

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# A Love Like Ours

Rosie Harris

# Contents

About the Book  
About the Author  
Also by Rosie Harris  
Title Page  
Dedication  
Acknowledgements

Chapter One  
Chapter Two  
Chapter Three  
Chapter Four  
Chapter Five  
Chapter Six  
Chapter Seven  
Chapter Eight  
Chapter Nine  
Chapter Ten  
Chapter Eleven  
Chapter Twelve  
Chapter Thirteen  
Chapter Fourteen  
Chapter Fifteen  
Chapter Sixteen  
Chapter Seventeen  
Chapter Eighteen  
Chapter Nineteen  
Chapter Twenty  
Chapter Twenty-One  
Chapter Twenty-Two  
Chapter Twenty-Three

Chapter Twenty-Four  
Chapter Twenty-Five  
Chapter Twenty-Six  
Chapter Twenty-Seven  
Chapter Twenty-Eight  
Chapter Twenty-Nine  
Chapter Thirty  
Chapter Thirty-One  
Chapter Thirty-Two  
Chapter Thirty-Three  
Chapter Thirty-Four  
Chapter Thirty-Five

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## About the Book

**They barely had enough to eat, let alone pay the rent...**

When seventeen-year-old Ruth Davies' father is invalided out of the Great War, the whole family has little choice but to move to the infamous Tiger Bay area of Cardiff. Not only faced with a life of adversity, Ruth and her mother Caitlin also share a secret, one that no one else must ever know.

Ruth and Caitlin's wages are barely enough to put food on the table let alone pay the rent. And an increasingly neglected young Glynis runs wild. When Caitlin contracts tuberculosis and dies they have no option but to move into an even more squalid neighbourhood. But Ruth is still determined to keep their secret, at all costs. That is, until their father dies unexpectedly and an ever more desperate Ruth and Glynis find themselves living hand-to-mouth...

## About the Author

Rosie Harris was born in Cardiff and grew up there and in the West Country. After her marriage she resided for some years on Merseyside before moving to Buckinghamshire where she still lives. She has three grown-up children, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild, and writes full time. *A Love Like Ours* is her eighteenth novel for Arrow.

Also by Rosie Harris

Turn of the Tide  
Troubled Waters  
Patsy of Paradise Place  
One Step Forward  
Looking for Love  
Pins & Needles  
Winnie of the Waterfront  
At Sixes & Sevens  
The Cobbler's Kids  
Sunshine and Showers  
Megan of Merseyside  
The Power of Dreams  
A Mother's Love  
Sing for Your Supper  
Waiting for Love  
Love Against All Odds  
A Dream of Love

Rosie  
HARRIS  
*A Love Like Ours*



arrow books

For Robert Mackenzie Harris  
My Favourite Grandson



## Acknowledgements

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# Chapter One

March 1915

CAITLIN DAVIES STOPPED stirring the savoury-smelling pot of cawl on the top of the kitchen range and turned round to face her daughter in astonishment. A trimly dressed woman in her late thirties with a plain round face, dark eyes and straight dark hair swept back into a thick knot in the nape of her neck, she had a serene outlook on life and it took a great deal to upset her.

‘What was that you said, Ruth?’ she gasped, her dark eyes widening with shock as she stared in utter disbelief at her thirteen-year-old daughter.

The look of incredulity on her mother’s face alarmed Ruth. For weeks she’d been trying to break the news, but she’d always held back at the last moment because she was so afraid of what her mam’s reaction was going to be. By the look of things now she’d had every right to be worried.

Caitlin Davies shook her head from side to side, almost as if she couldn’t believe her ears. ‘Duw anwyl! Did you really say what I think you did?’

Ruth bit down on her lower lip, blinking back her tears. She knew she was shaking all over and it wasn’t from the cold, even though it was one of the bitterest March days she’d ever known. She’d been glad to get into the warm kitchen when she’d come home from school, even though she knew that what she had to tell her mother was going to be difficult.

Now, pushing her shoulder-length dark hair back behind her ears, she squared her slim shoulders and faced her mother with an air of bravado.

'I'm pretty sure you heard what I said, Mam, now didn't you?' she challenged.

