

Titanic

Category: Poems

written by Jeanne J. LeVasseur | April 20, 2018

Jeanne LeVasseur ~

Even now, some eat strawberries in the sunshine,
some pace the deck in a strong salt breeze,
while for others, the music is winding down.
Always unfair—a few of us in lifeboats,
some sinking in the icy water,
others on a slanting deck about to go under.

We make salami sandwiches on rye,
smoke a cigarette after passionate love,
and wave goodbye to the yellow school bus.
We never know when—
until the deck slants and the loud machinery
grinds still.

Lucky are those who glimpse the stars,
get a chance to be noble,
to love and forgive, as the fugitive melody swells.

About the poet:

Jeanne LeVasseur is a professor of nursing at Quinnipiac University. Her poetry has been published in [Nimrod](#), [The Iowa Review](#), [The American Journal of Nursing](#), [Literature and Medicine](#) and [JAMA](#) and in four anthologies, including [Between the Heartbeats: Poetry and Prose by Nurses](#) and [Intensive Care: More Poetry and Prose by Nurses](#). She is also the author of a book of poetry, *Planetary Nights* (2015).

About the poem:

“The nobility of the musicians who, on April 15, 1912, played music to calm the passengers of the *RMS Titanic* as it was sinking has always struck me as a beautiful and clear-eyed act of heroism. This poem was inspired by the way we are all thrown into our lives, lucky or unlucky, on a ship about to go down. Some of us eat strawberries, preoccupied with the busy details of life, while others look over the rail and see the icy water that is coming. This capacity we have both to look away from our mortality and to see it coming seems uniquely human. Like the musicians on the *Titanic*, we may, in our last moments, experience a kind of rhapsody.”

Poetry editors:

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer

