

Goblin Market

Goblins
want ppl
to buy
fruit

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
5 Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
10 Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
15 All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
20 Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons¹ and bilberries,
25 Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
30 Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
35 Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
40 "Lie close," Laura said,

1. Bullaces, greengages, and damsons are varieties of plums.

1862

Pricking up her golden head:

"We must not look at goblin men,

We must not buy their fruits:

Who knows upon what soil they fed

Their hungry thirsty roots?"

"Come buy," call the goblins

Hobbling down the glen.

"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,

You should not peep at goblin men."

Lizzie covered up her eyes,

Covered close lest they should look;

Laura reared her glossy head,

And whispered like the restless brook:

"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,

Down the glen tramp little men.

One hauls a basket,

One bears a plate,

One lugs a golden dish

Of many pounds weight.

How fair the vine must grow

Whose grapes are so luscious;

How warm the wind must blow

Thro' those fruit bushes."

"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;

Their offers should not charm us,

Their evil gifts would harm us."

She thrust a dimpled finger

In each ear, shut eyes and ran:

Curious Laura chose to linger

Wondering at each merchant man.

One had a cat's face,

One whisked a tail,

One tramped at a rat's pace,

One crawled like a snail,

One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,

One like a ratel² tumbled hurry skurry.

She heard a voice like voice of doves

Cooing all together:

They sounded kind and full of loves

In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck

Like a rush-imbedded swan,

Like a lily from the beck,

Like a moonlit poplar branch,

Like a vessel at the launch

When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen

Turned and trooped the goblin men,

small brook

2. South African mammal resembling a badger (pronounced ray-tell).

With their shrill repeated cry,
 90 "Come buy, come buy."
 When they reached where Laura was
 They stood stock still upon the moss,
 Leering at each other,
 Brother with queer brother;
 Signalling each other,
 Brother with sly brother.
 One set his basket down,
 One reared^o his plate;
 One began to weave a crown
 100 Of tendrils, leaves and rough nuts brown
 (Men sell not such in any town);
 One heaved the golden weight
 Of dish and fruit to offer her:
 "Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
 105 Laura stared but did not stir,
 Longed but had no money:
 The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
 In tones as smooth as honey,
 The cat-faced purr'd,
 110 The rat-paced spoke a word
 Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
 One parrot-voiced and jolly
 Cried "Pretty Goblin" still^o for "Pretty Polly;"—
 One whistled like a bird.
 115 But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
 "Good folk, I have no coin;
 To take were to purloin:—~~steal~~
 I have no copper in my purse,
 I have no silver either,
 120 And all my gold is on the furze
 That shakes in windy weather
 Above the rusty heather."
 "You have much gold upon your head,"
 They answered all together:
 125 "Buy from us with a golden curl."
 She clipped a precious golden lock,
 She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
 Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
 Sweeter than honey from the rock.
 130 Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,³
 Clearer than water flowed that juice;
 She never tasted such before,
 How should it cloy with length of use?
 She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
 135 Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
 She sucked until her lips were sore;
 Then flung the emptied rinds away

she wanted
 but had
 no money—
 they
 begged

cut
 hair
 for good
 fruit

3. Psalm 104.15. "Sweeter . . . rock": Psalm 81.16.

But gathered up one kernel-stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.

Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.

You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:

I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
Tomorrow night I will
Buy more:" and kissed her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums tomorrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:

bloom

Like two blossoms on one stem,
 Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
 190 Like two wands of ivory
 Tipped with gold for awful° kings.
 Moon and stars gazed in at them,
 Wind sang to them lullaby,
 Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
 195 Not a bat flapped to and fro
 Round their rest:
 Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
 Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
 200 When the first cock crowed his warning,
 Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
 Laura rose with Lizzie:
 Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
 Aired and set to rights the house,
 205 Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
 Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
 Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
 Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
 Talked as modest maidens should:
 210 — Lizzie with an open heart,
 — Laura in an absent dream,
 One content, one sick in part;
 — One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
 — One longing for the night.