'Oh, I heard all right, but I can't believe my ears!'

'Well, it's quite true,' Ruth affirmed, avoiding her mother's eyes. 'I'm pregnant. In fact, I've been trying to tell you for ages,' she added petulantly.

'Ages! I see, and exactly how many weeks would we be talking about, then?' her mother demanded as she turned back to her cooking, stirring the pot of cawl so vigorously that some of the hot liquid splashed on to her hand making her wince.

'Does it matter?'

'Matter! Of course it does. And, even more importantly, when is this baby you're talking about due?' Caitlin asked, as she grabbed a tea towel to wipe the hot liquid from the back of her hand and from the front of the flowered cotton pinafore that she'd put on to protect her plain dark red dress from just such accidents.

'I'm not too sure,' Ruth admitted uneasily.

'There's rubbish! You must have some idea!' her mother exclaimed as she turned round, her dark eyes unusually hard and angry.

'I think it will be later in the year, probably about the end of August.'

Caitlin's eyes narrowed as she quickly did some mental calculations then she shook her head in despair. 'A special Christmas present, was it?' she commented sarcastically.

Ruth bit her lip and said nothing.

'You don't leave school until Easter,' her mother went on. 'You're supposed to be starting work in May as soon as we get back from our family holiday. What is going to happen now?'

'I don't know, Mam. That's why I've been trying to tell you about the baby.'

'You won't be able to go to work, that's for sure,' Caitlin went on almost as if Ruth hadn't spoken.

‘Why ever not? Of course I can go to work; the baby isn’t due for months and months.’

‘That’s as maybe, but by the beginning of June every man and his monkey will probably be able to guess what’s happening. Apart from the disgrace you are bringing to our heads, no one is going to employ you when they find out you are expecting, now are they, girl?’ Caitlin pointed out angrily.

‘I don’t see why not.’

‘Stop acting so twp. Who on earth will want to spend their time training you to do a job when they know you’ll be leaving in a few weeks?’

‘I’m not stupid so—’

‘Duw anwyl, you are damned twp or you wouldn’t be in this condition,’ her mother exclaimed furiously. ‘So who’s the boyo responsible for this mess, then?’

‘There’s no boy, Mam,’ Ruth mumbled, hot colour rushing to her heart-shaped face. Her throat tightened with fear as she saw the anger in her mother’s eyes. This was even harder than she’d thought it was going to be; if only her mother wasn’t so high-minded and worried about what other people thought. She was only too aware how silly she’d been to believe that Glyn would stand by her, or to let herself be taken in by his words of love. She’d dreaded having to tell her mother and now, seeing her reaction, she was suddenly scared stiff that her mother might turn her out because if that happened she had no idea what she would do

‘Oh damnio di! A miracle, is it? That’s one tall story that I’m not going to believe, so speak out and tell me his name. Come on now, girl, that’s the least you can do. With a bit of luck we can have you married off before the baba’s born; otherwise the poor dab is going to be a little bastard.’

‘There won’t be any wedding, Mam, so don’t start going on about it.’

‘Oh and why’s that, then? Has he scarpered already, suddenly become all patriotic and joined the army and gone off to the war and left you in the lurch?’ she asked bitterly.

‘He’s already married.’

The colour drained from Caitlin’s face. ‘He’s married and you knew! So what were you doing messing around with someone like that?’

‘He said he loved me and that what we were doing proved that I felt the same way about him.’

‘Duw anwyl!’ Caitlin looked dumbfounded. ‘Ruth, what’s wrong with you, cariad? You’ve got a loving family, a good home and we’ve given you everything you could possibly want. We’ve brought you up properly, regular chapel, nice clothes, good meals, and then you let a married man spin you some daft yarn like that. Surely you must have realised that he was taking advantage of you, you silly girl. Now come on, tell me who it is.’

‘Glyn Jenkins.’

The admission made Ruth draw in a deep breath of relief. It was as if it was no longer a burden she had to bear alone. She knew her mother was shocked, and she realised that there would be ructions – especially when her father was told – but the sense of relief that swept through her was tremendous.

It was a guilty secret no longer. Her mother was upset, but deep down she knew she’d help her and tell her what she must do. She wondered if she would let her leave school right away so that she wouldn’t have to see Glyn Jenkins every day.

