



The Chimney Sweeper

By Aleksanteri



Stanza 1

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father **sold me while yet my tongue**
Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! "
So your chimneys I **sweep & in soot I sleep.**

Blake recites the experience of a young boy who had to work in the chimney sweeping business before they could speak.

The boy was a baby, yet forced to work. This is a criticism of the abuse of power at that time. Blake didn't think it was appropriate for a tiny boy to have to work before they could even understand what they were doing.

The little boy doesn't have a place to sleep, he is covered in a layer of charcoal because of the long day of cleaning rich people's houses.

A lambs back





Stanza 2

There's little **Tom Dacre**, who cried when his head
That curled like a **lamb's back**, was shaved, so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's
bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white
hair."

Tom Dacre, a little boy. He is forced into this '*profession*'. He is crying which makes it seem more exploitative than a profession. They are being paid pennies for their work.

Curly white hair. Blake uses imagery to show how unique this hair type was, just to be thrown away so he fits in with the rest of the working boys.

The little boy from whose perspective this is being told is being very calm and overall positive about the whole situation.



Stanza 3

And so he was quiet, & **that very night**,
As Tom was a-sleeping he had **such a sight!**
That **thousands of sweepers**, Dick, Joe, Ned, &
Jack,
Were all of them locked up in **coffins of black**;

That night Tom had a realisation that many boys just like them were being exploited for next to free labour. That they had to lie in coffins while the upper class could just throw them into dangerous conditions to work. The mention of names shows that these are the only people the boy knows, they are his friends, even family to them.

This is the realisation in the poem where they understand the extent to which they are being exploited. The mention of coffins makes the reader think about how these boys are being exploited to the brink of death. That they are in rows takes their identity away, makes them feel worthless.



Stanza 4

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins & set them all free;

Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they
run,

And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

The boy understood that once they died, they would be sent to heaven. That God thinks the boys deserve better.

The mention of washing really shows that these boys only want to be clean, and play in the sun. Their lives are being taken away, stripped from them, by higher powers.

Blake is very critical of the abuse of power in those times.



Stanza 5

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,

They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.

And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,

He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

They felt free, their white skin shining underneath the layers and layers of soot they've now cleaned off.

The boys left behind (chimney sweeping bags) all their worries, they no longer wanted to carry the burden, the pressures of the real world.

The played in the clouds until an Angel told Tom, that no matter who his biological father is, how bad of a person they are, God will also be by the side of the boys, and that all will work out.

Blake wasn't critical of Religion, he believed in it. Just of the way society was structured back then.



Stanza 6

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.

Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy &
warm;

So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

When Tom awoke in the early morning, they had to
get straight to work. They picked their bags and
other tools.

In the cold depressing morning, Tom was happy and
felt enlightened.

If all do their duty to God, there is no need fear the
child exploitation.