

CHAPTER 1



MONDAY, APRIL 15, 1912

2:00 A.M.

ON THE DECK OF RMS *TITANIC*

The *Titanic* was sinking.

The gigantic ship had hit an iceberg.

Land was far, far away.

Ten-year-old George Calder stood on the deck.
He shivered because the night was freezing cold.

And because he was scared. More scared than he'd ever been before.

More scared than when Papa swore he'd send George to the army school, far from everything and everyone.

More scared, even, than the time the black panther chased him through the woods back home in Millerstown, New York.

The deck of the *Titanic* was packed with people. Some were running and shouting.

"Help us!"

"Take my baby!"

"Jump!"

Some just plain screamed. Children cried. A gunshot exploded across the deck. But George didn't move.

Just hold on, he told himself, gripping the rail. Like maybe he could hold up the ship.

He couldn't look down at that black water. He kept his eyes on the sky. He had never seen so

many stars. Papa said that Mama watched over him from heaven.

Could Mama see him now?

The ship lurched.

“We’re going down!” a man shouted.

George closed his eyes, praying this was all a dream.

Even more terrible sounds filled the air. Glass shattering. Furniture crashing. More screams and cries. A bellowing sound, like a giant beast was dying a terrible death. George tried to hold the rail. But he lost his grip. He tumbled, smashing his head on the deck.

And then George couldn’t see anything.

Even the stars above him seemed to go black.

CHAPTER 2



19 HOURS EARLIER . . .

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1912

7:15 A.M.

FIRST CLASS SUITE, B DECK, RMS *TITANIC*

George woke up early that morning, half expecting to hear Papa calling him for chores.

But then he remembered: the *Titanic*!

He was on the greatest ship in the world.

It was their fifth day at sea. George and his

eight-year-old sister, Phoebe, had spent two months in England with their aunt Daisy. What a time they had! As a surprise for George's tenth birthday, Aunt Daisy took them to see the Tower of London, where they used to chop off your head if the king didn't like you.

Now they were heading back to America.

Back to Papa and their little farm in upstate New York.

George got out of bed and knelt by the small, round window that looked out on the ocean.

"Morning," said Phoebe, peering through the silk curtains of her bed and fumbling for her spectacles. Her curly brown hair was practically standing straight up. "What were you looking for?"

George had to smile. Phoebe always had a question, even at the crack of dawn.

Maybe that's why she was the smartest little sister in the world.

"I thought I saw a giant squid," George said. "And it's coming to get us!"

George rushed over and grabbed Phoebe with wiggly squid arms. She curled up into a ball and laughed.

She was still laughing when Aunt Daisy came in. Even in her robe and slippers, Aunt Daisy was the prettiest lady on the whole ship. Sometimes George couldn't believe she was so old: twenty-two!

"What's this?" Aunt Daisy said. "You know the rule: No having fun without me!"

Phoebe sat up and put her arms around George. "Georgie said he saw a giant squid."

Aunt Daisy laughed. "I wouldn't doubt it. Everyone wants to get a look at the *Titanic*. Even sea monsters."

George halfway believed it. He'd never imagined anything like the *Titanic*.

Aunt Daisy called the ship a floating palace. But it was way better than the cold and dusty castles they'd seen in England. They had three whole rooms—one for Phoebe and George, one

for Aunt Daisy, and one for sitting around and doing nothing. They even had a man, a steward named Henry. He had bright red hair and an Irish accent that made everything he said sound like a jolly song.

“Some fresh towels for your bath?” he would say. “Some cocoa before bed?”

And just before they turned out the lights for the night, Henry would knock on their door and peep his head in.

“Is there anything else you might need?” he’d ask.

George kept trying to think of *something* he needed.

But what could you ever need on the *Titanic*?

The ship had everything, even a swimming pool with ocean water heated up like a bath, even gold silk curtains for your bed so you could pretend you were sleeping in a pirate’s den, even three dining rooms where you could eat anything you wanted. Last night George had eaten two

plates of roast beef, veal and ham pie, carrots sweet as candy, and a mysterious dessert called meringue pudding. It tasted like sugary clouds.

Actually, there *was* one thing missing from the *Titanic*: the New York Giants baseball team. George wondered what Henry would say if George said, “I need shortstop Artie Fletcher right away!”

Probably Henry would say, “Coming right up, sir!”

George grinned just thinking about it.

But Aunt Daisy wasn't smiling at him. She looked very serious.

“We have to make the most of our last three days at sea,” Aunt Daisy said in a low voice. “I want you to promise me, George. *No more* trouble!”

George gulped.

Was she really still mad at him for last night?

He'd slid down the banister of the grand staircase in the first class lobby. How could he



resist? The wood was so shiny and polished, curving around like a ride at the fair.

“That lady could have moved out of the way,” George said.

“How could she?” Phoebe said. “She was wearing a hundred pounds of diamonds!”

Aunt Daisy almost smiled. George could tell.

No, she could never stay mad at George for long.

Aunt Daisy put her face very close to George’s. She had freckles on her nose, just like George and Phoebe.

“No more trouble,” she repeated, tapping his chest. “I don’t want to have to send a telegram to your father.”

George’s stomach tightened into a baseball.

“Don’t tell Papa!” Phoebe said. “He’ll send George away to that army school!”

“I’ll be good,” George promised. “I will, really.”

“You better be,” Aunt Daisy said.