

80 Years

By Chloe L.

I stared out into the vast sea, feeling a wave of nostalgia crash over me. 80 years. 80 years since my brother had said his last words to me. 80 years since his hands slipped out of mine, surrendered to those dark waves that claimed him. 80 years since his body was left to be entombed by the icy waters, swarmed with the remnants of the *RMS Titanic*. I still remember every detail that night, every beat of silence that announced another death after rounds of agonized shouting shattered the glass that kept us from the heavens. Souls flitted through it, taking loved ones and leaving heartbreak in its trail. My brother was one of the victims. If I closed my eyes, the experience would return to me, shrieks blotting out one another, sights careening into my eyes, the sheer terror I felt sending my heart pulsing wildly. If I just closed my eyes, all of it would be relived again...

I ran around the deck of the Titanic, weaving around passengers. The salty air mussed up the pretty hairstyle Mama had made for me in the morning. But, at this moment, none of it mattered to me. All I cared about was to not get caught by my older brother, Tom, without tearing one of the last tea gowns I had brought aboard the cruise. All my other ones were already ruined. Tom's heavy footsteps alerted me back to the present, and I sprinted into a sitting room to hide behind a chair. I skidded behind one just in time. Tom strolled into the room, stopping by the chair I was hiding behind.

"Just where is she?" He mused. I giggled a little before I could hold it back. He pounced on me in seconds, grabbing me by the waist and plopping me onto the chair. "You know Mother said you aren't allowed to run around before dinner. It'll get your hair messed up," He said sternly, disdainfully eyeing my messy hair, tucking some strands into coils to make it look like I hadn't been speeding around the Titanic all day.

"You won't tell on me, will you, Tom?" I said innocently, peering up at him with my wide, blue eyes.

"No. But you know very well that I should," He sighed, tucking away a golden brown coil. I smiled at him sweetly, silently thanking Mama for passing on a bit of her beauty to me that helped me out of every situation. "We should go, you already made us late,"

I obediently got up and took his hand, walking back to the dining hall. This was what happened every day. I would do something I wasn't supposed to, and Tom would make sure I didn't get into trouble. The pattern was no different today. As Mama and Papa were talking with Mr. Astor, I accidentally spilled some tea over my dress. Tom nimbly switched our teacups, and excused himself to help me put my dress away and change.

Soon after dinner, I went to bed. Tom had decided to take a stroll, so I was alone. Mama and Papa slept in a different hall, since they couldn't afford two large rooms next to us. I only slept for a few hours when Tom awakened me.

"Anne, wake up. The Titanic has been hit by an iceberg. Our steward is tending to our parents, so I came to get you," He said, racing to the closet once he saw I was awake. He tossed me my warmest cloak and a dress to wear over my nightgown. I rubbed my bleary eyes and yawned, taking my time to put on the dress.

"I'm sleepy," I fussed, shoving on my cloak and standing up. I kept quiet until I noticed everyone was crowded on the deck. "What's happening?"

"We have to leave the Titanic on the lifeboats. It's only a warning, it'll be fine" He said unconvincingly. We found a lifeboat and quickly got in, pressed against each other in the stinging cold air. Two women and a baby got into the lifeboat before it was lowered, dumped into the ocean. We rowed away from the *RMS Titanic* until we were too tired and couldn't row anymore. I suddenly realized that Mama and Papa weren't with us.

"Where's Mama and Papa?" I whispered hoarsely, unable to speak clearly from the cold. Tom hesitated before answering.

"Mother got onto a lifeboat, but Father..." He broke off, but I knew what he was going to say. I just shuddered then stilled, staying that way for what must have been hours.

Occasionally, the women would try to make a smoke signal using strips of fabric with no avail. After a long time, they gave up, too, and we all just sat there to wait for our deaths. At the beginning, we could hear shouts, yelps, and deafening screams, but they subsided after a while, leaving only the rasped breaths of the people in our lifeboat to reach my ears. The baby died after some time, the icy air finally too much for him. After a long, long time, I saw a light heading our way.

"Tom, a ship came to pick us up," I said, my voice cracking. When there was no response from him, I turned around to face him, worried. He was still, just an icy body, slipping into the cold waters. "Tom!" My voice broke off.

There was no response, his body just kept sinking into the darkness. Finally, his body slipped away from my grasp, his frosty fingers leaving mine.

I remember wailing as they carried me up the *Carpathia*, tears freezing on my cheeks. But I would see him again, I knew, as my old body crumpled and my soul slipped into the heavens to rejoin with him.