL STREET at the end of the day, Raymond Baker is well pleased with his day's work. The GAS LIGHTS sputter, creating patches of light between the dark shadows, and the October wind blows the leaves from the trees and rustles the bushes, as he tramps through the MUDDY PUDDLES towards THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER CALE.

He has been careful to avoid the more astute of his customers, but the small increase in each person's payment should go unnoticed by the others, and due to his cleverness, his boss should be none the wiser. Since starting his little scheme he has been able to give his wife enough to buy new shoes for all his children, plus some extra coal, now that winter is drawing in.

He PULLS UP HIS COLLAR against the wind. The road is rutted and he feels the discomfort of GRAVEL PRESSING THROUGH THE SOLES OF HIS OLD BOOTS. Maybe next month he will be able to replace them too.

He senses a rapid movement behind him, a sudden searing pain crashes through his head and he staggers under the impact. He is CUDGELLED again and collapses to the ground, blood running down his neck. The pain is intolerable and he shakes and trembles, unable to focus his eyes, unable to move his limbs as the blows rain down on him. He feels his skull crumbling, as his blood and bone is propelled into the night air.

Large hands lift him up and he is hauled off the roadway towards the river. Although drifting in and out of consciousness, he can make out the muffled sound of TWO MEN TALKING. They DROP HIM INTO THE UNDERGROWTH and go through his JACKET POCKETS, ripping the cloth in their hurry to grab HIS PURSE. Then THE POCKET MATERIAL is bunged into his mouth and the effort to continue to breathe is too much for him, as his life ebbs away and his blood mingles with the river water.

EPISODE ONE: (October 1866)

BILLY LEAVES FOR PASTURES NEW

4/2 INT. THE KITCHEN, ALVINGTON MANOR: DAY

4/2

On Sunday morning BILLY RIDDICK pops into the kitchen for breakfast with the other staff. They are all seated around the SCRUBBED WOODEN TABLE whilst the cook, FLORA BOUCHER, and ELSIE hand out the PLATTERS OF FRIED EGG AND BACON.

The footman, MICHAEL PORTER picks up Friday's discarded *WESTERN FLYING POST*.

MICHAEL PORTER
I want to read about this body
they've found in Wincanton.

FLORA BOUCHER
(Nearly dropping the
FRYING PAN)
Body! What do 'ee mean, body!

MICHAEL PORTER
It says here: 'The deceased body of
an unidentified middle-aged man has
been found in undergrowth on the
banks of the River Cale, in
Wincanton. The local Police have
issued a statement saying the man was
murdered and are asking for people to
come forward, if they have any
information that would help in
identifying the man, or lead to an
arrest of the perpetrator.'

LETTIE BOUCHER
Oh dear! The poor fellow!

ELLIE PROCTOR
I'm glad it's not round here, I'd be
afraid to go up the hill home
tonight, if it was.

HATTIE PROCTOR
(Reassuringly)
Well, it's not, so you mustn't worry.

Michael continues scanning THE NEWSPAPER and ROSA, the lady's maid, looks over his shoulder, as she waits for Flora to dish up her hot food.

ROSA WARREN

(Exclaims)

Oh my! Look at this! Our Lucy and Ashleigh Seymour have announced their intentions to marry on 5th May next year.

Immediately Billy pushes back his chair.

BILLY RIDDICK

I've just lost my appetite; someone else can have mine!

Billy marches out; back to THE STABLE YARD.

4/3 **EXT. STABLE YARD, ALVINGTON MANOR: DAY**

4/3

Later, Lettie finds him MUCKING OUT. She sighs at the sight of him angrily jerking the MANURE FORK to and fro.

LETTIE BOUCHER

Billy, I know you liked her, but you like Beth too, don't you?

BILLY RIDDICK

No, Lettie. Not like I feel for Lucy. Beth is a good friend and fun to be with when we're all together socially, but I truly love Lucy, even though she's never given me a second glance. Do you remember when we all went to the St Leonard's Day Fayre and all the girls were taken with them gemstones. Malachi and Rosa bought rose quartz and malachite from the shaman, and Raymond bought you one too, well I offered to buy some for Lucy, but she rejected me. She's a sensible girl who wants a man who can provide well for her and her future family, why would she look twice at me? I was just the stable boy.

