

## GOBLIN MARKET

By Christina Rossetti

Adapted for the stage by David Lawson Lean

### Section 1

GOBLIN Morning and evening  
Maids heard the goblins cry:

GOBLIN Come buy our orchard fruits,  
Come buy, come buy:

GOBLIN Apples and quinces,

GOBLIN Lemons and oranges,

GOBLIN Plump unpeck'd cherries,

GOBLIN Melons and raspberries,

GOBLIN Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,

GOBLIN Swart-headed mulberries,

GOBLIN Wild free-born cranberries,

GOBLIN Crab-apples, dewberries,

GOBLIN Pine-apples, blackberries,

GOBLIN Apricots, strawberries; —

GOBLIN All ripe together  
In summer weather, —

GOBLIN Morns that pass by,  
Fair eves that fly;

ALL Come buy, come buy:

GOBLIN        Our grapes fresh from the vine,  
 GOBLIN        Pomegranates full and fine,  
 GOBLIN        Dates and sharp bullaces,  
 GOBLIN        Rare pears and greengages,  
 GOBLIN        Damsons and bilberries,  
 GOBLIN        Taste them and try:  
 GOBLIN        Currants and gooseberries,  
 GOBLIN        Bright-fire-like barberries,  
 GOBLIN        Figs to fill your mouth,  
 GOBLIN        Citrons from the South,  
 GOBLIN        Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;  
 ALL            Come buy, come buy.

## Section 2

LAURA        Evening by evening  
 LIZZIE        Among the brookside rushes,  
 LAURA        Laura bow'd her head to hear,  
 LIZZIE        Lizzie veil'd her blushes:  
 GOBLIN        Crouching close together  
                   In the cooling weather,  
 GOBLIN        With clasping arms and cautioning lips,  
 GOBLIN        With tingling cheeks and finger tips.

LAURA           “Lie close,” Laura said,

GOBLIN           Pricking up her golden head:

LAURA           We must not look at goblin men,  
We must not buy their fruits:  
Who knows upon what soil they fed  
Their hungry thirsty roots?

GOBLIN           “Come buy,” call the goblins  
Hobbling down the glen.

LIZZIE           Oh,” cried Lizzie, “Laura, Laura,  
You should not peep at goblin men.”

GOBLIN           Lizzie cover’d up her eyes,  
Cover’d close lest they should look;

GOBLIN           Laura rear’d her glossy head,  
And whisper’d like the restless brook:

LAURA           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  
Through those fruit bushes.

LIZZIE           “No,” said Lizzie, “No, no, no;  
Their offers should not charm us,  
Their evil gifts would harm us.”

GOBLIN           She thrust a dimpled finger  
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:

*Lizzie exits*

- GOBLIN Curious Laura chose to linger  
Wondering at each merchant man.
- GOBLIN One had a cat's face,
- GOBLIN One whisk'd a tail,
- GOBLIN One tramp'd at a rat's pace,
- GOBLIN One crawl'd like a snail,
- GOBLIN One like a wombat prowl'd obtuse and furry,
- GOBLIN One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
- GOBLIN She heard a voice like voice of doves  
Cooing all together:
- GOBLIN They sounded kind and full of loves  
In the pleasant weather.
- GOBLIN Laura stretch'd her gleaming neck  
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
- GOBLIN Like a lily from the beck,
- GOBLIN Like a moonlit poplar branch,
- GOBLIN Like a vessel at the launch  
When its last restraint is gone.

### Section 3

- GOBLIN Backwards up the mossy glen  
Turn'd and troop'd the goblin men,
- GOBLIN With their shrill repeated cry,
- ALL Come buy, come buy.

GOBLIN            When they reach'd where Laura was  
                      They stood stock still upon the moss,  
                      Leering at each other,  
                      Brother with queer brother;

GOBLIN            Signalling each other,

GOBLIN            Brother with sly brother.

GOBLIN            One set his basket down,

GOBLIN            One rear'd his plate;

GOBLIN            One began to weave a crown  
                      Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown

GOBLIN            (Men sell not such in any town);

GOBLIN            One heav'd the golden weight  
                      Of dish and fruit to offer her:

ALL                "Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.