She’d been so sure that when she told him her news about the baby he would be absolutely overjoyed and would want to marry her. His refusal to even discuss their future, and his adamant assertion that he not only didn’t love her, but had also never considered leaving his wife and family, had been the biggest shock of all.

He'd told her so many times that his wife didn't understand him and that he wasn't happy at home, and even that he'd give anything for the chance of the two of them being together, so she'd thought he would be delighted at the thought of being with her and making a home for her and their baby. She still found it hard to believe how wrong she'd been and that he'd never had any intention of marrying her after all.

'Glyn Jenkins! Duw anwyl, this gets worse by the minute.' Her mother's voice, now almost a shriek, sliced through Ruth's thoughts like a sharp knife through paper. 'He's not just a married man, he's got a young family. Three little ones and the youngest is a mere mite not yet three. What the hell has been going on? And him the school caretaker and all. I've a good mind to report this to the authorities. He shouldn't be allowed anywhere near young girls, not when they are as twp as you are,' she added scathingly.

'Please, Mam, don't go doing anything like that. I've learned my lesson. I'm not even speaking to him now.'

'Chucked you, has he, and told you to keep your mouth shut?' her mother commented caustically.

'Please, Mam, promise you won't go causing trouble for him,' Ruth implored.

'I'll think about it. You keep quiet as well until I've decide what to do. Who else knows that the pair of you have been carrying on and that you're pregnant?'

'No one. I haven't breathed a word to anyone about the baby except to Glyn and now you.'

'Well, let's keep it that way for the moment. He won't be telling anyone, you can be sure of that, and if you say anything then in all probability he'll only deny it. Meeting you in the boiler room and round the back of the bike sheds, was he?'

'Something like that,' Ruth admitted, hanging her head.

‘Right. Well, go and lay the table for our meal. Your dad will be home any minute and you know how he likes his food to be ready the minute he gets in, especially on a cold day like this. Go on, then, and stop moping. Just remember to keep your mouth shut about all this until I have had time to consider what we must do for the best.’

‘Yes, Mam,’ Ruth agreed contritely.

‘We must think carefully; think of the scandal if this gets out. Pity you didn’t tell me earlier, then we could have got rid of it,’ she added reflectively.

‘Mam!’ The horror in Ruth’s voice brought a tightening to Caitlin’s lips. ‘That would be murder.’

‘It will be murder once your dad gets to hear about what’s happened, let me tell you. I don’t know how he’ll react. He’ll probably blame me for being too lenient with you and not keeping a firmer rein on what you get up to. Mind you, seeing as you rarely go anywhere without us, how I could do that when I thought you were safe and sound in school, I don’t know,’ her mother retorted sharply. ‘By rights the authorities ought to be told and he should be drummed out of the school,’ she went on angrily. ‘Wicked thing to do, leading an innocent young girl on, taking advantage of her, and then refusing to accept any responsibility.’

‘I’m sorry, Mam.’ Ruth scrubbed away the tears which were now streaming down her face. As she made to put her arms round her mother, hoping for a reassuring cuddle, there was the sound of the front door key that hung on a string being pulled through the letter box, signalling that Tomas Davies was home from work.

‘Quick!’ Caitlin pushed her daughter away. ‘Dry your eyes, girl, and try and behave normally. Not a word to your dad, mind. Get on with laying that table. Hurry.’

By the time her father had taken off his overcoat, muffler and cap and hung them up on a peg in the hallway and come through into the kitchen, rubbing his hands

together and grumbling about how cold he was, Ruth had hastily laid out the knives, forks and spoons for their meal and put the crusty loaf on the bread board, placing it in the centre of the table along with a dish of butter. She had also set out three cups and saucers in a group, together with a small jug of milk and the teapot stand, ready for when their meal ended.

Her mother dished out the cawl and Ruth carried their plates of savoury-smelling stew from the kitchen to the table, putting the largest helping in front of her dad who was already sitting at the table waiting for his meal.

‘That smells good!’ he commented as he picked up his knife and fork. ‘You managed to get some lamb, then. Hard to believe there’s a shortage when there are so many sheep on the hills just outside Cardiff. This war has a lot to answer for and no mistake, and it has only just started. Things will get worse, you mark my words,’ he added gloomily.