He chucks his PITCHFORK into the corner of the empty stable and CASSIOPEIA next-door stamps her feet and snorts at the sudden noise.

BILLY RIDDICK (cont'd)

Now I'll have to put up with her being driven around by that silly article, I'll have to be here working and observing them when she visits her parents at Home Farm with their many wonderful children, I just can't stand it, Lettie. It's going to hurt so much... I think I might have to leave here and start afresh somewhere else, where I can try to forget her. I don't want to, this is all I've ever known since the poor house and I love it here, but I can't see any other answer.

LETTIE BOUCHER

Come on Billy, it's not going to be that bad. You'll just have to keep out of their way. I'm sure you'll find someone else to love and care for before too long.

BILLY RIDDICK

(Snaps)

Well I'm not!

He turns away from her to shovel some more muck and then slowly turns back.

Sorry Lettie, I didn't mean to snap your head off.

He quickly rubs his sleeve across his eyes.

Would you do me a favour, when you go back in? Would you bring out the newspaper for me to check the job vacancies, when they've finished with it, please.

LETTIE BOUCHER

Of course I will. I'll go and check now.

He watches her go, as she rushes back into THE KITCHEN for him, and sighs.

She returns with THE NEWSPAPER and they sit on THE MOUNTING BLOCK, side by side, her wild curls confined under her MOP CAP and his mousy locks under HIS TWEED CAP almost touching, as they peruse the advertisements.

BILLY RIDDICK

This place has always been like home to me, and the staff my family.

(MORE)

BILLY RIDDICK (cont'd)

I doubt I'll ever find anywhere as good as this?

LETTIE BOUCHER

You never know Billy, there may be something just right for you around the corner.

Lettie, quicker at reading than he is, having had more schooling, soon spots a position.

LETTIE BOUCHER (cont'd)

Look here's one, 'groom and trainer' immediately available at Hatherleigh Farm, near Wincanton. Oh dear it's miles away, we'll never see you, Billy.

BILLY RIDDICK

Well that's the idea, isn't it?

LETTIE BOUCHER

I s'pose so. But Wincanton was where the man was murdered!

BILLY RIDDICK

(He laughs at her)

Well that's not going to affect me, is it?

LETTIE BOUCHER

Hopefully not.

She smiles uncertainly, her dimples deepening.

Do you think you'd like being a trainer, as well as a groom?

BILLY RIDDICK

Yes, I think I would. I've heard John Moore talking about how they have huge, well organised, race meetings somewhere near Wincanton, on Easter Mondays.

LETTIE BOUCHER

Well, if you really think you'd enjoy it, perhaps you should compose a letter and apply for the position.

BILLY RIDDICK

I will. Would you help me Lettie, by checking my spelling, two heads are better than one?

LETTIE BOUCHER

I'll do my best. Do you have some writing paper?

BILLY RIDDICK

No, I'll have to ask Gareth for some, and he'll want to know what I want it for.

LETTIE BOUCHER

I'll get you some, Billy, when no-one's looking. You don't really want everyone knowing your intentions, until you've been offered a position, do you?

BILLY RIDDICK

No.

He pauses, daunted by the prospect of leaving. Then he looks up at her.

Thank you Lettie, I'm very grateful for your help.

4/4 INT. THE KITCHEN, ALVINGTON MANOR: DAY

4/4

Billy is surprised when a few weeks later he receives A LETTER. It is the first letter he has ever received. Gareth looks intrigued as he passes it to him in the kitchen with everyone there looking on and filled with curiosity.

Billy looks at Lettie and she smiles encouragement. He takes up A KNIFE and slits THE ENVELOPE open. His whole life could change depending on the contents of this note.

He reads the letter and doesn't know whether to laugh or cry; he has been offered the position. He shows the missive to Lettie, who hugs him.

LETTIE BOUCHER

(Whispers)

I knew you could do it.

GARETH WILLIAMS

Is this something you'd like to share with us, Billy?