LAURA            Laura stared but did not stir,  
                      Long'd but had no money:

GOBLIN            The whisk-tail'd merchant bade her taste  
                      In tones as smooth as honey,

GOBLIN            The cat-faced purr'd,

GOBLIN            The rat-faced spoke a word  
                      Of welcome,

GOBLIN            ..... and the snail-paced even was heard;

GOBLIN            One parrot-voiced and jolly  
                      Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly;" —

GOBLIN            One whistled like a bird.

GOBLIN            But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:

LAURA            Good folk, I have no coin;  
                      To take were to purloin:  
                      I have no copper in my purse,  
                      I have no silver either,  
                      And all my gold is on the furze  
                      That shakes in windy weather  
                      Above the rusty heather.

ALL                You have much gold upon your head,

GOBLIN            They answer'd all together:

ALL                Buy from us with a golden curl.

GOBLIN            She clipp'd a precious golden lock,

GOBLIN            She dropp'd a tear more rare than pearl,

GOBLIN            Then suck'd their fruit globes fair or red:

GOBLIN            Sweeter than honey from the rock,

GOBLIN            Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,

GOBLIN            Clearer than water flow'd that juice;

GOBLIN            She never tasted such before,

GOBLIN            How should it cloy with length of use?

GOBLIN            She suck'd and suck'd and suck'd the more

GOBLIN            Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;

GOBLIN            She suck'd until her lips were sore;

GOBLIN            Then flung the emptied rinds away

GOBLIN            But gather'd up one kernel stone,

GOBLIN            And knew not was it night or day

GOBLIN            As she turn'd home alone.

#### Section 4

LAURA            Lizzie met her at the gate  
Full of wise upbraidings:

LIZZIE            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  
Pluck'd 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.

LAURA            "Nay, hush," said Laura:  
"Nay, hush, my sister:  
I ate and ate my fill,  
Yet my mouth waters still;  
To-morrow night I will  
Buy more;" and kiss'd her:  
"Have done with sorrow;

I'll bring you plums to-morrow  
 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."

*The sisters sleep. The Goblins creep in.*

- GOBLIN      Golden head by golden head,  
 Like two pigeons in one nest
- GOBLIN      Folded in each other's wings,  
 They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
- GOBLIN      Like two blossoms on one stem,  
 Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
- GOBLIN      Like two wands of ivory  
 Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
- GOBLIN      Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,  
 Wind sang to them lullaby,
- GOBLIN      Lumbering owls forbore to fly,  
 Not a bat flapp'd to and fro  
 Round their rest:
- GOBLIN      Cheek to cheek and breast to breast  
 Lock'd together in one nest.

## Section 5

GOBLIN           Early in the morning  
 When the first cock crow'd his warning,

GOBLIN           Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,  
 Laura rose with Lizzie:

*Lizzie and Laura get up*

LAURA           Fetch'd in honey, milk'd the cows,

LIZZIE           Air'd and set to rights the house,

LAURA           Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,  
 Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,

LIZZIE           Next churn'd butter, whipp'd up cream,

LAURA           Fed their poultry, sat and sew'd;  
 Talk'd as modest maidens should:

LIZZIE           Lizzie with an open heart,

LAURA           Laura in an absent dream,

LIZZIE           One content,

LAURA                            one sick in part;

LIZZIE           One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,

LAURA           One longing for the night.

GOBLIN           At length slow evening came:

GOBLIN           They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;

LIZZIE           Lizzie most placid in her look,

LAURA           Laura most like a leaping flame.



Each glowworm winks her spark,  
 Let us get home before the night grows dark:  
 For clouds may gather  
 Though this is summer weather,  
 Put out the lights and drench us through;  
 Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

LAURA        Laura turn'd cold as stone  
 To find her sister heard that cry alone,  
 That goblin cry,

ALL            *(Louder now)* Come buy our fruits, come buy.

*The Goblins draw close to Laura, but she cannot see them.*

GOBLIN        Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?

