

Stairwell Leads

By [Diane Webster](#) (April 2024)



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The stairwell leads down
smaller, smaller, narrower, narrower
into a slit canyon of walls
so tight only air, water
squeeze through, through
to the darkness below where
ollie, ollie, oxen free!
echoes into a no man's land.

The stairwell climbs up
expanding as it ascends
into a sky offering
horizon to horizon blue
of sunshine or a dome
of stars rotating with earth
where one breathes full,
exhales particles
of millennial dust gathered
from the plaster walls left
behind, below, a ripple
of echo no longer heard.

Marble Musings

A block of marble outlines
the squinty fossil of a mermaid
tail curved to her left
as she lounges on a rock
at the sea's edge to admire
the horizon merge with the sunset.

A sarcophagus sealed
against looters with only

the lid a hint of what's
hidden inside, the mermaid
vacuum packed in tins
of cat food ready
to feed feral hordes
gathering as disciples
of the saint someday
reborn.

Fighting for Freedom

A soldier's statue stands
stories high on high rise ledge.
He gazes over the city
as the sun rises and wishes
he could raise his hand
to shade eyes from the glare.
His left knee bends
in anticipation
of the next step,
next step off the ledge.

But the punishment freezes,
forever granite solid
between step or no step;
stands for decades of erosion,
plunges to shattered remains
ground to sand to abrade,
to saw constrains like prison bars
of other city statues
tired of idolness.

Pine Tree Shadows

Needles abandoned
the pine tree long ago
leaving barren branches
outstretched for sparrows.

Sparrows fly in;
late parishioners
scooting into pews
hoping God and everyone
pretends not to notice.

They sing,
a chorus of praise
to the sunrise, blue sky,
and mountain air.

Individual pine cones
imitate mountain sparrows
as they cling and pray
to the pine tree.

Release them
with the hopes
a stray seed
captures the earth
in root strength
to grow needles
rising to the sky.

Rolls

Oscar taps tobacco
onto a cigarette paper
as thin as his white hair.
He rolls
outer around inner
with decades experience
and licks the paper
to seal the deal.
A match flares sending
sulphur into his nostrils;
a flame lights his cigarette,
and Oscar inhales,
exhales smoke
combing through his hair
like a lover's fingers.

Mom spreads out dough,
dabs butter all around,
sprinkles cinnamon,
raisins, brown sugar.
She rolls the mixture
with practiced fingers
and seals the edges
with swipes of water.
With butcher precision
she slices slabs from the whole,
lays them on a cookie sheet.
While baking, the aroma wafts
through the air like perfume
luring a look.

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Diane Webster's work has appeared in *El Portal*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *New English Review*, *Verdad* and other literary magazines. She had a micro-chap published by *Origami Poetry Press* in 2022, 2023 and 2024. One of Diane's poems was nominated for Best of the Net in 2022. Diane retired in 2022 after 40 years in the newspaper industry.

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