**Chapter 1**

**1912**

Stained glass began to rattle in the decorative mahogany screen behind Bernard Quist and he twisted in his chair to look around the wood-panelled smoking room. The other clientele had paused mid-conversation, most turning to watch the crystal decanters tinkle noisily against one another on their shelves behind the bar.

‘Intriguing,’ said Quist, as the vibrations ceased. Settling back into the leather seat, he drew on his cigar and frowned curiously. ‘What on earth could that have been?’

Lenny Logan sat opposite Quist at the table. He’d placed his whisky too close to the edge and the tremors sent the glass tumbling over. The wiry Scotsman caught the drink and raised it to show that nothing had spilled. Logan belched and took a gulp. ‘How about that?’ He laughed loudly. ‘Lucky Lenny, they call me. Lucky, lucky, lucky.’

Several nearby aristocrats turned to scowl, appalled at the coarse sound of his voice. These people weren’t used to hearing drunken Glaswegian accents.

Sir Ronald Norberton sat beside Quist, eyeing Logan in a manner that couldn’t have held more contempt had the Scotsman been a negro. Norberton was proud of the British class structure; it was the finest in the world. He’d been stationed as an army officer in India and, although their caste system seemed to work, it was organised over five complex levels. England had a straightforward three: the cream, the pen-pushing middle class and the scum.

The lower classes were a necessary evil, needed to man factories, dig coal and keep the streets clear of shit, but Norberton never had cause to speak with these horrendous people and they knew their place. That place would soon be following the orders of their betters and marching towards German machine guns. These people were oiks and Norberton prided himself on his ability to smell them. You could bathe an oik, spray it with expensive cologne and clothe it in finery, but the seedy stench would remain. He glared again at the drunken Glaswegian. There were higher chances of women being allowed to vote than an oik getting into this first class lounge, and yet Logan appeared to have somehow managed it.

Norberton turned to the middle-aged man beside him. Bernard Quist’s large aquiline nose and dark wavy hair reminded him of the early portraits of the Duke of Wellington. Quist was cultured, intelligent and highly knowledgeable, but try as he might, Norberton couldn’t figure him out. His eloquent English voice was right and his clothes were right, but Quist simply didn’t feel right. Somehow he seemed classless, which, of course, was impossible.

‘We’re hundreds of miles from the coast,’ said Quist, looking around again. The smoking room had been constructed to resemble an exclusive gentleman’s club and a blue tobacco haze shrouded the ornate ceiling. ‘So what could have caused that shuddering? Has something happened down in the engine room? Perhaps a minor explosion?’

‘I very much doubt it,’ said Norberton. ‘Everyone knows this ship is the finest in the world. I’m sure you’re worrying unnecessarily.’

‘Ah, who cares?’ said Logan, leaning across the table to the two men. ‘I don’t know you chaps, but here’s a question for you both. What do you think of me? Be honest.’

Norberton’s rude grunt suggested he didn’t think much.

Quist was more diplomatic. He sat back in the leather chair and drew on his cigar. ‘What do you mean?’ he asked.

‘When you look at me, what do you think?’ The Scotsman gave an inebriated grin. ‘How much do you reckon I’m worth? Come on. Take a guess.’

Disgusted, Norberton raised his eyebrows. A gentleman would never dream of asking such things. Logan’s watch chain was gold and his clothes were certainly expensive, but his suit was the only one in the room that wasn’t handmade. It was the sort of thing a gambler might wear and far too flash for his discerning tastes.

‘I can’t imagine,’ said Quist. ‘That really isn’t for us to comment on.’

‘Yes, well…’ Copious amounts of whisky had loosened Logan’s tongue. ‘You wouldn’t believe me if I told you. There’s a lot of weird things you fine, upstanding chaps wouldn’t believe.’

Quist puffed his cigar and smiled. ‘Oh, you’d be surprised at the weird things I believe, Mister Logan.’

