

Rheostatics, The Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald

Gordon Lightfoot

The legend lives on, from the Chippewa on down
Of the big lake they called Gitchee Gumee.
The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead
When the skies of November turn gloomy.
With a load of iron ore, 26,000 tons more
Than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty,
That good ship and crew was a bone to be chewed,
When the gales of November came early.

The ship was the pride of the American side
Coming back from some mill in Wisconsin.
As the big freighters go, it was bigger than most
With a crew and a captain well seasoned.
Concluding some terms with a couple of steel firms,
When it left fully loaded for Cleveland,
And later that night when the ship's bell rang
Could it be the north wind they'd been feeling?

The wind in the wires made a tattle-tale sound,
As a wave broke over the railing,
And every man knew as the captain did too,
Was the Witch of November come stealing.
The dawn came late; the breakfast had to wait,
When the gales of November came slashing.
When afternoon came it was freezing rain,
In the face of a hurricane west wind.

When supertime came, the old cook came on deck,
Saying, "Fellas, it's too rough to feed you."
At seven pm, a main hatchway caved in,
Said, "Fellas, it's been good to know you."
The captain wired in he had water coming in.
The good ship and crew was in peril,
And later that night when its lights went out of sight
Came the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.

Does anyone know where the love of God goes
When the waves turn the minutes to hours?
The searchers all say they'd have made Whitefish Bay
If they'd put fifteen more miles behind them.
They might have split up, or they might have capsized.
They may have broke deep and took water.
All that remains is the faces and the names
Of the wives, the sons, the daughters.

Lake Huron rolls, Superior sings
In the rooms of her ice water mansions.
Old Michigan steams like a young person's dreams,
The islands and bays are for sportsmen.
And farther below Lake Ontario
Takes in what Lake Erie can send her.
The iron boats go as the mariners all know
With the gales of November remembered.

In a musty old hall in Detroit they prayed
At the Maritime Sailors' Cathedral.
The church bell chimed till it rang twenty-nine times,
For each man on the Edmund Fitzgerald.
The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down
Of the big lake they called Gitchee Gumee.
Lake Superior, it is said, never gives up her dead,
When the gales of November come early.

