

**FOLLYFOOT FANFIC**

*New  
Beginnings  
by  
Sue*

## New Beginnings

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*Set at the very beginning of Series One, running alongside the first two episodes 'Dora' and 'Steve'.*

Steve slowly pulled back the bolt on the stable door, listening carefully for signs of anyone else around. Leading the chestnut horse he'd just saddled into the yard, he looked around cautiously. He was in luck, the yard was deserted and he was able to mount the horse quickly and ride out of the gate unnoticed. He didn't hang about for fear of being spotted but made his way hastily into the nearby woods. He knew he should have asked permission before abandoning his given stable duty, but he had the urge to ride, and let's face it, thought Steve, he done precious little of it since arriving at the squire's three months previously. He had been delighted to have been offered employment in the Squire's stables despite his newly acquired prison record; it seemed the squire was acquainted with Steve's probation officer, who had put in good word. Although he enjoyed working with horses, he was given very little time or opportunity to ride them for pleasure so had resorted to sneaking out every now and then, usually while the yard manager and head groom were other wise engaged in their weekly meetings regarding stable matters. Steve surmised it was also an excuse to partake in a few alcoholic refreshments, especially today with the Squire away.

Ambling through the wood Steve relaxed in the saddle and enjoyed the evening sun as it shone through the trees, leaving the dappled pattern on the path in front of him. He closed his eyes briefly and breathed in the smell of the damp earth and the strong garlicky scent of the wild Ramsons that carpeted the floor of the wood. He followed the path that emerged from the wood at the top of a hill that over looked the river. He stood marvelling at the scenery spread out before him. The valley of lush grass, rolling fields and green trees, split in two by the meandering river as it sparkled in the golden rays of the late afternoon sun. He had spent most of his life living in cities and the dirty mining towns of Yorkshire, being pushed from one orphanage to the next, foster homes to young offender's institutes, never belonging anywhere, feeling like an alien in the very streets where he learnt to fight and survive. He didn't seem to fit in wherever he went, always the loner, the odd one out, the misfit. But here in the country, he had found his niche; he loved the outdoors, the wide-open spaces where he could be free, not hemmed in like he had been in the claustrophobic confines of the town. On the whole, there was no one to bother him here, yes, he was still alone, but he liked it that way, he was happy with his own company less likelihood of getting into trouble that way. For despite, or because of, his turbulent and unorthodox up bringing, he really just yearned for the plain and simple life and a home, the proper home he was yet to find. In his rare melancholy moments he wondered if there existed a place that he would ever call home, where he was loved and cared for. He threw off the black thought for now was a beautiful evening and not the time for depressing contemplation.

Suddenly out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of another horse and rider, walking along the banks of the river. Even from his position, a few hundred or so yards away he could tell it was a young girl on the dark coloured horse's back, her light brown hair blowing in the wind. His gaze followed her as she moved along the water's edge, for a moment she stopped and allowed the horse to nibble at the long green grass on the riverbank. She sat straight in the saddle and gazed about her. Steve moved his horse back



into the shadow of the wood; for fear that she would spot him watching her. He knew he was staring at her but he couldn't help himself, there was something intriguing and compelling about the young girl. Thankfully she appeared not to look in his direction. Steve continued to watch the girl as she moved on and eventually she disappeared out of sight.

His brow furrowed in puzzlement as he wondered whom she was, and where she had come from? She appeared to be about his age, perhaps a year or two younger, late teens, he surmised. He certainly hadn't seen her about before; he listed in his mind, all the likely places hereabouts where she could be staying. She had an air of breeding about her, the way she held herself in the saddle, and the horse appeared to be of good stock, no mangy hack that was for sure. As well as the Squires there were several grand houses in the vicinity that had stables of fine horses. He stood for a few minutes unmoving, thinking of the girl, he felt the need to know more about her.

Loud roars shook him from his reverie. He frowned as his ears picked up the sound of several engines. Motorbikes! They sounded too close to be on the main road, as the shouts and whoops of the riders became louder and Steve realised that they were on the track that lead into the wood on the far side by the paddocks. Nightriders! He hesitated, should he go back to the stables and raise the alarm, risking being caught out or try and follow the nightriders and confront them himself.

