

## **A Job to be Done**

Coal mines  
harshness  
broken bones of those before me  
of those working  
underneath

Taking the raw energy  
Infusing the coal  
with the miners raw energy  
which burns

Living in coal mines  
---- of my mind ----  
Living in jobs  
This is a coal mind  
Breathing industrial fallout  
of our own labor  
keeping us in labor  
which burns

Whether working in deep mines or your own mind, avoid burning away as meaningless labor. Burn as an engaging flame of life: even when toiling. Living doesn't stop with a job; living stops when you accept labor as being meaningless.

### ----- **Looking from another angle**-----

A person can work having their labor taken away,  
so the world can burn brightly.

**--- or ---**

A person can work and assume their labor,  
to personally burn brightly.

It's the same job both times, yet the result ends up being vastly different depending on the perspective of each person.

Taoism drifts towards the third path:

Just be yourself

## ===== Paths =====

At times, work can become meaningless, repetitive or empty. When this happens make it something different: At this point, it can become a mantra to aid the process of reflection.

To illustrate this: Once my job had become dismal and the general attitudes of co-workers desperate (some were literally in tears over the daily problems). The experience crescendo-ing into my nearly resigning at exactly 1:12 pm in the afternoon. My mind switched into a calmer mood, pushed over a boundary, thinking about leaving the job, doing the math of all the debts and responsibilities, accepting that tomorrow I would deal with each problem, one at a time, to rebuild a new life. While starting to write a resignation letter, something else filled my mind. In that moment, I happened to look out of the 11<sup>th</sup> floor window: everything was crisper, the buildings in the view appeared as if each were a stone. The buildings moonlighting as black mountains, outlining an empty space 3 city blocks in size. In that moment, a seagull drifted thru the empty space between the manmade stone-skyscrapers. The bird flew in curves, defined by invisible hills and valleys of wind and air. The bird knew this terrain, its flight thru, illuminated an entire empty space, showing me something as a man myself I could only feel in sharing with a seagull. In that moment, the entire space became a Zen Garden, illuminating the empty space of my own personal frustration with a job. The stones of skyscrapers, a pebble of a bird, the lines of flight, the simplicity of a vista... left me at one with the whole moment. I didn't leave the job, as any other corporate job would have been the same, but within this job I had found, within a most crazy situation, a time of reflection and peace in a personal Zen garden which had manifested itself.

Now this last paragraph reads as rambling run on sentence. ***Shift the experience. Change the angle by reading it out loud as a story.*** A simple shift in approach modifies everything. Similarly simple alterations in work style can change a long tedious job into a poetic experience (- to a point -).

Life and work aren't packaged in neat sentences; they run on for us to experience.

Many monasteries use hard repetitive work, such as constant cleaning and maintenance of the monastery, as a form of meditation. A job doesn't have to be just a job. It can be the source of more than just cash if we are willing to be awake to other possibilities. Even the most mundane job can open realizations within ourselves. The key isn't to lose our personal identity to the control of something else!

I have a goal to help meld the spiritual practice of meditation within the western work environment. At times all jobs are empty, hard, boring or meaningless → yet with a slight shift of the mind, the same emptiness can illuminate a whole new vista of self discovery.