

ELEVATOR MAN

Charles Fort

(For Ben Cocoa, the Man Who Lived Above Ground)

Elevator Man was a hunchback, they said.

He followed the elevator man
a stooped shadow in a fedora
up the steps of City Hall
to pay the property taxes
on his three-story tenement.
The elevator man changed hats
buttoned his blue shirt to a bow tie
and paced inside a cubicle of stale air
under a halo of green and red bulbs.
His eyes filled with swamp water
that foamed in the Walnut Park fountain
as he pushed aside the thick iron gate
that closed like the accordion
at the Blue Mirror Bar and Grill
in the science of woe and Polka.

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Did the elevator man
bow down to the men of fame
and roam high above the clouds
at the sixth floor alarm bell
and was it steam that hissed
from the gargoyle's nose
at the seventh floor stop
or the snapped pulley
and throttle in round eight?
They laughed at his buck shoes
and his wide brim black fedora
his gnarled lip and serpent cane
until the world shook where they stood
until the sky turned orange and black
until the hunchback revealed his wings
and taught himself to fly.