



## Chapter 1

‘I forbid you to go, Eve! You’ll leave this house over my dead body!’ Margaret Reynolds screamed at her headstrong daughter as she stood in front of the kitchen doorway, barring Eve’s way from leaving the family home, with her arms held out over the exit.

‘Stop it, Mam, you can’t keep me here anymore. There’s nothing for me in Rothwell – I’m sixteen and don’t want to stay and be made to go into service for those nobs at the big house at Temple Newsam. I just won’t! I’m not going there – I’m going to Leeds, whether you and Father give me your blessing or not!’ Eve Reynolds raged back at her mother as she grabbed her shawl and a few of her belongings that were airing on the rack above the kitchen fire, shoving them into her already bulging carpetbag.

‘If your pa was here he’d take his belt off to you, my girl! You’re only doing this because he’s not. You know you hardly make any money with the little bit of washing you take in for other people, and it gets in my way in

the kitchen. He's lined you up with the position of parlour maid, thinking you'd be grateful and now you're throwing it back in his face. You know Hugo Meynell-Ingram is the next thing to royalty here – you should be thankful for the position offered to you. But instead, here you are turning your back on everything, for absolutely nothing, not even a roof over your head.' Margaret folded her arms, still blocking her daughter's way. Her face was flushed and her breath short as Eve came towards her. 'You're not going to Leeds, my girl. You know nobody there, you've no money and no work awaits you. Sometimes I think that you're simple in the head! Why throw away the life you have for nothing?' Her mother still stood her ground, but now tears were beginning to flow down her cheeks. She loved her daughter with all her heart, but Eve had always been headstrong and when her mind was set on something there was no changing it.

'I'm not going to be tied to a pompous oaf like Hugo Meynell-Ingram forever, and have to curtsy to him every time he passes and do the same for all his fancy guests. And from what I hear from other village girls, that's not the worst of what he demands of his staff. I'll make my own way in the world; that's why I have to go to Leeds and not stop in this pitiful little village. I love you, Ma, but Father doesn't understand that there's more to life than being in service and I aim to plough my own furrow in life.'

Eve put her bag down on the spotlessly clean stone-flagged floor of the small worker's cottage and looked

with sympathy at her mother's face as she wiped away her tears. Her father was dependent on the Temple Newsam estate for his living – and the cottage itself was tied to his job.

‘Please, Mam, let me go. I'll be all right; I'll find somewhere to stay before the day ends and I'll find myself work in the morning. Jenny Tomlinson says there's plenty of work if you're willing to do long hours – and at least I'll not be tied day and night to a family that can't even remember your name, let alone care about you. Father's been gardener there since he was a lad and they still treat him like the dirt he handles every day. I don't want to waste my life running after that sort.’ Eve calmed herself down, she knew her mother was partly right in her worries, but if she didn't leave her home this minute, her father would soon be back and, as her mother had warned her, that would mean a good hiding and him forbidding her to leave the house.

‘Think about it, lass, your father will never make you welcome at home again. He's already said to me that he doesn't know what we've done to deserve such a wilful creature as you. Since you've turned sixteen you've a mind of your own. He despairs that you no longer attend chapel and that you won't join us in taking the pledge against the demon drink. This will push him too far, Eve; he'll turn his back on you and, worse still, he'll forbid me from ever seeing you. Please, unpack your things and stay, for my sake if nobody else's.’ Margaret walked towards her daughter and held her

arms out to hug her. Eve was her only child, born to her late in life when hope had nearly gone of her ever being a mother. Because of that, perhaps, they had both been too strict with her and now she was rebelling against her upbringing, belittling her life with them at home and it hurt Margaret deeply.

‘No, Mam, I’m going.’ Eve picked up her bag and, taking advantage of her mother being off guard, made for the front door, opening it quickly and looking around hastily as her heartbroken mother sobbed in the dark interior of the cottage. ‘I’ll send word as to where you can find me. I’m sorry, Mam . . . I love you.’

Eve shed tears too, as she set off down the road that led out of the small mining village of Rothwell, not daring to look back at her mother, who was now standing in their front garden, shouting for her to return home. It would only take a second of weakness and she’d be running back to her mam, begging her forgiveness. She had to be strong and look forward to a new life away from the strict upbringing that she had endured with her Methodist family. Although she had always been shown love and kindness, Eve yearned for some excitement – dances and young men courting her and frivolous dresses instead of being told to be demure and not to be too forward in the company of village boys she’d known all her years. A life in the growing town of Leeds, with its many shops and trades, was an opportunity to see something of the world. Something far more alluring than being a parlour maid to the gentry at Temple Newsam and having to be subservient to all around her.

