

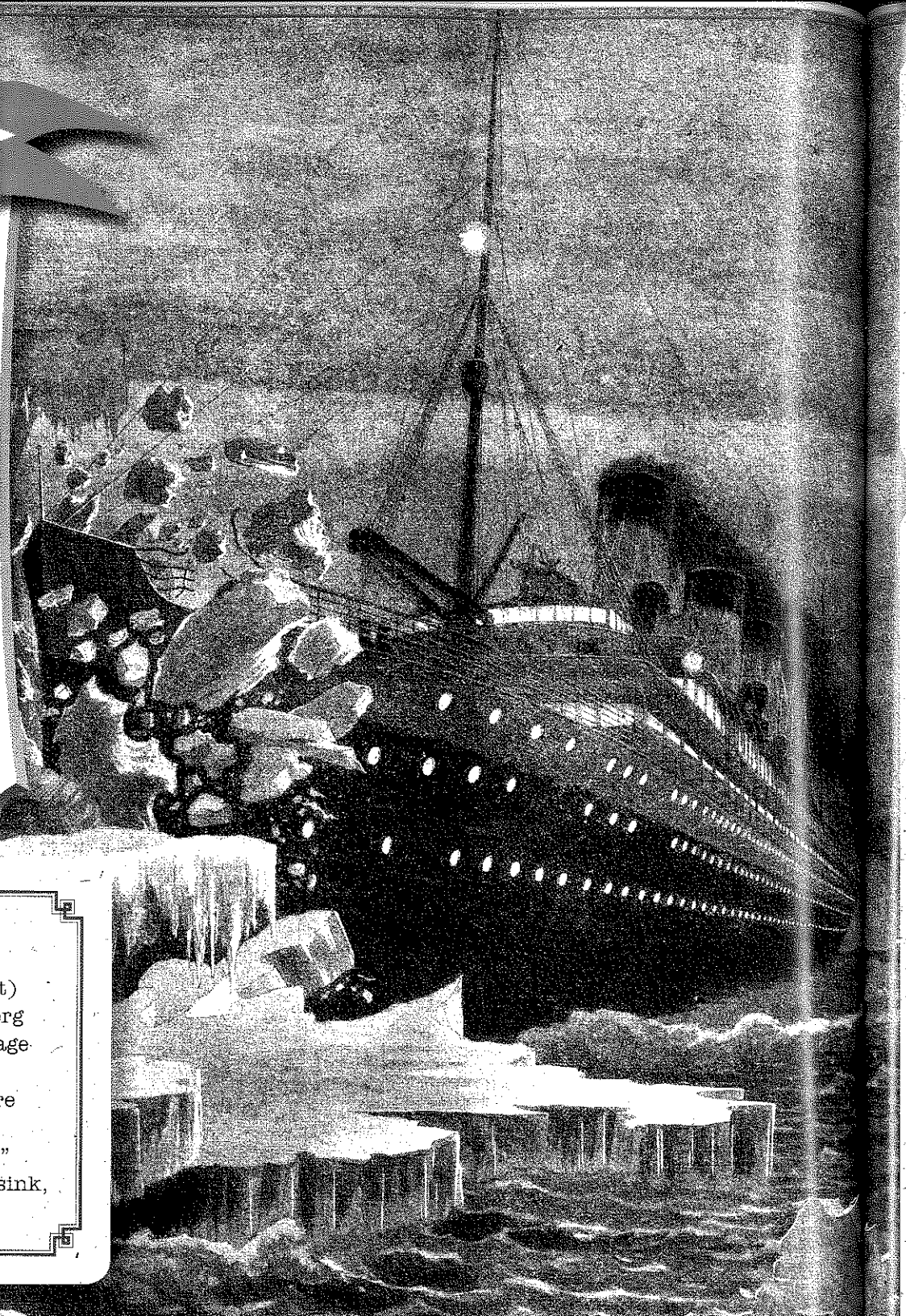
Disaster Strikes

At around 11:40 p.m., the *Titanic* struck a large iceberg. At first no one realized how serious the impact was. Most survivors remembered feeling a bump, but nothing more.