215 At length slow evening came:
 They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
 Lizzie most placid in her look,
 Laura most like a leaping flame.
 They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
 220 Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
 Then turning homewards said: "The sunset flushes
 Those furthest loftiest crags;
 Come, Laura, not another maiden lags;
 225 No wilful squirrel wags,
 The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
 But Laura loitered still among the rushes
 And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
 The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:
 230 Listening ever, but not catching
 The customary cry,
 "Come buy, come buy,"
 With its iterated jingle
 Of sugar-baited words:
 235 Not for all her watching
 Once discerning even one goblin

awe-inspiring

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122

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165

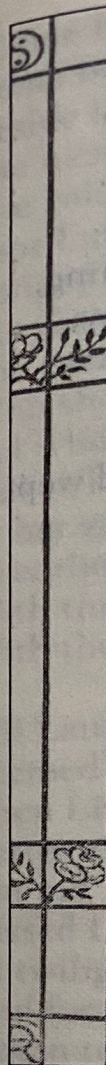
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GOBLIN MARKET and other poems by Christina Rossetti



"Golden head by golden head"

London and Cambridge
Macmillan and Co. 1862

WIL

Goblin Market. This frontispiece is one of the two illustrations that Dante Gabriel Rossetti provided for his sister's first volume of poetry in 1862.

Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;

Let alone the herds

That used to tramp along the glen,

In groups or single,

Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;

I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:

You should not loiter longer at this brook:

Come with me home.

The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,

Each glowworm winks her spark,

Let us get home before the night grows dark:

For clouds may gather

Tho' this is summer weather,

Put out the lights and drench us thro';

Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone

To find her sister heard that cry alone,

That goblin cry,

"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous^o pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?

juicy, succulent

260 Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
265 Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

goblins
never
came

270 Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
275 Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and gray;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
280 Her fire away.

watches
for themgrows
seed

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
285 But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
290 False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
295 Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
300 To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:

juicy, succulent

"Come buy our orchard fruits,
 Come buy, come buy:"—
 305 Beside the brook, along the glen,
 She heard the tramp of goblin men,
 The voice and stir
 Poor Laura could not hear;
 310 Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
 But feared to pay too dear.
 She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
 Who should have been a bride;
 But who for joys brides hope to have
 315 Fell sick and died
 In her gay prime,
 In earliest Winter time,
 With the first glazing rime,
 With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.
 320 Till Laura dwindling
 Seemed knocking at Death's door:
 Then Lizzie weighed^o no more
 Better and worse;
 But put a silver penny in her purse,
 325 Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
 At twilight, halted by the brook:
 And for the first time in her life
 Began to listen and look.
 Laughed every goblin
 330 When they spied her peeping:
 Came towards her hobbling,
 Flying, running, leaping,
 Puffing and blowing,
 Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
 335 Clucking and gobbling,
 Mopping and mowing,⁴
 Full of airs and graces,
 Pulling wry faces,
 Demure grimaces,
 340 Cat-like and rat-like,
 Ratel-and wombat-like,
 Snail-paced in a hurry,
 Parrot-voiced and whistler,
 345 Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
 Chattering like magpies,
 Fluttering like pigeons,
 Gliding like fishes,—
 Hugged her and kissed her,
 350 Squeezed and caressed her:
 Stretched up their dishes,
 Panniers, and plates:

4. Grimacing, making faces.

"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
355 Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
360 Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:

365 "Give me much and many:"—
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.

"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"

370 They answered grinning:

— "Our feast is but beginning.

— Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:

375 Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.

380 Sit down and feast with us,

— Be welcome guest with us,

— Cheer you and rest with us."—
"Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
At home alone for me:

385 So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits tho' much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee."—

390 They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
395 Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
400 Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,

Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
 Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
 Twitched her hair out by the roots,
 Stamped upon her tender feet,
 405 Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
 Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
 Like a lily in a flood,—
 410 Like a rock of blue-veined stone
 Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
 Like a beacon left alone
 In a hoary roaring sea,
 Sending up a golden fire,—
 415 Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
 White with blossoms honey-sweet
 Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
 Like a royal virgin town
 Topped with gilded dome and spire
 420 Close beleaguered by a fleet
 Mad to tug her standard down.

