



## **Write Your Own Story Instructions**

Read the story, then do a portrait page of how you see the character, and write your own story.

## **Story Prompt for The Little Sweeper:**

What would you do if you were the Little Sweeper?

# The Little Sweeper

## ONCE UPON A TIME...

there was a Little Sweeper who went about sweeping and cleaning from one corner of a room to another, down one street of town and up the other. With his broom of straw, he would stir up the dust all around him and, then, laugh. No one knew what made him so happy. As the sun shone through the windows, the dirt in the corners of the room would float down like fairy dust through the rays of light. As though it surrounded him in a magical world, The Little Sweeper would stand in the middle of the falling dust and let it settle, covering him in a thin blanket of warmth.

The town depended on him to sweep up the dirt on the cobblestone streets and to dust off the sills of the windows in the village square. Wherever he went dust would fly and a little whirlwind of debris would follow him. The children of the town were jealous of The Little Sweeper whose job it was to play in the dirt. They would follow him around, teasing and taunting, pointing and laughing at him. They would hold their noses and make sounds like a pig. They would set up traps for him, stringing rope across his path to trip him up or entangle him. Sometimes, they would simply spill over cans of garbage, making quite a mess.

But none of their meanness and mischief seemed to bother The Little Sweeper. He just kept on sweeping and cleaning, doing his job while merrily humming the same tune over and over again. Into the streets he'd go each morning at sunrise and on he'd sweep until sunset. Every day, the rays of light would pick up the floating dust surrounding The Little Sweeper in a protective cloud and a secret world.

One night, all the jealous children made a plan to stop The Little Sweeper from having so much fun. They snuck into the wooden shack where The Little Sweeper lived and, while he slept, they stole his only straw broom. When The Little Sweeper woke up to discover the broom

was gone, he didn't know what to do. How would he go about his work, spending his days happily covered in clouds of magical dust, followed by little whirlwinds of scattered debris?

In the morning, the children came to dance around the shack and to tell him they had hidden his broom. He refused to cry, while they sang their little song: "The broom is hidden, who knows where and in three days it won't be there. If you can't find it, you shall see, tiny sticks it will be."

The poor Little Sweeper, who could he ask for help? On the first day, all he could do was go hunting for his broom from corner to corner and through the streets of town. But everywhere he went, he found nothing except mounds of dirt and piles of rubbish left behind. On the first night, with no new layer of dust to cover him and keep him warm, he could barely sleep and sat huddled up in his shed.

On the second day, while the mean and terrible children danced around, making their pig sounds, singing their song and laughing, he continued his hunt and went all about the village, through every gate and along every fence that circled the town. But he found nothing. And, by that second night, another layer of dust had been shed from around him. He was colder than ever and couldn't sleep a wink.

On the third day, The Little Sweeper was tired and miserable. This was the last day to find his broom and save it from being broken into tiny pieces. The children returned to dance around his shack and sing their song: "This is day three, and you shall see. We mean what we say, the broom will be hay. We'll build a pyre to set it on fire."

By the third night, The Little Sweeper hadn't found his precious broom. The mean children danced into the woods, dug up the buried straw broom and broke it into pieces. Hidden behind a tree, The Little Sweeper watched as they built the chips and straw into a pile, then, set it on fire.

As it burned, clouds of smoke rose high in the sky. Whirling furiously around them, the smoke circled the children, covering them in black soot. At first, with their faces coated in ashes, they all laughed and thought it was funny. But when they couldn't rub it off, some became so frustrated and others so frightened, they all ran home.

The Little Sweeper, left alone in the woods with the remains of his precious broom smoldering on the fire, gathered the charred sticks and ashes and carefully carried them back to his shed. He gently placed them in an old tin can. And, while the heat from their burning embers warmed him, he finally fell asleep.

The following day, the whole town was in an uproar. The corners and windowsills of every room in every shop were filled with dust. The streets were littered with trash. The children were covered in a black soot that wouldn't come off no matter how many baths they were given. Where was The Little Sweeper who loved to sweep and clean up with his straw broom?

Of course, all the children blamed the Little Sweeper and his magic broom for making them so dirty and cried to their parents that it wasn't their fault the town was such a mess. Meanwhile, The Little Sweeper remained hidden in his shed, staying warm by the can of still burning embers made from the ashes of his broken broom. What else could he do?

But while he sat in the corner, warming himself, he began to sing the same little song he'd always sung while he swept: "The dirt and the dust came from where? From someone else and from over there. I sweep and I clean, putting pieces together. Out of nothing I gather protection from weather. Clouds of dust I conjure with the sun to make a world for my own fun. No one knows where I've been, hidden inside this dirty skin."

And as he sang his sweet tune, out of the can an ember flew. It seemed to dance around the room and when it hit a ray of light it turned into a whole sparkling new broom. The Little Sweeper was surprised to hear the broom continue singing his song: "If what's needed is to share the

secret magic everywhere. Then, we shall teach the children now, what little is needed and just how, to play while working with quick strokes, to clean the town while making jokes.”

The Little Sweeper listened to the broom sing, finishing his song. Then, he jumped up and began to sweep from one end of town to the other. Of course, the whole village was happy to see him, except for the dirty children. As they gathered to do something mean and terrible, The Little Sweeper quickly turned to them and began to brush them off. Dust blew everywhere as the new broom magically removed all the black soot that had been stuck to their angry little faces since last night.

From his can of burning ashes, The Little Sweeper drew out and handed one burning ember to each child. The moment it touched their hands, the charred pieces from the old straw broom, turned into a tiny broom, each one a different color. While the children held on, they followed The Little Sweeper through the town, cleaning and sweeping. Allowed to work and play in the dirt and dust, the children, no longer jealous, were delighted to do exactly what The Little Sweeper did. And as they learned to sing his song, the dust would float down through the rays of sunlight, surrounding them in a magical world of their own.