However, unknown to everyone on board, the iceberg had done enormous damage to the underside of the ship, and it had begun to sink. Once the realization set in, officers sent up distress rocket flares while the telegraph operators tried desperately to contact any ships in the area.

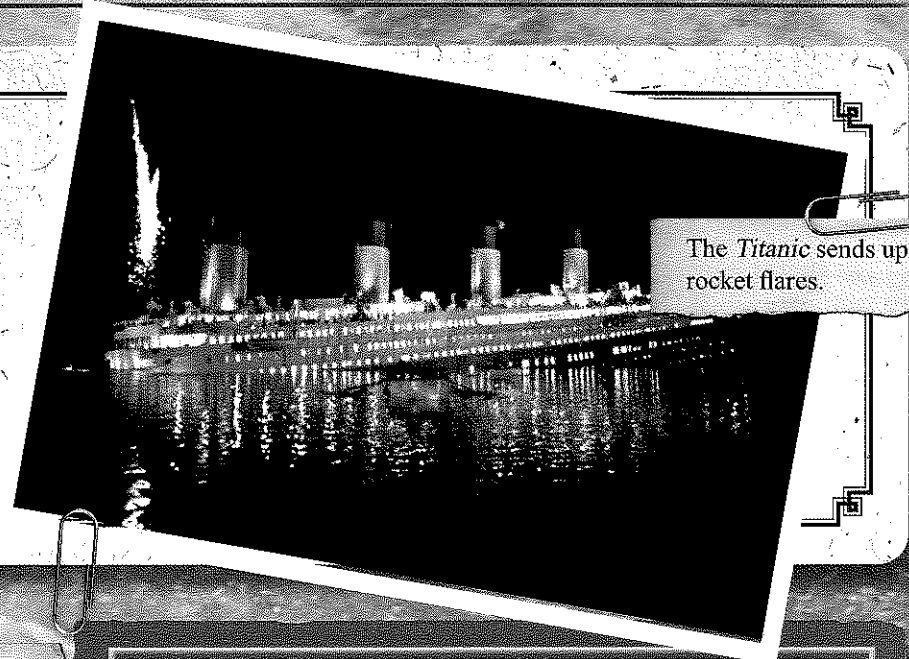
THE IMPACT

Unable to get out of the way in time, the ship's starboard (right) side hit the iceberg. Although around 98 ft. (30 m) of the iceberg could be seen above the water, towering over the deck, no damage was reported to the ship's upper levels. However, around 90 percent of an iceberg's mass is underwater—and that was where the problems were caused. The iceberg gouged a series of holes in the *Titanic's* hull below the waterline. Five of its "watertight" compartments began filling with water and the ship started to sink, bow first.



DISTRESS SIGNALS

Earlier in the evening a nearby ship, the *Californian*, had telegraphed an ice warning to the *Titanic*. But by the time the *Titanic* started sinking, the *Californian's* crew had gone to bed. On the *Titanic*, Fourth Officer Boxhall tried to attract the attention of the ship by sending rocket-flare distress signals soaring 246 ft. (75 m) into the air. They were seen by lookouts on the *Californian*, but when woken up and informed, the captain chose to ignore them. He was heavily criticized for his actions after the disaster.



The *Titanic* sends up rocket flares.

CQD TO SOS

Realizing that the ship was in serious danger, the *Titanic* telegraph operator Jack Phillips started urgently sending messages asking for help from any ships that might be in the area. He sent the then most commonly used Morse code distress signal, **CQD**. A new Morse code signal, **SOS**, had been introduced a few years before, but it had not yet been widely adopted. Encouraged by his assistant operator, Phillips became the first person to transmit the SOS signal from a ship.