> Purity

She wouldn't eat

One may lead a horse to water,
 Twenty cannot make him drink.
 Tho' the goblins cuffed and caught her,
 425 Coaxed and fought her,
 Bullied and besought her,
 Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
 Kicked and knocked her,
 Mauled and mocked her,
 430 Lizzie uttered not a word;
 Would not open lip from lip
 Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
 But laughed in heart to feel the drip
 Of juice that syruiped all her face,
 435 And lodged in dimples of her chin,
 And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
 At last the evil people
 Worn out by her resistance
 Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
 440 Along whichever road they took,
 Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
 Some writhed into the ground,
 Some dived into the brook
 With ring and ripple,
 445 Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
 Some vanished in the distance.

Goblins

Raped Lizzie

She resist eating
 But she does not
 Fight back

They save up

In a smart, ache, tingle,
 Lizzie went her way;
 450 Knew not was it night or day;
 Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,

Threaded copse and dingle,
 And heard her penny jingle
 Bouncing in her purse,
 Its bounce was music to her ear.
 455 She ran and ran
 As if she feared some goblin man
 Dogged her with gibe or curse
 Or something worse:
 But not one goblin skurried after,
 460 Nor was she pricked by fear;
 The kind heart made her windy-paced
 That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
 And inward laughter.

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
 465 "Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
 470 Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

475 Laura started from her chair,
 Flung her arms up in the air,
 Clutched her hair:
 "Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
 For my sake the fruit forbidden?
 480 Must your light like mine be hidden,
 Your young life like mine be wasted,
 Undone in mine undoing
 And ruined in my ruin,
 Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?"—
 485 She clung about her sister,
 Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
 Tears once again
 Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
 Dropping like rain
 490 After long sultry drouth;
 Shaking with aguish° fear, and pain,
 She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
 That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
 495 She loathed the feast:
 Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
 Rent all her robe, and wrung
 Her hands in lamentable haste,
 And beat her breast.

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5. Makes headway ago

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Days,
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Her locks streamed like the torch
 Borne by a racer at full speed,
 Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
 Or like an eagle when she stems⁵ the light
 Straight toward the sun,
 Or like a caged thing freed,
 Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread thro' her veins, knocked at her heart,
 Met the fire smouldering there
 And overbore its lesser flame;
 She gorged on bitterness without a name:
 Ah! fool, to choose such part
 Of soul-consuming care!
 Sense failed in the mortal strife:
 Like the watch-tower of a town
 Which an earthquake shatters down,
 Like a lightning-stricken mast,
 Like a wind-uprooted tree
 Spun about,
 Like a foam-topped waterspout
 Cast down headlong in the sea,
 She fell at last;
 Pleasure past and anguish past,
 Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
 That night long Lizzie watched by her,
 Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
 Felt for her breath,
 Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
 With tears and fanning leaves:
 But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
 And early reapers plodded to the place
 Of golden sheaves,
 And dew-wet grass
 Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
 And new buds with new day
 Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
 Laura awoke as from a dream,
 Laughed in the innocent old way,
 Hugged Lizzie but not⁶ twice or thrice;
 Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
 Her breath was sweet as May
 And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
 Afterwards, when both were wives
 With children of their own;
 Their mother-hearts beset with fears,

⁵. Makes headway against.

not only

Their lives bound up in tender lives;
 Laura would call the little ones
 And tell them of her early prime,
 550 Those pleasant days long gone
 Of not-returning time:
 Would talk about the haunted glen,
 The wicked, quaint^o fruit-merchant men,
 Their fruits like honey to the throat
 555 But poison in the blood;
 (Men sell not such in any town:)
 Would tell them how her sister stood
 In deadly peril to do her good,
 And win the fiery antidote:
 560 Then joining hands to little hands
 Would bid them cling together,
 "For there is no friend like a sister
 In calm or stormy weather;
 To cheer one on the tedious way,
 565 To fetch one if one goes astray,
 To lift one if one totters down,
 To strengthen whilst one stands."

1859

"No, Thank You, John"

I never said I loved you, John:
 Why will you tease me day by day,
 And wax a weariness to think upon
 With always "do" and "pray"?

5 You know I never loved you, John;
 No fault of mine made me your toast:
 Why will you haunt me with a face as wan
 As shows an hour-old ghost?

10 I dare say Meg or Moll would take
 Pity upon you, if you'd ask:
 And pray don't remain single for my sake
 Who can't perform that task.

I have no heart?—Perhaps I have not;
 But then you're mad to take offence
 That I do not

1862