

The Music of the Spheres

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A little boy alone in a big room
goes to the wall and picks up a long stick,
takes a few steps toward a heavy table,
rubs his sticky hands across the clean felt,
aims his dark-blue eyes down the wooden shaft,
looks around him, hits the ivory ball.

An older boy picks up a different ball,
looks around him, alone in the same room,
shoves it and a wad down a metal shaft,
packing it in with a thin scouring stick,
imagining things he has never felt
before setting the flintlock on the table.

A young man takes his weapon from the table;
anxious to find a home for his lead ball,
he rubs his soft hands across the green felt
before he steps outside the shady room,
carrying against his shoulder a stick
that conceals powder in a rifled shaft.

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A man aims his eyes down the metal shaft,
across a field as flat as a table,
wishing he were a boy playing with a stick,
praying his chest not become home to a lead ball,
imagining himself in a billiard-room
with friends, feeling his chest made of rough felt.

A baby at home wrapped in quilted felt,
warmed by smoke-billows from the chimney-shaft
and the light of a fire across the room
in which sits an empty table,
begs a father leave behind the lead ball
and return home with a mere walking-stick.

An old man lays down a dirty walking-stick
and takes his cue from the faded felt,
casts his light-blue eyes toward the eight-ball,
following his glance with the wooden shaft,
which clicks the spheres across the table
in the middle of a quiet room.

As he listens to the stick strike the ball,
shafts of fear and peace fill the shady room
with the table covered in what is felt.