‘Lamb or mutton, I’m not sure which it is,’ Caitlin laughed. ‘I’ve marinated it well and then cooked it nice and slowly so it should be lovely and tender.’

They ate in silence. Ruth didn’t feel hungry and started pushing the meat and vegetables around on her plate but a warning look from her mother stopped her. With an effort she began eating; her mind was still full of the revelations she had made to her mother and she wondered what the outcome was going to be. The earlier feeling of relief was dissipating as she began worrying about what her mother intended to do about it now that she knew. Sooner or later they would have to tell her father and she wasn’t at all sure that he’d accept the situation as well as her mother had done. He was a kind and caring man but as the wage earner he felt responsible for his family’s welfare and he’d be shocked and hurt when he heard the news.

Every Friday night he handed over housekeeping money to her mother and gave Ruth a sixpence for pocket money.



‘Save half and spend the rest,’ he always told her. And she did. Three pennies went straight into her money box, the remaining threepence she spent on sweets and a comic.

Sixpence wouldn’t be much use to her when she had a baby, she thought wryly. There was so much to worry about, not only the actual act of having it, which was something of a mystery to her, but also how to provide it with food and clothes once it was born. She dared not even start to think about all that because she had no idea what it was going to cost.

She studied her father. He was almost as broad as he was tall. A rotund man, thickset with a barrel chest. His short dark hair was beginning to recede and his shiny forehead was becoming more and more pronounced so that it looked like a giant egg when he stood underneath the gas light. Yet it wasn’t because he was old; he was not yet forty. It was something that ran in his family. Grandpa Jenkins had been completely bald and her dad claimed that he’d started to lose his hair when he was still in his twenties, which was even before she was born.

He was a manager at Mostyn Mouldings and in charge of over thirty men so he was used to ordering people around. He had a hard, curt voice and a decisive manner. He stood no nonsense from anybody and never argued. It was as if what he said was law. Once or twice she had tried to contradict something he’d said, but he’d completely ignored her. After that she noticed he did the same when her mother expressed an opinion that was different from his.

Her mam was plump and placid and although she appeared to do exactly what he told her to do Ruth knew that really she ran things exactly the way she wanted to. She never argued with him and it seemed that, as long as their home was run efficiently, his meals were on time and his clothes always washed, ironed and ready to wear whenever he wanted them, he rarely queried what she did.

He never questioned how she managed to find the money for new clothes or even things for their home, which was probably just as well since her mam liked to look smart and well dressed and was always buying things.

It was as if he had no idea about the price of food or anything else. As long as he was well fed and they had a fire burning brightly in the grate when he arrived home, he was content to let her spend the housekeeping money as she thought best and to run things her way. Their house was probably the best furnished in Harriett Street. They had a lovely Axminster rug in front of the fire in the living room, not a rag rug made out of scraps of cloth from old clothes like some of their neighbours had. They changed their curtains twice a year; thick heavy ones in the winter to keep out the draughts and pretty cotton ones in the summer. Her mam never turned sides to middle when their sheets or towels became worn but bought new ones and cut up the old ones and used them as cleaning rags or polishing cloths.

She wasn't expected to wear any of her mother's cut-down dresses or skirts. Her mam bought her a new dress for summer every Easter and a hat and shoes to go with it. She had a thick winter coat and when it was too small for her she had a new one; often her mam gave her old one away to a younger child in the street.

They were never in debt, nor did they ever have a tally man banging on their door because that was one thing that her dad wouldn't tolerate. They celebrated at Christmas with a big fat chicken for their dinner and there'd always been a stocking at the end of her bed as well as a special present like a big doll, or something else that she'd been longing for. There'd always been an Easter egg for her ever since she could remember.

Compared to some people in Harriett Street their life was as smooth as a mill pond. Leastwise, it had been until now, Ruth thought guiltily. She didn't see how her mam was

going to break the news to her dad without causing ructions, but she knew better than to question her decision.

His job was both physically and mentally tiring and all Tomas Davies wanted to do when he got home at night was have his meal, put on his slippers and sit and read the evening paper until it was time for a cup of hot cocoa before bed.

