

Immigrant Staircase

Rebecca Nye

Icy cool in sticky

June, the russet ceramic tiles sealed with crumbling
caulk welcomed the meeting of a chestnut burnished banister
accompanied by brushed-iron balusters knotted like the trunks of maples.
Dimpled hands trembled with might up each step, fingers clutching
textured cigarette-perfumed walls, navigating the jungle
gym that was the switchback
staircase.

Halfway up,

sunlight illuminated
the crimson and turquoise stained
glass panes in the curved nook, and when we were tall enough,
our auburn curls, too. How did those *Picea pungens* pinecones come to be?
Sometimes summertime ivy meandered about the window, veiny spinach salad,
while olive mosses lingered lonely in ever-damp pavement cracks below.
Cars whizzed past on the street beyond the pine,
buzzing metallic invasive emerald
ash borers flitting by.

The summit wasn't far beyond

the curve, but a pair of ornamental trumpet-brass deer,
a bewildering buck and doe duo, reminded us to slow and spin.
On the way down, rushing like Lake Michigan waves, following the tumbling
camel carpeting, that one step did our socked-feet in, and Oma yelled, "careful!" again. Suddenly
scooped onto her bouncing knees on the lowest step, crinkling
cousin eyelashes kissed flush as her peppery
cinnamon-gum mouth jingled with a
German nursery rhyme.