

# THE LAWS of GARTSHERRIE

A novel by AJ Morris

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## **DEDICATION**

With all my love to my Mum and Aunt Mary  
who prepared me for life.

And, to Rebecca, my precious granddaughter.  
The future comes from the past.



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# CHAPTER 1

March 1899

A young woman sat opposite her husband in the third class carriage of a steam train travelling from Glasgow, it was heading towards the biggest coal, iron, chemical and industrial town in the whole of Scotland, Coatbridge.

The population of the town was a huge melting pot, like the blast iron furnaces. Coatbridge attracted poor, displaced and job hungry people, from Ireland, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Lithuania, Russia and Poland.

It seemed as though the poor of the world were all rushing towards this Lanarkshire town, that until as recently as 1830 had been nothing more than a small country village.

In the black of night the furnace fires lit the sky like erupting volcanos so that the town was never without a fearsome red glow.

The town was also overshadowed by an enormous bin of waste dross standing like a black mountain threatening to engulf the population in a mantle of coal slurry.

Coatbridge might look like, and smell like, a medieval image of hell, but the people who inhabited it were like people everywhere. Good, bad, jealous, spiteful, generous, plain, handsome, the whole gambit of the human condition.

What united this mixture of religions and nationalities, with a very few exceptions, was poverty.

As the people of Coatbridge headed towards the new century and the end of the Victorian era, life for them was one of hard grind and extreme poverty.

Although slavery had been abolished throughout most of the British Empire in 1833, the people who worked in the mines and foundries and other heavy industry in Lanarkshire at the beginning of the twentieth century, were as much a slave to the company owners as any plantation worker cutting sugar cane in Jamaica or toiling in the cotton fields of the Americas.

Darkness was falling on the chilly March afternoon, as the train from Glasgow passed the outlines of the many giant monuments to industry that dominated the skyline. In a cloud of sulphuric steam it drew into Sunnyside Station, a misnomer, a name which in no way reflected the reality of its surroundings.

Among the many people who alighted from the train were the Law family, a middle aged man and his young wife, together with a dark haired toddler and a tiny red haired baby.

Agnes Law had been born and brought up in Glasgow, so she was no stranger to industry, but the atmosphere of this sooty, noisy, busy place with its gigantic structures, disgorging red flames, terrified her. Coatbridge, might look like Hell, but Agnes would eventually learn it also housed Angels.

Agnes was a pretty girl in her twenties. Petit with small neat features, a flawless complexion and striking blue eyes, she had beautiful long dark silky hair, which was kept tied up in a knot under her winter felt hat.

Rab, her husband, was a good deal older than Agnes, but despite years of toil he was still a fine looking man. His dark hair contained a sprinkling of grey and his grey blue eyes held a steely determined look. He was holding the hand of a little girl, who was snugly wrapped in shawls to keep out the biting March wind. Between them they carried their few possessions in an old black leather portmanteau bag and wrapped in a bed sheet, which was tied together at the corners.

Rab had said nothing to Agnes on the train journey as to where they were going, or where they would be staying.

They left the station, still smelling the acrid steam from the engine. As they emerged into the busy road, Agnes was taken aback when a tall man rushed forward to greet them and, in a broad

Ulster accent, addressed Rab.

“How goes it my man? Little did I think when I was your lodger and we worked in the metal foundry in Glasgow that you, and your wee wife here, would be my lodgers. Come on Rab, it’s a tidy walk to the Rows, so it is. Now what would I be calling your good lady and the fine wee bairns?”

Robert Law introduced his wife Agnes to his friend Alex Johnstone.

“And this is my fine little stepdaughter wee Charlotte, the babby is our newborn Mary Ann.”

Alex welcomed the family to Coatbridge, saying,

“We best get you back quickly to the Gartsherrie Rows, for a warm by the range fire, and a bite to eat. Jessie, my wife, will take good care of you Agnes, she is used to wee bairns we have three, two girls and a lad.”