Determined to reach the bustling centre of opportunity called Leeds before nightfall, Eve walked quickly, her tears diminishing the nearer she got to the town. She needed to find somewhere to stay the night and in the morning she would set off on her quest to find work. She'd read in old copies of the *Sheffield Telegraph*, passed on to the family by their minister, that industries were springing up daily in the town, that girls like her were needed to work in factories and shops and that there was no end of possibilities once you had made your way into the bustling heart. That you could buy a pie for next to nothing and that on every street there was something called a doss house, where you could lay your head for a penny or two. Eve smiled to herself; she'd saved up a penny here and penny there over the last few months and now she had as much as two whole shillings safely placed in the pocket of her skirt. That would see her with a bed and her stomach filled for at least the next few nights, just until she had found herself employment and then she would look for a more permanent place to stay. Having lived with her mam and dad all her life, she was eager for her own home, where she come and go as she liked and not have to listen to sermons from the good book and be quiet as her father chastised her for not paying attention. Life was going to be good, she thought, as she climbed the brow of the hill and looked out into the distance at the town that lay in front of her.

Eve stood for some minutes, looking at the scene: the many houses and factories, mills with their tall chimneys

belching out smoke enshrining the town in a magic cloak of mystery. There were canals that twisted and meandered across the land, busy with barges filled with goods of all kinds and, from this distance, the town folk looked like ants, busy going about their work. There were pedlars travelling to and from Leeds with laden packhorses or carts brimming with wares, all part of this thriving place where wealth and opportunity lay. She breathed in and sighed, shaking her head and trying to forget the vision of her mother crying and begging her not to leave home. What did her mam know? She'd never wanted any other life than the one she had in Rothwell; she'd never felt how Eve felt, stifled by the mundane life of being a country girl. But, even so, Eve could feel the tears welling up in her throat as she remembered her mother's loving words and kisses; she loved her mam and she hoped that one day Margaret would understand her need for freedom. Her father, on the other hand, she knew would simply be furious that she had gone. Knowing him too well, she also knew her mother's warning would come true: she would not be welcome if she were to return home. From now on she was on her own and she would have to make the best of it; but it was a challenge that she was determined to embrace with open arms, she thought, and she went on her way, smiling at her fellow travellers as she walked the last four miles to her new life.

Eve stood on Crown Point Bridge as she took in the sights of the busy town. She had been to Leeds just once before

with her parents but only as a child when she had found the town an exciting place, full of wondrous things, and now, at just sixteen, she was even more enthralled by the business of the place. In front of her stood the busy market street of Briggate and behind that was the magnificent building of the Town Hall; to the east and southeast were countless mills, forges and factories while the most fashionable of Leeds made their homes at Headingley and Chapeltown. Of course she knew that the poor of Leeds still lived in squalid conditions with poor sanitation in the back-to-back houses of Holbeck, New Wortley and West Leeds, where death and illness made no exceptions in the crowded streets and money was scarce, too scarce to pay for a doctor's attention if you were taken ill. Eve, however, was too awe-inspired to notice the beggars in dark doorways and the prostitutes, showing their wares along the canal-side. She saw only the monkey on the organ grinder's back and the woman selling flowers and fripperies, the likes of which she had never seen before. The air around her was full of the noise and smells of a busy town and it was intoxicating. She took in all the sights and sounds and vowed to herself never to return to Rothwell to live; this was going to be where she would make her living and home from now on and nobody was going to stop her.

'Hey, watch what you are doing! You nearly knocked me flying.' A young lad stopped her in her tracks, scowling at Eve, who hadn't realised that she had even touched him, let alone nearly knocked him down in the street as she had been



taking in the sights. He glared at her, pausing to pick up his hat from the ground before dusting himself down.

‘I’m sorry, I didn’t realise you were there,’ Eve said apologetically. The lad was no more than ten or twelve and he was dressed in a jacket and breeches with a spotted muffler around his neck. His face was streaked with dirt and grime but his eyes were of the brightest forget-me-not blue.