By the time he reach the paddock he realised he was too late; the nightriders were already on the horses and were riding hard along the field away from the wood. Steve

hung back unsure what to do. He decided to wait it out and catch the hooligans when they returned. He didn't have to wait long; they were soon back, the horses exhausted and sweaty from their hard and cruel ride. Steve rode down the slope from the wood and squared up to one the riders, all of whom either wore scarves around their faces and/or hats to disguise themselves. His confrontation with one of them, the assailant's sandy hair was familiar to Steve, culminated in Steve being physically pulled from horse and thrown on to the ground. The force of hitting the ground winded him and by the time he managed to get to his feet, two of the nightrider's had taken off over the field, chasing another horse, with what Steve could make out at a distance, the girl on it's back. He was torn between going after them and trying to help the girl or staying with the horses that had fallen, injured. He decided there was no way of catching the nightriders or the girl, and had to hope that she was a good and confident a rider as she appeared and could out run the chasing hooligans.

Steve was kneeling by the side of one of the injured horses when two of the squire's men came rushing in from an adjacent field, shouting and cursing at him. He tried to explain that he himself had arrived only in time to see the nightriders on the horses, and had not been a part of the ensuing carnage. No matter how much Steve protested his innocence, the two men refused to believe him. He had already given up arguing when the girl returned, dismounting from her own horse; she walked over to where Steve was still comforting the dying horse. He looked up at her as she bent over the horse, and for a brief second their eyes met. Steve saw the look of horror and dismay in her eyes. Had the circumstances been different may have had the courage to speak to her but there seemed nothing to say at that moment. And by the way she turned quickly away from him; it was plain that the fate of the horses was her main concern. Even when Steve was accused once more of being a nightrider, she was very hesitant to come to his defence.

Steve's dark eyes followed the girl as she walked back to her horse, his subconscious mind noting her slender figure and her casual but expensive clothes. But then in an instant she was forgotten as his attention once more focus on the nauseating scene of the dying horses and the vet's gun. He looked on in horror as the first shot rang out, he didn't notice the girl mount her horse and ride off upset and distressed.

Dora rode speedily over the fields and down the country tracks to her Uncle's large house, the tears stung her eyes and she was grateful for the horse's instinct in knowing its way to the stables. Running into the house she discovered the Colonel reading the newspaper in his study. Within minutes she had blurted out the happenings of the evening. The Colonel was shocked and angry that his niece, on her first day in his charge should be subjected to such danger and horrific scenes. After calming and reassuring her, he sent Dora to her room to rest before dinner.

Sitting on the window seat looking out over the well manicured lawns and beyond to rolling fields and woods, now merging with the sky in the rapidly fading light. Her thoughts turned to the horrific events of earlier that evening. Her mind's eye could still see the injured and dying horses.

Her stomach churned at the suffering the horses injured at the hands of the nightriders, and her heart pounded as she recalled being chased by the horrid youths. As Dora stared through the window, her gaze caught the reflection in the pane, but it wasn't her hazel eyes that stare back but the dark eyes of the boy. She gasped, as the sight of his face framed by his dark hair took over her thoughts. She recalled the look he gave her as their eyes met briefly. Even in those few seconds she felt the warmth and kindness hidden within his.

Later that evening in the large outbuilding that served as accommodation for him and two other stable hands, Steve was washing the day's grime from his young body under what was laughingly called a shower, at least the water was hot. As he worked the shampoo to a lather in his long dark hair, he contemplated the happenings of that evening and the inevitable consequences. The next morning he was to face up to the Squire, and try to explain, knowing only too well that

he wouldn't be believed, he rarely was given his past, knowing too that he would probably be not only out of a job, but not for the first time, be minus a roof over his head. The squire's hospitality was hardly four star but he did have his own room, albeit being on the small side it was clean and dry. He shared a tiny bathroom and a kitchenette

which comprised of a grease laden oven and two-ringed gas hob that worked intermittently. There was another small room that disguised itself as a lounge/diner with its threadbare settee, ancient table and four chairs, along with a black and white portable television, which picked up more static than picture, but then Steve very rarely kept company there, preferring to keep himself to himself, even eating many of the meals in his room.

Now he was convinced that despite his innocence, he would have to start the unenviable task of finding new employment and accommodation, not an easy one with his prison record,...again!

Steve closed his eyes and sighed heavily, rinsing the shampoo from his hair, the lather sliding over his muscular shoulders and down to the small of his back. As he luxuriated in what was likely to be his last hot shower for a while, the face of the girl suddenly appeared in his mind's eye. His eyes flew open, instantly shutting again as he screwed them up against the stinging soap suds. Grabbing at a flannel, he wiped his eyes, puzzling over the sudden image of the girl, he hadn't given her a single thought since she had gallop away, well, maybe one or two...or was it three. He grinned to himself and happily kept the girl's pretty face in his mind.