The walk seemed to take a very long time, even with the men taking it in turns to carry Charlotte, while Agnes carried the baby at her bosom. In reality it was less than half an hour but a combination of the chilly air, the strangeness of the town and a baby, who badly wanted to suckle, made the journey seem like hours to Agnes.

They passed the Monkland canal with its barge boats, carrying their cargos of black coal; the railway lines with wagons in the sidings; and then the huge structures and chimneys that was “The Works”, Wm Baird & Sons.

Alex shouted above the noise, the noise that would eventually become second nature to Agnes, so that she barely even heard it.

He offered an explanation to his new lodgers.

“We are nearly at the Rows now. That big grey sandstone building is the Gartsherrie Institute. It was built aboot ten years back by the Baird family, probably to keep us oot of mischief. It has swimming baths, reading rooms and lecture rooms, that’s where the Lodge meetings are held. The brass band practice is also held at the Institute. We have dances on a Saturday night, even a pigeon fancier club; all Gartsherrie life meets at the Institute, so it does.”

They turned into the Long Row, walking along a cobbled road past a long terrace row of grey stone cottage style houses. On the

opposite side of the road there were outhouses, which Agnes would later learn were coal cellars, wash houses with big copper boilers and toilets blocks. There was also drying greens with poles for hanging out washing and some of the houses had plots of land, which could be used for growing vegetables. Families lucky enough to own rugs used the fences along the perimeter of the greens to beat their carpets with curved bamboo paddles.

Alex and Jessie lived near the top of the Row at 130, making it quite a long walk over the cobbles to reach their little house, set within the long cottage like terrace.

At last they arrived at their destination and Alex turned the door handle; the house was only ever locked at bedtime. Nobody locked doors during the day in the Rows. They entered through a small scullery, which held a sink and a wooden workbench. Several pails and a butter churn were under the bench, a pot and a large cast iron frying pan on top. There was also a pile of chipped stoneware plates and bowls and a large jug containing an odd assortment of cutlery, cooking implements and wooden spoons. On the wall, resting on two large nails, hung a zinc bath.

They gladly tumbled into the living room, lit by an oil lamp and the glow from the range fire, which was the heart of the Johnstone home. There was a black cast iron pot hanging over the range, from which came a tempting aroma.

As soon as he entered the house three children ran towards Alex, putting their arms around him.

“Paw, paw, who have you brought home?” they chorused.

“Give me a minute bairns, be quiet now till I talk to your Mammie. Jessie, let me introduce you to the Law family, our new lodgers. This is my good pal Rab, or Robert, if we are using his Sunday name, and his wife Agnes, the wee lass is Charlotte and the babe Mary Ann.

Rab and Agnes, these three mischiefs are Samuel or Sam, Agnes and Mary, our three bairns. We are going to be having a big Agnes and a wee Agnes and a big Mary and a wee Mary, so we are. Thank goodness the other lass is called Charlotte.”

“Please, can I go into the other room and feed wee baby Mary?”

Agnes asked Jessie.

“Surely,” she replied, “but it is frozen cold in there, just sit here by the warmth of the fire and suckle the wee wean under your shawl. That is how we all feed the bairns here in the Rows.”

After Mary was fed Agnes took stock of her surroundings. The walls were whitewashed and clean. The furniture was poor, a plain wooden table that was scrubbed clean. To one side of the table was a bench, on the other side there were three stools. In the middle of the table sat a brass oil lamp. There was a wooden rocker type chair on one side of the fire and another rough built chair on the other. The rocker and chair had folded plaid blankets over them and blue ticking cushions, the only visible signs of comfort. Either side of the fire were cupboards, one of which contained the family’s store of food. There were two recess beds on the left hand side of the room. On the back wall was a door, made from planks of wood, which were battened together. This led to the bedroom where the Law family would sleep, or as Alex would say ‘ben the hoose’.