‘Bloody well watch what you are doing next time,’ he mumbled and then went on his way, whistling as he pushed through the crowd.

Eve bent down and picked up her bag, walking on and looking in the windows of the many shops, admiring all the latest fashions and accessories that Leeds had to offer as she walked up through the busy market street. She became aware that the day was coming to an end and that the stallholders and tradesmen were preparing for the evening, tidying their patches up and swilling down the pavement where blood and fish guts had been dropped from their stalls. She looked around her; finding a place to sleep was her priority now, somewhere she would be safe for the night. To her left, she saw a sign on the wall just to the right of an archway leading to a yard, which read:

*Bed and Board available here, no drink allowed.*

*Respectable people only. 6d per night.*

Eve stood at the entrance to the yard and looked down the dirty flag stoned alleyway. On one side was the Binks Hotel

and, on the other, a tea room called Morley's, but right at the very back of the yard was a double-windowed small cottage with a notice of *VACANCIES* in its window. She picked up her skirts and made her way down the yard, passing the hotel, which was full of rowdy market traders having a gill before they returned home and then lifted the door knocker in the shape of a gloved hand on the green-painted cottage door. Her stomach churned as she waited for the door to be opened; she'd never stayed the night away from home before and she had no real idea of what to expect. Eventually, a stout man came to the door and looked her up and down.

'I'm looking for a bed for the night, preferably a room of my own, although I wouldn't mind sharing with another woman.' Eve looked at the red-faced man and felt even more vulnerable.

'Aye, well, we've got a bed you can have, but we'll not be wanting you to be bringing men back to entertain and we don't encourage drink on our property. There's enough of that goes on at that bloody place.' The man scowled and looked across at where cheering could be heard coming from the Binks Hotel and echoing around the yard.

'No, sir, I'll not be doing either. All I want is a bed and perhaps a bite to eat if you can provide that also,' Eve said quietly.

'Aye, well, you look respectable enough. Now show us your money; it'll be sixpence for a bed and a further penny if you eat with us this evening. I like to make sure we get paid before you enter our home because we've learned from

experience that it's better to take for folks' keep when they arrive rather than when they leave – that's when you find out they've not a penny to their name,' the owner of the cottage said with a sigh.

'Of course, sir, I wouldn't expect any different.' Eve put her bag down; her arm ached from carrying it and she was just relieved that she had found a good honest house in which to stay the night. She put her hand in her skirt pocket and reached for her small purse with the two shillings that she had so diligently saved. It didn't come to her hand and she felt deeper into her pocket, her face flushing in embarrassment as panic set in. The purse wasn't there! Her skirt pocket was empty, which meant she'd not got a penny to her name.

'I-I'm sorry,' she stammered. 'I can't find my purse! It was in my pocket when I left home and now it's gone!' Eve felt tears welling up in her eyes and she looked for sympathy from the man, who just shook his head and turned his back on her.

'It's always the same; you young lasses think we were born yesterday. You come into Leeds with no money, thinking you can make it by selling yourselves to any Tom, Dick or Harry, like the whores you are. Well, it'll not happen under me and my old woman's roof. No brass, no bed.'

And with that, he slammed the door shut, leaving Eve in tears on the doorstep. She'd no bed, her stomach was empty and, worse still, she had no money to her name and all she could hear were her mother's words of warning going

around in her head. What she was going to do now she didn't know, but the prospect of being in a large town at night and on her own scared her terribly, especially as she passed the rowdy hotel and made her way back onto the wide street of Briggate. She couldn't return home – she just couldn't. It would mean losing face and her father would beat her for not obeying him and her mother. Suddenly the vibrant and exciting town of Leeds looked dark and foreboding; she was now on her own with no family and not a friend in the world as she wandered down the now-deserted market street.

'Hello, dearie, just come from the country, have you? You'll not get any trade looking as miserable as that.' A woman dressed in a low-cut bodice and a vibrantly coloured skirt leaned over Eve as she sat in a darkened doorway, resting her aching feet. 'Your face is bonny enough, mind, but you need more swagger.' The prostitute looked down at her and laughed. 'You're on Bert Bradshaw's patch too, so mind he doesn't catch you, else he'll take you for what he can get out of you and then you'll soon not be looking so prim and proper.' She stood up and looked Eve up and down. Under her scrutiny, Eve stood silent and clutched her bag tightly without replying.

