

# On This the 100th Anniversary of the Sinking of the Titanic

## We Reconsider the Buoyancy of the Human Heart

By Laura Lamb Brown Lavoie



What's wrong? Titanic asked me this morning, when she found me lying on the ocean floor with all my suitcases strewn open.

Oh, I dunno, I moaned, I was looking through *National Geographic* and saw some pictures of you, and thought I might come and chat. You looked great, by the way, in the pictures.

Me? No. Titanic smiled. If anything I seem to have become a Picasso. and I have a beard.

It was true; she looked more like a collage of a ship. Strangely two dimensional, in a crater of her own

making:

French doors, boilers, railings every which way. And she did have a bit of a beard-rust icicles hanging in red strands from her iron engines.

sitting up in my own little crater, I sort of blushed.

To be honest, I told Titanic,

My honey's leaving town soon and I'm afraid it's gonna wreck me, so I dove down here.

Well come on in, Titanic said, but I'm not sure I've got what you're looking for.

So in I climbed between, through a window between two rust stalactites, and began to pace her great promenade. (which would have been awesome, by the way -walking by the ghosts of all those waving handkerchiefs - except that I was in that feeling-sorry-for-yourself state where very hallway is the hallway of your own wretched mind, every ghost your own ghost, so I didn't take a good look around.)

When I got to the Turkish baths, I sat on the edge of a barnacled tub and watched weird crabs scabble at my feet.

I was hoping you'd teach me how to sink, I said. You, who have spent a century underwater with 1500 skeletons in your chest.

I don't know, said Titanic, I'm kind of a wreck.

Exactly! I said, Me too! I'm here to apprentice myself to wreckage. I'm here to apprentice myself to you! Great bearded lady, gargantuan ark, you floating hotel. With enough ballrooms in you to dance with everyone I've ever loved.

My heart has an iceberg with its name on it, I told Titanic, so I need some advice. Tell me, did you see the iceberg coming?

I did, Titanic said.

And you sailed right into it?

It was love, Titanic said.

And the band just kept playing? And the captain stayed at the wheel? What did it feel like to swallow seawater? Tell me, Titanic, how did it feel?



pieces. never will I be reassembled in plain air. No, I will remain whole, two miles down, with my suitcases strewn open, and in 100 years I will still be writing about this feeling, though my heart be a Picasso, though my heart be bearded at the bottom of the sea.

The Titanic let me cry for a while, my sobs echoing off her moldy mosaics.

Then she said: Girl, you're too young for a beard like this.

I sniffled a little and scratched my name into the green slime of the tub.

The trouble with you humans is that you are so concerned with staying afloat. Go ahead, be gouged open by love. Gulp that saltwater, sink beneath the waves. You're not a boat, you can go under and come up again, with those big old lungs of yours, those hard kicking legs.

And your heart, she said, that gargantuan ark, that floating hotel. Call it unsinkable, though it is sinkable.

Embark, embark.

There are enough ballrooms in you to dance with everyone you'll ever love.

That's what the Titanic told me this morning, me, lying next to her on the ocean floor.

There are enough ballrooms in you.

*- Laura Lamb Brown-Lavoie*