It was a comfortless bedroom, two more recess beds, the only furniture a large wooden chest or kist and a low chair. There were a number of hooks on the wall to hang all the family’s clothing. No curtains graced the window, just a piece of sacking which had been nailed to the window frame to keep out draughts and provide a degree of privacy.

The floors were all stone, without the comfort of a rug to warm them. Agnes thought of her parents’ home in Glasgow, she had always thought they were poor, but compared to this abject poverty they lived in luxury.

Jessie sat the four children at the table and dished them each a plate of soup rich with vegetables, peas and barley, which they ate with a slice of bread. After the children finished eating they all took turns going for a wee wee in the zinc pail, as it was too cold to go out to the toilet block. The three Johnstone children, Samuel, Agnes and Mary all said their prayers and were then put to bed, top to tail in one of the recess beds in the kitchen.

Charlotte was taken by Agnes into the bedroom and settled

down to sleep. After her nappy was changed Mary too was snuggled down beside Charlotte. Charlotte cuddled into her little sister, using her like a hot water bottle for warmth.

Jessie now dished up soup with a slice of bread for the four adults. After finishing their soup the men were given a piece of flank mutton from the pot, together with some whole potatoes.

When the meal was finished the women cleared away the dishes and went out to the standpipe to fill the kettle and a jug with water. Jessie then put oatmeal in a pot to soak with warm water.

“It makes the porridge making in the morning much easier, she explained to Agnes.”

Tired from their journey the Johnstone’s new lodgers, Rab and Agnes, went to their bed in the back bedroom while Alex and Jessie slept in the kitchen and enjoyed the residual warmth from the range after it had been backed-up with damp coal dross.

Morning began for Jessie with the 6.00am siren. Her first job of the day was to put on the porridge oats to cook. Meanwhile, she spread slices of bread with beef dripping for Alex and Rab’s break and put them in their tin piece boxes. A large pot of tea was brewed, a mug for the men with their breakfast and the remainder poured into their enamel tea cans.

The menfolk were now up and busy washing in the scullery.

There was no conversation, Alex and Rab sat at the table Jessie served them with great steaming bowls of oatmeal porridge, seasoned with salt and mugs of black tea. There would be no sugar to sweeten the tea until payday. As the men prepared to leave for their shift Jessie handed each of them a piece box containing their bread and dripping together with an enamel can full of black tea.

After the men had left for work Jessie went through to the bedroom to waken Agnes, she found her lying feeding baby Mary while Charlotte hid under the covers.

Jessie spoke firmly, but kindly.

“Agnes, am I right in thinking you have lived a much better lifestyle in Glasgow than the one you see now in Gartsherrie?”

“Yes” she replied. “I always thought we were poor. My Paw is a master bricklayer and my mother used to take in sewing and do a bit

of dressmaking. But the flats we lived in always had flush toilets on the half landing, and we had wooden floors and rag rugs and running water and, and, and.”

Agnes started to sob uncontrollably. Jessie put her arm around her as her three bairns stood watching through the open door. Jessie, allowed Agnes to shed her tears for a few minutes, then she spoke to her in a firm, no nonsense, manner.

“Look Agnes the Rows are a way of life and the quicker you accept life here the better for you and your wee bairns. Every spare bed is used. Every family has lodgers; we used to have two lads, Eck and Archie. They were all right but Alex knew I would prefer another woman to share the load with. Washing cooking and cleaning for three men and looking after the bairns on my own was a real struggle. Then Alex heard that his auld pal Rab had got a job at the Works and wanted a place for him and his wee family, so he found other digs for the two boys.

Agnes, two households sharing can be a living hell, or we can support each other. There are houses in the Rows where the two women living together argue constantly, they even fight each other. I have seen women with black eyes; hair pulled out in handfuls, while the other women and weans gather round and egg them on. Women can be worse than men when they get started, especially if the argument is about their weans.

I don't want it to be like that with us, I want us to be friends. I will show you the ropes here. And Agnes, you must learn quickly. No nonsense of pining for how it was in Glasgow, you must just get up now, dry your eyes, and feed Mary. The Long Row hooses are no mansions but they are a great deal better than the hovels of the Rosehall Rows that the miners live in, just count your blessings Agnes Law.”

Agnes was no fool, she realised how lucky she was to have a woman like Jessie in her corner. Yes, her life had certainly taken a turn for the worse but she was also responsible enough to know that her first thought must be for her two wee girls. Working together with Jessie was the best way to ensure their survival. Too many babies died from disease, overcrowding, poor food and just plain

neglect. Jessie's bairns were clean and looked healthy, that was a good starting place.

Jessie herself had a pretty heart shaped face and violet blue eyes, her hair was a soft brown and like most of the women in the rows tied up in a knot at the nape of her neck and held in place with pins. Petit, like Agnes, although her figure was softer and she had a rounded bust. What made Jessie exceptional was the warmth of her nature and her sense of humour. Jessie had a ready smile and could always find a kernel of goodness in everything that befell the Johnstone family.

Agnes came into the warmth and sat by the hearth on the rocker chair feeding Mary while Jessie backed up the fire and gently reheated the porridge. The four older bairns started playing with some shiny ball bearings which they used like marbles.

Jessie briskly dished the porridge; after they had all eaten breakfast, she poured some water into a bowl and washed the hands and faces of the four bairns. Then they had to take it in turns to dip their fingers in a cup of warm water with a little baking soda added and use their fingers to rub their teeth clean.

Jessie was firmly in control, issuing orders.

"Right Agnes get wee Mary wrapped up to go out. You four get into your outdoor shawls, Sam put on your balaclava and you three girls get into your bonnets, I'll help you fasten your button boots. We all have to go down to the Store, now."

Damping down the fire with wet dross Jessie then shooed them all out into the cold dank morning.

As they walked over the cobbles down the Long Row Jessie started Agnes's tuition.

"We are going down to the Store, always the first job of the day. It is the only way to be sure you get a nice new baked loaf of bread. If you are not down early and miss the bread you have to give your man fried porridge that has been set from the morning with his dinner, also you won't have any bread for his piece and dripping the following morning. Not a good idea, I have seen women with two black eyes for missing the bread delivery. Not that my Alex would ever raise a hand to me, or our bairns."

Doors were opening, women and children walking back and forth to the toilet block; there were queues at the standpipes for water; children out playing. Friendly cries greeted them as they walked.

“How do Jessie? Bitter could one this morning?”

“New pal Jessie?”

“Have you heard Jessie, Sammy the Pole has been fighting again at the Works and he has been suspended for three 12 hour shifts. God knows how that wee wife of his will manage.”

“I know how she will manage.” Jessie confided in Agnes. “One neighbour will give her a couple of onions, another a cup of oatmeal, another a few tatties. That’s how we survive here. Ninny, God knows what her real name is, but that’s what she gets called here, is a Catholic. All the Polaks are Catholics, so are the Lithuanians. But believe me, the men might talk their talk about Billies and Tims, and join their Orange or Hibernian Lodges but we all have to help each other here in the Rows if we want to survive. So her Protestant neighbours and her Catholic neighbours between them will do their best to make sure that Ninny and Sammy’s weans are fed.”

They reached the Store; it was really a Shop owned by Gartsherrie Works’. The men earned their money, they paid their rent for their Work’s House and their wives bought the messages at the Work’s Store. What precious little money was left they used to buy porter or beer, again at the Store, in order to forget the hell of Baird’s Work for a few hours each week.

The Store was divided into sections, general groceries, butchery, drysaltery, and a wine and spirits department. Adjacent to the Store was another shop with the grand name of ‘The Emporium’, this shop sold material, clothes, shoes and haberdashery. On a Friday fresh fish was sold from a horse drawn cart, in the Store’s backyard.

