

Chapter One

Five am, Saturday June 27th, 1914.

Arthur Marsden was in the back yard of his bakery waiting for the daily delivery of flour, dressed in his normal work attire - overalls, clogs, and flat cap. He pushed his cap back momentarily and scratched his forehead; the sun was already making its presence felt.

The side gate was open, and Arthur looked out, scanning the horizon.

Keighley, a West Yorkshire wool town, prosperous and thriving, the myriad of mill chimneys exuding the residue of fifty or more furnaces, creating a dark haze in the still summer air. It had been Arthur's home for his nineteen years.

To the left of the yard was the blacksmiths. Although motorised transport was increasing in popularity, there were still many working horses needing to be serviced. The road outside the yard showed evidence of their presence, the droppings creating a hazard for unwary pedestrians. The smell of horses hung in the air.

Arthur looked right along the cobbles of West Street. A short distance away was James Street, the main thoroughfare. The baker's shop had had a prominent presence on the corner for over fifty years and was etched in the town's history.

Just then, the sound of Buxton's lorry could be heard, and Arthur watched as it turned from the main road and headed towards him. The driver waved as he parked up. There was a clunk and grind as he applied the handbrake. The side of the lorry was emblazoned with ornate scrolling script, 'Buxton's Flour Mill'; the family-run enterprise which supplied many of the bakeries around the Keighley area.

It was a drop from the cab to the pavement and an ungainly descent by the man.

"Eh up, Arthur," said the miller in his thick Yorkshire accent. He was an avuncular man but as strong as an ox and nearly as big.

"Ow do, Edward, fine day."

"Aye, tis indeed. Six today, right?" enquired the miller.

"Aye, busy day Saturday; our Agnes and Grace will be rushed off their feet."

The miller walked towards the trailer, chatting as he went. "I hear strike's been called off today."

"Is that right?"

"Aye, just been chatting to a few of the lads on t'corner. Mind you, seems t'foundry owners called police in. All sorts been going on. Some of 'em were saying they wanted to go back afore but were being threatened by t'ringleaders."

"Nay! That's bad. So what's going to 'appen, you reckon?"

"Most're going back to work... But some of 'em's got themselves into trouble and been arrested, you know, going to prison an' that. If you ask me, I reckon one or two've been getting some grief from their womenfolk."

"Aye, we've had a few of 'em in t'shop asking for credit. I've had to tell our Agnes we can't do that; we've got bills to pay an' all. 'Appen they weren't best pleased."

"Aye, I bet... anyways, I'll get on."

The trailer was a flat-bed, piled with thirty or forty sacks of flour, each weighing a hundredweight. Edward Buxton's hair was already white from earlier deliveries.

Lifting a hundredweight of flour safely was an art and one that the miller had mastered over thirty years. He backed against the trailer; grabbed the two top corners of a sack and slowly eased it away; his upper-back taking the load. He was wearing a modified leather apron which ran across his shoulders to take some of the strain of the heavy bags.

Arthur's frame did not suit him for such a job. Although approaching six feet tall, he was painfully thin. His older sister, Grace, would often tease him about his physique. "Blow over in a gale," she would say. His mother told him he would fill out in time.

Arthur counted the bags as Buxton carried them into the baking shed at the back of the shop. He paid the miller the nine pounds for the delivery. Then he escorted him back to the lorry and bid his farewells.

"Sithee Monday, Arthur," shouted Buxton as he got into the cab.

"Aye, tarra, Edward, take care of thissen."

Arthur watched as the truck lurched and bounced away down the cobbled street to his next call.

Marsden's Bakery had a good reputation in town for fair prices and excellent bread. Queues would regularly form before opening time at eight o'clock. Arthur's father, Albert, and his father before him, Benjamin, were master bakers prior to Arthur taking over the mantle. His father was now infirmed, a consumptive caused by years of breathing in flour. Arthur's mother, Mildred, was now a nurse to her husband as well as a mother to their five children.

Arthur was the only boy. His sisters, Grace, and Agnes, served in the shop; Molly and Freda were still at school. Taking over the family business, following his father's confinement two months ago, was a huge responsibility for Arthur. Not just in providing the income to keep the family fed, but also in serving the local community that depended on the bakery.

In the baking shed, the fire that heated the large oven had been lit; it was the same oven that had baked the bread since the bakery opened. Its brickwork was soot-marked and crumbling in places, evidencing the years of use, but it had served the family well and would continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The walls of the baking shed were white-tiled to aid cleaning, but many were cracked now, and the crazy patterns provided an unintended decoration. The room was dark and gloomy, despite the bright morning outside, and the air was thick with flour-dust and grime.

