Sally Helm: HISTORY This Week. April 10, 1912. I'm Sally Helm.

It's hard to tell the story of the Titanic from the beginning because it has such a dramatic end. On this day, in 1912, the ship sits in her berth on the South Coast of England, ready to set sail. And picturing it—the passengers unpacking their fur coats and their hat boxes, crowds of people waving their handkerchiefs from the pier as the Titanic pulls away on her maiden voyage-- it's like you can already see the distress flares. You picture those fur coats and those hat boxes on the ocean floor. You almost can't help but imagine the iceberg. Floating out there beyond those waving handkerchiefs. Waiting to bring this ship down.

Everything looks like a sign. As the RMS Titanic pulls away from the crowded Southampton port, it almost crashes. The ship is huge enough that it displaces a ton of water when it moves--so much so that a nearby boat breaks free of its mooring cables. A passenger reports that they "snapped like a thread." That ship drifts towards the Titanic, sucked in by its powerful propellers. The crowds watching from the pier climb aboard railway trucks to get a better view. The ships get within four feet of each other...but at the last minute, the Titanic stops its engines. Tugboats are able to nudge the smaller ship out of the way. "A serious disaster was narrowly avoided," the newspaper reports, cheerfully, the next day.

Four days later, of course...a serious disaster will not be avoided. The Titanic's first voyage will be her last. But during her brief life, the vessel is a microcosm of the Gilded world around her. A world that has important parallels to our own.

Gareth Russell: We're probably living through something fairly similar for the first time, since the early 1900s, it is a warning against the cost of human hubris.

Sally Helm: Today: the Titanic. A technological marvel that ran into the harsh laws of nature. How did this opulent luxury liner come to exist? And how did it foretell the dangers of wealth, technology, and arrogance that shaped the world around it...and the world we live in now?

The writer Gareth Russell grew up on northern Ireland's east coast, near the city of Belfast. Which is the same city where the Titanic first came to be.

Gareth Russell: We sort of grew up with the shadow of the Titanic on our doorsteps. It was just omnipresent, growing up.
Sally Helm: Russell's great grandpa worked in the shipyards as a kid, delivering coal. He was alive when Russell was born. And he told stories of the Titanic. Stories that helped inform Russell's recent book on the subject, "The Ship of Dreams."

When his great grandfather was carting coal around Belfast, he was performing an important function. The whole city smelled of coal. It was an industrial center.

Gareth Russell: There were, sort of behemoth-like rope factories, tobacco factories, and linen factories, but the city's main industry was shipbuilding.

Sally Helm: Which was powered by lots of young Belfast men, who get hired to build for a prestigious English shipping company, called White Star Lines.

Trying to one-up their corporate rivals, in 1907, White Star starts building three huge new ships. Each one and a half times larger than its nearest competitor. The length of about six modern day commercial airplanes. As tall as an 11-story building. They are the Olympic, the Britannic, and... the Titanic.

Tens of thousands of men are hired to help put these ships together. It's tough work. 12-hour days. Cold, damp conditions. Danger from climbing up the high scaffolding.

Gareth Russell: There are stories of quite a lot of men going deaf because of how loud it was.

Sally Helm: Wow, from like the sounds of clinking metal?

Gareth Russell: Yeah, if you were assigned to hammering the rivets in, and particularly if you were underneath the ship, you were essentially in an echo chamber and you were hammering in metal-on-metal day after day.

Sally Helm: To keep time as they hammered, and pass the time as they worked, they'd sing songs.

Gareth Russell: I was lucky enough to hear my great grandfather could remember some of the songs. In the same way, if you go into an office, today, people are often playing music or whatever, because lifts the mood, back in 1910, 1911, you had to make your own.

Sally Helm: The men spend years putting these ships together.

Gareth Russell: Watching them grow from a skeleton on a gantry, up into being these enormous, completed luxury liners.
Sally Helm: Overseeing that transformation is a man named Thomas Andrews. At the shipyard, he's in charge.

Gareth Russell: He was a meticulous genius you know, he could remember if a colleague beneath him, sort of in the chain of command, hadn't taken the requisite number of days off, and he would write to them and say, by the way, you're still owed three days you should really be taking.

Sally Helm: Andrews himself came from the upper class. He was one of the first people in town to own his own car. He lived in a red brick mansion, with four servants.