BILLY RIDDICK

I've been offered a job at Hatherleigh Farm, near Wincanton and I have to decide whether, or not, to take it.

Gareth, realising that Billy is shocked, responds.

GARETH WILLIAMS

Perhaps I might suggest you discuss it with Lord Dryer, before you make any hasty decisions, Billy.

BILLY RIDDICK

Yes sir, might you organize this for me please, Mr Williams.

GARETH WILLIAMS

Leave it to me, Billy.

JOHN MOORE

(Offended)

You kept that under your cap, lad.

BILLY RIDDICK

I'm sorry, John. I didn't want to tell you or Edwin, until I knew whether, or not, I'd got the job. There was no use stirring up the pot, if it was all to come to naught.

JOHN MOORE

We've been a good equestrian team, us three, you'll be sorely missed, Billy, lad. Do you have to go?

BILLY RIDDICK

It's for personal reasons, I feel I must go and seek new pastures, nothing to do with my job here. I've always loved it. You've been a good friend and teacher to me John, and Edwin has been a good mate too. I'm gutted I should leave, but I think it'll be for the best. I'll speak to his Lordship first though, and see what he recommends.

4/5 INT. THE STUDY, ALVINGTON MANOR: DAY

4/5

Billy stands before LORD DRYER later that day, his heart pumping with anxiety, lest his lordship might think him ungrateful, throwing the security of a good job and living quarters back in his face.

Gareth, who had shown him in to Lord Dryer's study, remains standing to attention beside the door.

Lord Dryer leans back in his chair regarding him.

JOSHUA DRYER

Billy, I'm very sorry to hear you're thinking of leaving us, for you've been a good and loyal member of my staff, ever since I first came to Alvington Manor fifteen years ago and you'll be sorely missed by us all. Is there anything I can do to persuade you to stay?

Billy plucks up the courage to look his boss in the eye.

BILLY RIDDICK

That's most kind of you, my lord, but it's for personal reasons that I'm considering leaving here. Even though this job will be an advancement, as I'll also be a trainer, I wouldn't be looking for new pastures, if it wasn't for my final acceptance that the love of my life is lost to me forever, to a man I despise.

JOSHUA DRYER

I've no wish to pry into your private business, Billy, but you're still a young man and things may feel raw now, but surely in time you'll feel ready to set your sights on another. You may find more consolation in having your friends around you.

BILLY RIDDICK

I've given it a lot of thought, my lord, and I believe I need a fresh start. Making new friends and settling into a new job and new surroundings, will help keep my mind off more depressing matters.

JOSHUA DRYER

I understand and I'd like to say now, that if this new position doesn't work out for you, you'd be welcome to come back here. I'll not need to replace you, as Edwin, who has been our excellent and adaptable 'Man Friday', can take on all your duties working with John. When are you intending to leave?

BILLY RIDDICK

Well, my lord, as soon as you give me leave to go, really.

Joshua looks at his CALENDAR.

JOSHUA DRYER

There is only just over a week to the end of this month, so shall we say the 31st October, Billy? Would that suit you?

BILLY RIDDICK

Yes, my lord, it will give me time to make all the arrangements.

JOSHUA DRYER

How are you planning to travel there?

BILLY RIDDICK

I was hoping to hitch a ride on the mail coach.

JOSHUA DRYER

There will be no need to do that. John can drive you there.

BILLY RIDDICK

Thank you, my lord, that's a load off my mind.

JOSHUA DRYER

(Addresses his butler)

Gareth, as it will be All Hallows Eve, I suspect Flora and the rest of the staff will want to arrange a party in Billy's honour, that day.

BILLY RIDDICK

(Embarrassed)

Oh no, my lord, I don't want no fuss.

JOSHUA DRYER

Well, I think that is a matter for you, Gareth. I'll leave it in your capable hands.

This sentence has a sense of finality and Billy bows respectfully. Gareth nods his head in acknowledgement.

GARETH WILLIAMS

Of course, my lord.

JOSHUA DRYER

A party is the least we can do,
Billy, to show you how much you'll be
missed as a member of the team here.

BILLY RIDDICK

Thank you, my lord.