



THE TREE-KEEPERS

By Wayne Visser

The other day, on Hampstead Heath
While mist lay shrouded like a wreath
I chanced upon some tree-keepers
With leaves above and mulch beneath

Now tree-keepers, I must explain,
Are much the same as bee-keepers –
Though less about the drowsy smoke
And more about the high-slung rope;
Less about the honey wax
And more about the pruning axe;
Less about the buzzing bees
And more about the tufted trees –
So ... not so much, it must be said,
Like bee-keepers at all.

But tree-keepers, I will admit,
Are almost like the chimney-sweepers –
Just less about the charcoal dust
And more about the leafy rust;
Less about the fiery shoots
And more about the twisted roots;
Less about the blackened bricks
And more about the wayward sticks –
So ... not so much, in actual fact,
Like chimney-sweepers at all.

Still, tree-keepers, I'm sure it's true,
Are pretty much like fire-eaters –
But less about the searing spark
And more about the ailing bark;
Less about the showmanship
And more about the budding slip;
Less about the more absurd
And more about the nesting bird –
So ... not so much, if truth be told,
Like fire-eaters at all.





In actual fact, the tree-keepers
Are nothing like the night-sleepers
Or keyhole-peepers or canyon-leapers;
Not a bit like money cheaters
Or egg-white-beaters or candy-treaters;
Not even like crawly-creepers,
Let alone grim-hooded-reapers –
No ... not so much, despite their rhyme,
Like any -eepers after all.

Rather, those strangers on that day
On Hampstead Heath, I'd have to say,
Were nothing more and nothing less
Than keepers of wise Nature's way.

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