‘How about magic? Do you believe in that?’ The Scotsman took out a pack of cards and placed three face-down on the table. He lifted one to show it was the Queen of Diamonds, then briskly moved them around. ‘Where is she now? Where’s the Queen?’

‘For God’s sake,’ growled Norberton. He’d heard about this stupid trick, but had never witnessed it before. Apparently, it was something the oiks wasted money on in taverns – a grubby gambling diversion for the weak-minded. He’d been watching carefully and tutted as he tapped the central card. ‘It’s that one, obviously.’

‘Really?’ Logan turned it to show the Two of Hearts and flipped over the one beside it. ‘No, the Queen’s there. Hey, it’s a good thing you didn’t bet a shilling on that.’

‘Indeed,’ said Quist. ‘Although, seeing as this gentleman owns most of Hampshire, I doubt such monetary losses would be cause for concern.’

Logan laughed loudly. ‘Find the Lady. Do you know how much that little trick has made me? How much it will make me?’ He reached over and produced a palmed shilling from behind Norberton’s ear. ‘I’m going to be the richest man in America.’

‘What on earth are you talking about?’ Norberton peered at the Glaswegian as though he were mad. ‘I know certain types practise such twaddle and I’m aware you can coerce idiot gamblers into parting with petty cash on street corners, but you’ll never make any real money. That stupid conjuring nonsense with the coin isn’t going to impress anyone.’

‘I only need to impress one person: Sarah.’ He pulled another shilling from Quist’s ear. ‘Sarah is fascinated by Find the Lady and my little feats of magic.’

‘Oh, yes, your travelling companion,’ snorted Norberton, disdainfully. ‘Your rather attractive and very young niece.’

Logan answered with an earthy chuckle which confirmed his suspicion – this sleazy character was most definitely not the girl’s uncle.

‘Sarah?’ Quist tapped his cigar in the ashtray and sat forward, suddenly interested. ‘Yes, I saw her with you at dinner. It’s approaching midnight. I assume she’s retired?’

Logan nodded. ‘She’s catching up on her beauty sleep, not that she needs it. Quite a looker, isn’t she?’

Quist nodded slowly. From the little he’d seen of this petite blonde, she appeared rather naïve and Uncle Lenny was doubtless enjoying bedtime fun and games in his cabin. Sarah hadn’t been aware of Quist until this evening, but after noticing him from a nearby dining table, she’d shown a great deal of interest. It didn’t seem to be romantic interest, but several times he’d caught her staring inquisitively and he was curious as to why.

‘I don’t suppose I’m making much sense,’ said Logan. ‘The card trick itself isn’t going to make money and neither is my sleight of hand magic, but they entertain…’ He hesitated, then decided against explanations. ‘Here’s to Sarah.’ He raised his glass instead. ‘The very best niece any man could wish for.’

The Scotsman gulped the whisky, hoping that Sarah really was asleep in their suite. She’d spent much of the voyage on a quiet area of the deck gazing at the ocean. The last thing he needed was for her to be washed overboard by some freak wave. Then again, that was hardly likely as he was lucky, lucky, lucky. Logan smiled to himself. He’d certainly been lucky the night he met Sarah shivering on the Glasgow docks. She’d stowed away on a boat from somewhere and he’d been the one to find her. The girl had made Logan a fortune in Scotland, but his gambling habit had forced him to flee. He was now able to pay his debts many times over, but he’d made too many enemies, the kind who didn’t like card cheats and were willing to write off lost cash for the pleasure of slicing him into pieces. He’d taken Sarah south by train and booked their sea passage to America, his new-found wealth ensuring they travelled first class. He finished his drink and smirked. New York would be a lucrative place to begin afresh. The east coast was filled with rich people who could easily be relieved of their money.

‘Excuse me.’ Quist gestured to a passing steward. ‘What was the shudder we felt a short while ago?’

