

## 062111-HOUS.2



*Written by Zachàr Laskewicz, for men, builders all, who are not mute yet cannot speak – and also for builders who are not blind but choose not to see . . . \**

1.

**The House I built was not of  
bricks,  
Nor stone, nor wood, nor  
mud and sticks;  
Made thus of cards  
Its fall was self  
Fulfilling...**

**Still, knowing it would all  
backfire,  
I kept on, as I did desire:  
Not 'house-as-built',  
Instead, the act of  
Building.**

2.

**I worked on it for hours long,  
So you would think it safe and  
strong;  
Yet for every hour  
Intact I kept on  
Praying...**

**With the fragile beams I lay  
I knew my house could blow  
away  
Thanks to the weak  
Foundations I was  
Laying.**

3.

**It's not the cards that I can  
blame,  
Rigged houses always win the  
game;  
I knew of all the  
Nothing I'd be  
Getting...**

**I felt that I could not refuse  
To play, although I knew I'd lose;  
Because I couldn't  
Still the urge for  
Betting.**

4.

**It's true, I knew of gambling's  
flaw  
I quickly saw its single law –  
Was to ensure that  
Betters can't be  
Choosers**

**The moment that I chose to play  
I knew that I would have to pay;  
And paying means  
You're playing with  
The losers.**

5.

**The hand whose contents I  
withheld  
The winning full-house I  
forespelled  
Was empty having  
Nothing as a  
Filling...**

**Worth all the nothing spent  
within  
How could you ever think I'd  
win?  
You knew my hand of  
Cards went for a  
Killing.**

6.

**With hand revealed I thought  
of Alice,  
Who in Wonderland's mad  
palace  
To the queen of hearts  
"Those guards are cards!" was  
Saying...**

**Although those cards cried  
for her head,  
On seeing them as cards she  
read  
That in dreamlands she  
Could not stand for  
Staying.**

7.

**I sold a piece of my delusion  
In my Wonderland's illusion;  
So quickly did you  
Buy what I was  
Selling...**

**Not seeing trees much less the  
wood  
I always knew you never  
could  
Tell any tale I  
Told from its  
Retelling.**

8.

**I had you think my house so tall  
Was not of cards and wouldn't  
fall;  
But it was just your bluff  
That I was  
Calling...**

**At the moment that it fell,  
You didn't see. How could you  
tell?  
To see it rise does not  
Foresee its  
Falling.**

9.

**For little pigs a lesson learned  
Is safety's cost – it must be  
earned;  
Like them, I feared the wolf  
Sees weakness  
Showing...**

**On smelling pork, he comes to  
town,  
He finds your house, then blows  
it down;  
His huff and puff so  
Gruff it's not for  
Slowing.**

10.

**But in truth there's naught to  
gain  
From piglets that are small and  
vain;  
'T-was of a false protection  
They were  
Preaching...**

**Because it was I feared you'd see  
The fiction in my fantasy;  
Blinded was I taught  
This empty  
Teaching.**

11.

Thus waiting for the wolf to  
call,  
I found out wolves don't come  
at all;  
Yet my fear grew  
Deep and kept on  
Growing...

I now know what in truth  
rings true  
In fact I am the one who blew;  
When my house blew  
Down, I did the  
Blowing.

11.

I thought when none escaped  
unscarred,  
From Usher's House which  
fell so hard;  
One must've heard its cry  
Through all that  
Crying...

This was when I wondered  
why  
So still my house began to die;  
Did it know of its own  
Death before its  
Dieing?

12.

When the House of Usher  
Trembled  
Perhaps it's true that it  
resembled,  
My house which could have  
Been a vengeance  
Seeking...

But as the earth began to  
rumble  
And it upon itself did tumble,  
Why did it meekly  
Crumble without  
Creaking?

13.

As it collapsed into the ground,  
Uttering no single sound,  
I thought of Usher's  
House, its anger  
Seething...

An evil had upon it preyed,  
And thus it left a ghostly shade;  
But when mine left  
It had no soul for  
Leaving.

14.

So quickly sank my leaking boat,  
It never had a hope to float;  
That's why it was of  
Drowning I kept  
Thinking...

Though stuck on deck without a  
crew  
It's true that I still hoped that you  
Not notice I had sunk  
Much less the  
Sinking.

15.

I knew it takes no stormy gale  
To sink a ship that just can't sail -  
Still did I thrust  
Foolhardily my  
Boat in...

Thus paddlelessly up the creek,  
I wasn't mute yet couldn't speak;  
So strong my angst you'd  
See me barely  
Floating.

