

# Why Do You Build What You Know Will Fall?

by Stephen Measure

The wind blew and stung us—so I took a shovel and began to dig. I piled the soil up high, and I packed the soil in tight, and I built up walls around us.

Then a voice asked: “Why do you build what you know will fall?”

And I laughed as I shaped the soil. And I smiled at what I built, for when the wind blew, it couldn't sting us.

But then the rain began to pour, and the soil could not stand. And I wept as it turned to mud. I wept as it began to slide. I wept as the walls fell down.

Yet my body still had breath, so my work was not yet done, and the wind blew and stung us, and the rain fell and soaked us—so I took a sharp ax and cut down ten trees. I split them into boards, and I fastened them with nails, and I raised a frame around us.

Then a voice asked: “Why do you build what you know will fall?”

And I sang as I nailed the wood. And I smiled at what I built, for when the wind blew, it couldn't sting us, and when the rain fell, it couldn't soak us.

But then the fire began to burn, and the wood could not stand. And I wept as it lit afire. I wept as the flames rose up high. I wept as the walls fell down.

Yet my body still had breath, so my work was not yet done, and the wind blew and stung us, and the rain fell and soaked us, and the fire rose and burned us—so I took a hammer and split many stones. I carved them into blocks, and I laid them one by one, and I built a roof above us.

Then a voice asked: “Why do you build what you know will fall?”

And I danced as I placed the stone. And I smiled at what I built, for when the wind blew, it couldn't sting us, and when the rain fell, it couldn't soak us, and when the fire rose, it couldn't burn us.

But then the ground began to shake, and the stone could not stand. And I wept as it showed a crack. I wept as the whole roof trembled. I wept as the walls fell down.

Yet my body's breath was gone, so my time for work was done, and I lay upon the ground, and my body joined the earth—and it became the soil, and it became the wood, and it became the stone, and all was as I found it.

Now others will have their breath—as so many have before—and they will work the soil, and they will work the wood, and they will work the stone. And I hope they will laugh. I hope they will sing. I hope they will dance. I hope they will smile at what they are building. And I hope they won't listen to the voice that asks: “Why do you build what you know will fall?”