At least he knew who she was now; he had overheard her telling one of the Squire's men, that her uncle was the Colonel, who Steve knew lived in the large mansion house on the estate that adjoined the Squire's land.

"I do wish you would eat some breakfast, my dear." The Colonel asked his niece as she rose from the dining table.

"I'm fine, Uncle, really." Dora pushes her chair back under the table. "This place, Follyfoot, how do I get there, is it far?"

"Not far, just beyond the paddock and the lower field. James will show you when you collect your horse. Slugger will happily give you some breakfast if you're hungry when you get there." The Colonel finishing the last mouthful of his morning meal could never understand how the young people these days could get through the day without a good breakfast inside them.

For Dora walking across the yard to the stable, the thought of breakfast and food made her feel nauseous, the events and scenes of the previous day still played on her mind as they had done for most of the night. She had slept fitfully, and had been plagued with flashbacks of the injured horses. And more than once the boy had interrupted her thoughts. She couldn't understand it, she hadn't even spoken with him and had barely spent two minutes in his company, yet he continued to plague her mind. On her way across the fields, she battled to banish him from her thoughts. By the time she reached Follyfoot and had been introduced to the horses by the red haired boy dressed in the fancy shirt and cowboy boots, she forgotten about him, that was until close on lunch time when her uncle arrived in the old battered Land Rover to pick her up and drive her to the Squires.

Steve stood in the Squire's yard flanked by his two accusers as the Squire grilled him about the previous evening's events. A few yards away stood Colonel Maddox and the girl. She was obviously nervous but her uncertain recollection of his part in the nightriders' cruel treatment of the horses did nothing to convince his employer of Steve's innocence. As soon as the subject of his prison record was brought up, Steve knew his fate was signed and sealed and he was to be fired.

Dora watched as the boy was led away, his anger and frustration showing as he shrugged off the grasp of the head groom's hand on his black leather jacket. As he disappeared out of sight, her heart sank a little as she wondered if that was likely to be the last time she would see him. She was sure he would move out of the area, to where she did not know.

An hour later Steve was walking down the long drive that led away from the Squire's estate. He didn't look back, he never looked back, the Squire's place was in his past, and his thoughts now were where he would be spending his future, although Steve's future was never more than the day ahead. He was used to living day by day, hour by hour, very rarely making plans, knowing his past meant he couldn't rely on being wanted or employed anywhere. It was usually the self righteousness and the thought of being seen by their peers 'doing good' for the uneducated and

less well off of society, that men like the Squire employed people like Steve.

Steve stopped and looked around him; he had no idea where he was going next. Without a second thought, he vaulted a nearby fence into a field, and headed east, if he found nowhere to stop on the way, he knew at least he would eventually end up at the coast, knowing there was always a seasonal job looking after the poor donkeys that were forced to give rides to horrid toddlers and overweight big brothers and sisters. Failing that there were still the arcades and fairground rides that were inevitably sited along the piers and promenades. The girls, especially those on holiday for the first time without their parents, were easy to pick up there, and more than willing and eager to help him stave off the odd lonely night in the dank and dreary bedsit or lodging house.



Steve had been walking for half an hour, when something caught his eye on the edge of nearby woodland. It was a horse and as he got closer Steve recognised it as one of the Squire's missing from the night before. It was scared and obviously injured, and backed away as Steve approached it. Using a very gentle voice Steve spoke to it, reassuring it that he meant no harm. Soon the frightened horse was allowing Steve to touch it and he began to stroke the now calmer creature. Steve spied the horse's sore mouth and winced at the injury caused by the nightriders' makeshift bits. Steve ran his hand down the horse's foreleg: it too had been badly damaged by the harsh treatment inflicted by the cruel riders. Steve knew he had to help, and get the horse to safety somewhere, somehow. He instantly thought of the Colonel, he heard how he'd looked after injured or unwanted horses, and had a farm not many miles from here. He had to get the horse there, he had no choice but would that mean he would have to encounter the girl again, he thought not, a person like her would hardly be seen to frequent the run down old farm he'd heard about. Why, he thought was half of him pleased that he was unlikely to see the girl again, yet the other half was a little disappointed, after all there would be very little, if any at all, chance of them ever mixing in the same circles. The hours went by as Steve, leading the horse, progressed slowly over the rough ground towards Follyfoot

and it soon became obvious to him that the poor creature wouldn't be able to go far and that it would need to rest and continued the journey the next day. He had no choice but to leave it, and make his way to the Colonel's by himself and just hope that the Squire's men didn't find the horse in the meantime.