**16.**

**Here in my house's ruins I  
wait,  
Knowing now it's far too late;  
To build again what  
I so hard was  
Building...**

**Looking back, I wish you  
knew  
About my house and its faults  
too –  
Only then, to build again  
Would I be  
Willing.**

**17.**

**I'm naked with so little left  
And although I'm house  
bereft;  
At least what's left  
Is no more fear for  
Fleeing...**

**With pained relief I know  
you'll see  
What houselessly there's left  
of me –  
At last you'll see there's  
Little left for  
Seeing.**

**19.**

**Doomed to fall, my house of  
cards,  
Its broken glass in fractured  
shards  
Has borne upon my soul  
Scars I'm now  
Bearing...**

**I built a house I couldn't fix  
Because I built with cards not  
bricks -  
And thus card-scarred I  
Care no more for  
Caring.**

**20.**

**It can't be true I've heard you've  
said  
You still can't see my house is  
dead?  
Its presence there is  
What you keep  
Insisting...**

**Though it blew down, and sank  
and fell,  
Like me you want to build as well  
–  
My house's spell  
Is just not built  
For lifting.**

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Sint-Niklaas, Belgium**

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Belgium**

**EXPLANATORY NOTES TO :**

The instigating metaphor which led me to write this poem grew out of a few anecdotes I spawned a few months before the idea of writing a poem came to me: firstly “You shouldn’t preach from a structure you’ve made of sticks” and secondly “A house you build of mud and sticks, it sure as hell aint made of bricks”, the idea being that one should be aware of one’s own vulnerability or that the one’s reality is a created and an entirely arbitrary one, one which you may believe in but can just as easily be brought into question and metaphorically fall to pieces, leaving you with a reality which makes little sense. While taking a shower, the fairy-tale of the three pigs and the absurdity of its possible moral interpretations struck me and the first version of the poem came almost immediately into existence, that of a house representing symbolically the construction of the self, one which is potentially built of cards, a delicate structure if there ever was one. The other metaphors connected to cards (of gambling and playing games, of Alice in her Wonderland and her crazy encounters with the cards) as well as the realisation that houses don’t just get ‘blown down’, but also ‘fall’ in the sense meant by Poe in the “The Fall of the House of Usher” struck me soon after, and I soon had finished the first version from the point of view of someone who spends his time building the fiction that he calls existence, knowing how fragile it is, but at the same time longing for everyone to participate or at least to believe in the strength of his house. This has very personal meanings for myself, but I distanced it in a sense by making it ‘art’-ificial with the rhyming structures and the use of these metaphors, which were designed firstly to present an amusing structure to communicate a powerful message, but also to fool the reader into thinking they were reading an exercise in poetic conceit when it really struck to the centre of an essential (and personal) existential problem, something which for me becomes increasingly more blunt as the poem reaches its end.

For me ‘art’ is connected to the word artificial in an important way; it means in an attempt to comprehend reality, you (or at least I) distance it from myself by surrounding it or presenting it in a structure which I can not only share with others but will hopefully provide me with a better understanding of my universe; although it is ‘artificial’, it is not *per se* about the ‘artistic’ product but the necessity of its creation for the writer (or painter or composer) and the process they use for its creation; in this case it is through poetic conceit, although as a composer and a graphic artist I’ve used different means to express similar (and entirely different) themes.

Returning to the poem, although we know that we are vulnerable, it amuses me to see how busy I keep myself building at convincing myself of its strength (and to watch others do the same; men – builders all); to distract myself from the risks of my world falling apart I try to stay as busy as possible holding it together. To demonstrate this I use literary metaphors from gambling (‘stilling the lust to choose to bet; betters can’t be choosers’ etc.). Also the three little piglets tale and the big, bad wolf who represents fear; the pigs teach a false lesson of safety behind walls we’ve built which are essentially flimsy, which is in essence a set of lies because our houses remain

equally vulnerable “I too fear the wolf sees weakness showing [the fear of you noticing my vulnerability; you are the wolf]”; further, there even aren’t any wolves – by being so obsessed with building, we are more than partly responsible for their demise. Alice in wonderland, who criticises the queen by pointing out her servants are just a set of playing cards, nothing more; she is brave and can wake out of the dream – she can choose; the absent first person ‘you’ however remains blind to the vulnerability of the narrator, aloof and distant (as most of us are, for obvious reasons, to what is really going on in the heads of all the people we encounter). There is also the metaphor of the leaking, sailless floating boat, ‘paddlessly stuck up the creek’ fighting the current to stay above water, and finally the metaphor of the comparison between the dramatic *Fall of the House of Usher* (E. A. Poe) and the ‘soulless’ house of cards which falls without a sound.

A last few words on some of the structural elements and word plays. As a rhyming poem I have attempted to form it into a structure which reads seamlessly and looks appealing on the page, even though it hides a confronting message (at least to me). I take advantage of the English language in ways which give the poem a folk-like simplicity, but I still make use of simple alliterations and repetitions that help ease and make pleasant the reading process, i.e. “You won’t see me, With so liittle left for, Seeing” – ambiguity here; “You wouldn’t see I’d sunk, Much less the, Sinking” – simple word plays, also allogicisms which have their own effect, i.e. “I knew of all the nothing I’d be getting” in relation to betting. Then there are deceptively funny elements “On smelling pork he comes to town, he finds your house, then blows it down; his huff and puff so gruff it’s not for slowing.” There are many other examples, but I hope this description provides a basis for understanding the poem.