Two long-handled, shovel-like tools with elongated blades were resting against the wall; they were used to load the uncooked mix into the oven and then remove the finished loaves. A large vat was in the corner, cleaned and ready to be filled with the ingredients. Arthur knew the amounts without the need for scales. Traditional ingredients of flour, salt, yeast, and water were mixed with the expertise and care of a master baker.

Arthur used metal moulds, twenty at a time, for those wanting the traditional 'loaf' shaped bread. He also made batch-loaves using just the dough-mix, and baps, smaller bread-cakes, which were his most popular produce.

It was skilled work, much of his knowledge learned since he left school four years earlier. He had been a regular helper to his father in the baking shed as soon as he was old enough to be able to lift one of the shovels.

He went to work and was soon stirring the mixture in the vat. The container could easily double as a bath; it was just a little bigger than those facilities enjoyed by the gentry.

Within a few minutes, the unmistakable aroma of freshly-made bread had permeated the shop as well as the family living quarters on the first floor.

Arthur walked along the short corridor, which linked the baking shed to the retail outlet. Halfway along to the right, there was a flight of stairs. While the dough was baking, he would collect his breakfast.

Upstairs, above the bakery, there were two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a parlour, which housed Arthur and his family. The larger bedroom was shared by the five children. There were two three-quarter sized beds for the girls and a single bed for Arthur which was screened from his sisters by a large sheet.

As Arthur entered the parlour, his mother greeted him with a plate containing two slices of bread, coated with a thick layer of home-made dripping, and a glass of milk. The two elder sisters were at the wooden table eating their sandwiches.

“Thanks, mam.” Arthur took the plate from his mother. “’Appen strikes off, according to Edward Buxton.”

“Eh, that’s some good news... It’s been terrible for the families. I’ve been telling our Grace to give ’em some of the pig scraps; right grateful they were too,” said Mildred.

“Mildred!” A voice bellowed from the bedroom.

“I’ll just go and see to your father.”

Albert Buxton was a difficult man, particularly after he had consumed alcohol. After a hard day in the bakery, he was a frequent visitor to the Malt Shovel, the alehouse down the street. It was for medicinal purposes he would say, to clear the tubes from the dust. Ironic given his present condition.

Beatings were commonplace, and the children would hide from him in the bedroom when they heard his footsteps clomping up the stairs on his return from the pub. Mildred was the recipient of most of her husband’s frustrations, although Arthur had received many a lashing with his father’s leather belt, even for the most trivial of misdemeanours. Over the years, the treatment had affected Arthur’s development.

People would describe him as an 'anxious lad'; his hands could often be seen shaking as he went about his daily chores.

While Arthur finished his breakfast and returned to his bread-making, Mildred attended to her husband in the bedroom.

"Clean it up, woman," commanded Albert.

She looked at her husband. Part of her wished that his inevitable death would arrive sooner rather than later to relieve her of this burden. Albert wheezed and slowly removed the bed sheet; he had soiled himself again. There was a jug of water in a basin on the dresser and Mildred went to work without complaint while Albert continued to berate her.

"What are you putting in my food, woman? Are you trying to kill me?"

Irrational rants had become commonplace as his brain deteriorated, unable to control his bodily functions.

Mildred said nothing, but deep inside, she cursed her mother's choice of suiter. "A master baker – you'll never go hungry," she had said. Although that part was true, it was a high price to pay for the regular rapes and beatings Mildred had been subjected to during their marriage.

Twenty minutes later, with the soiled clothing and bedlinen piled in the corner waiting to be washed, Mildred returned to the parlour. The four girls were now at the table eating; Arthur had returned to the baking shed.

"It will be busy today if the rumours are true," warned Mildred.

"What rumours, mam?" said Grace.

"They say there's going to be shortages."

"Why's that?" asked Grace.

"Might not be able to get flour... That's what I heard."

“What will us do?”

“I don’t know, Grace, I’ll need to speak to Arthur.”

By eight o’clock, Molly and Freda, the two younger daughters, were off to school. It was Molly’s last term. Grace and Agnes served behind the counter in the shop. Grace was the eldest sibling, at twenty, a year older than Arthur, Agnes a year younger at eighteen, Molly and Freda, fourteen and twelve.