Form No. 4-100-17810
The Marconi International Watergate House, New York Buildings, Adelphi, London, W.C.
 Date, 14 APR 1912
Marine Communication Co., Ltd.
 OFFICE: 14 APR 1912
 CHARGES TO PAY: 79 32
 Total

Handed in at **SEBRAGO**

To **OLYMPIC**

Eleven PM NEW YORK TIME TITANIC SENDS OUT SIGNALS OF DISTRESS ANSWERS HIS CALLS. TITANIC REPLEYS AND GIVES ME HIS POSITION 41.46 N 50 14 W AND SAYS WE HAVE SEEN AN ICE BERG. OUR DISTANCE FROM TITANIC 508 MILES.

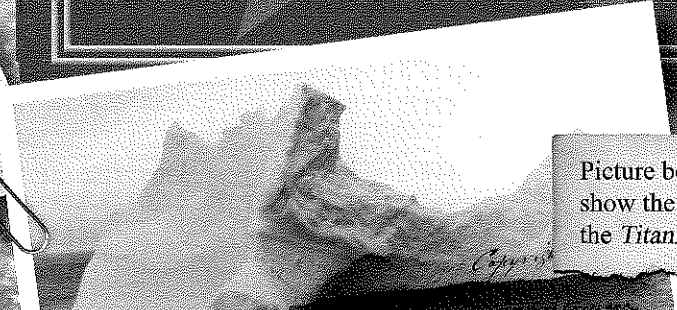
Telegram from the *Titanic* to the *Olympic*.

THE ICEBERG'S STORY

The iceberg that destroyed the *Titanic* would have begun life around 15,000 years ago as snowfall on a glacier on Greenland's west coast. Gradually the snow would have been packed down till it formed hard glacial ice. Once this part of the glacier reached the sea, an enormous chunk would have broken off, or calved, to form an iceberg. The berg, believed to have been around 1 mile (1.6 km) long, would then have been slowly carried by tides and currents out into the ocean and into the path of the oncoming ship.

Titanic
 CQD SOS was CQD CQD - M 87
 We are sending fast passengers on being put into boats M 87
 J. L. Cameron
 J. A. Work.

Telegram announcing the *Titanic* is sinking.



Picture believed by some to show the iceberg that sank the *Titanic*.

Abandon Ship!

After the impact, Captain Smith and the ship's designer, Thomas Andrews, inspected the damage below decks. Realizing how serious the situation was, the captain ordered the lifeboats to be prepared and for passengers to start evacuating the ship.

Unfortunately, there weren't enough lifeboats for everybody on board. A lack of training (since there hadn't been a lifeboat drill) and a general air of confusion and panic meant that many boats were launched before they were full.

THE LIFEBOATS

The White Star Line's lifeboat policy was another sign of its overconfidence in the *Titanic*. There weren't enough boats for all the passengers—the regulations of the time didn't state that there had to be. There were 16 solid lifeboats (numbered 1–16) and 4 collapsible lifeboats (lettered A–D) with room for 1,178 people. Unfortunately, there were 2,223 people on board. Furthermore, the lifeboat drill had been canceled, so none of the passengers had a clear idea of what they were supposed to be doing as the disaster unfolded.

LIFE JACKETS

There should have been a life jacket for everyone on board. However, many people weren't able to find theirs in the panic. The jackets were designed to keep a fully clothed person afloat, but they gave no protection against the cold. Down in the bowels of the ship, not all of the gates separating third class from the rest of the ship had been opened, leaving many people trapped inside.



heard right here on this boat deck, as the ship left Southampton the first day. The woman who predicted the *Titanic* wouldn't have enough lifeboats had told her friend what happened to the "unsinkable ship," the *Titan*, in the novel she'd read. "She set sail in April, just like we're doing, and she sank in the ice fields in the middle of the Atlantic."

Well, Albert wasn't going to be daunted by anything as unscientific as a novel. The air was too calm, the sky too beautiful. While he'd been looking the other way, the sun had begun sinking on the horizon, and the western sky blazed pink and red and orange, as brilliant as Grandmother's gladiolus bed that Abraham nurtured every summer.

And what was the old poem Mattie Lou had taught him? *Red skies at night, sailor's delight. . . .*

Albert suddenly heard laughter. A whole cluster of people had congregated on the boat deck to go for a walk in the sunset.