Susie Milar: You know, maids to light the fires and parlor maids and a valet and Gardner

Sally Helm: Susie Milar [miller] leads Titanic tours around modern Belfast. She stops at Thomas Andrews's home.

Susie Milar: It would have an orchard and a tennis court and, a beautiful staircase with a lovely stained glass window at the top of it.

Sally Helm: Milar's great-grandfather worked at the shipyard, too. He started as a carpenter and worked his way up to engineer. As the Titanic got closer and closer to launch, he saw an opportunity. He moved over to the White Star company so that he could work aboard the Titanic as it sailed and use its maiden voyage to immigrate to America. According to family lore, when he needed a letter of reference to get the job, he asked Thomas Andrews.

Susie Milar: I used to joke with the Andrews family that it's their fault. You know, if Mr. Andrews had written him a bad reference. He never would have got himself on to Titanic

Sally Helm: There are a lot of dark jokes in Belfast about this time, when the ship is getting ready to launch on its fateful voyage. Workers who have spent years on this project are putting the finishing touches on the Titanic. The smell of coal has given way to new smells.

Gareth Russell: Varnish and wood shavings and freshly laid linoleum. There's quite an interesting dark Belfast, humorous story about the grand staircase, which is that one, one of the carpenters accidentally chipped and broke one of the panels

Sally Helm: He and a friend manage, well enough, to put it back together. But he's worried someone will notice. Like the meticulous genius, Thomas Andrews, who’s going around making last minute notes.

Gareth Russell: He's not pleased with the efficiency of plumbing in the second-class lavatories
Sally Helm: The furniture in the Parisian café is the wrong shade of green.

Gareth Russell: The hat hooks and the first-class carbons are unsightly

Sally Helm: No notes about the grand staircase, though. The construction worker gets away with it.

Gareth Russell: On the day when it sank, his, the friend who helped him cover it up said, well, don't worry. They'll never find out.

Sally Helm: Most of the workers stay behind in Belfast when the ship heads out. But Susie Milar's great grandfather is on board. Her family continues to pass down the coins that he gave to his sons, right before he left.

Susie Milar: He gave them each two 1912 pennies and said, don't spend those until we're all together again. And then my grandfather talks about how that evening, when Titanic was pulling out of Belfast lock, he was standing on the beach, and he watched us the ship sails away out of sight. He said he couldn't understand why everybody was cheering because for him, it was a very sad day. And he said that he had his two pennies clutched so tightly in his hand that the date of 1912 was nearly burnt into his palm.

Sally Helm: The Titanic leaves Belfast on April 2 of that year. Also on board is Thomas Andrews. He's going to ride along for the ship's first trip, just to make sure everything goes smoothly. He has a lot do to, what with the plumbing, the hat hooks, the Parisian Cafe. It's all in preparation for the passengers. Who board the ship mostly in England and set out just after noon on April 10, 1912, on their journey across the Atlantic.

The passengers are the type who might actually notice such things as unsightly hat hooks.

Gareth Russell: It's sort of who's who of the east coast American upper-class. You have railway tycoons like John Thayer. Colonel John Jacob Astor the fourth, who belongs to the famous Astor family that owns so much of Manhattan that they're nicknamed the landlords of New York.

Sally Helm: There's a Guggenheim on board. A countess, heading to meet her husband to celebrate their anniversary. There's a confidant to President Taft. Some famous writers.

Gareth Russell: One of the early pioneers of sci-fi

Sally Helm: You can't forget Dorothy Gibson.

Gareth Russell: One of if not the highest paid movie star in the United States
Sally Helm: Or a famous British fashion designer, Lady Duff Gordon.

Gareth Russell: If you talk to a historian of fashion, they will always say that Lady Duff Gordon was one of the major influences responsible for ending the popularity of the corset.

Sally Helm: There was a lot of wealth on board the Titanic. And off it. This is the Gilded Age in the United States. The Edwardian Era in England. Both marked by massive income inequality.

Gareth Russell: By the time of Titanic set sail, there is growing, discomforts, probably too mild, a word there is growing fear and resentment over the amount of capital that can be disposed of and utilized by the super wealthy.

Sally Helm: White Star Line itself was owned by JP Morgan, a wealthy American banker. Just a few years before the Titanic's launch, he'd been able to help prevent economic collapse with his own private wealth.

