

Walking a Hallway to the Hotel Room

For my father, it was always too long.
I'd reach the room first, holding the door for his arrival,
others farther down slamming on springs.
He'd wince along the way, eager for the air conditioning,
water from a plastic cup I'd hand him,
later, a seat on the balcony with its waterway view,
time to mop his brow and neck, curse Florida.
Then, the ritual of pipe, pouch, dipped felt cleaner,
multiple strikes of humid-moist matches (more curses).
The soothing crossword with a sharpened pencil.

For two nights, I am staying in Pittsburgh's grandest hotel,
a place we would never have been together.
The walk from the elevators to my suite is far—
not every guest could make it—
and for him, I think, the distance
would have been too great.
Yet, I wait in the threshold for him to catch up.

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