Oh, for heck's sake, he thought with frustration. How long will *they* be up here? He pulled Father's watch from his pocket and looked at the time: 7:14. Darn! Mother would be worried. He'd promised to be back fourteen minutes ago.

Well, he'd have to get through one of the ship's barriers tomorrow. At least he still had three more days to find Harry Gordon.

Fifteen

Sunday, April 14, 1912. 11:10 P.M.

"Miss Harcher!" called Virginia.

Albert woke up with a start.

"Miss Harcher!" she cried again.

Albert sat up, remembering where he was. Mother's cabin. Uncle Clay had asked him to stay with Virginia while the grown-ups discussed family matters in the cabin Uncle Clay and Albert shared. Albert pushed the heavy overcoat he'd been using for a blanket to one side and turned on the light above the sofa. "You're all right," he assured his sister as he walked toward the brass double bed.

"Oh, Albert, it's only you."

"Yes. You must have been dreaming."

"I don't want it to be a dream. I want it to be true."

"What did you dream?"

"I dreamed that Miss Harcher was waiting for us in America."

"That's nice," he said dully. "Now close your eyes and go back to sleep."

"Do you think she'll be there?" Ginny pleaded.

"No. The *Titanic* was the only ship sailing from England this week. There wasn't enough coal for another one."

Virginia's voice grew shrill. "I want her to be waiting!"

Albert rolled his eyes. "Listen, Ginny. She won't be there. All her friends and family live in England. Close your eyes and go to sleep. Maybe you'll dream about her again."

"No!"

"Stop screaming. You'll wake the whole ship. Go back to sleep."

"I can't sleep. My stomach hurts! I have 'pendicitis!"

Good grief! Albert thought. People would start banging the cabin door if he didn't get her quiet. He shifted his weight, wondering what to do. "Look, I'll go find Mother. Try to relax. I'll be back in a minute."

No sooner had he opened the door than he heard the yelling from his own cabin.

"Do you really think Mama would stand by and let you disgrace her by becoming an actress?"

"Why would it disgrace her? Just tell me that. Why?"

"You know as well as I do. Actresses are cheap. Tawdry."

"That's not true! My friend, Zora LaRue—"

"Your friend Zora LaRue is a *suffragette*."

Nervously Albert reached in his pocket and clutched

Father's watch, not knowing if he should knock on the door.

"There's nothing wrong with women trying to get the right to vote!" Mother screamed. "We're human beings, you know! With brains! And feelings!"

"Let me tell you something else, Katherine. You know that director Zora LaRue arranged for you to try out with? Well, I made it a point to go meet him when I was in London. He said you were undoubtedly pretty once, but you're getting a bit long in the tooth to start an acting career now. And you don't have a thimbleful of talent."

Albert felt himself shaking. His heart was thumping in his chest. Afraid to hear any more, he turned around and hurried back to Mother's cabin.

Amazingly, Virginia had fallen asleep. He sat on the edge of the sofa, rocking back and forth as he listened to her soft, furry snoring. He needed to get out of here. He needed fresh air.

He'd go to the boat deck, he decided.

He knew it would be cold outside—freezing—so he grabbed the things he'd need to stay warm. Overcoat. Cap. Muffler. Gloves. He turned out the light. Then, as quietly as he could, he opened the door and turned the lock before leaving. Aware that the elevator wouldn't be working this late at night, he dashed to the stairs and climbed them.

Outside, the stars hung yellow and full, like golden apples waiting to be picked. The sea was black and still as slate. Albert leaned against the starboard railing of the boat deck, his muffler wound about his ears and mouth. He felt numb.

How could Uncle Clay have told such terrible lies to Mother? He hadn't really talked to the director in London, had he? Was Mother really too old to become an actress? Didn't she really have any talent?

And if she couldn't become an actress, what would become of all of them? Would Albert ever go to a school where he would have friends and play sports like baseball? Would he ever be able to study art?