Gareth Russell: It’s very difficult to fully appreciate just how wealthy they were. I mean, their wealth would easily have drowned that of the wealthiest courtier at Versailles before the French revolution. I mean, they were just stratospherically wealthy.

Sally Helm: And, as reflected on board the Titanic, it's not just countesses who have that kind of money. It's also railway tycoons. With the onset of industrialization, there has been a huge boom in new technologies, and new ways to make money.

Gareth Russell: The nature of privilege is fracturing, changing and evolving. They are not asking for your family tree before they give you a ticket. They're asking for your check.

Sally Helm: A first-class suite aboard the Titanic could cost as much as over $100,000 in today’s money. Even the second-class passengers were still dropping the modern equivalent of nearly $2000.

Gareth Russell: People do take it to represent haves and have-nots when, in fact you know, the Titanic's third class could cost the equivalent of second on other ships.

Sally Helm: Right, it’s like the haves, and the have a little less.

Gareth Russell: Right. Exactly. That's, that's the perfect way to describe it.

Sally Helm: Riding in Second Class:

Gareth Russell: There's a Haitian gentleman called Joseph Laroche. His uncle had just been elected president of Haiti.
**Sally Helm:** There's a university graduate named Lawrence Beasley.

**Gareth Russell:** He loved American history and he wanted to go and see some of those places that he'd only been able to read off before.

**Sally Helm:** Third-Class riders on the Titanic were people like Swedish journalist, August Wennerstrom (*venner-strom*), who’d made some enemies criticizing the monarchy, and needed to emigrate. Or a young Irish farmer, Daniel Buckley, who was moving to America to make some money. They stayed in cabins—sure, on bunk beds, but not in communal dormitories, as they would on other ships. Still:

**Gareth Russell:** There were very strict laws in place by U.S. immigration at the time that there was to be no mixing between third-class and any of the other classes.

**Sally Helm:** The rationale for this was that Third-Class passengers would be processed at Ellis Island when they disembarked. And they'd be subject to a medical screening. If First- or Second-Class passengers associated with them, they'd be subject to that screening, too.

**Gareth Russell:** And this was partly in response to a cholera epidemic that had happened in 1892, but it did mean that the layout of the ship was strongly designed to discourage any possibility of interaction between the classes.

**Sally Helm:** That meant that if Third-Class passengers wanted music, they had to sing. Because the band couldn’t come to them. Meanwhile, First- and Second-Class passengers each received a songbook, listing all the pieces of music the ship's band knew, each with a number attached.

**Gareth Russell:** So, if the band stops and says any requests, you say number 34, and we still today, this little number goes like two, you know, we still call songs numbers because of that tradition at sea.

**Sally Helm:** First-class passengers got that list of songs. And also, a list of their fellow passengers.

**Gareth Russell:** So, you could see who else was on board, maybe you're, you know, on a social climbing mission and you want to accidentally bump into an Astor

**Sally Helm:** At afternoon tea. Or coffee in the lounge. Or dinner.

**Gareth Russell:** The meals took up a lot, a large chunk of the day. As did changing your clothes because you really weren't supposed to be in the same clothes throughout the whole day.
Sally Helm: When they weren't eating or picking out new frocks and coats, the first-class passengers played cards or wrote letters. Visited the squash courts or the Turkish baths. Took bets on how many miles the ship had traveled in the past day.

Thomas Andrews is watching the ship's progress, too. And schmoozing with this crowd. Though he's not all that forthcoming. A New York socialite later described Andrews joining them at dinner:

Gareth Russell: He must have talked about his work very much because she says, you know, he had something to do with the Titanic

Sally Helm: He confides more in members of the crew. He befriends a stewardess from Belfast and tells her how homesick he is.

Gareth Russell: He worried about his mother's health, his father's health, his wife and child back home.

Sally Helm: One particular night, Sunday, April 14th, Andrews goes to dinner in the dining room, as usual.

Gareth Russell: He was planning perhaps to join someone dining companions for a coffee or tea after, but the companions lingered so long over the pudding course that he decided to go back to his cabin three decks up and get back to work, you know, going over the blueprints, going over the, his journals and his notebooks to see what he wants to tackle tomorrow.

Sally Helm: Up on the deck, it's gotten quite cold. Some of the passengers later describe a new chill in the air. The ship is navigating off the coast of Newfoundland. And around 11:40pm... that looming iceberg finally appears.