'Too posh to talk to an old tart like me, are you? Well, you'll not be so high and mighty after a night or two on the streets. You listen to me: this is no place for a fresh-faced slip of a thing like you. Go back home and think yourself lucky that you bumped into Bonfire Nell on this night and followed her advice. Lord knows I should have done the

same myself a long time ago.' Nell watched as Eve still said nothing but picked her skirts up and started to nearly run down the street, just to get out of the way of the outspoken whore.

'Go back home, lass. It's never too late to do that rather than end up on the streets like me!' Nell yelled after her as she watched Eve disappear into the darkness.

Eve shivered and shook as she turned the corner down into Warwick Street, the words of Nell the prostitute ringing in her ears. Perhaps she should return home; a belting from her father and a lecture or two would surely be better than having nowhere to spend the night and no food. How had she lost her money? She thought that she'd been so careful, had put it deep within the pockets of her skirt and it should have been secure there. If she'd had her money, it would have made all the difference; she'd have been safe and secure in the rooming house and not be wandering the streets being mistaken for a woman of the night. Then she remembered her incident with the young urchin boy on the bridge. Had he picked her pockets while she stood engrossed in the new scenes? He must have done. Oh, how could she have been so stupid as not to have looked after her money more carefully? She knew that no one was to be trusted in the town. Eve hung her head; nothing was turning out the way she had imagined it would and everything that her mother had warned her of was coming true . . .

Eve lifted her head as the clock in the church tower struck midnight. She was ravaged by hunger, not having eaten

since her breakfast early that morning so she'd walk the streets until morning and then return home, like the prodigal daughter she was and just hope that her parents would forgive her. She walked down the cobbled Walker Street, stopping for a second outside the Bluebell Inn, gazing through its mucky windows and noticing that it was empty except for the landlord sitting down at a table enjoying a late supper. She could smell his plate of beef stew as the steam from it escaped out of the open window above her head. Her stomach growled and she felt pangs of hunger as she stood on her tiptoes looking in at the empty inn, her nose pressed against the window and her mouth dribbling at the sight of the landlord dipping a hefty slice of bread in the broth. She stepped back quickly as the man spied her and turned to walk away when she saw him get up from the table and make for the inn's door.

'Hey, not so fast,' the burly man shouted after her. 'What are you doing out at this time of night? You don't look the kind to be wandering the streets. Stop, lass. Don't run away.'

Eve ignored his shouts, walking quickly down the street, not daring to look backward, her heart beating faster when she heard the man striding out behind her. Suddenly his hand was on her shoulder.

'Just stop for a second. I'm not going to hurt you but there's plenty out there that will.' Theodore Lambert pulled on Eve's shoulder and turned her around. 'I saw you looking in and I want to know what a sweet young lass like you is

doing out here in the night?’ Theodore looked at the fear on Eve’s face.

‘I didn’t mean to disturb you,’ she said. ‘It’s just that I saw your lamps were still lit and I smelt the supper you were eating. But I’ll be on my way now.’ Eve looked up into Theodore’s kindly face and saw that he meant her no harm.

‘On your way to where? I can’t help but notice the bag you are carrying – have you left home?’ Theodore stood back and looked at the pretty lass in front of him. She wasn’t the sort who stood on a street corner at that time of night like so many in Leeds. She was a fresh young thing, straight from home if he knew the signs, but she’d be at the mercy of any man who decided to take advantage of her if she wasn’t careful.

Eve hung her head; this was the first time since her arrival in Leeds that someone had actually shown any true kindness towards her. ‘I left home first thing this morning and I aimed to find lodgings and work,’ Eve began, trying to control the tears that were welling up in her eyes. ‘But I lost all my money and now I’m going to have to return home and admit that I was foolish to think that I could make a new life for myself here in Leeds.’ She snivelled and then looked at Theodore, hoping that he really was not the sort of man to take advantage of her.

‘Have you eaten? Are you hungry?’ Theodore looked at the young lass standing in front of him and felt pity – as well as knowing that she was just the sort of lass he needed, desperate and on her own.

'I've not eaten since early this morning, sir. That's what attracted me to your inn, the smell of your supper.' Eve dared not look at the man as he smiled at her.

