

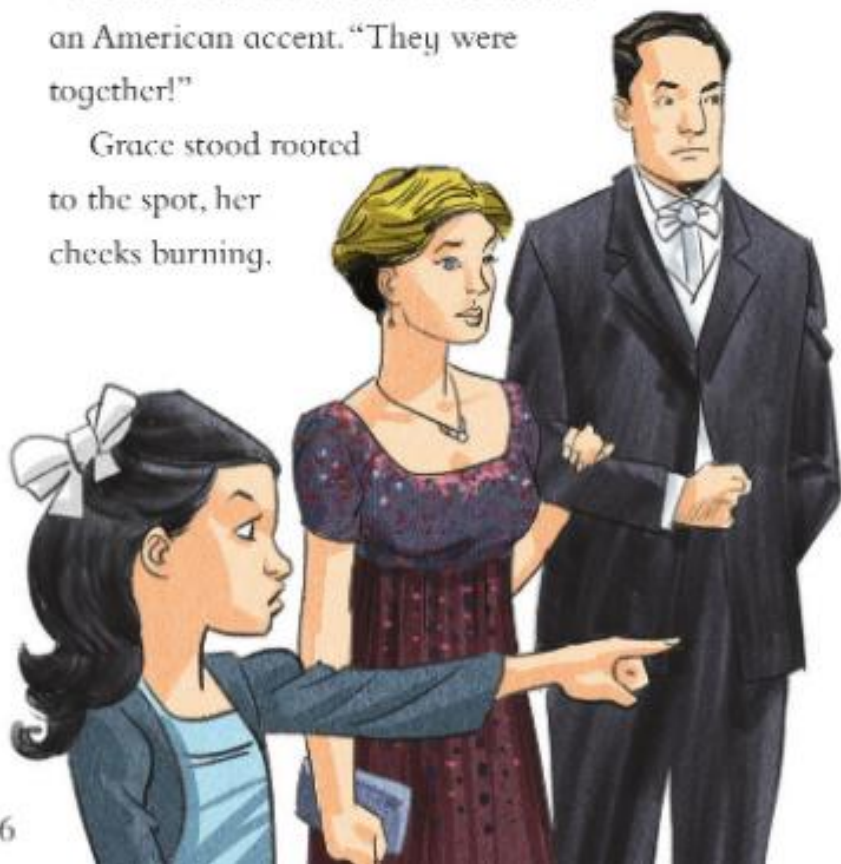
Chapter Three

"We'll never catch them," said one of the stewards. "I didn't even see their faces."

Some passengers had come out of the dining hall – a girl of Grace's age followed by a man and a woman.

The girl pointed an accusing finger at Grace. "She knows those thieves!" she said in an American accent. "They were together!"

Grace stood rooted to the spot, her cheeks burning.



A steward grabbed Grace's arm. She tried to pull free, but his grip was too strong.

"You'd better tell us where we can find your friends," he said, scowling at her.

"I don't have a clue where they are," said Grace. "And they're not my friends."

"You're lying," said the girl. "You were standing right there with them."

Grace turned to her, suddenly feeling uncomfortable in her patched dress and scuffed old shoes. The girl's clothing looked brand new and probably cost a fortune.



"That will do, Catherine," the man said quietly. Grace realised he and the woman must be the girl's parents. He was tall and dark and wore a tailored suit and bow tie. His wife was fair, and her sparkling dress seemed to be something a queen might wear.

"Your father's right," said the girl's mother. "This is none of our business."

"I was only trying to help," said the girl. "I mean, stealing is wrong ..."

"Maybe they were hungry," said Grace pointedly.

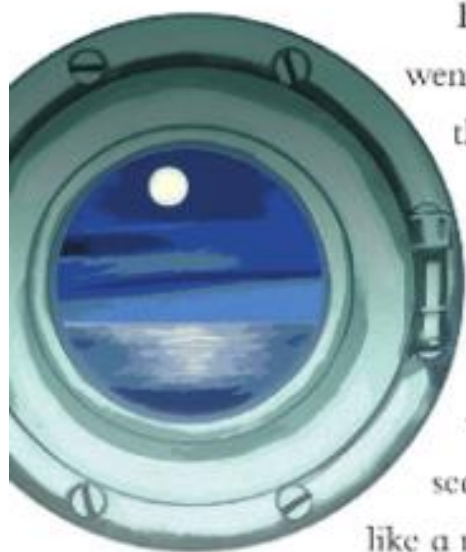
Stealing was wrong, of course, but Grace hated the way this girl, Catherine, had interfered. She expected Catherine to snap something rude back at her now, but she didn't. She looked down instead, and Grace could see she was blushing.

"Come along, Catherine," the girl's father said firmly, and they returned to their table in the dining hall. The steward finally let go of Grace's arm.



“Go away,” he hissed at her. “And don’t let me see you here again!”

He needn’t worry, thought Grace. She had already made up her mind to steer clear of the first-class areas from now on.



By the time Grace went to bed that night, the great ship was well on its way across the Atlantic Ocean. Over the next three days, they were lucky with the weather. The sea was so calm it was

like a mirror reflecting the bright April sky, and only a few people were seasick.

Grace missed Auntie Nora terribly, but life on board was interesting, and she was excited about the future. There were people from almost every country in Europe in third class, and they all seemed to get along.

On the fourth evening some third-class passengers had a party. Grace went along and danced and sang with everyone else. It was late, and she felt tired, but she was having fun.



Suddenly, there was a sharp bump that threw Grace off balance, followed by a strange scraping noise.

Everyone stopped dancing and looked at each other.