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The Creighton Pool Hall / The Corridor

Mark Sanders

Robert L. Spencer

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The Creighton Pool Hall

BY MARK SANDERS

The smoke here is friend. The break of the rack
quiet conversation. Along the brown-gray walls,
where wood benches sit in the haze, cue sticks
stand their silent guard. Today no one speaks,
not the old farmers with sun burned dull
on their faces, nor the smart-mouthed kids
who fool with snooker, smoky silence
held in their lungs. Whatever is cool works hard
to stay that way. The squat Coke machine sweats
in its sun-dusted corner. A pin-up selling cement
ashens with age, her wax-smooth body scarred
where someone put out his cigarette.
A box fan shivers at the alley door,
an old dog noses out a space of shadow. ■

The Corridor

BY ROBERT L. SPENCER

I wake in an exquisite Old-Paris
mansard-roofed, colossus hotel.
Gold-gilded window frames, purple awnings.
The porter folds back the cage door,
the elevator opening to the Sunday morning lobby.

Three American girls with the exchange program,
their dark-haired French friend, his brother
introduce themselves, and coax me to follow.
The girls want the brothers to talk,
so I am silent as we spiral down
a stone corridor beneath the street.

The corridor ends at a huge oaken door
that opens to a basement room
and the boys' Jewish grandmother.
There is a fire blazing in a stone fireplace,
a great library of oversized books,
framed photos, signed, of opera stars,
wine glasses on a mahogany table;
a music box turns a ballerina.

The grandmother commands the girls
to laugh, the men to speak elegantly.
This meeting, which she has arranged,
is an opera stage. A curtain of shadow
hangs over her face.
Any moment she will sing
to avert tragedy. ■