Gareth Russell: One of the most interesting things about the moment of impact is it's so slight that a lot of first-class passengers sleep through. The Countess of Rothes says that she felt like her bed left slightly. She woke up slightly groggily and then rolled over, went back to sleep.

Sally Helm: One passenger later notes that the vibration of the engines got duller. Another describes "a lurch, and a creaking."

Andrews is in his cabin at the time. Maybe wrapping up some work. Maybe already asleep for the night.

Gareth Russell: The captain sends for him and says, I would like you to perform my diagnosis of the ship to see how bad the damage is.
**Sally Helm:** He leaves his cabin and goes down from A-deck to G-deck. That's where the luggage and mailrooms were.

**Gareth Russell:** I imagine the first moment when he begins to have a real internal shutter is when he sees water beginning to come into the first-class luggage room.

**Sally Helm:** In the mailroom, he finds clerks hurriedly moving sacks of letters out of the freezing cold seawater that's streaming in. He goes down even farther to the boiler rooms. They're flooding rapidly. So, he rushes back upstairs to report to the captain.

**Gareth Russell:** We do know from one eyewitness, the movie star, Dorothy Gibson, who saw him as he came up the stairs and she said, he looked green, his face looked green.

**Sally Helm:** Andrews does some quick math. Based on the amount of water flooding in, and what he knows about the ship that he himself designed:

**Gareth Russell:** He tells Captain Smith that based on his calculations, the Titanic has about an hour and 30 minutes to live.

[AD BREAK]

**Sally Helm:** The night the Titanic hits an iceberg, the ship's captain, Captain Smith, had been speeding. Even though there had been repeated warnings about ice. Gareth Russell says, in his research, he came across telling comments Smith made years before the Titanic was built.

**Gareth Russell:** Knowing what happens, it does strike a chill. There are at least two occasions where he more or less it's impossible for there to be a terrible shipwreck, given modern technology.

**Sally Helm:** The Titanic itself had been touted, in Shipbuilder magazine, as "practically unsinkable." Both Captain Smith and Thomas Andrews are said to have assured passengers that if the ship was cut in three pieces, each piece would still float.

Back in Belfast, though, among the workers who had poured years of their lives into building this ship:

**Gareth Russell:** This sort of idea of it being unsinkable was something that never really caught on in Belfast. I mean, I think if there's a container and you fill it with enough water it'll sink

**Sally Helm:** Right, these are shipbuilders, they would, they would know that.
Gareth Russell: Right, you know, I think they were, I think they were sort of slightly jaded to the hyperbola of the, the trade journals and the press that, you know, we're, obviously trying to sell things to people who shouldn't know a lot about ships

Sally Helm: But many of the passengers, and members of the crew, had bought into that idea. And that's part of what’s going to make it so hard to get them off the sinking ship.

It’s just before midnight when Thomas Andrews tells the captain: the Titanic is going down.

Gareth Russell: At this stage he has done his job to inform the captain of the danger the ship is in. But Thomas Andrews was always someone who wanted to do things who needed to be useful. And so, he starts going along the corridors, checking empty rooms, encouraging stewards and stewardesses to take out blankets, to put the lifeboats, to keep people warm.

Sally Helm: But Captain Smith still hasn’t told the crew how serious the collision was. So, the crew thinks, no reason to alarm the passengers. They do begin to rouse people from their cabins, telling them to dress warmly and come up to the deck.

Gareth Russell: They knew they'd hit an iceberg, but it was more or less implied that this was a precaution.

Sally Helm: In fact:

Gareth Russell: If you were to design a series of signals that communicated that there was nothing to worry about, that pretty much was what was done with first-class

Sally Helm: The purser decides, let's open up the first-class lounge. Get inside, off this freezing cold deck.

Gareth Russell: Someone said later, it was like a fancy-dress ball in Dante's Inferno. The electric heaters are put back on the band arrives the little bars opened up and people are ordering like cocoa and brandies

Sally Helm: Crew members are directing women and children to the lifeboats, but without much urgency. So many aren’t all that keen to put down their cocoas. And really, Russell says, who can blame them.

Gareth Russell: I mean, if I was somewhere and it was below freezing outside. And the authority figures had opened up, you know, room based on Versailles and started an impromptu concert. I don't know if I would necessarily feel a sense of urgency. I think everything that was done in that early stage at suffocated, a sense of, panic and momentum in the first-class passengers.
**Sally Helm:** People are dawdling. Some try to retrieve their jewels from the purser's safe. John Jacob Astor decides it's better for his pregnant wife to remain comfortable in the lounge, rather than be lowered 70 feet in a small wooden lifeboat into the freezing Atlantic.