GOBLIN        Must she no more such succous pasture find,

GOBLIN        Gone deaf and blind? *(Wicked laugh.)*

GOBLIN        Her tree of life droop'd from the root:

GOBLIN        She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;

GOBLIN        But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,  
 Trudg'd home, her pitcher dripping all the way;

LAURA        So crept to bed, and lay  
 Silent till Lizzie slept;

*Laura lies down. Lizzie lies down. Laura sits back up.*

Then sat up in a passionate yearning,  
 And gnash'd her teeth for baulk'd desire, and wept  
 As if her heart would break.

### Section 6

*Laura is alone, she leans on the back of a chair gazing forward.*

GOBLIN           Day after day, night after night,  
 Laura kept watch in vain  
 In sullen silence of exceeding pain.

GOBLIN           She never caught again the goblin cry:  
 "Come buy, come buy;" —

GOBLIN           She never spied the goblin men  
 Hawking their fruits along the glen:

*Laura sits*

GOBLIN           But when the noon wax'd bright  
 Her hair grew thin and grey;

GOBLIN           She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn  
 To swift decay and burn  
 Her fire away.

GOBLIN           One day remembering her kernel-stone  
 She set it by a wall that faced the south;

GOBLIN           Dew'd it with tears, hoped for a root,  
 Watch'd for a waxing shoot,

GOBLIN           But there came none;

GOBLIN           It never saw the sun,

GOBLIN           It never felt the trickling moisture run:

GOBLIN           While with sunk eyes and faded mouth  
 She dream'd of melons, as a traveller sees

GOBLIN           False waves in desert drouth  
 With shade of leaf-crown'd trees,

GOBLIN           And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

GOBLIN           She no more swept the house,

GOBLIN        Tended the fowls or cows,  
 GOBLIN        Fetch'd honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,  
 GOBLIN        Brought water from the brook:  
 GOBLIN        But sat down listless in the chimney-nook  
 GOBLIN        And would not eat.

*Laura sits alone on a block to the side of the stage. Lizzie gazes at her.*

### Section 7

GOBLIN        Tender Lizzie could not bear  
                   To watch her sister's cankerous care  
                   Yet not to share.

GOBLIN        She night and morning  
                   Caught the goblins' cry:

ALL            Come buy our orchard fruits,  
                   Come buy, come buy;

*Lizzie turns to look. Laura does not hear.*

GOBLIN        Beside the brook, along the glen,  
                   She heard the tramp of goblin men,

GOBLIN        The voice and stir  
                   Poor Laura could not hear;

LIZZIE        Long'd to buy fruit to comfort her,  
                   But fear'd to pay too dear.

GOBLIN        She thought of Jeanie in her grave,  
                   Who should have been a bride;

*Ghostly bride appears before Lizzie.*

GOBLIN           But who for joys brides hope to have  
                    Fell sick and died  
                    In her gay prime,  
                    In earliest winter time,

GOBLIN           With the first glazing rime,  
                    With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

*Ghost exits.*

GOBLIN           Till Laura dwindling  
                    Seem'd knocking at Death's door:

GOBLIN           Then Lizzie weigh'd no more  
                    Better and worse;  
                    But put a silver penny in her purse,  
                    Kiss'd Laura, cross'd the heath with clumps of furze

GOBLIN           At twilight, halted by the brook:  
                    And for the first time in her life  
                    Began to listen and look.

GOBLIN           Laugh'd every goblin  
                    When they spied her peeping:

GOBLIN           Came towards her hobbling,  
                    Flying, running, leaping,