Suddenly Albert was aware of a huge shadow in the water, blocking out many of the stars. Some large gray thing, taller than the funnels on the ship, was passing the *Titanic* and vibrating the railing he was leaning on. Albert stood up straight. From below came a harsh sound as if someone were dragging a stick across an iron grating. The sensation lasted half a minute, possibly longer. Then the shadow was gone, and the grinding noise stopped.

What had it been? Albert looked off in the distance, but all he could see were the golden stars and the quiet ocean. Had the whole thing been his imagination?

No. All at once the huge smokestacks above his head sent off steam with a roar that cracked the starry silence. The engines stopped churning the steady rhythm that Albert had grown accustomed to over the past four days, and the great *Titanic* lay motionless in the water.

The noise overhead was deafening, but the absence of motion—the deathlike stillness—frightened Albert even more. He stood paralyzed, squinting to see where the gray shadow might have gone.

An elderly gentleman rushed from the stairway and approached Albert. "What happened? Did you see?" he shouted. Albert could barely hear him with all the noise the smokestacks were making.

"We passed something in the water."

The man cupped his ear with a hand. "Eh?"

"We passed something in the water," Albert repeated louder.

"What was it?"

"I don't know. It was big, though. And gray. Like a shadow."

"I thought we were in an earthquake. My clothes started swaying on their hangers."

"It wasn't an earthquake."

"Eh?" the man said.

"It wasn't an earthquake," Albert yelled.

"How can you be sure?"

"Look how calm the water is."

"Glory be!" said the man. "I've crossed the Atlantic five times, and I've never seen the ocean that still."

Albert leaned on the railing again. The sea was a mirror, reflecting the stars so clearly he couldn't tell where the sky ended and the ocean began.

"I'm sure glad it wasn't an earthquake," the man shouted. "I was in the San Francisco earthquake in '06. Wharfside Saloon. Nearly got trampled to death."

"Trampled? How come?"

"Panic. People go crazy when they panic. Kill each other trying to save themselves."

The thought made Albert shudder.

"What do you think the shadow was that you saw?" the man asked.

Albert hesitated. Should he tell what he'd heard the officers discussing this afternoon—about the ice fields and Mr. Ismay's order to keep going full steam ahead? Would this man—would everyone on board—panic if they

knew? He tried to keep his voice calm. "An iceberg, maybe."

"Eh?"

"An iceberg," Albert said more loudly.

"Glory be! That's why the engines stopped. The holds down below must be filling with water. I have to find my family."

Albert grabbed the man's arm. "The *Titanic* can't sink. I've read all about it. If one hold starts filling up, an automatic door closes so the water can't go anywhere else."

The man wriggled free. "Maybe so, but I'm not taking any chances. I'm going to get my family into good warm clothing. Get everyone into lifeboats before the panic starts. Panic is worse than just plain drowning."

Albert watched the man head back toward the stairs, wondering if the old gentleman were overreacting or if what he said made sense. If this were an emergency—if the passengers found out there weren't enough lifeboats on board—would everyone panic?

But this wasn't an emergency, was it? If the ship were in serious trouble, wouldn't someone have sounded an alarm by now?

Still, the ship *had* stopped after she scraped by the iceberg—or shadow—or whatever it was. And the smokestacks were still screeching.

Could the *Titanic* really sink?

Sixteen

Sunday, April 14, 1912. 11:52 P.M.

Albert headed to the cabins to find his family, stopping first in the second-class smoking room to see if anyone there knew more about the accident than he did.

A gray-haired gentleman was sitting alone in a wing chair, snoring loudly. A younger man with a handlebar mustache was quietly smoking a cigar, probably his last one for the night. Two others were playing cribbage.

Relieved by the calm atmosphere in the room, Albert let out a sigh. Then he walked over to read the notice on the smoking-room wall. The *Titanic* had traveled 546 miles from noon Saturday until noon Sunday. Well, that was pretty fast, he knew, but the ship wouldn't set the crossing records Mr. Ismay was planning on if the engines didn't get started up right away.

Albert's stomach began to feel as if a swarm of bees were trapped inside. He left the room and walked quickly