The young man smiled politely. ‘Nothing to be concerned about, Sir,’ he said. ‘We almost collided with an iceberg.’

‘Almost?’ said Norberton. ‘But the jolt…’

‘It only scraped us, Sir. Fortunately the lookout spotted it and we were able to turn.’

‘I see.’ Quist drew on his cigar. ‘So there’s no damage?’

‘Well…’ The steward shrugged. ‘We sustained inconsequential scarring along the starboard hull, but certainly nothing to worry about.’ He gave a smile of reassurance. ‘This is Titanic, Sir, not some rusty old freighter.’

‘There you go,’ laughed Logan. ‘We almost hit an iceberg. Like I told you, I’m lucky, lucky, lucky.’

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The steward had probably been mistaken in his damage estimation, decided Quist, and Lenny Logan was certainly wrong about being lucky. It was now two and a half hours since their inconsequential encounter with the iceberg and Titanic had virtually disappeared. Only the stern remained visible and Quist stared in horror at the nightmarish sight. There were no storms, huge waves or blazing fires – the destructive things one might associate with maritime disasters – just a luxury liner slowly and bizarrely vanishing into the calm ocean, the star-encrusted sky reflecting on the mirrored surface around it.

Quist floated in the freezing water, attempting to keep his head up without kicking his legs. People could only survive for around fifteen minutes in these conditions and exertion would shorten that time; the more energy he used, the quicker he’d lose heat. The body cools faster in water than in air and this water was way below zero; the sort of temperature found in British swimming pools. His shivering had stopped and his teeth were no longer performing a frantic castanet melody. His breathing had slowed too and so had his heartbeat. These weren’t good signs. Hypothermia had set in, his core temperature was falling and he knew he’d soon slip into unconsciousness.

Quist had given his lifejacket to a child and he wondered if it had helped. Probably not, he decided woefully. Bodies floated all around him, some writhing, but the majority now motionless, turning the tranquil Atlantic into a surreal soup of the dying and the dead. Most of the lifeboats had rowed away, fearful of being sucked down in the vortex created by the sinking vessel or, more probably, because of the danger of being swamped and capsized by panicking survivors. Turning, he saw that one boat was still close enough to reach and, forcing his sluggish legs to work, he slowly swam towards it.

A young woman floated on her back just ahead. Her piled coiffure had fallen apart and the soaking golden hair covered her face, but he recognised the striped dress from earlier at dinner. It was Logan’s niece Sarah. Swimming to her, Quist lifted her head and searched with numb fingers for a pulse in her neck. It was there, thankfully, but feeble and slow. The girl’s body mass was smaller than his and she’d cool much faster. If he didn’t get her out of this icy water in the next couple of minutes, she’d be dead.

‘Wake up, Sarah,’ slurred Quist, cupping her chin and swimming backwards towards the lifeboat. ‘Stay awake.’

‘Water,’ mumbled the girl, consciousness returning. ‘I’m in water.’

‘Yes, but you’re going to be alright.’ Quist looked around for Logan, but he was nowhere to be seen amongst the floating bodies. With the amount of whisky he’d drunk, he was probably asleep in his cabin. ‘Just try to stay awake.’

Some thirty feet in length, the lifeboat had been built to carry sixty-five people, but held forty and most of the empty seats were filled with expensive suitcases and hat boxes. The steward in charge stood up, watching their arrival dubiously. Reaching the side, Quist held onto the hanging grabline and lifted the girl as high as possible.

‘Help her,’ he slurred. ‘Take her.’

The steward appeared indecisive, but several arms reached out and hoisted Sarah to safety.

‘The little lamb’s frozen,’ said an American woman, wrapping a blanket around her. ‘Squeeze up to her with me and use your bodies to warm her.’

Several aristocrats glanced at each other, shocked at the disgusting suggestion.