Grace and Agnes were dressed in their aprons and white caps, the serving uniform since Victorian times. The queue of people waiting for the bakery to open stretched up James Street almost to the butcher’s, some hundred yards or more. Arthur was helping his sisters bring the large wicker baskets of loaves from the baking shed and placing them on the shelves awaiting sale.

There was a beaded curtain separating the shop from the corridor that led to the baking shed, a necessary but frustrating barrier when trying to move the product from the bakery. Arthur had pegged it back to stop it getting in the way.

The shop itself was a good size; it would comfortably hold twenty customers. There was a serving counter split in two with a gap in the middle where the expensive NCR cash till took pride of place. The girls would serve either side to avoid getting in each other’s way. Behind the serving counter were the shelves of bread and at the end, a table with a set of scales on top. Poorer customers who could not afford a whole loaf would buy their bread by the ounce.

The first woman in the queue started knocking on the glass door, the only other entrance to the store.

“Wait tha hurry, woman,” shouted Arthur, as the three continued to stock the shelves. The woman knocked again; Arthur ignored her.

Five minutes later, the shelves had been suitably replenished with the results of Arthur’s labours. He returned to the baking shed to start again. He would continue until the flour was gone; there would be nothing left over today.

Agnes went to the front door. The clamour behind it was getting ugly as women jostled each other for position. One had seemingly pushed in and had been knocked to the ground.

Agnes stopped. "Arthur," she shouted. "Can you come?"

Arthur answered the call and returned from the baking shed; he could see the mayhem outside.

He took over from Agnes. "Get back and get in line or there'll be no bread today," he shouted through the glass.

His voice seemed to carry some authority, and gradually the crush subsided.

He unlocked the front door. There was a loud 'clang' from the bell, which would indicate a customer in normal times; these were not normal times. He would leave it open today.

The pandemonium started again. The first three women at the head of the queue barged in trying to pass through the door together, jostling to get to the counter first. It was not wide enough, resulting in an ungainly entrance. After six customers had entered the shop, Arthur put his arm across the entrance preventing anyone else from entering. He spoke to the next woman waiting. "It's one out and one in from now... or I fetch the constabulary, pass it on." The word went back.

Looting, in the present climate, was a real concern; a crowded shop increased that risk and Arthur waited by the front door until the chaos had died down and the queue had started to move more orderly. Grace and Agnes were at full tilt dispensing the loaves. "One each, no more," instructed Arthur as he went back into the baking shed to start the next mix.

There were many arguments about the imposed rationing. Several women had large families and complained bitterly that one loaf was not enough to feed everyone.

"We open again on Monday," said Agnes in an effort to placate the first complainant.

"Aye, and I'll be queuing afore dawn again," was the bitter response.

James Street was a wide thoroughfare on an incline, north to south, with a mixture of horse-drawn and motorised transport. Crimson and white trolleybuses with their overhead umbilical cords, and balcony cars that would hold over fifty people, would pass the bakery at regular intervals. As the morning progressed, the traffic increased. The parade of shops stretched the length of the street to the top where it joined the

High Street, the main road through the town, at a busy junction. Next door to the bakery was a florist, then a butcher's, a greengrocer's, a haberdashery and, finally, a general store and grocery on the corner with the main road.

Marsden's Bakery's signage gleamed in the mid-summer sun with its elaborate gold script, a testament to the sign-writer's art. Throughout the morning, the store continued to dispatch bread non-stop, although the queue had been reduced to a steady trickle.

One or two women had re-joined the line in an effort to beat Arthur's rationing, hoping that Grace and Agnes wouldn't recognise them. Given the numbers passing through the shop, that was a distinct possibility. Others had enlisted the help of their children to join the queue in different places.

Wednesdays and Saturdays were half-day closing at one o'clock and, at three minutes to one, Agnes called Arthur to close the doors. The shop was still full. He had finished baking and had started washing down.

He walked into the shop and looked at the shelves; they were almost empty.

"We'll stay open till it's all gone; it'll be barely use for pigs by Monday. There's not much," said Arthur.

He went outside and looked up the street. He could see other proprietors closing their doors. The fruit and vegetables normally on display outside the greengrocer's had gone, and the proprietor was pushing back the awning with a long pole.

By one-fifteen, the shelves were completely empty; Grace and Agnes had served the last of the customers. Arthur retrieved the awning pole and echoed the task recently completed by the greengrocer.

"Eh up, Arthur, how be tha?" said a friendly voice as he was about to return inside the shop.