Dora busied herself fussing over the new foal that had been born during the night. She had ridden to Follyfoot first thing that morning as soon as she heard from her Uncle that Slugger had rung to inform him that the farm's newest arrival had put in an appearance. She had called the grey foal Folly, short for Follyfoot despite Slugger thinking it daft and suggesting that he should be named Fred. She'd look after Folly herself, she could ride over every day and help out with the other horses if Slugger wanted her too! Dora had met the girl Callie, who helped out at weekends, but was unable to during the week as she was still at school, and judging by the little amount of work the boy Ron did, the old man could do with an extra pair of hands.

Leaving Folly in his mother's care, Dora made her way to the barn where she began to fork hay into barrow for the foal's stall. She froze, she had the feeling someone else was in the barn with her, watching her. A voice from the hayloft startled her and she turned abruptly to find the boy from the Squires staring down at her. She hadn't meant to sound so curt when asking why he was there but he had frightened her at first. The boy obviously took umbrage to her sharp tone, and immediately came on the defensive, accusing her of getting him sacked from the Squires, which Dora felt was unfair. She suddenly realised her heart was pounding, was it from the fright the boy had given her or something else, like the surprise of seeing him again but the moment was soon gone with the arrival of Ron's mate Lewis Hammond, and the haunting memories of the evening before last came flooding back. Finding out that Steve knew where the horse that Lewis and his companions were looking for was hidden, Dora volunteered, much to her own surprise to go with him to help bring it back to Follyfoot.

Dora rubbed her tired eyes and yawned, it had been an exhausting and emotional day. She wrapped her dressing gown around her as she stood at the window of the elegant bedroom assigned to her in her uncle's large country house. She had no idea when she had risen from the ornate four poster bed that morning, what an eventful day this was to be, a day that was to change her life forever. Striding over fields and through woods and streams, Dora had allowed Steve to guide her to the injured horse. Sometimes they chatted mostly about horses, other times they walked side by side in silence. Only once did Dora allow the briefest of doubt of what she was doing to enter her mind. She knew nothing of the boy with her, apart from that he'd worked at the Squires and had been in prison, he could be anyone, a rapist, or murderer and here she was out in the middle

of nowhere with him. But she knew in her heart, he was neither. One look in those dark eyes told her that here was a kind and honest person. He was a gentleman too, steadying her as she slipped on the wet rocks in the river and helping her up the steep bank. Dora allowed herself a small smile as she thought of the horrified look on her mother's face; she would have a heart attack if she knew her daughter had consented to wander the Yorkshire countryside with a complete stranger and a young man at that.

Finding the horse where Steve had left it the previous night after taking feed from Follyfoot, they then had the tricky task of leading it back to Follyfoot, over uneven and hilly ground as well as through a river. Dora shivered as she recalled the freezing cold water and the two mile trek over land to fetch her Uncle. She shivered again as she remembered how she'd left Steve holed up with the injured horse, and his subsequent discovery by the Squire's men. The

fact that he was prepared to face trouble for the sake of a horse meant he had gained her admiration. When she thought the worse was over after the Colonel declared the horse the first of her collection and offered Steve employment, their return to Follyfoot was met by the nightrider, Lewis



Hammond and his horrid mate hollering around the stable yard, setting the horses housed there free, and herding them through the farm gate. Even worse still her beloved Folly, the new foal her uncle had given her, had disappeared. Finding him after a frantic search, safe and well, she and Steve had walked back to Follyfoot together, to their new home. Tomorrow she would pack up the few items of clothing she had already unpacked, most still lay in suitcases and the big trunk in the corner of the room, and move into the farm. A new start and quite different from her life so far but she already had a feeling that she belonged at Follyfoot and that she would be happy there. Her thought once more turned to Steve.....did he belong there, she was sure he was a drifter, a loner, would he ever find a place to settled down and would Follyfoot be that place? She had watched him closely at supper that evening, she sensed he felt a little uneasy, she wasn't sure if it was just because he was once more in new employment or whether it was the fact that he was in the company of herself and the Colonel and felt a little inferior to them due to their class and status. Dora liked Steve and went to her bed hoping that he would remain at Follyfoot and eventually become her friend; even at this early stage she definitely felt some kind of attraction to him. His smile and dark eyes set her heart racing faster and beating loudly in her chest each time she looked at him. What did he think of her, she wondered as she closed her eyes and excitedly planned her retreat to Follyfoot the next day?