‘Is she first class?’ asked one of the ladies, her luxurious leather trunk taking up the three seats beside her. Wrapped in the skinned corpses of rare felines, her face reminded Quist of a painted ferret. ‘We already have two girls from steerage in here. I may as well be sharing the boat with prostitutes.’

Quist hauled on the grabline, attempting to raise himself.

‘Sorry, mate,’ said the steward, holding up a hand. ‘No room for you.’

‘Are you serious?’ gasped the American. ‘Pull him in, you fool.’

The sailor glared at Molly Brown. He was tired of this mouthy Yank and it was time to assert his authority, even if it meant someone dying. ‘I’m in charge here,’ he snapped. ‘Your lives are in my hands and it’s my job to make the critical decisions. I’m sorry, but sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind.’

‘Help him,’ said Sarah, finding her voice. ‘You must help him.’

‘The boat can’t take any more, Miss.’ The steward shook his head and picked up the oars. ‘We’re already too full. A big wave could sink us.’

‘A wave?’ Molly Brown glanced incredulously at the mirror-like ocean. ‘No, you have to let him in. Just throw out some of these jewellery boxes and you’ll have more than enough room to...’

Her words were drowned by a deafening rumble and a cacophony of horrendous screams. Titanic had broken in two and the stern thundered as it vanished beneath the surface in a creamy eruption of bubbling foam.

The terrified steward began to row. ‘Shut up,’ he snarled. ‘The boat’s full.’

‘Don’t worry, Sarah,’ mumbled Quist, releasing the grabline. ‘It will be alright.’

Watching the lifeboat row away through white clouds of breath, he tried moving his legs, but he no longer had any feeling from the waist down. A piece of planking floated nearby, too small to clamber onto, but ideal for what he had in mind. Quist knew the hypothermia wouldn’t kill him, but he was close to blacking out and had to work fast. With dead fingers, he clumsily fumbled off his trouser belt, tethering it tightly around his left wrist and securing the loose end to the wood. This would keep his body afloat and ensure he was found. Consciousness began to fade and, finally allowing his eyes to close, Quist’s head slipped slowly beneath the surface.

Somewhere below him, Lenny Logan lay drunkenly comatose on his bed, blissfully unaware of the porthole cracking under pressure and that his first class suite was on a two-mile journey to the ocean floor. The unimaginable horrors of the past few hours had completely passed him by.

Perhaps he was lucky after all.

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**Chapter 2**

**Present Day**

Torrential rain poured from the night sky onto the vast expanse of Dartmoor, the rugged terrain drinking it in like a greedy black sponge. The armoured van motored south through the darkness, heading along the lonely lane from Princetown to connect with the main road in the Devon town of Yelverton. Phil Turner sat with his prisoner in the rear, peering dourly through the tiny barred window and listening to the deluge hammering on the roof. This sort of weather was normally only seen on British bank holidays, or when the television forecasters predicted sunshine.

Turner had never understood why the tourists and walkers viewed Dartmoor as beautiful; he hated this desolate wasteland of bleak heather, sucking mires and rocky outcrops. Folklore told of Hell hounds that supposedly roamed this wilderness after dark, bounding out from Wistman’s Wood to hunt down unwary travellers. He grunted scornfully. Any devil dog with a modicum of sense would take one look at this miserable place and piss off somewhere else. Anywhere else. He hated the countless eerie legends and romantic myths of the moor. He hated the cheery descriptions of the area in the Devon travel brochures. Above all, however, he hated the way his prison transfer request appeared to have been misplaced in favour of more suitable officers.

Turner had been stationed at Dartmoor Prison for six years and most inmates referred to him as Turner the Screw, although only the bent solicitors and other more literate prisoners understood the jokey reference to the writer Henry James. Despite its formidable appearance, the centuries old jail had been downgraded to Category C and now housed white-collar criminals and sex offenders. The guard turned from the window to stare at the slender prisoner sitting opposite. Sebastian Moran was definitely not Category C. Psychiatric experts and most normal people would argue that he deserved a category all of his own