That was except on a Saturday night; that was his night out. He went on his own to the local pub where he mingled with friends he had known all his life, played a game of darts, drank two or three pints of beer, and then came home again by ten o'clock.

His routine rarely varied. On Sundays, he accompanied Ruth and her mother to chapel in the morning and after their midday meal he often slept in the afternoon for an hour or so. In the summer, though, he took her and her mother out for a stroll or to Cathays Park to listen to the band.

During the week her mam made sure that her housework was done before midday and then she'd get dressed up and go out with her friend Phoebe Parsons who lived in the next road. Sometimes they went to the pictures or else into the centre of Cardiff and walked around the posh shops admiring all the things they would like to buy.

Usually her mam brought home some little luxury from one of the stalls in the Hayes. Her father didn't approve of shop cake; he liked the ones her mother baked, like apple tarts, Welsh cakes and Bara Brith. He liked to take one or the other in his lunch box each day, so what Caitlin bought was always put away in the larder. Ruth and her mam would share them as a special treat when she came in from school, or sometimes on a Saturday evening while her dad was out at the pub.

It had been fun to share the secret of these special treats with her mam when she'd been younger, but as she grew older they lost their appeal. Living such a well-

ordered life was so dull. The other girls in her class at school were allowed out to the pictures or even to local dances but her mam would never let her go because she always said that her dad wouldn't approve.

It meant she had no excitement at all in her life like the other girls had, which was probably why she'd fallen for Glyn Jenkins's glib tongue so easily, she thought ruefully. He was extremely attractive; very tall and handsome with thick black curly hair, flashing blue eyes, a thin dark moustache and an infectious smile. He was always making witty comments or telling a snappy joke. Whenever he had to tell anyone off he always spoke to them in such a way that they never felt guilty or uncomfortable but were eager to do as he asked.

At one time when the other girls talked about their flirtations with one of their classmates, or one of the boys who'd left school a year or so before and were now out working, she'd felt jealous. But from the moment Glyn Jenkins had singled her out and started paying her attention she'd felt so special. Her classmates' boyfriends were only raw youths; hers was an experienced man.

He'd told her that he thought she was pretty; no one had ever said that before. The first time he'd kissed her had been magical. She relived the memory of it every night for weeks afterwards.

After that, every day had brought some new exciting memory to treasure. At first they had mostly talked, telling each other all about their home life. He'd gently stroke her face or hold her hand and tell her how much she meant to him and that no one had ever shown him so much affection before.

These snatched moments together, the thrill of knowing that she was the one he loved, and the scheming to be with him, without anyone else at school finding out what was going on, made every school day exciting.

Life suddenly become a wonderful adventure. She never knew when she was going to see him or what he was going to say or do next. He would convey messages to her with a special smile, a knowing wink, or raise his eyebrows questioningly so that words were hardly ever necessary when there was anyone else around.

He aroused feelings deep inside her and turbulent emotions she'd never known before. It was thrilling and frightening. Whenever they were alone he was so loving and gentle that she never for one moment considered that what they were doing was wrong.

She still couldn't believe how he'd changed the moment she'd told him that she was expecting his baby. The twinkle went out of his eyes, there were no more secret meetings in the boiler room or light touches on her arm when they passed each other in the corridors.

He was so cold and formal towards her that she felt deeply hurt. Whenever she tried to catch him on his own to talk to him about it and ask what they were going to do and when he was going to leave his wife, he made some excuse or the other.

When he finally told her to stop pestering him and that he'd no intention of breaking up his own home life she had felt as if the bottom had dropped out of her world. All the promises he'd made and the dreams they'd woven together as she lay in his arms after they'd made love turned to ashes.

That was when she knew that she would have to tell her mother the sordid unhappy news that now she was expecting his baby he wanted nothing more to do with her.

She'd tried so hard to do it, lying awake for hours at night, going over and over in her mind how she would lead up to telling her. Then when it came to it tonight she had blurted it out knowing that it was the only way she could do it.

## Chapter Two

RUTH WAITED ANXIOUSLY for her mother to tell her father that she was pregnant. She knew there was bound to be a tremendous row and the thought of it hung over her head like a threatening cloud.