"Ow do, Wilfred, aye grand."

"Tha coming for a pint?"

"Aye, give us ten minutes will tha? Come in and wait."

Wilfred Stonehouse was known to all as the 'butcher's boy', but, like Arthur, had taken over from his father on his untimely death a year ago, managing the family business. The parallels were striking. Wilfred had an even larger number of siblings, six; he was the eldest. There were two younger brothers and four sisters. The boys and two of the girls all worked in the butcher's shop. The two remaining girls were at the same school as Arthur's sisters. Wilfred was a year older than Arthur, but they had been friends since primary school.

"How's tha morning been, Wilfred?" said Arthur as he locked the door.

"Aye, grand, Arthur, been rushed off feet today."

"Aye, same here, you'd think the world were going to end... Why do tha think?"

"Well, I think it's the strike, now it's over... pub'll be busy an' all."

"Aye, tha could be right... Give us a minute, I'll check the girls."

Grace and Agnes were cleaning down the shelves before tackling the baking shed. Arthur went to the till and took out all the money and put it into a cash bag.

He turned to his sister, who was rinsing out a cloth. "Grace, are tha ok? I'm just taking cash upstairs, then off to t'Shovel with Wilfred; be back later."

"Aye, Arthur, sithee later."

"Shan't be a minute," said Arthur to Wilfred and he disappeared through the curtain and up to the parlour.

A few minutes later, Arthur and Wilfred, identically dressed in the fashion of the day, waistcoats, trousers, hobnail boots, and flat caps, left the shop. It was a scorching hot summers day, and they were both thirsty after their morning's labours. They crossed West Street, skipping over the flattened horse dung which littered the road. There was a bank on the corner where Arthur would be depositing his money on Monday. Next to the bank was The Malt Shovel.

The outside of the alehouse was tiled in shiny mottled-brown, green, and yellow terracotta which glistened in the bright sunshine, giving the establishment a garish look. The name was emblazoned across the top in bold black lettering, a swinging sign hung just above the entrance depicting a shovel and two sacks of barley.

The pair went inside; it was heaving with men. Some were standing in the corridor which ran down the centre of the pub to the outside yard at the back where the toilet was situated. The word 'toilet' was a euphemism. It was an old out-building with the left-hand wall used to pee against and the run-off channelled by gravity down the length of the structure and through a hole to an outside drain. The pitted floor would be awash with urine. The stench meant that few ventured there for any length of time.

There was a 'sit-down' facility in an adjacent shed or 'the hut', as it was known. Inside there was a large wooden box with a circular hole cut out of the top, placed over a four-foot deep pit. Scraps of newspaper tied with string were suspended from a hook screwed into the wall.

The entrance to the bar was just along the corridor to the right. To the left was another room, the lounge or 'snug' as it was known. Every seat was taken and a blue fog hung in the air from the smoke of pipes and cigarettes. Glasses and empty ale bottles littered the tables.

Arthur and Wilfred turned right into the bar, a much larger room but, again, heaving with men engaged in discussions, most of which seemed to be about the ending of the strike. Arthur elbowed his way towards the bar where Thomas Fielding, the portly landlord, was dispensing beer at an alarming rate. There was no finesse; the glass was placed under the tap of the barrel; it was turned, and gravity did the rest. There were six barrels in a line, each with pools of beer on the floor beneath. On the shelves above the barrels, rows of pint bottles of ale - brown ale, pale ale, stout; slightly more expensive than that from the barrel and, therefore, less popular. The ale arrived daily by horse-drawn wagon, straight from the Knowle Spring Brewery and Malt kilns.

"Eh up, Arthur, Wilfred, what'll tha have?" said the landlord recognising the new arrivals.

"Aye, two pints of best, Thomas, ta," said Arthur.

Arthur had taken to visiting the pub after work since he turned eighteen, continuing the routine of his father. Mildred had tried counselling him on the dangers, but the advice fell on deaf ears. For many local

men, a visit to the pub was more than a social occasion. The quality of the local drinking water was notoriously poor, causing stomach upsets and worse. As a result, men generally preferred to get their liquid intake from the cask.

Thomas presented the two pints. "Sixpence, Arthur."

Arthur put the coins on the countertop. Both lads picked up their beers and took a long slug. Arthur's prominent Adam's Apple bounced up and down as the beer disappeared down his gullet. Within seconds it had gone. Wilfred was not far behind. He took out some coins. "Same again, Thomas."