GOBLIN           Puffing and blowing,

GOBLIN           Chuckling, clapping, crowing,

GOBLIN           Clucking and gobbling,

GOBLIN           Mopping and mowing,

GOBLIN           Full of airs and graces,

GOBLIN           Pulling wry faces,

GOBLIN        Demure grimaces,  
GOBLIN        Cat-like and rat-like,  
GOBLIN        Ratel- and wombat-like,  
GOBLIN        Snail-paced in a hurry,  
GOBLIN        Parrot-voiced and whistler,  
GOBLIN        Helter skelter, hurry skurry,  
GOBLIN        Chattering like magpies,  
GOBLIN        Fluttering like pigeons,  
GOBLIN        Gliding like fishes, —  
GOBLIN        Hugg'd her and kiss'd her:  
GOBLIN        Squeez'd and caress'd her:  
GOBLIN        Stretch'd up their dishes,  
                 Panniers, and plates:  
GOBLIN        Look at our apples  
                 Russet and dun,  
GOBLIN        Bob at our cherries,  
GOBLIN        Bite at our peaches,  
GOBLIN        Citrons and dates,  
GOBLIN        Grapes for the asking,  
GOBLIN        Pears red with basking  
                 Out in the sun,  
GOBLIN        Plums on their twigs;

Pluck them and suck them,

GOBLIN Pomegranates, figs.—

LIZZIE “Good folk,” said Lizzie,

GOBLIN Mindful of Jeanie:

LIZZIE Give me much and many: — (*Holds out apron*)

GOBLIN Held out her apron,

GOBLIN Toss’d them her penny.

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

GOBLIN They answer’d grinning:

GOBLIN Our feast is but beginning.

GOBLIN Night yet is early,  
Warm and dew-pearly,

GOBLIN Wakeful and starry:  
Such fruits as these  
No man can carry:

GOBLIN Half their bloom would fly,

GOBLIN Half their dew would dry,

GOBLIN Half their flavour would pass by.

GOBLIN Sit down and feast with us,

GOBLIN Be welcome guest with us,

GOBLIN Cheer you and rest with us. —

LIZZIE            “Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits  
At home alone for me:  
So without further parleying,  
If you will not sell me any  
Of your fruits though much and many,  
Give me back my silver penny  
I toss’d you for a fee.”

GOBLIN            They began to scratch their pates,

GOBLIN            No longer wagging, purring,  
But visibly demurring,

GOBLIN            Grunting and snarling.

GOBLIN            One call’d her proud,

GOBLIN            Cross-grain’d, uncivil;

GOBLIN            Their tones wax’d loud,

GOBLIN            Their looks were evil.

GOBLIN            Lashing their tails

GOBLIN            They trod and hustled her,

GOBLIN            Elbow’d and jostled her,

GOBLIN            Claw’d with their nails,

GOBLIN            Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,

GOBLIN            Tore her gown and soil’d her stocking,

GOBLIN            Twitch’d her hair out by the roots,

GOBLIN            Stamp’d upon her tender feet,

GOBLIN            Held her hands and squeez’d their fruits

Against her mouth to make her eat.

- LIZZIE      White and golden Lizzie stood,  
 Like a lily in a flood, —  
 Like a rock of blue-vein'd stone  
 Lash'd by tides obstreperously, —  
 Like a beacon left alone  
 In a hoary roaring sea,  
 Sending up a golden fire, —  
 Like a fruit-crown'd orange-tree  
 White with blossoms honey-sweet  
 Sore beset by wasp and bee, —  
 Like a royal virgin town  
 Topp'd with gilded dome and spire  
 Close beleaguer'd by a fleet  
 Mad to tug her standard down.  
 One may lead a horse to water,  
 Twenty cannot make him drink.
- GOBLIN      Though the goblins cuff'd and caught her,
- GOBLIN      Coax'd and fought her,
- GOBLIN      Bullied and besought her,
- GOBLIN      Scratch'd her, pinch'd her black as ink,
- GOBLIN      Kick'd and knock'd her,
- GOBLIN      Maul'd and mock'd her,
- GOBLIN      Lizzie utter'd not a word;  
 Would not open lip from lip  
 Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
- LIZZIE      But laugh'd in heart to feel the drip  
 Of juice that syrapp'd all her face,  
 And lodg'd in dimples of her chin,  
 And streak'd her neck which quaked like curd.

GOBLIN        At last the evil people,  
                   Worn out by her resistance,  
                   Flung back her penny, kick'd their fruit  
                   Along whichever road they took,  
                   Not leaving root or stone or shoot;

GOBLIN        Some writh'd into the ground,

GOBLIN        Some div'd into the brook  
                   With ring and ripple,

GOBLIN        Some scudded on the gale without a sound,

GOBLIN        Some vanish'd in the distance.