She wished they'd had time to talk more before her dad had come home. Now she was in turmoil wondering what her mam was going to do; the waiting was a greater punishment than any telling off would have been.

Two days, three days, then four, and she decided she could stand it no longer. She'd tell him herself. She mightn't do it as tactfully as her mother would, but that didn't matter. At least it would be out in the open and she wouldn't be on tenterhooks all the time wondering when the storm was going to break.

She resolved she'd do it on Saturday morning when they all sat down to breakfast together, and she spent the next couple of days going over and over in her mind exactly what she would say.

The opportunity to carry out her plan never materialised. On Friday, when she arrived home from school, she found her mother white faced and apprehensive. A letter from the war authorities addressed to Tomas Davies had arrived by the midday post and she was full of gloom about what the contents might be.

Caitlin waited until they had finished eating their evening meal before she produced the letter. 'This came for you this morning, Tomas,' she commented as she took it out of her pinafore pocket and passed it across the table to him.

Her husband frowned as he took it from her. Thoughtfully he turned it over, studying the markings on the envelope and shaking his head as if mystified. Then, wiping his knife clean on the side of his plate he inserted the blade under the flap and sliced it open.

Ruth and Caitlin held their breath as he drew out the sheet of paper and studied it in silence.

‘Damnio di!’ he muttered. ‘Things must be in a pretty bad state when they need to conscript a man of my age.’

‘Conscript? You mean you’ve been called up, Tomas?’ Caitlin asked in a shocked voice, her eyes widening in dismay as her worst fears were confirmed.

‘Here, read it for yourself,’ he said, shaking his head in disbelief as he passed the letter across to his wife.

Caitlin’s mouth tightened as she read the curt notification. ‘Duw! I can’t believe it’s come to this, boyo!’ she said, shaking her head sadly. ‘What are they going to say about this at work when you tell them?’

Tomas pushed back his chair and stood up. ‘What can they say or do? If you get your call-up papers then that’s it.’

‘There must be some exemptions – your age, the sort of work you do, that sort of thing,’ Caitlin protested.

‘Maybe there are, but by the look of things none of them apply to me or they wouldn’t have sent me that dratted letter. They’re not going to waste time writing to those they know can wriggle out of going, now are they?’

‘No, I suppose not,’ Caitlin agreed slowly. ‘This is such a shock though. It’s going to make such a difference to our lives. You may be away months—’

‘Or even years,’ Tomas interrupted.

‘Oh, don’t go saying things like that. They are probably calling up all the men they possibly can so as to make a huge attack on the enemy and settle this silly war quickly and put an end to such conflicts once and for all.’

Tomas shook his head. ‘I doubt if they will manage to do either, cariad. I think we are all in for a tough time. With

the men away you women will have to manage as best you can and there will be shortages of everything from food to clothes, so you won't find life easygoing, I can tell you.'

'It won't be all that easy for you either, Dad,' Ruth added.

'No, cariad, you're right there. We're all going to find our lives changing and there is nothing at all we can do about it. It's out of our hands and we have to rely on those at the top, the ones in authority, to do their damn-dest to get us through this lot - and I'm not all that sure that they know what they're doing. Time will tell, though, time will tell,' he added morosely.

'Cheer up, Dad.' Ruth smiled. 'It will be quite an adventure for you going off and meeting lots of other men and leaving Mam and me at home on our own.'

'Adventure!' He gave a bitter laugh. 'It's an adventure I can well do without. I'm happy enough where I am. I have a good job, regular pay at the end of each week, so what more does any man want? Security is a wonderful thing. We've just about finished scrimping and saving to get a home together and we've finally got things as we want them. You'll be starting work in a few weeks' time and then we'll even be able to afford a few more of life's little luxuries.'

'Well, I may not ...' Ruth started to speak, intent on telling him about what was going to happen, since her mother didn't seem to be prepared to do so, and explain that she might not be starting work for a while. She caught Caitlin's warning look and her slight shake of the head and realised that her mother didn't want her to speak out at this moment.

