



“SCHOOL HOUSE”

Nothing fancy, never fancy,
every board counted, every nail,
every bench, every piece of shingle,
nothing fancy, just love.

The hands of men with nothing but hope
in their fingers, tenderly grew this school
from the swamp-soft earth,
there under the canopy of ancient trees;
grew this sanctuary for learning,
a school where once there was bush.

And the children came,
soaked to the bone with morning rain
and the discriminating splatter of mud
by the wheels of the yellow school buses
ferrying the white children to their brick
edifice where they learned difference.

And we would wait with towels to ready them—
shaken but not broke—to learn.

There is nothing here, and here is a germ
of possibility. The wind wailed
late in nineteen forty-two,
and we trembled at the fate of the temple
while we held up the walls of our homes
straining against the blast outside.

In the early morning, when all was calm
we walked with tools, timber and fearful hearts
into the dense madness of the swamp
to find the school standing tall,
miraculously saved from the howl
and the crash of old rotting trees.

Come Monday morning, the children came,
faces aglow with new hope, new hope.

-- from *Wisteria: Twilight Poems from the Swamp Country*
by Kwame Dawes

