

THE CRESCENT

by Carol Dahmen

Thirty years after the great fire, my Dry Goods moved
from Riverside to Wall & Main, concrete details reinforced.
I am the only one with windows on every floor –
Seven stories all told.

At six, the boy sits on a red stool by his mother
Under the Clock on 1
Mesmerized by the soda jerk, he slurps his chocolate malt
his polished patent shoes swinging like
little black pendulums - wave bye-bye
to Daddy who's headed up to
golf on 5.

His breath fogs my windows years later in December.
I long to lead him out of the cold of a 1929 Christmas and crash
into my bay windows lined with soft, snowy cotton
red and green ribbons spiraling around him playing
amidst all the toys. He disappears into the crowd
his mother pulling him away wearing a
warm hat she bought on 3.

At thirty he waited for hours among thousands to ride
my escalators, the only ones in town, his own family in tow
all dressed up to explore each floor, until I seated them
to dine at a white linen table, decorated with china cups (from 4),
silver tiered trays of sugar cakes and
plates with crustless tea sandwich triangles.
Models, in fashions from 2, slowly walk and twirl down the center aisle
like soft, chiffon desserts
in the Tea Room on 6.

His cane clicks up the sidewalk.
In his seventies now, he still comes -
fogs up my bay windows marveling at the mechanics
of Christmas, and longs for chocolate malts - but
the soda jerks have left as has the
playroom on 7 and the
fur vaults in the basement.

I saw him one last time,
his jacket worn at the cuffs, fingering the
frayed threads, remembering the
tailor on 2 who is no longer there. Confused
he looks for my name

but only sees the waning moon reflected in empty windows.