

# Stairwell Leads

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



Stairwell Leads

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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