**Gareth Russell:** He took her into the first-class gymnasium and tried to calm her down and destruct her by taking out his pen life and opening up a life jacket to shore the cork inside that made a buoyant

**Sally Helm:** The first lifeboat, number 7, is lowered at 12:45am, about an hour after the iceberg strike. The boat had space for 65 but held only 28.

**Gareth Russell:** If you look at the lifeboats that left sometimes, well, under half full, they were the ones that went in the early stages of the evacuation when officers were asking people to get in and they wouldn't.

**Sally Helm:** One of those who does go in that first boat is a Manhattan socialite, who brought along her Pomeranian dog, Bebé. Another is the actress, Dorothy Gibson. She'd seen that green look on Thomas Andrews' face and heard the rumor circulating that the first-class squash courts had flooded. And she thinks...this is serious.

She's early to that thought. Her lifeboat is lowered at 12:45am. That’s over an hour before the last boat is lowered, at 2:05am, just before the Titanic finally sinks. In between, there's no one moment where everyone realizes how dire the situation is. For some passengers, it's seeing distress rockets fired. Or seeing crew members coming up from below deck, drenched.

**Gareth Russell:** For one, its seeing pajama legs poking beneath the trousers of the managing director’s suit, because he's usually so fastidiously well-dressed.

**Sally Helm:** The last people to realize how bad things have gotten are the Third-Class passengers. They're sequestered in their separate accommodations, below deck, while others are being evacuated. There’s a set of stairs, with a waist-high gate at the top, connecting the Third-Class to the First- and Second-Class decks:

**Gareth Russell:** Which is where the lifeboats are. So, you have a ship that is not designed to make it easy for them to get up there, being run by people who have not been told there's any reason for them to get up there.

**Sally Helm:** The young Irish farmer Daniel Buckley watches as another Third-Class passenger goes up that set of stairs, connecting their deck to the rest of the ship. But a crew member, who doesn't realize how bad things are, sees this as a violation of those US immigration laws. The ones that require Third-Class to be kept separate from the others. So, the crew member locks the gate at the top of those stairs. People have to climb over it to get out, until someone finally breaks it down.
This ship is not designed to help Third-Class passenger’s escape. On top of that, there’s a language barrier between the crew and many of the Third-Class passengers. And in the rush to launch the ship, the emergency information notices had been left behind. In their place, empty frames hang on the back door of each cabin.

In the end, 75 percent of the third-class passengers don't make it into a lifeboat.

Neither does Thomas Andrews. Someone spots him late in the night, when it's becoming clear that the casualties are going to be massive.

**Gareth Russell:** Andrews is standing alone and bereft in the smoking room as he realized there wasn't a rescue ship near enough by. But that is not the last sight of him. He actually then gathered himself, went up on deck and started throwing deck chairs overboard so that people would have something to cling on to after the ship disappeared. So, this is someone who, from the moment he is called on to inspect the damage until, you know, he loses his, his life not long afterwards is trying his best to do his last service to the Titanic and its people.

**Gareth Russell:** There are very few points of firm agreement from the eyewitness testimonies, except on the noise. There is near unanimous agreement that none of them could shake the sign of the screaming.

**Sally Helm:** There's a series of roars and explosions, as the ship splits apart.

**Gareth Russell:** They're in a life, but watching a skyscraper sink in front of them. And after the ship disappears. And there's about these few minutes of people screaming in the water, then the silence that settles as hypothermia claims most of the people who had been on the Titanic at the moment disappeared. It is the point of similarity in the eyewitness testimonies from survivors, the screaming, and then the silence.

**Sally Helm:** The survivors--most from first class, some from second and third--are left to drift and wait. The Countess of Rothes, who had, a few days earlier demanded a more "suitable" first class cabin, now finds herself rowing a lifeboat for six hours, in the dark.
Gareth Russell: She talks about this horrible moment when the sun rises, after the sinking and it shines light over these cathedrals of ice around them. And she realizes how all-encompassing the ice field is.

Sally Helm: It fills her with despair.