GOBLIN        In a smart, ache, tingle,  
                   Lizzie went her way;

GOBLIN        Knew not was it night or day;

GOBLIN        Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,

GOBLIN        Threaded copse and dingle,

GOBLIN        And heard her penny jingle  
                   Bouncing in her purse, —

LIZZIE        Its bounce was music to her ear.

GOBLIN        She ran and ran  
                   As if she fear'd some goblin man  
                   Dogg'd her with gibe or curse  
                   Or something worse:

GOBLIN        But not one goblin scurried after,  
                   Nor was she prick'd by fear;

### Section 8

GOBLIN        The kind heart made her windy-paced  
                   That urged her home quite out of breath with haste

And inward laughter.

LAURA *(Loud and alert)* She cried, "Laura," up the garden,

LIZZIE  
 Did you miss me?  
 Come and kiss me.  
 Never mind my bruises,  
 Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices  
 Squeez'd from goblin fruits for you,  
 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.

GOBLIN  
 Laura started from her chair,  
 Flung her arms up in the air,  
 Clutch'd her hair:

LAURA  
 Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted  
 For my sake the fruit forbidden?  
 Must your light like mine be hidden,  
 Your young life like mine be wasted,  
 Undone in mine undoing,  
 And ruin'd in my ruin,  
 Thirsty, canker'd, goblin-ridden? —

GOBLIN  
 She clung about her sister,  
 Kiss'd and kiss'd and kiss'd her:

GOBLIN  
 Tears once again  
 Refresh'd her shrunken eyes,  
 Dropping like rain  
 After long sultry drouth;  
 Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,  
 She kiss'd and kiss'd her with a hungry mouth.

GOBLIN  
 Her lips began to scorch,  
 That juice was wormwood to her tongue,  
 She loath'd the feast:

- GOBLIN      Writhing as one possess'd she leap'd and sung,  
Rent all her robe, and wrung  
Her hands in lamentable haste,  
And beat her breast.
- GOBLIN      Her locks stream'd like the torch  
Borne by a racer at full speed,
- GOBLIN      Or like the mane of horses in their flight,  
Or like an eagle when she stems the light  
Straight toward the sun,
- GOBLIN      Or like a caged thing freed,  
Or like a flying flag when armies run.
- GOBLIN      Swift fire spread through her veins, knock'd at her heart,  
Met the fire smouldering there  
And overbore its lesser flame;
- GOBLIN      She gorged on bitterness without a name:  
Ah! fool, to choose such part  
Of soul-consuming care!
- GOBLIN      Sense fail'd in the mortal strife:  
Like the watch-tower of a town  
Which an earthquake shatters down,
- GOBLIN      Like a lightning-stricken mast,  
Like a wind-uprooted tree  
Spun about,  
Like a foam-topp'd waterspout
- GOBLIN      Cast down headlong in the sea,  
She fell at last;  
Pleasure past and anguish past,  
Is it death or is it life?
- GOBLIN      Life out of death.

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

### Section 9

GOBLIN           Days, weeks, months, years  
                       Afterwards, when both were wives  
                       With children of their own;  
 GOBLIN           Their mother-hearts beset with fears,  
 GOBLIN           Their lives bound up in tender lives;

LAURA            Laura would call the little ones  
                      And tell them of her early prime,  
                      Those pleasant days long gone  
                      Of not-returning time:

GOBLIN            Would talk about the haunted glen,  
                      The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,

GOBLIN            Their fruits like honey to the throat  
                      But poison in the blood;

GOBLIN            Men sell not such in any town:

GOBLIN            Would tell them how her sister stood  
                      In deadly peril to do her good,

GOBLIN            And win the fiery antidote:

LIZZIE            Then joining hands to little hands  
                      Would bid them cling together,

LAURA            For there is no friend like a sister  
                      In calm or stormy weather;

LIZZIE            To cheer one on the tedious way,

LAURA            To fetch one if one goes astray,

LIZZIE            To lift one if one totters down,

BOTH              *(Holding hands in unity)* To strengthen whilst one stands.