She felt slightly irritated. Surely if they were going to break the news to her dad then they must do it quickly, because from the contents of the letter it appeared he would be leaving within the next few days and he ought to be told before then. If they put it off until the very last



moment it would be a terrible shock for him and she didn't want him to go away with the impression that she had avoided telling him until the very last moment in order to escape a good telling off.

If she told him now it might even help to take his mind off being called up, Ruth thought wryly. He certainly didn't seem to like the idea of going into the army, which rather surprised her because he was a man who always liked to be seen doing and saying the right thing. She knew he didn't approve of physical violence, but surely when it came to defending your country against the enemy then that was slightly different and he had always seemed to be very patriotic.

As she helped her mother to clear away the dishes and carry them through into the scullery to be washed, she managed to waylay her out of earshot of her father and ask why she wasn't telling him about the baby.

Again Caitlin shushed her to keep quiet and, frowning, shook her head, even more vigorously this time. 'Leave it!' she hissed. 'I'll deal with it all in good time.'

Ruth knew it was pointless arguing with her mother when she was in one of her determined moods, so she said no more but she couldn't help wishing she'd hurry up and get on with it. The sooner her dad knew and the lecture was over, the better she would feel. It had dragged on now for almost a week and she found the suspense was like some form of torture. She even wondered if it was her mother's idea of punishing her.

There was no opportunity for her to speak to her mother again that evening because both her parents seemed to be too intent on discussing how things were to be handled in her father's absence.

Long after she went to bed Ruth tossed and turned because she was so worried about the situation. She was full of regrets about what had happened. What on earth had she been thinking about to let herself be taken in by

the smooth tongue and handsome looks of Glyn Jenkins? She knew all the girls in her class at school fancied him and they were always talking and joking about it, but she was the one he'd picked out for special attention.

In the beginning it had merely been roguish smiles and amusing quips whenever he had a chance to speak to her. Then it had become more daring; the hand on the small of her back, a gentle squeeze or an arm around her shoulders as he pretended to move her out of his way. Gradually, one familiarity had led to another: the snatched kiss; the raised eyebrows signalling that he would meet her later. Then came the dallying after school so that they could meet secretly when she was supposed to be with her friends or staying late at school for some reason.

At first it had been merely a crazy flirtation on her part; and probably on his as well. Then, after the school end-of-term party at Christmas things had really got serious. It had been the only time that he had actually made love to her and it had scared her stiff. She realised they had gone too far.

He'd joked about it, but she had been in a terrible state for days afterwards, frightened in case her parents or someone at school discovered what had happened. She'd found it so scary that she didn't even tell her best friend Veronwy Williams, in case she blurted it out to someone. Anyway, there wasn't much to be gained from doing so because she knew Veronwy would be forbidden to have anything more to do with her once it was known she was having a baby.

Her mam was so right; Glyn Jenkins was a married man with young children and there was no excuse at all for him to be playing around. She should have known better than to trust him. The minute he saw how upset she was he'd cut and run. The next day he hadn't even spoken to her. He'd passed her in the corridor and simply carried on walking, whistling away as though he hadn't even seen her.

A couple of days later and he was chatting up Freda Francis, another girl in her class; winking at her, raising his eyebrows and nodding suggestively towards the janitor's office where he kept all his mops and buckets.

She'd been on the point of warning Freda but then thought better of it. She could hardly justify doing so without disclosing what had happened to her and, once she told one person, then she was pretty sure that the entire class would get to hear of it, possibly the whole school, and she couldn't bear for everyone to find out what an idiot she'd been.

A couple of months later exactly how stupid she'd been came home to her even more forcibly. At first she tried to ignore the signs, telling herself it was because she'd had a cold, or because she was so worried that she was run down. When nothing happened the following month she knew it was pointless to go on kidding herself.

Even so, it took her ages before she could pluck up the courage to tell her mam. She would have avoided doing so if she could, but she kept being sick in the morning and refusing her breakfast and her mother was concerned.

She'd thought her mam would tell her dad about it straight away; keeping her waiting was adding to her mental torment. She realised what a dreadful blow it must have been for her mother because friends and neighbours would think it a terrible disgrace. More than likely, as her mother had already said, they would put some of the blame on her. Her dad certainly would, which was no doubt why her mam was so hesitant about telling him, especially now. Even so, she wondered what was going on in her mam's mind and why she was holding back from telling him.

