

“Auxier has created a world you will fall in love with. He is a master storyteller.”

—Adam Gidwitz, Newbery Honor–winning author of *The Inquisitor’s Tale*

✧ *We save ourselves by saving others.* ✧

It’s been five years since the Sweep disappeared. Orphaned and alone, Nan Sparrow had no other choice but to work for a ruthless chimney sweep named Wilkie Crudd. She spends her days sweeping out chimneys. The job is dangerous and thankless, but with her wits and will, Nan has managed to beat the deadly odds time and time again.

When Nan gets stuck in a chimney fire, she fears the end has come. Instead, she wakes to find herself unharmed in an abandoned attic. And she is not alone. Huddled in the corner is a mysterious creature—a *golem*—made from soot and ash.

*Sweep* is the story of a girl and her monster. Together, these two outcasts carve out a new life—saving each other in the process. Lyrically told by one of today’s most powerful storytellers, *Sweep* is a heartrending adventure about the everlasting gifts of friendship and wonder.

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PRINTED IN USA



✧ PART ONE ✧

# INNOCENCE

## ✧ THE GIRL AND HER SWEEP ✧

**T**here are all sorts of wonderful things a person might see very early in the morning. You might see your parents sleeping. You might see an ambitious bird catching a worm. You might see an unclaimed penny on the sidewalk or the first rays of dawn. And if you are very, very lucky, you might even catch a glimpse of the girl and her Sweep.

Look! Here they are now, approaching through the early fog: a thin man with a long broom over one shoulder, the end bobbing up and down with every step. And trailing behind him, pail in hand, a little girl, who loves that man more than anything in the world.

The girl sticks to the man like a shadow. If he hops over a puddle, she hops, too. If he skips along a rail, she does the same. It is clear just by looking at them that the little girl belongs to the man, just as the man belongs to the little girl. And as they pass between sleeping houses, they sing at the top of their lungs:

With brush and pail and soot and song!

A sweep brings luck all season long!

*The song is not particularly special. Their voices are not particularly sweet. But when they sing, the most unusual thing happens. Instead of people snapping their windows shut to block out the sound, they rise from their beds, one by one, throw back the curtains, and decide to love the world just a little bit more. Parents suddenly feel the urge to hug their children. Children suddenly feel the urge to let them.*

*And every person, young and old, spends the rest of the day softly humming the song of the girl and her Sweep.*

*For as long as the girl could remember, the Sweep had been at her side. First he carried her in a sling over his back and fed her bottles of milk. When she got a bit older, he would let her ride upon his shoulders and pick apples from the trees they passed. And when she got older yet, they walked together like true equals.*

*The Sweep shared everything with the girl. If he had a scarf, he would let her wear it during the cold days and take it for himself on the hot ones. If they found a loaf of bread, the girl would eat half and pass the rest to the Sweep; he would eat half of what remained and then give it back to the girl; then she would eat half again; and so on. They would trade the loaf back and forth like this until the bread was gone and their bellies were full.*

*The Sweep let the girl share in his work, too. First he just had her scoop ashes from the hearth, but when the girl became a bit stronger, he let her climb chimneys with him. From the start, the girl was a natural climber.*



*She had long limbs, just like the Sweep, and her thin frame could wriggle through even the tiniest flues.*

*Being inside a chimney is a frightening thing; it's so dark and cramped that one can scarcely tell which way is up. And so when the girl and her Sweep climbed inside a chimney, they would sing to each other. The Sweep, who always went up first, would brush out soot and nests and cobwebs, singing all the while. And the girl knew that all she had to do was follow his voice and she would be safe.*

*Eventually the two of them would emerge from the top of the flue, filthy and triumphant. The view from a chimney stack is a truly majestic thing. For miles in every direction all you can see are rooftops and more rooftops, like tiny dunes stretching to the horizon. Many times the Sweep remarked that kings and lords couldn't wish for a better view—and he should know, because he had swept a few palaces in his day.*

*Of course, life was not always easy for the girl and her Sweep. Many nights were cold and wet. Many days were humid and hungry. More than once they entered a new town and quickly found themselves surrounded by a band of disgruntled local sweeps. Whenever this happened, the Sweep would ask the girl to watch the tools while he and the other sweeps talked things through in the alley. He would emerge a few minutes later, limping slightly, his clothes a little torn, but smiling as broadly as ever. He would report to the girl that the other sweeps had told him of a neighborhood just a few miles off with some particularly good houses. In thanks for this*

*valuable information, he had decided to give them all the money in his pockets.*

*When the Sweep did secure work, he would get paid a coin or sometimes even two coins. On his way out the door, he would always warn the homeowner to burn the chimney hot all night long—just in case any sparrows tried to make a nest up there. (This was a special joke between the girl and the Sweep, and it was all the girl could do not to spoil things by laughing.)*

*Later that night, once the sun had set and the town was asleep, they would return to the same house, and the girl would clamber up the rain gutter to the edge of the roof and let down a rope for the Sweep to follow after her. Then, walking very carefully, so as not to make any noise, they would lay blankets against the smoking chimney stack, which was warm to the touch, and make their beds.*

*Most children despise bedtime and will do anything to avoid it. This is because they are forced to sleep under scratchy covers inside stifling houses. If they could sleep like the girl and her Sweep—on warm rooftops beneath a canopy of stars—they would understand just how magical bedtime could be.*

*As they stared into the infinite dark, sometimes the Sweep would tell the girl stories about their day. Other times they would just lie in silence. But every night ended the same way: with her falling asleep against his chest as he stroked her hair and sang her their special lullaby:*

THE GIRL AND HER SWEEP

With brush and pail and soot and song!  
A sweep brings luck all season long!

*As the Sweep sang these words, the girl would drift off—dreaming of stars and seas and adventures far, far away.*

*This was life as the girl knew it. And every night she slept soundly, knowing that she and the Sweep would have each other forever.*