The barman smiled. "Busy morning I see, young Wilfred."

"Aye, and it's right warm today; builds up a thirst," replied Wilfred.

Thomas served the second pints, and Arthur and Wilfred supped at a more leisurely pace.

There was a lull at the bar, and the landlord started washing a few glasses in the sink under the counter. Just then, his wife, Maisy, came into the bar from the back. There was a flight of stairs leading up to the living quarters over the pub. She took over the glass-washing while her husband took a breather. He had also been awake since five am. The licensing laws were generous at this time. There were no restrictions on opening time; many men would enjoy a pint before going to the mill. Closing time was set at eleven o'clock; it was a long day for the licensee. The landlord poured himself a half pint and went to the end of the bar to join Arthur and Wilfred.

"So what's t'news on strike, Thomas, have you heard owt?" asked Arthur.

"Aye, seems all but over. Back to work on Monday. Mind you, there's still unrest in town. Some of the foundry lads up at Prince Smith's place are still bitter. I vouch we've not heard last."

"I heard constabulary were called," said Wilfred.

"Aye, some broken heads an' all. Feelings are still running high," replied the landlord.

While the men continued to debate the news of the day, Mildred was at home preparing Albert's lunch; Grace and Agnes were still cleaning in the baking shed, and the two youngest had gone out for a walk. There was no school today.

"Mildred, where's us lunch, woman?" hollered Albert from his bed. There was the sound of violent coughing.

Mildred ignored the shout and continued her preparation. Five minutes later, she left the kitchen with a tray containing a bowl of home-made soup and some bread.

As she reached the bedroom, Albert appeared to be struggling for breath. His eyes were wide and he was making a strange gasping sound. Mildred put the tray down on the dressing table and watched as her husband wheezed and gesticulated for some kind of help, pointing at his throat.

He had had these seizures before and normally she would just bend him forward and slap his back. His breathing would quickly recover. But this time, she just watched him as his actions became more desperate.

Gradually the gestures slowed, his hands dropped to his side and his eyes closed. His breathing was shallow. Without a moment's thought, Mildred picked up one of the pillows, knelt on the bed and leaned down on her husband's face, completely covering it with the pillow. She stayed there for what seemed an eternity but in reality, was just a few minutes.

Slowly, she removed the pillow. Albert's mouth was open, his lifeless eyes staring at the ceiling. It was no different to putting down a dying dog, a kindness in its own way; she felt no remorse.

She returned the tray to the kitchen and went downstairs to the bakery and called her daughters. "Grace, Agnes, can you come?"

The two girls followed their mother up the stairs.

"What's wrong, mam?"

"It's your father, he's had another seizure. He's gone."

"Oh, no," said Grace.

“Yes, Grace, I need you to go down the Malt Shovel and get our Arthur.”

Grace left the bakery, ran across West Street, past the bank and into the pub. She looked around the bar through the smoke and at all the male heads; the conversation suddenly died, and men were staring at her.

“Arthur,” she called.

Arthur heard the voice. He was still at the far end with Wilfred and the landlord.

He put down his pint and walked towards her. “Grace...? What are you doing in here?”

“It’s our dad, tha better come.”

Arthur went back, picked up his drink and sipped up. He bid farewell to his drinking companions. “Summat’s up, I’ll sithee, Wilfred... Thomas.”

He placed the empty glass on the counter and joined Grace.

“What’s up?” said Arthur as they left the darkness of the alehouse into the street. He squinted until his eyes became accustomed to the sunlight.

“It’s our dad; mam says he’s gone... had one of his seizures.”

They walked at pace back to the bakery. Mildred was waiting with Agnes in the shop.

There was a clang of the bell as they entered.

“Eh up, mam, what’s happened?” said Arthur.

“It’s your dad, he’s gone, Arthur... Can you run and get Doctor Adams?”

“Aye, will do.”

Arthur left the shop and turned right up James Street trying to take in the news. For some reason, he was not overtaken with grief, more a sense of relief.

It took him fifteen minutes to reach the large house which also served as Doctor Adam's surgery. He rang the bell at the side of the door, then again, then a third time. He couldn't hear anyone and knocked with his knuckles on the glass pane.

It took a few minutes before a figure approached the door.

"Yes," said a matronly-looking woman, sternly, as she opened the door.

"Is Doctor Adams there? It's me dad."

"Wait here," said the woman.

There was another delay.

