

Chapter 1



LOOK OUT BELOW!

Patrick Murphy hurried through the dark streets of Belfast. If he arrived late for work at the Harland and Wolff shipyard, the gate would be closed. He'd lose his pay for the day.

Patrick picked up his pace. When he turned the corner and saw the open gate, his heart filled with relief. He'd made it!

Patrick stopped at the time office, picked up his board, and tucked it into his pocket. The worker number stamped on the small piece of wood ensured that he'd get credit for

the hours he'd worked when he turned it in at the end of the day.

The yard hummed with activity as men streamed in from all over the city. The shadow of the big ship towered over them.

Patrick had grown up in this shipyard, right along with the *Titanic*. He remembered visiting his father at work when he was a little boy. He'd peek in the big windows of the Harland and Wolff drawing room to watch Mr. Andrews and the other designers making plans for the biggest boats in the world. Patrick longed to stand at the desks with them, imagining and drawing such amazing ships.

They started work on the *Titanic* in 1909, when Patrick was eleven. First came the gantry — a huge structure with cranes, elevators, and walkways. It was the scaffolding from which the men would build. Beneath

the gantry, they'd laid the great ship's keel. Then came the framing.

On the morning of Patrick's twelfth birthday, his father had placed two new pennies in his hand before he left for work. "Hold on to them until I get home," he said. "We'll go out together to buy a sweet."

That was the day a section of staging collapsed in the shipyard. Patrick's father was killed in a fall. *He's away to the other yard*, the shipbuilders whispered.

Patrick tucked the pennies in a little cloth pouch. He hid them away in his trunk and promised himself he'd never spend them.

But Patrick and his mother needed money to eat, so they went to work in one of Belfast's linen mills.

It was dangerous and dusty. Patrick's mother developed a cough. Soon, it became so bad she couldn't work anymore.

Patrick needed a job that could support both of them. So when he turned thirteen, he went back to the shipyard, where crews continued to work on the *Titanic*. Patrick joined a riveting team that fastened great steel plates onto the ship's skeleton. But now that work was mostly finished, Patrick took on other jobs – painting and running supplies. Everyone was busy getting ready for the ship's launch, just two months away.

Sometimes, Mr. Andrews himself would tour the shipyard. The pockets of his blue jacket were always stuffed with plans. Patrick wished he could stop work for just a moment on those mornings. He'd love to unroll the drawings and talk with the shipbuilder about what he might imagine next.

But today, there was too much work for daydreaming. "Move along, Murphy!" the foreman called.

Patrick hurried to his work site. Today, they'd start building the slipway, the big ramp that would run up to the ship and under the keel. On launch day, the *Titanic* would slide down that ramp into the water, and everyone would cheer.

"Watch yourself!" someone called as a crane unloaded a pile of timbers beside the men. Patrick unhooked the bundle, and the crane's arm rose up to get more.

"Over here!" the foreman called. One by one, Patrick and the other men lifted the enormous timbers and walked them into place.

"More on the way!" someone called as the crane's arm swung their way again.

Patrick wiped his brow with his sleeve. His stomach growled. How long was it until the morning break? Breakfast was only bread and tea, but it would be better than working with an empty belly.



While Patrick waited for the next bundle of timbers, he let his eyes close, just for a moment, and listened. He loved the music of a ship coming to life — the banging and rattling of steel on steel.

But then another sound rang out from above. A deep, booming voice.

“Look out below!”