

The Titanic Game

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by Mike Warner

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Summary: Fifth-grader Dane Sheridan, opposed to his new foster sister, Abby, learns a lesson
in brotherly love when a magic book transports the two back to the Titanic and Dane must save
them both from disaster.

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For my wife Ann, who wouldn't have gotten
on a lifeboat without me.

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English teacher and author, Will Hobbs,
for his inspiration and encouragement.

CHAPTER ONE

Dane Sheridan stood on the blacktop of Silver Rush Elementary, hands jammed into the pockets of his jeans. He was leaning against the red brick building, the gentle early morning September wind blowing its way across the schoolyard and ruffling his sandy blonde hair. His backpack hung sloppily from one jean-jacketed shoulder as he surveyed the usual before school ritual.

Kids getting out of cars.

Kids trudging wearily towards the playground to wait for the bell and the start of the school day.

Kids playing on monkey bars and other pieces of assorted playground equipment.

Kids chasing each other, running off valuable calories gained from breakfast.

Often he was with them and joining in, but he just hadn't felt much like participating lately, and was more in

favor of keeping the school wall company. His mood was dark, resembling the gray clouds he could see lazily trekking their way in from the west, being urged on by the wind.

There might be a storm later.

His eyes tracked the reason for his foul mood as she made her way from the sidewalk and entered the gap in the fence and approached the primary playground.

His sister.

Or rather, his foster sister.

Abby Walsh was the reason he had gone from being, as his teacher Mrs. Magruder would say, “a perfectly happy boy,” to “a boy with a fierce need for an attitude adjustment.” At least that was what she had told him yesterday when she had grilled him on why his behavior had gone screaming downhill like a fiery car crash.

He hadn’t answered, only shrugged, which had become his main form of communication lately.

Dane’s mom and dad had taken the second grader in a few weeks ago, wanting to give foster parenting a try, even though he had protested strongly. They had told him that it might not be permanent and that she might not end up with them forever, but that they should all try hard and give it a shot.

But he didn’t want to give it a shot. He definitely hoped that this wouldn’t be permanent. He *liked* being the only

child.

Well, had liked.

Abby glanced up and saw her brother, her maybe brother, by himself against the school wall. He hadn't walked with her again, and instead left early so he wouldn't have to spend time with her. Sadly she raised an arm to him in a wave in the hopes that he would wave back, but he didn't. He just stood there, propped up against the wall, scowling at her. She dropped her arm and kept moving.

Dane felt a pang of remorse as, with her head down, Abby pushed on against the wind and headed for her playground, her brown hair flowing behind her. He quickly buried his feelings. At this rate, if he continued to be unkind to her, she might not want to stay with them, and then it would be life back to normal.

As the bell that signaled the beginning of the school day rang, Dane pushed himself off the wall and headed for the school entrance. As he walked he was surprised to see the principal, Mr. Hill, looking sternly at him with his arms crossed and standing near the door.

Dane started to walk into the school, but the principal of Silver Rush Elementary raised his arm in Dane's way, blocking his path.

"That was rather rude of you, don't you think, Mr. Sheridan?"

Dane looked at his shoes and shrugged. In some cases

silence was best. He tugged nervously at his white T-shirt.

Mr. Hill stared hard at Dane. When he spoke, displeasure oozed from his voice. “What’s gotten into you? That’s about the third time I’ve seen you treat your sister badly since she began her term at this school.”

“She’s not my sister, just some girl!” Dane shot back, surprising himself. He had never argued with a teacher before. As soon as the words had slipped from his mouth, he knew he was in for it.

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