

Up & Down Stairs

by Bill Lapham

If you were at the bottom, the steps led upward. If you were at the top, they led down. Well meaning people had put them there, the concrete staircase. They wanted to preserve the natural beauty of the forest by preventing soil erosion in a well traveled corridor. In other words they destroyed the setting to save it.

The path, and then the steps, had connected the university's main classroom buildings at the top to the dormitories at the bottom.

The buildings were in ruins now. Some of the red brick walls still stood — looking like one hand praying — but all the roofs had collapsed. Spray paint proclaimed the tragedy's cause: “We can't *pay* more.”

Where the library once stood, simple critters with simple needs burrowed into the pages of rain-rotted classics.

These steps would survive long into the future, but not forever. They had become part of nature's reclamation project. They would succumb, eventually, to the slow decay the Second Law of Thermodynamics demanded. Science had won out; the whole place had become a longitudinal lab experiment.

Nature has patience. On a long enough time scale, it always prevails. The complex and organized decay into the simple and scattered: atoms and void. Time's arrow points straight at it. The end.