Jessie chose two large white loaves from those piled high on the long wooden trestles. They each had a black crust on the bottom and a rounded brown crust on top and smelt yeasty and delicious.

Then she moved over to join the butchery queue.

“Can I have a knap bone for soup please, Mr Clark?”

“Certainly Mrs Johnstone I’ve got a nice one here with your name stamped on it, and will this be a new neighbour with you today?”

“Yes, this is my friend Mistress Law, no doubt she will be coming into the Store for her messages when she is settled in the Long Row.”

“Excellent, just take Mistress Law over to see Miss McDougall in the office and she will sort her out with a Store Number, and explain how the system works.”

The office was a closed rectangular mahogany structure in the centre of the Store, wood at the bottom with glass panels fitted on two sides and wood on the others; inside were two women, wearing brown linen coats. One woman was sitting facing a solid wood panel, working on ledgers. The other facing a glass window with an opening at the front; she marked down the women’s purchases in their Store Book. Bills were settled on a Saturday morning, after the men had been paid.

Together they waited in the queue while the other women had their purchases marked up. Jessie handed over her book and Miss McDougall entered her purchases.

Jessie then introduced Agnes.

“This is Mistress Law, can you please give her a Store Book Miss McDougall, her man’s name is Robert Law and he is working beside my husband.”

Miss McDougall took a new book from the pile under the counter and filled in Agnes’s details, she then informed her.

“Your number is 7550 Mrs Law, and the dividend is paid on the quarter days.”

Jessie and Agnes then gathered up the children, who had been playing quietly in the sawdust which covered the floor.

Walking back to number 130 they again ran into a number of neighbours with whom they had to pass the time of day. When they eventually arrived home, Jessie announced.

“Don’t settle yourself Agnes, we are off out again. We’ll just leave the food in the scullery, and pick up the milk cans. This time it’s up to Shanks’s Farm, and I’ll be able to show you the Rows proper, Agnes.”

As they walked Jessie explained to Agnes the system and the names of the Rows.

“There are quite a number of different Rows, built as the Works expanded and more and more people came to live in Gartsherrie. The South Square, we passed that going down to the Store. Then there is North Square, Heather Row, The Dandy Row, Herriot Row, Wee Row, Quarry Row, Cornish Row, Stable Row, and The Long Row, where we live.

Even within the Rows there is a pecking order, The Square and Long Row are higher up than Wee Row or Dandy Row, and Herriot Row is one step up on them but not as high as The Square and the Long Row; complicated isn't it. But you wouldn't believe the snob value associated with the name of the Row, even when you consider we are all as poor as church mice, it does make me laugh.

A lot of people live here Agnes, and we are all bound to the Works in one way or another. No work at Baird's Works and we all starve, or we move on to pastures new.”

It wasn't a very long walk to the farm. When they arrived they walked through the yard to the Dairy and Jessie warmly greeted the lady working in the milk parlour. Jean Shanks was Farmer Shanks' sister, a plump, rosy-faced woman, who enjoyed the company of the women who came to buy produce from the farm.

Jessie introduced Agnes to Jean, who then endeared herself to Agnes by admiring wee Mary.

“My she is a bonny wean with all that lovely red hair, she'll certainly steal the boys hearts one day.”

Jessie bought a quart of milk, a sack of onions; half a stone of potatoes; two turnips, some carrots and parsley. Her purchases cost one shilling and twopence, which she paid with money from her well worn purse.

Jean then asked the children if they had been good and helped their Mammies'. Jessie's three started to shout.

“Yes, Miss Jean we are very good,” Charlotte soon got the idea and joined in. “We are all really, really good.”

“Right, right, I get the message.” said Jean. “Now wait there, and I'll see if there is anything to be found in my Special Tin.”