'Then we can soon remedy that; there's more than enough beef stew in the pan in my kitchen. Come and fill your belly at least.' Theodore had seen plenty of young women come into the growing town of Leeds – and he'd seen plenty of them fall upon hard times and enter the oldest trade of all. He'd made it his business not to encourage them at the Bluebell – he was trying to build the reputation of the place and prostitutes dallying for trade around its doors wouldn't help him do that. At the same time, a bonny face behind his bar was always appreciated by his mostly male drinkers.

'I thank you, sir, but I shouldn't enter an inn; it's against my family's beliefs.' Eve looked at the man who was offering her food that she was desperate for and was sorely tempted by his kindness.

'And would your family want you to go hungry and cold and to wander these streets putting yourself at risk? I can offer you some supper and even a roof over your head for the night if you are happy to stay in such a heathen place as the Bluebell. If you are worried that my attentions are not honourable, I can assure you that they are. My wife, Mrs Lambert, runs the inn with me and ourselves and our four children live above the bar. We have a spare room in the attic that you can sleep in, so at least you will be safe with us tonight and then you can be on your way in the morning, if you wish.' Theodore looked at the lass who should never



have left home and hoped that she trusted him enough to accept his offer. Although he was nowhere near perfect himself, he knew that the notorious Bert Bradshaw, who ran and owned many a whorehouse down by the canal docks and preyed on those who came looking for their fortune in the growing town, would soon get wind of her arrival and take her under his so-called protective wing.

‘I don’t know ... I shouldn’t. I don’t know you. How do I know I can trust you?’ Eve wavered in her thoughts as the temptation of something to eat and a bed for the night swayed her into giving the offer time of day.

‘Trust me, I might like my gambling and run an inn, but you’ll be safe while you are under my roof. My old lass will see to that and she’d want me to bring you back with me, instead of seeing you wandering the streets. I’d get a right earful if I told her that I let you go on your way. Come, give me your bag and come in and get warm and fill your belly and then, if you want to stay the night, you can and be on your way in the morning.’ Theodore reached for Eve’s bag and smiled as she handed it to him hesitantly.

‘I’ll welcome some supper, sir, but I will reserve my thoughts on staying the night if you don’t mind.’ Eve wondered if she should be trusting this burly but apparently kind-hearted man; after all, she wasn’t a naïve girl – he might have other plans for her if she stayed the night under his roof.

‘The devil will not get your soul for one night’s stay in my abode. Now, what’s your name? It would help if I can tell

my old lass that and assure her that you are of good character.' Theodore walked her back up the badly lit cobbled street to where the oil lamps of the Bluebell shone brightly out into the gloom.

'I'm Eve Reynolds, sir. I'm from Rothwell, my father works for the Temple Newsam estate and I can honestly say that I am from a good upbringing.' Eve nearly had to run to keep up with Theodore as they reached the Bluebell Inn's steps.

'Well, Eve Reynolds, look after your soul because you're very welcome at the Bluebell Inn. We might serve drink here and have the odd gambling night and I'm known as a hard man, but I'll not have the low of the old town taking advantage of such a bonny little thing like you. Too many young lasses go that way, but at least tonight you'll be safe.' Theodore climbed the two steps up into the main bar of the Bluebell Inn and held the door open for Eve to join him in the low-ceilinged, wooden-floored barroom.

Eve had never been into an inn before and as she looked around her, she felt as if she was committing a terrible wrong and could only think what her parents would have said. She'd heard many a time that drink and those who served it were the implements of the devil and yet, there she stood as bold as brass, in the bar area of the Bluebell. The walls were brown with tobacco smoke and the smell of beer and food mingled together in the air. The inn did not look quite as inviting as it had done from outside when she'd wished for the warmth of the dying fire. The long wooden bar had a

tall mirror behind it, surrounded by various bottles of drink in all shapes and sizes and ale jugs stood along the length of the bar while an array of spittoons lined the wooden floor, placed at regular intervals for easy use of drinkers.

‘I shouldn’t be here,’ Eve said as she turned around, looking like a frightened rabbit that wanted to bolt into the safety of its burrow.

‘Nay, you are all right. I’ll yell for my Nancy; happen the sight of my old woman will calm your nerves and then you can sit and eat some stew with us.’ Theodore pulled out a chair from beside one of the many tables and motioned for her to sit down upon it. ‘Nancy! Get your arse down here! We’ve a visitor,’ he bellowed as he made his way behind the bar and pulled a long curtain to one side that obviously led to the inn’s living quarters.