Steve pulled his jumper off over his head and placed it over the iron bedstead at the foot of the freshly made up bed in the loft room above the stables at Follyfoot. Undoing his shirt buttons he paused and gazed out at the yard through the grimy window. The moon was out in full and cast a silvery light over the cobbled yard and the bare and broken boughs of the tree by the donkey's pen. He mentally made a note to ask the old man, Slugger why it had been left standing when it was clearly dead. Although the girl Dora obviously thought differently, he smiled as he remembered the sight of her earlier that evening throwing a bucket of water at the old tree's base. She'd need a miracle if she thought that it would grow again!

He gazed over the moonlit fields in the direction of the Colonel big house, it couldn't be seen from the farm but Steve knew it was only a mile or so away and that Dora had returned there after supper, to her grand and fancy bedroom, and a four poster bed he surmised, didn't all posh places have four posters? Why she wanted to leave all that luxury and move into the cold and damp farmhouse, he couldn't fathom? He wonder if like him, was she looking for a home and had had the same overwhelming feeling about this place as he had when he first stepped foot in it yesterday evening. He continued to remove his shirt as he glanced around at his new abode. Okay, so it was dusty and full of cobwebs but that at least said it was dry, and although with the inclusion of a bed and dresser it had been stable hand quarters before, it was now being used as a junk room, cluttered with boxes and old machinery. But tomorrow he would set to and tidy it up and give the place and good sweep and clean. Slugger had said he could do with it as he pleased and the Colonel had made an offered of some old unused furniture from the big house. It wouldn't take him long to make himself at home here, indeed there was already a special feeling about the place, a feeling he never had any where else. As long as he was accepted by the others here, he knew he could be happy and contented at Follyfoot. His mind went back to suppertime that evening and the four other people that he shared the kitchen table with. The old man Slugger, had made him very welcome in a down to earth, matter of fact way. He had made it clear that he didn't stand on ceremony with anyone, people took him as they found him and vice versa. Steve was comforted by the old man's no nonsense manner and already liked him, despite the nondescript meal he had produced.... what on earth had that been that he dished up? The red haired boy, Ron, wasn't so accepting, and he could tell by the furtive glances that he was suspicious of Steve, and probably put out with the fact that Steve had been given a job by the Colonel on a whim. Steve had seen Ron around the area in his infrequent visits to the local pubs but hadn't ever spoken to him. Ron moved in different circles to the loner Steve and had a gang of biker mates

that he frequently kept company with, including that louse, Lewis Hammond. Steve wondered if Ron had been one of the nightriders, he seemed that type. Steve wasn't sure how he get on with Ron, or if they'd ever become mates themselves.

The Colonel, himself although not over friendly had been kindness itself to Steve, offering him work and place to stay despite knowing of his prison record and his trouble at the Squires. He had heard of the Colonel and his eccentric ways, especially with regard to Follyfoot and its inhabitants of old and unwanted horses. The ex-military man was known for his love of horses and his theory that every horse should be allowed to live out its last day with kindness and care. Steve was in awe of the Colonel, and would never be able to thank him enough for trusting in him and giving him this new start. But what of his niece, what did she think of Steve? Did she think of him as just another low life taking advantage of her uncle faith in human nature no matter what class

or social standing? They may have to work together here at Follyfoot, but would they ever become friends? For all he knew, maybe she wouldn't work here, just act as Lady of the Manor and boss himself and the other stable hand around. After all, she made a pretty poor job at collecting up hay in the barn earlier that day. Probably wouldn't like getting her hands dirty and heaven forbid, she might break a nail! Steve checked himself as recalled her friendly if shy manner at supper. She certainly wasn't stand offish or full of her own self importance like a lot a posh birds, well the few that he'd had the misfortune to come across in his days of working in the stables of country estates, were anyway. And she genuinely appeared excited at the prospect of living at the farm and had made it known that she wanted to help out. He remembered how catching each other's eye briefly over the table she had smiled coyly at him, showing none of the distain or unfriendliness that Ron had showed. As he stripped down to his underpants and clambered between the crisp, clean white sheets, Steve allowed himself to linger on the image of Dora's smile and grinned to himself, here was a new beginning for both of them and only time would tell if their friendship would grow with them into a combined future. He fell into a contented sleep dreaming of tomorrow and all the future tomorrows here at Follyfoot, and not far away Dora was having the same dream.

The End

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