She disappeared into the farmhouse and returned with four home baked biscuits. The children's' eyes lit up as she gave them one each.

“Mind, be good now, or never another wee treat will you get from my Special Tin.” said the kind hearted Jean.

They said their thanks and started the walk back home. Agnes carrying the milk and wee Mary; Jessie with the sack of potatoes and vegetables on her back; with the four children munching on their home baked biscuits.

As they walked back to the house there were the inevitable greetings from neighbours. Everybody seemed to know everybody. Having lived in a big bustling city Agnes was used to having lots of people around her but not the level of intimacy she found in the Gartsherrie Rows.

Jessie greeted everyone with a cheery smile, introducing Agnes to the women, and then giving Agnes potted histories as to who they were.

“That's big Isa, heart of gold but if she has a wee drop of porter on a Saturday she gets as drunk as a puggy and you can hear her singing Orange songs from here to the Whitelaw Fountain down in Coatbridge.

Alice is a quiet wee woman, she is a rarity here, nae weans. Her and her man Hughie have about four lodgers so they are certainly not short of a bob or two.

Come on now Agnes hurry up here comes Jenny Baxter, she is not the full shilling, if she sees us we will never get away.”

They fell into the house laughing at their dodging of poor Jenny. “Lets have a piece and a cup of tea.” Suggested Jessie. “I don't know about you but I'm ready for something.” Agnes suckled wee Mary while Jessie cut slices of bread for all of them, spread them with a little jam and shouted for the children to come in from their play outside the house.

“Get your hands washed wee ones, and come and eat your bread and milk.” The word “eat” galvanised them and they all ran into the scullery to wash. Only then did they all sit at the table to enjoy their jammy bread and milk.

Agnes noticed how well mannered Jessie's children were. They

might not be rich but they certainly knew how to sit quietly at the table while eating and drink without slurping. When they finished each child said, "Please may I leave the table?" They then took their cup and plate into the scullery to wash them up.

The longer Agnes spent in Jessie's company the more she realised how lucky she was to have been taken under the wing of this fine woman.

As the two woman ate their bread and enjoyed a cup of tea Jessie questioned Agnes.

"Tell me, what are you good at Agnes, any wee skills that can make a few pennies are always good. Also we can sort out how to divide the work between us most effectively."

Agnes responded by saying.

"Jessie I want to thank you so much for all your kindness. I just don't know how I would have coped in a strange new place, what with Charlotte into everything and Mary just being a few weeks old. I am so grateful..."

Jessie cut her off in mid sentence.

"Come on Agnes enough of all the grateful nonsense, we are all here on God's earth to help each other. Now come on tell me, what are you good at?"

The two women laughed, and they both instinctively knew that they were going to be friends.

"Well," said Agnes, "I can cook quite well. My Maw taught me and I worked in service for a time. I can also sew a bit. I can knit and I can scrub a floor with the best of them. Oh, and I can change a nappy."

"Funny," said Jessie,

"We never say nappy here, we all say hippen. Nappy is a Glasgow word."

"Aye Jessie, I've a lot to learn about life in the Rows," said Agnes. "So what are we going to do now? You just tell me what you want me to do and I'll be your pupil."

"Me a teacher," laughed Jessie. "You can certainly blether Agnes Law but that's not going to get the work done."

You must stay inside in the warm today with Mary, and you can

keep an eye on the other bairns, they will be fine playing outside with their gird and cleek. Make the soup for the dinner. I'll go up to the bing with the bogie and get some dross."

"What's a bing?" asked Agnes.

"You really are a city girl Agnes Law," laughed Jessie. "It's a mountain of waste where we go to get the dross to back-up the fire with, if we are lucky we can also sometimes find bits of coal. The only problem is it's a good two-mile walk to the bing. Four miles walking for a bogie of dross, but at least it's free. We keep the bogie, which Alex made from bits of this and that from the Works, in the coal cellar. I'll away and get it now, the quicker I get away the quicker I'll be back. I'm Lady Jessie now with my cook Agnes making the evening meal."

