

GHOSTS OF THE TITANIC

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Prologue

The ghost was waiting on the water.

What have you done?

What has become of my precious boy?

The man in the dory was not surprised. He had come to know the ghost and her endless questions.

“He’s dead like all the others.” The man was weary of her questions, weary beyond imagining.

Has his body been taken by the sea?

Does he weep for me in the deep?

Does he walk on land, searching for me?

“I saw him buried. I put roses on his casket.”

How will he know me? How will he know me?

He wept for her and her lost child. He wept for his own.

Come with me, robber of the dead.

Come back and undo what you have done.

Come with me . . .

He longed to go but it was too soon. She was the albatross around his neck, his guilty conscience. She was the penance he had to pay.

What have you done? Thief of a lost boy’s past . . .

He turned the boat around and rowed for shore, hearing her voice in every lap of the oars.

~

Daybreak, April 21, 1912

Bodies, bodies everywhere. Bodies rolling on the blue-black sea, face up in the drift ice, nudging and bobbing against the wreckage, against the cutters of the men sent out to recover them. Ordinary Seaman Angus Seaton was the youngest of those men, and the task was hitting him hard.

They'd come upon the first signs of the *Titanic* disaster the previous day. An overturned lifeboat, deck chairs, silver flasks, cushions, gloves, the wadding from lifebelts, bits of tattered clothing — miles and miles of floating debris. They'd expected to reach the disaster site that same evening, but fog and ice had slowed their progress, forcing them to stop and let the ship drift overnight.

At first light, they'd taken their positions on deck. Watchful and silent, their eyes scouring the sea for any sign of a human form.

Angus watched from the forecastle deck, steeling himself for the job ahead. The sooner they got started, the sooner it would be over and, no matter how gruesome, it was better to recover the bodies and bury them properly than to leave them floating about for weeks.

A sudden shout from the wing deck. "Up ahead to starboard!"

Angus had spotted it too. Way off in the distance, a cluster of white flecks, rising and falling with the rise and fall of the waves. Gulls. A sight he'd seen over a thousand times. A large flock of gulls, resting on the water.

The others thought the same, even the captain and the officers on the bridge. Until they'd gotten closer and realized that the white flecks were not gulls but the tops of lifebelts. Each one holding up a body. Bodies in the hundreds.

Bodies, bodies everywhere . . .

Chapter One

Victoria, B.C.

“Halifax?” Kevin burst into the kitchen. “No way I’m going to Halifax!”

“Hello to you too,” his mother said. “How did things go at the pool?”

“Fine. Everything was fine until now.” He shot her a look, half-noticed his father chopping something at the counter and, after elbowing past Courtney to open the fridge door, he continued to rant. “No way I’m going to Halifax — it’s the other side of the country. Forget it! I’m not leaving my friends, and me and Zack have got plans. Swimming lessons, remember? I’m already behind Zack, thanks to soccer. You can’t make me go to Halifax, you know. I’ve got rights. I’ll move in with Zack or something. *No way* I’m moving to Halifax.”

Kevin stopped rummaging through the fridge long enough to toss back a handful of grapes and gulp down some chocolate milk from the carton. “Whose idea was this anyway? Courtney’s I bet. You want to visit the little house of green gables or something, Courtney? Hey! Isn’t anybody listening?” He shut the fridge door and turned to see what they were up to.

What? They were laughing at him. His sister was practically doubled over, his mum was chuckling, his dad’s shoulders were shaking over a pile of red and green peppers — at least he was in a good mood for once. “What’s so funny? I’m just stating an opinion.”

“We’re not *moving*, you goof,” Courtney said.

Kevin frowned. “I heard you.”

“You heard a bit of talk,” his mum said. “And instead of asking about it, you come barging in — ”

“And jump to conclusions,” Courtney interrupted. “And just so you know, Green Gables is in P.E.I., not Nova Scotia.”

“Think for a minute,” his dad said. “Why would we move to Halifax?”

“What’re you saying now?”

“Oh, Kevin.” His mother gave an exasperated sigh. “Wash up and set the table. Supper’s almost ready.”

He grabbed a chocolate-sandwich cookie and made for the door, only to hear his dad say, “But just because we’re not moving to Halifax, doesn’t mean we’re not going.”

What was that supposed to mean?

It became clear at supper — sort of. “Let me get this straight,” Kevin said, reviewing what his dad had told them. “A letter comes in the mail. By courier. So it’s important. And it’s from some lawyer in Halifax and he tells you that you’ve inherited a mansion.”

“He doesn’t say it’s a mansion. Only a large piece of waterfront property with a house on it.”

“Okay. But you’ve never heard of the place, you don’t know anybody who lives in Nova Scotia, and the guy

who left it to you, this Angus Seaton, you've never heard of him either? Whoop!" he said, shaking his head. "Am I missing something? This is too weird."

"But isn't it great?" said Courtney. "Aren't you excited? It's like winning the lottery. I can't wait to see it."

"How do we know the letter's not from one of those scammers from Nigeria or somewhere?"

"Because the letter doesn't start with 'Dearest' or 'Dear One' and nobody's asking for a bank account number," his mum said. "Don't worry, it's all above-board. Your dad's already talked to the lawyer and next week he's going to Nova Scotia to have a look."

"You are, Dad? Is that what you guys were talking about?"

"Partly. I've booked a flight and the lawyer's going to introduce me to the property manager and show me around the place." He consulted the letter. "It's called Shearwater Point, on the south shore of Nova Scotia, a couple of hours outside Halifax. Right on the coast."

"It's waterfront, so it's got its own beach? Cool! And we get to miss school?"

"Changed your mind already?" Courtney said. "A minute ago you didn't want to leave your friends."

"Sorry, Kevin," his dad said. "Nobody's missing school. I'm going to check out the situation and then we'll see."

"Are you going to find out who this Seaton guy was?" Kevin asked. The whole business was creepy. "You should go on the Internet. That's the first thing I would have done."

"I did. There are a few listings under *Angus Seaton* but none of them fit."

"A real-life mystery," said Kevin. He could write about it in Language Arts. Not yet though. Not until he had some answers. For one, Who was Angus Seaton?