

A Selection of Poems by William Blake

(Produced in order to demonstrate Open Anthologies)

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A Song

Sweet dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!

Sweet Sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown
Sweet Sleep, angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child!

5

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight!
Sweet smiles, mother's smile,
All the livelong night beguile.

10

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thine eyes!
Sweet moan, sweeter smile,
All the dovelike moans beguile.

15

Sleep, sleep, happy child!
All creation slept and smiled.
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee doth mother weep.

20

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace;
Sweet babe, once like thee
Thy Maker lay, and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee!

25

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,
Who became an infant small;
Infant smiles are his own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

30

Earth's Answer

Earth raised up her head From the darkness dread and drear, Her light fled, Stony, dread, And her locks covered with grey despair.	5
"Prisoned on watery shore, Starry jealousy does keep my den Cold and hoar; Weeping o'er, I hear the father of the ancient men.	10
"Selfish father of men! Cruel, jealous, selfish fear! Can delight, Chained in night, The virgins of youth and morning bear?	15
"Does spring hide its joy, When buds and blossoms grow? Does the sower Sow by night, Or the plowman in darkness plough?	20
"Break this heavy chain, That does freeze my bones around! Selfish, vain, Eternal bane, That free love with bondage bound."	25

Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild, Piping songs of pleasant glee, On a cloud I saw a child, And he laughing said to me:	
"Pipe a song about a Lamb!" So I piped with merry cheer.	5
"Piper, pipe that song again;" So I piped: he wept to hear.	
"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe; Sing thy songs of happy cheer!" So I sang the same again, While he wept with joy to hear.	10

"Piper, sit thee down and write
 In a book, that all may read."
 So he vanish'd from my sight; 15
 And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
 And I stain'd the water clear,
 And I wrote my happy songs
 Every child may joy to hear. 20

Night

The sun descending in the west,
 The evening star does shine;
 The birds are silent in their nest,
 And I must seek for mine.
 The moon, like a flower 5
 In heaven's high bower,
 With silent delight,
 Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove,
 Where flocks have ta'en delight. 10
 Where lambs have nibbled, silent move
 The feet of angels bright;
 Unseen they pour blessing,
 And joy without ceasing,
 On each bud and blossom, 15
 And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest
 Where birds are covered warm;
 They visit caves of every beast,
 To keep them all from harm: 20
 If they see any weeping
 That should have been sleeping,
 They pour sleep on their head,
 And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey, 25
 They pitying stand and weep;
 Seeking to drive their thirst away,
 And keep them from the sheep.
 But, if they rush dreadful,
 The angels, most heedful, 30
 Receive each mild spirit,
 New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
 Shall flow with tears of gold:
 And pitying the tender cries, 35
 And walking round the fold:
 Saying: "Wrath by His meekness,
 And, by His health, sickness,
 Are driven away
 From our immortal day. 40

 "And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
 I can lie down and sleep,
 Or think on Him who bore thy name,
 Graze after thee, and weep.
 For, washed in life's river, 45
 My bright mane for ever
 Shall shine like the gold,
 As I guard o'er the fold."

On Another's Sorrow

Can I see another's woe,
 And not be in sorrow too?
 Can I see another's grief,
 And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear, 5
 And not feel my sorrow's share?
 Can a father see his child
 Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?

Can a mother sit and hear
 An infant groan, an infant fear? 10
 No, no! never can it be!
 Never, never can it be!

And can He who smiles on all
 Hear the wren with sorrows small,
 Hear the small bird's grief and care, 15
 Hear the woes that infants bear—

And not sit beside the next,
 Pouring pity in their breast,
 And not sit the cradle near,
 Weeping tear on infant's tear? 20

And not sit both night and day,
 Wiping all our tears away?
 Oh no! never can it be!
 Never, never can it be!

He doth give his joy to all: 25
 He becomes an infant small,
 He becomes a man of woe,
 He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
 And thy Maker is not by: 30
 Think not thou canst weep a tear,
 And thy Maker is not near.