They laughed together as Jessie lifted her shawl and flounced out of the room, leaving Agnes alone with wee Mary.

Agnes set to work; getting fresh water from the standpipe. Using the knap bone they had bought she made stock in the big pot hanging over the fire, Agnes then prepared the soup with care. She peeled and chopped carrots, onions and potatoes, added lentils, salt and pepper, then the pot was set on a really slow simmer. It was now one o'clock, the soup should be done to perfection by the time the men returned from their shift and they ate, around seven o'clock that evening.

The next few hours were filled for Agnes by doing some hand washing; changing and feeding Mary; and, unpacking their few possessions. Most of their belongings she put into the kist but her portmanteau she pushed under the bed, as far back as she could, in it was secreted Agnes's private memories, together with some money. Not much money, but a bridge against starvation.

Jessie returned and the children came in from their games, just as it was getting dark.

"I've stowed the dross in the coal cellar," said Jessie, "Now I need a good wash before we have our tea. Right weans, I'm first in the scullery for a wash and then its you four to get scrubbed up. Agnes, what's that lovely smell, and it's no just the soup?"

"It's called skirlie, responded Agnes. My mother used to make

it, you get oatmeal and chopped onions, fry them slowly in beef dripping with salt and pepper, it tastes just like haggis.”

“Well I really am Lady Jessie coming home to this feast. You are spoiling us Agnes, but don’t you stop mind.”

The women got the children fed and into bed; then Agnes washed, changed, and fed Mary, and the bairns were put down to sleep before the men arrived home after their hard days toil.

The Johnstone house provided a warm welcome for the returning workers, with the savoury smells from the cooking and the heat from the glowing fire. In the lamplight the room looked cosy, despite the plain furnishings and bare walls.

Alex and Robert were exhausted after their day’s labour. They washed and sat at the table, no words were spoken until after they had all eaten their soup and bread. The skirlie and mashed potato meal went down well, finished off with a big mug of tea.

“That was a rare feast ladies,” said Alex.

“I found a newspaper in the bothy today Jess. Will you read us a wee bit, I’m dog tired and I expect Rab here is tired out as well”.

The men settled themselves on the chairs and lit clay pipes, filled with their favourite baccy. Jessie laid the newspaper over the table, while she glanced through it looking for an article of interest.

“More trouble in South Africa between the Empire and the Boer Republics, by the sounds of it there could be another Boer War. Terrible thing to say but it would certainly keep the Works busy. What else, lets see now, she turned the pages.

Oh there is a funny advert here for Pears Soap with a photograph of some missionary type.” Jessie put on her best upper crust voice.

*‘The first steps towards lightening the White Man’s Burden is teaching the virtues of cleanliness. Pears Soap is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilisation advances, whilst among the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place - it is the ideal toilet soap.’*

What a laugh, with our burdens and living in this dark corner, the best we can afford is carbolic soap. Pears Soap indeed, fine for

them with money and highfalutin ideas.”

Rab stood up, tapped out his pipe on the grate and said. “Right Mistress Law, bedroom.”

Agnes followed him through into the bedroom. They quickly undressed in the chill of the room and got into bed.

Rab then lay on top of his wife and they had sex. They did not make love, no showing of care or affection, no tender kisses. There was no gentleness in this coupling. He entered her and used her, like as two animals would mate. Thankfully for Agnes the act did not last long and Rab immediately turned over and fell soundly asleep.

Agnes lay quietly in the dark, sleep would not come. She listened to the soft breathing of her daughters and knew this was now her life, she could not leave Gartsherrie. Rab, her man, had the Works and his Lodge, she had the weans and the Rows. The only bright light so far was her friendship with Jessie Johnstone. And, the only thing between her and destitution was a little money, and some gold jewellery, carefully hidden in the lining of her portmanteau.

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