‘For lawks sake, Theo, keep your voice down, the baby’s only just settled,’ a voice called back from behind the curtain. ‘What are you doing, asking folk in at this time of night? Don’t they know we want our sleep like any other decent souls?’ Nancy Lambert emerged from behind the curtain with her hair in rags and her nightdress on. She was as broad as she was tall and waddled as she walked towards Eve. ‘Who’s this, then? And what is she doing sitting there?’ She looked at Theo and then at Eve and put her hands on her ample hips.

‘This is Miss Eve Reynolds and she has fallen upon hard times while visiting our great town of Leeds. She’s lost what money she had when she started out and has nowhere to stay

tonight. And I, being the good soul that I am, have offered her supper and board – that is, if she will accept my offer.’ Theodore slapped his wife on the back.

‘Eve, is it? Well, you match your pretty name, just look at those bonny red cheeks and those long golden ringlets! No wonder my Theo saved you from the streets.’ Nancy smiled a sickly smile at Eve and then gave a warning glance at her husband.

‘I really shouldn’t be here. I’m grateful for your offer but my parents would not—’ Eve stopped in mid-sentence.

‘Get her some stew, Mother, and a chunk of that bread. Here, come nearer the fire, it may be only September but there’s a nip in the air.’ Theo insisted Eve move her chair nearer to the fire and Nancy spooned a dish full of beef stew from out of the pot that was bubbling on the range, passing it to her together with a spoon before going behind the curtain yet again and returning with some crusty bread, which she put on the nearest table.

‘Here, you look half-starved, get this inside you and then see how you feel. My Theo is a devil for wanting his own way and he’s such a big brute of a man nobody dares say no to him. But really, he’s as soft as muck once you know him.’ Nancy sat down next to her, while Theo went behind the bar and tidied the empty drinking tankards that still needed his attention.

Eve looked at the stew; she was so hungry and the smell tempted her so much, making her mouth salivate. She looked across at Nancy, who urged her to pick up the spoon and eat.

‘You could do with a good dinner in you by the looks of you,’ Nancy chuckled as Eve could resist no longer and started to eat quickly.

‘Not everybody wants a fine figure like yours, my old lass. You leave Eve be, she’ll catch many a man’s eyes looking like she does.’ Theo winked at them both.

‘Aye, that’s the trouble, Eve. If you go back out there tonight, who knows who will take a fancy to you and not all are as kind and generous as my Theo here. Why don’t you stay the night? The top attic bedroom’s spare and the bed’s aired. Up until yesterday, our barmaid was living in it, but she decided to run away with some soldier from the barracks, without so much as a by-your-leave. The little madam!’ Nancy growled.

Eve ate her supper quickly, deciding it was the best stew she had ever tasted and she suddenly felt warm and content as she looked around her and pondered her situation. ‘But I’ve no money to pay for my stay and you’ve done enough by feeding me . . .’ She felt sleepy and the temptation of staying a night at the inn instead of on the streets was beginning to win her over.

‘Makes no difference to us, lass, whether the room is empty or slept in and you are better in here with us than out there.’ Theo moved her empty plate away and smiled.

‘Stay, just until the morning and then you can be on your way. At least then I can sleep tonight, knowing that you’re safe under our roof – and I’m sure your mother would also

want that, even though we may not be the kind of company you're used to keeping.' Nancy patted Eve's hand and smiled.

'I *am* tired and I must admit I'm not relishing the idea of sleeping on the streets. And I promise I will repay your kindness when I'm able to.' Eve looked at both her hosts and admitted that what they said made sense.

'That's settled then, Mother, so show her to the attic room and let me make safe the bar for this evening because it'll be light before you know it and Thwaites brewery will knock on my door with a new delivery of ale,' Theo said loudly and grabbed his tea towel again, looking at the dirty tankards that he still had to wash.

'Come, Eve, we aren't the biggest of places but we keep a clean house and bar and there's all you need in the attic bedroom, so you make yourself comfortable for the night and then we will see what tomorrow brings.' Nancy took a lighted oil lamp from the bar and led Eve up the creaking dark oak stairs to the bedroom in the loft. The room was sparsely furnished but there was all that she needed there: a bed, a washstand with a jug and bowl filled with water upon it, a small wardrobe – and she spied a chamber pot under the bed. There was also a bolt on the inside of the door, Eve was relieved to see, for although the Lamberts seemed friendly enough, she didn't want any unwanted intrusions from either of them. She watched as Nancy lit her a candle by the bedside.

