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B. H. Fairchild  
A Photograph of the *Titanic*

When Travis came home from the monastery,  
the ground had vanished beneath him,  
and he went everywhere in bare feet

as if he were walking on a plane of light,  
and he spoke of his sleepless nights  
and of a picture in *National Geographic*

a pair of shoes from the *Titanic* resting  
on the ocean floor. They were blue  
against a blue ground and a black garden

of iron and brass. The toes pointed outward,  
toward two continents, and what had been  
inside them had vanished so completely

that he imagined it still there, with the sea's  
undersway bellying down each night  
as each day after compline he fell into

his bed, the dark invisible bulk of tons  
pushing down on the shoes, nudging them  
across the blue floor, tossing them aside

like a child's hands in feverish sleep  
until the shoestrings scattered and dissolved.  
Sometimes he would dream of the shoes

coming to rest where it is darkest,  
after the long fall before we are born,

when we gather our bodies around us,  
  
when we curl into ourselves and drift  
toward the little sleep we have rehearsed  
again and again as if falling we might drown.

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