Oh He gives to us his joy,
 That our grief He may destroy:
 Till our grief is fled an gone 35
 He doth sit by us and moan.

The Chimney-Sweeper

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, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head, 5
 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."

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
 As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!— 10
 That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
 Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an angel, who had a bright key,
 And he opened the coffins, and let them all free;
 Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run, 15
 And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and 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, and never want joy. 20

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,
 And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
 Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm:
 So, if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

The Echoing Green

The sun does arise,
 And make happy the skies;
 The merry bells ring
 To welcome the Spring;
 The skylark and thrush, 5
 The birds of the bush,
 Sing louder around
 To the bells' cheerful sound;
 While our sports shall be seen
 On the echoing Green. 10

Old John, with white hair,
 Does laugh away care,
 Sitting under the oak,
 Among the old folk.
 They laugh at our play, 15
 And soon they all say,
 "Such, such were the joys
 When we all—girls and boys—
 In our youth-time were seen
 On the echoing Green." 20

Till the little ones, weary,
 No more can be merry:
 The sun does descend,
 And our sports have an end.
 Round the laps of their mothers 25
 Many sisters and brothers,
 Like birds in their nest,
 Are ready for rest,
 And sport no more seen
 On the darkening green. 30

The Little Girl Found

All the night in woe
 Lyca's parents go
 Over valleys deep,
 While the deserts weep.

Tired and woe-begone, 5
 Hoarse with making moan,
 Arm in arm, seven days
 They traced the desert ways.

Seven nights they sleep
 Among shadows deep, 10
 And dream they see their child
 Starved in desert wild.

Pale through pathless ways
 The fancied image strays,
 Famished, weeping, weak, 15
 With hollow piteous shriek.

Rising from unrest,
 The trembling woman pressed
 With feet of weary woe;
 She could no further go. 20

In his arms he bore
 Her, armed with sorrow sore;
 Till before their way
 A couching lion lay.

Turning back was vain: 25
 Soon his heavy mane
 Bore them to the ground,
 Then he stalked around,

Smelling to his prey;
 But their fears allay 30
 When he licks their hands,
 And silent by them stands.

They look upon his eyes,
 Filled with deep surprise;
 And wondering behold 35
 A spirit armed in gold.

On his head a crown,
 On his shoulders down
 Flowed his golden hair.
 Gone was all their care. 40

"Follow me," he said;
 "Weep not for the maid;
 In my palace deep,
 Lyca lies asleep."

Then they followed 45
 Where the vision led,
 And saw their sleeping child
 Among tigers wild.

To this day they dwell
 In a lonely dell, 50
 Nor fear the wolvis howl
 Nor the lion's growl.

The Little Girl Lost

In futurity
 I prophetic see
 That the earth from sleep
 (Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise, and seek 5
 for her Maker meek;
 And the desert wild
 Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,
 Where the summer's prime 10
 Never fades away,
 Lovely Lyca lay.

Seven summers old
 Lovely Lyca told.
 She had wandered long, 15
 Hearing wild birds' song.

"Sweet sleep, come to me
 Underneath this tree;
 Do father, mother, weep?
 Where can Lyca sleep? 20

"Lost in desert wild
 Is your little child.
 How can Lyca sleep
 If her mother weep?

"If her heart does ache, 25
 Then let Lyca wake;
 If my mother sleep,
 Lyca shall not weep.

"Frowning, frowning night,
 O'er this desert bright 30
 Let thy moon arise,
 While I close my eyes."

Sleeping Lyca lay
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
Viewed the maid asleep. 35

The kingly lion stood,
And the virgin viewed:
Then he gambolled round
O'er the hallowed ground. 40

Leopards, tigers, play
Round her as she lay;
While the lion old
Bowed his mane of gold,

And her breast did lick
And upon her neck,
From his eyes of flame,
Ruby tears there came; 45

While the lioness
Loosed her slender dress,
And naked they conveyed
To caves the sleeping maid. 50

The Tyger

Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire? 5

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet? 10

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp? 15

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

20

Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?