‘I’ll leave you with that; try not to burn it too long for candles cost money and we are always trying to save the odd penny here and there.’ Nancy smiled and then left, closing the door behind her and leaving Eve deep in thought.

Eve sat on the edge of the bed and looked around her, then stared at the bag full of the only possessions that she had in the world. With no money and no job, she would have to go back home, there was nothing more that she could do. She got up and bolted the door, then undressed and washed in the cold water on the washstand before climbing into the bed that lay directly under the skylight. There she lay watching the dark clouds of the night scuttle across the sky by the light of the moon. Her parents had warned her about Leeds and they had been right, in part, but seemingly they had been wrong when it came to innkeepers, at least in the case of the Lamberts, who had shown her nothing but kindness. She would have to try and repay them in some way come the morning, she found herself thinking, as the long day got the better of her and her eyes began to droop and feel heavy. She was warm, safe and off the street, that was all that mattered. Tomorrow was another day and she’d decide what to do then.

‘What have you gone and brought a bloody Bible-bashing do-gooder into the likes of this house for, Theodore Lambert? It’s like bringing a lamb into a den of wolves!’ Nancy, her face an angry red, stood at the bar and swore under her breath at her husband as he put everything back in its place

for the next day, pouring himself a generous measure of gin while he did so.

‘You know very well why I’ve brought her; we’ve lost our bloody barmaid and have you not noticed her looks? If we can persuade her to work for us here, the men will flock in their droves to see her pull a pint. She’s the bonniest thing Leeds has seen in a long time – and so innocent.’ Theo leaned back and downed his tot of gin while he watched his wife get even more annoyed.

‘Aye, well, you make sure she stays that way. Don’t you be sneaking up those stairs and knocking on her door, I can tell the difference between the rats having a game of dominoes and you having your wicked way astride the barmaid. I don’t know why I don’t up and leave you as any self-respecting wife should. Well, I would if I had somewhere else to go to and enough money to feed and dress our children. For God’s sake, let’s try and keep this one if she agrees to work for us, so don’t you rock the ship,’ Nancy sighed.

‘Oh, she’ll be staying; she’s nothing to go home for and she’ll soon be leaving her Bible-reading days behind her, that I’ll swear. We’ll soon show her the error of her ways.’ Theo laughed as he blew the oil lamp out and followed his wife’s ample body up to the stairs to their bedroom.



## Chapter 2

Eve lay in the bed high up in the roof space of the Bluebell Inn. Downstairs, even though dawn had just broken, she could hear beer barrels being unloaded from the dray cart and bounced on the cobbled street down into the cellars of the inn. The smells and atmosphere were completely different to those of home. She looked around her at the small room that had obviously belonged to the barmaid before her arrival. There were still hairpins on the dressing table and a dying posy of dog daisies beside them. Had she been happy working here? Eve wondered as she eased herself out of bed and started to dress. The Lamberts certainly seemed an amicable couple, judging from how they had treated her the previous night, but today she would have to decide what to do next.

After finding herself penniless and demoralised by her adventure in Leeds, returning home with her tail between her legs looked like the most obvious solution. She put her head in her hands and sighed. She didn't want to return

home; even though Leeds was not all that she had expected it to be, she would rather stay than have to listen to the lectures of her father and be in service in the big house. She wanted more than that. She wiped back a tear and then shaking her head, refreshed her face with cold water from the jug before dressing and looking at herself in the long mirror of the wardrobe. She was young and pretty with a good figure – she could see that – so surely there would be a worthwhile job out there for her this morning; she just had to find it.

Nancy Lambert looked up from breastfeeding her youngest next to the newly lighted fire of the inn's kitchen. 'Don't mind me, I'm obliged to feed him as usual, else he'll scream the whole blinking pub down. There might not be much of him, but his lungs certainly work well enough.' Nancy hugged the baby to her and grinned up at Eve before looking down at the guzzling baby. 'My Theodore says I could take a fella's eye out with my breasts! I've always had too much up top, not like you – there's hardly owt there. That'll change once you've had children, everything changes when children come onto the scene.' She concentrated on feeding the baby, not noticing Eve blushing and not knowing quite where to look as Nancy slid her left breast back into her bodice, leaving the ribbon on her top unfastened before placing baby Albert on her knee and gently patting his back to relieve him of wind. 'Sleep well, did you, dearie?' she asked.