Gareth Russell: But she didn't want to let anyone know that she was in despair because she thought it would, break people's spirits in the lifeboat. So, she leads them in, singalongs of hymns until the Carpathia, the rescue ship arrives, and then the minute her feet touch the deck and sort of her, her task is over she faints.

Sally Helm: The rescue ship pulls into New York on April 18th. But the story of the Titanic has beat it there.

Gareth Russell: It has become one of the first great mass media covered events in history. Journalists higher, tugboats in New York Harbor to take them in the hope that they can try to jump on board the rescue ship and get the first interviews with the survivors. It was really a game of whispering that was going on

Sally Helm: Who had survived? What happened that night? For male survivors, judgment was harsh. How had they gotten out, despite the policy of "women and children first?" A rumor emerges about the fashion designer Lady Duff Gordon and her husband.

Gareth Russell: The story is that they bribed the crew either to take them or according to some accounts to not go back to pick up the survivors.

Sally Helm: Russell says, the rumor is unlikely to be true. But stories like it take on an almost mythical quality in the days and weeks after the Titanic's sinking.

Gareth Russell: It's like a sort of Aesop's fable at sea. You can attach so many different morality lessons to the sinking of the Titanic.

Sally Helm: About the dangers of arrogance. Calling your ship unsinkable. About how you shouldn't ignore obvious warnings, and pridefully think they won't apply to you. And about wealth and power.

Gareth Russell: People are using it as a sort of a symbol of what they see as the egregious injustices of the period.

Sally Helm: The first-class passengers get off...and the third-class passengers are left to drown.
All that new technology—high speed ships and railroads and bridges and factories—which had brought about previously unfathomable wealth and innovation...it hadn't been enough to prevent disaster.

**Gareth Russell:** The sinking of the Titanic was a sort of jolt out of that confidence that technology was always going to get better, but it was always going to make people's lives better because of that. And that as a result, people had less and less to fear from nature from the world around them because of the strength and superiority of progress.

**Sally Helm:** Russell said, as he was researching the story, he kept being struck by a sense of recognition.

**Gareth Russell:** We are again, grappling with, you know, concerns over nature and also concerns over technology. So, it's an eternal story and it's one that taps into a lot of concerns in 1912 and in 2022.

**Sally Helm:** For some, the Titanic grows to epitomize the end of an era. The following year would bring about the income tax in America, rolling back some of that boundless wealth that new technology could bring. The year after that comes World War I. Just one battle would leave many more dead than the sinking of the Titanic. Jack Thayer, who survived the sinking, would write that it "not only made the world rub its eyes and awake, but woke it with a start."

The Titanic was a tragedy around the world. But it was a special tragedy back in Belfast. Russell's great-grandfather remembered that when the news arrived, people broke down in the streets and wept. The workers mourn the loss of the ship they had poured their labor into. And they mourn the people. Including Thomas Andrews.

**Gareth Russell:** One of the things I find out was that they memorialized Thomas Andrews, and other members of the shipyard staff who ended up losing their life on the Titanic

**Sally Helm:** They do it in song.

**Gareth Russell:** We don't have the music for it, but I found the lyrics. So, call them a Queen's island Trojan who worked the last, very proud. We are all from here in Belfast.

**Sally Helm:** "Our working-men knew him as one of the best--he stuck to his duty, and God gave him rest."

[Credits]

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If you want to get in touch, please shoot us an email at our email address, HistoryThisWeek@History.com, or you can leave us a voicemail at 212-351-0410.

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This episode was produced by Julia Press. It was story edited by Ruxandra Guidi and sound designed by Brian Flood. HISTORY This Week is also produced by Julie Magruder, Ben Dickstein, and me, Sally Helm. Our associate producer is Emma Fredericks. Our supervising producer is McCamey Lynn and our executive producer is Jessie Katz.

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**The Titanic Sets Sail**

April 10, 1912. As the RMS Titanic pulls away from a crowded port on the south coast of England, it almost crashes. Just in time, it’s able to turn off its engines and prevent a collision with a smaller ship. "A serious disaster was narrowly avoided," reports a newspaper, cheerfully, the next day. Four days later, a serious disaster will not be avoided, and the Titanic’s first voyage will be her last. But during her brief life, the vessel is a microcosm of the Gilded world around her. How did this opulent luxury liner come to exist? And how did it foretell the dangers of wealth, technology, and arrogance that shaped the world around it, and the world we live in now?