Doctor Adams had been the family physician since before Arthur was born. His hair was now wispy and white, but he still maintained the bearing of someone in authority. He opened the door and looked at the visitor.

"Arthur Marsden...? What's the problem?"

"It's me dad... mam says he's gone."

"Oh, right, well you get back, young Arthur, I'll be down directly."

Arthur returned to the shop. James Street was still busy; the opposite park full with families enjoying the hot summer weather.

The girls were upstairs, and Arthur used his keys to get in; the clang heralded his entrance once again. He walked through the shop and up the stairs. His shirt was sticking to him, and there were sweat marks around the brim of his flat cap.

His mother and two sisters were in the parlour. As with Arthur, there seemed little emotion, certainly not the grief you would expect at the passing of a close relative.

"Doctor's on his way, mam," said Arthur as he entered the room.

"Aye, thanks, Arthur," said Mildred.

“What happened, do you know?” asked Arthur.

“Aye, Arthur, he had another one of his turns.”

It was half an hour before the doctor rapped on the shop door with his cane. Arthur went downstairs and let him in. Seymour Adams was wearing his three-piece suit, bowler hat and carrying his medical equipment. A pocket watch hung by a chain in his waistcoat.

They went upstairs to the parlour; it was a familiar journey for the doctor who had been maintaining a weekly visit since Albert had taken to his bed.

They entered the parlour, and the doctor took off his hat and placed it on the table.

“Hello, Mrs Marsden... Arthur tells me your husband’s gone.”

“Aye, I’ll take you through.”

Mildred had laid out Albert, and he was lying peacefully with his arms across his chest.

Doctor Adams pulled out a stethoscope from his Gladstone bag and checked Albert’s heart, then his pulse.

“Can you tell me what happened?”

“Yes, he had another one of his seizures. I came to help him, but he stopped breathing and went limp.”

“I’m sorry to hear that Mrs Marsden, my condolences, but it was to be expected. Frankly, I’m surprised he lasted this long. I’ll give you a death certificate and you can take it up to the Town Hall on Monday to get it registered. Have you thought about the funeral yet?”

“No, doctor, I haven’t.”

“That’s alright, I can recommend Josiah Rombold of Parish Road. Do you know them?”

“I’ve heard of them.”

“They are very good... Just mention my recommendation and you will get excellent service... or, I can call in on them on the way back if you prefer. It’s not out of my way.”

“That would be a kindness indeed,” said Mildred.

The doctor opened his bag and returned the stethoscope then took out a pad of certificates. He completed the details with Mildred providing the information. Death was stated as ‘consumption of the lungs’. The doctor signed with a flourish.

“Now don’t forget, you must register the death as soon as you can, else you won’t be able to bury your husband.”

“Yes, I’ll see to it Monday,” replied Mildred.

“I’ll bid you good day,” said the doctor and he picked up his hat.

Arthur escorted him down the stairs. As they reached the door of the shop, the doctor turned to Arthur. “Tell your mother I’ll send my account on Monday.”

“Aye, will do,” replied Arthur and watched as the physician walked back up James Street.

Arthur returned to the parlour. “Doctor Adams said he will send the account on Monday.” Mildred looked concerned.

“Are we alright, mam? For money I mean, for Doctor Adams.”

“Yes, Arthur, don’t worry; your father put away enough for that and for the funeral. I’ll need to go to the bank on Monday and let them know. You better come with me; there’ll be forms to sign, I don’t doubt.”

“Aye, mam, will do... What about t’shop? Do we open?”

“Yes, Arthur, business as usual. It’s what your dad would want. Can’t be letting folks down. We can go after you’ve finished baking... Wait here, I need to sort out a few things; I don’t want to be disturbed.”

Mildred returned to the bedroom.

Arthur and the two girls remained in the parlour. Agnes was cross-stitching, Grace reading a book.

Just then, the two younger sisters arrived back.

“What were the doctor doing? I’ve just seen him leaving t’shop.” asked Molly as she started to take off her shoes.

Grace looked up from her book. “’Appen our dad’s died. Don’t go in t’bedroom, mam doesn’t want to be disturbed.”

Molly looked at Freda. They both sat on the sofa next to Grace.

“What’ll happen?” said Molly.

“Nowt, tha should worry about. ’Appen we’ll manage.”

Arthur was quiet, deep in thought, starting to come to terms with being head of the family. He went to the drawer and took out the cloth bag containing the takings from the morning’s trade and started to count it ready for banking on Monday.