'I did sleep well, thank you. How can I repay you before I go on my way home? Now that I'm penniless, I'm not sure

how I can.’ Eve sighed and watched as baby Albert regurgitated some of his mother’s breast milk down onto her hand and apron. Nancy quickly wiped her hand and scowled at the little soul as she placed him to sleep in a cot at the side of the fire.

‘Now, not so quick, young miss, we’ll not have you going on your way just yet.’ Nancy walked to the curtain that separated the kitchen from the bar and pulled it back, yelling Theodore’s name down into the dark hole of the cellar, the hatch of which lay open on the floor next to the bar.

Eve felt a moment of panic. What were they going to ask her to do? What if they demanded money? Or even worse, demanding payment in kind.

‘Theodore, get your arse up here, our guest says she’s leaving!’ Nancy bellowed, making the baby momentarily flinch before closing its eyes again to sleep. She turned around to look at Eve and her bag before folding her arms as Theodore climbed up the steps from the cellar. His face trickled with sweat and his striped shirt was wet and stuck to his back as though he had climbed out of hell. He brushed his hands together and stood just inches away from Eve.

‘Now, you can’t leave us this soon, I need to have a word with you.’ Theodore smiled slyly at his wife and then at Eve. ‘Right, me and my old lass got talking last night – and I know it’s not what you are used to, and it’s definitely not something your parents would approve of ...’ Theo stopped for a moment, watching the horror appear on Eve’s face. ‘Well,

we wondered if you would perhaps consider becoming our new barmaid? You're a bonny enough thing and you'd soon learn the ropes – that way, you'd be helping us out as much as we're helping you out.' Theo looked at the expression on Eve's face and waited for an answer.

'Oh . . . Oh, I do thank you, sir, b-but I don't know what to say. It's not that I don't appreciate your offer, it is just that my family are sworn against the evils of drink and for me to be working here, well, it would break their hearts.' Eve looked around her and thought that she could do a lot worse but everything in her upbringing told her this was not where she belonged. She hung her head and felt disheartened. She had come to Leeds to break away from her family – and yet, here she was saying no to a roof over her head and a job. And the Lamberts might be rough and ready, but their hearts were obviously good.

'Aye, well we expected you'd say as much. If that's the way you've been brought up, we understand. But I can't say that I'm not disappointed, you'd have been just right for the job.' Theodore nodded his head and then made his way back towards the cellar steps to carry on with the job in hand. Before going back down into the darkness, he turned and smiled at Nancy. 'I tried, Mother, but I told you what her answer would be. She's too good for the likes of us.' Theo shook his head and then went back down to the depths of the beer cellar.

'You'll be leaving us, then? You can tell my Theo is disappointed, he really thought that you'd be right good for us and

that we would be helping you out at the same time.’ Nancy scowled a little at Eve as she reached for her bag and turned to leave the inn.

‘Yes, I’m sorry, but I’m truly thankful for my bed for the night and my supper, you’ve been really kind to me.’ Eve hesitated as she stepped out into the busy Walker Street with traders shouting of their wares and early morning shoppers going about their business.

Nancy looked down at Eve from the doorway of the Bluebell. ‘Are you going home, then? Or are you looking for employment elsewhere in the town? If it’s the second, just be careful about who you talk to, not all are as understanding as Theo and me. And you can always change your mind and come back to us if you decide differently.’

‘I don’t know, I might have a walk around the town, see if there is any work out there, and, if not, I’ll have to go home and admit that I’m wrong and that I should have been grateful for what I had already,’ Eve explained, worrying that she seemed ungrateful to her host for the night’s stay.

‘Well, before you go wandering off, just stay there a minute; you’ll need something to eat and I can hear the baker’s lad coming in at the back door with our usual delivery. I can at least make sure that you’ve something in your belly on your walk home.’ Nancy turned into the inn and soon came back with a loaf of bread wrapped up in a napkin. ‘That’ll keep you going, seeing you’ve not got a penny to your name. We might be unruly, beer-swilling publicans but we do have a little bit of Christian in us.’ She came down the steps onto