Perhaps she thought he had enough already on his plate and so she wasn't going to tell him right to his face. If they waited until after he'd actually left home then one of them could tell him in a letter. It seemed rather a cowardly way

out, though, and she was sure that it would upset him far more than if he was told now.

She simply had to talk to her mam about it. She was still thinking it over when she fell asleep, and next morning she was so late getting up that there was no time to discuss anything. Her dad had already gone out, probably to work, anxious to break the news to his boss and colleagues that he had received his call-up papers and to see if any of them had done so as well.

Her mother was not in a very talkative mood over breakfast. There were dark shadows under her eyes and she looked as though she'd hardly had any sleep.

'Your dad being called up for the army is going to affect us all,' she said worriedly. 'I have no idea what sort of pay a soldier receives, but I'm pretty certain it won't be as much as he earns as a manager at Mostyn's.'

'I'll be leaving school and—'

'Yes, I'd been counting on you going out to work and being able to hand over some housekeeping money and perhaps even being able to buy your own clothes in the future,' her mother interrupted. 'Now it seems you are going to be more dependent on us than ever. We'll not only have to keep you, but this baby as well.'

'I'm sorry, Mam.'

'It will probably mean that I'll have to go out to work like one or two of the other women around here whose husbands are out of work or not earning very much money.'

'Dad would hate for that to happen,' Ruth told her. 'He's always said that he doesn't approve of wives working and that their place is in the home, caring for their family, cooking and cleaning, not out in the workplace.'

'He won't be here to do anything about it, though, or even to know if I go out to work or not, now will he? I'd rather find myself a job than be short of money.'

The thought intrigued Ruth; she wondered what sort of job her mother would want to do. As far as she knew, she

hadn't worked since the day she got married. Before that she had been an assistant in a ladies fashion department in David Morgan's, which was one of the top department stores in Cardiff.

In the past she'd always loved hearing the stories her mam sometimes told her about those days. All the apprentices and shop assistants had to live in, so they had slept in dormitories and had had to obey all sorts of rules.

Of course she wouldn't have to do that now, because she was a grown woman and had a home to run. But, although she still loved clothes and took a great interest in all the new, modern styles, it was such a long time since her mam had actually worked behind a shop counter that they might not think she was suitable any more.

She might have to take on some other kind of work, such as dressmaking, which she was quite good at, or perhaps making curtains and things like that since she was very good with her needle.

Ruth was quite sure her mam would never go out cleaning or looking after sick people. She didn't think she'd even like minding other people's children while they went out to work because she was far too house-proud. She wouldn't want little sticky fingers touching everything, or toys and muddle all over the place.

In fact, the more she thought about it the more she wondered how her mother would react to working for other people. She was so used to doing things her way and no one criticising her at all that she'd probably take it very hard if she had to conform to other people's demands.

## Chapter Three

IT WAS A crisp, bright Monday morning in late March when Tomas Davies pulled on his heavy grey coat over his dark blue suit, kissed Caitlin goodbye, and set off for work from his comfortable little terraced house in Harriett Street.

He felt unusually alert as he set off at a brisk pace for the tram stop in Newport Road and made the journey to Mostyn Mouldings at East Moors. Tucked into the inside pocket of his jacket was the letter that had been waiting for him when he'd arrived home the previous Friday night; a letter that he was well aware was going to change his entire life and that of his family.

He'd spent many years as a young man getting his hands dirty and ingrained grimy-grey from the metal components they handled on the factory floor, but he'd stuck at it, doggedly working his way up the promotional ladder. He'd succeeded; he'd become one of the youngest charge hands in the company.

He'd been determined to do even better for himself and he'd felt it had been very worthwhile when he'd been promoted to under-manager for the entire components section some three years earlier.

It meant that not only was he able to discard his overalls and wear a suit to work, but he also had his own office. True, it only consisted of a flat-top metal desk, a couple of chairs and a four-drawer filing cabinet in a partitioned-off corner of the factory floor, but it was a mark of his authority.

Now it seemed he was about to lose all he had achieved. A single sheet of paper from someone he'd never heard of