

Tricia Knoll

Flecks of Rusticles

The old man trudged with a cane,
accepted the minister's hand-up
to the podium. A woman I presumed to be
his wife kept her hand on his left elbow.
She carried three pictures framed in mahogany.

Today's service was spiritual show-and-tell.
He started to speak. The microphone was too high.
The minister urged him to wait for an adjustment.
The man fished into the pocket of his sport coat
to bring out a jeweler's box. Ring size.

His nubby fingers fumbled with the latch.
He told his story, breathy, leaning in.
In 1985 he served on Bob Ballard's crew
that scoured the ocean floor south of Newfoundland
for remains of the Titanic. Robots found hints

twelve thousand feet down. Sonar and sub cameras
confirmed the shipwreck. Rising, the sub caught
on the ship's rust icicles, handiwork of decades
of iron-eating bacteria. Now rust flakes rested
on satin in his white-suede case.

Sacred seas, the old man said.
No looting. A bit of rust, another of coal,
each the size of a fingernail. So many years
holding on to flakes of sunken death
in that box designed for engagements.

Tricia Knoll is a Vermont poet living in the woods of the unceded land of the Abenaki. She often writes of trees and other beings that breathe. Sometimes aging. She has four collections of poems in print; more information and links to many online poems are at her website: triciaknoll.com