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“Jack Fritscher has roamed the furthest corners of sexuality, and can lead you on head trips unequaled by any other gay writer I know of. You may resist, as I did, some of the aggression, machismo, and sexual practices only to be won over by Fritscher’s prose....[He] writes with sweat and wit, dirt and desire. Fritscher is a knee to the groin.”

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—Richard Labonté, *A Different Light*

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“The wit of Fritscher’s characters’ banter is matched by the text, offering much in the way of intelligent observation and wry commentary on the social milieu of the first-class passengers and crew and the disaster itself....Fritscher shows a greater degree of sensitivity to history and the story of *Titanic* than many other writers who have used *Titanic* to make socio-political points, or as dramatic backdrop for turgid carrying on.”

—[www.bytenet.net/TitanicImprint.com](http://www.bytenet.net/TitanicImprint.com)



# ***TITANIC***

## **The Untold Tale of Gay Passengers and Crew**

**100th Anniversary Collectors' Edition**

**Jack Fritscher**



Palm Drive Publishing

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## Epigraph

Walt Whitman, *As If Titanic*

Now, Voyager, sail thou forth, to seek and find...

What think you I take my pen in hand to record?  
The...ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass the  
    offing to-day under full sail?  
...of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in the midst  
    of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,  
    The one to remain hung on the other's neck and  
        passionately kiss'd him,  
While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.

I am for those who believe in loose delights.  
I share the midnight orgies of young men.  
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers.

I ascend to the foretruck,  
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,  
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around  
    on the wonderful beauty,  
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them,  
    the scenery is plain in all directions,  
The white-topt mountains show in the distance,  
I fling out my fancies toward them,  
We are approaching some great battle-field  
    in which we are soon to be engaged...  
Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready graves...

The conductor beats time for the band,  
    and all the performers follow him.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the  
steamship, and Death chasing it up and down...  
How he knuckled tight...  
How he saved the drifting company at last,  
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the  
side of their prepared graves,  
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the  
sharp-lipp'd unshaved men;  
All this I swallow...it becomes mine,  
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

Near by, the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin;  
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and  
carefully curl'd whiskers.  
Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd touch!  
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

Now, land and life, finale and farewell,  
Now, Voyager, depart...  
Often enough hast thou adventur'd o'er the seas,  
Cautiously cruising... But now...Embrace thy friends...  
To port...no more returning,  
Depart upon thy endless cruise, old Sailor.

Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd, came a drop gently to me,  
Whispering "I love you," before long I die,  
I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you to touch you,  
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,  
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.  
Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,  
Return in peace to the ocean, my love,  
I too am part of that ocean, my love,...  
as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,  
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us diverse forever;

Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air,  
the ocean and the land,  
Every day at sundown for your dear sake, my love.

Vivas...to those whose...vessels sank in the sea!  
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean;  
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers;  
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me;  
We must have a turn together—I undress—hurry me  
out of sight of the land;  
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse;  
Dash me with amorous wet—I can repay you.

Now, voyager!

—Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the great gay poet, broke the boundaries of poetic form, and rearranged and added to his ever growing book *Leaves of Grass* with every edition from his first in 1855 to his death-bed edition of 1891. Always writing about the human condition, Whitman often invoked the universal sea, ship wrecks, heroism, homosexual love, and loss. In his excerpting his beloved Whitman, Fritscher, without altering the beat of Whitman's "Drum Taps," samples *Leaves of Grass* as if Whitman, the American pop-culture poet, were alive to chronicle, as he surely would have done, the sinking of *Titanic* which occurred twenty years after Whitman's death. All the words sampled are Whitman's alone.



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