

Goblin Market

Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* is a narrative poem that tells the story of two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, and their encounter with the goblin men, who sell magical but dangerous fruit.

The Goblin Men's Temptation

The poem begins with goblin men calling out to young girls, urging them to "Come buy, come buy" their exotic fruits. The descriptions of the fruit are rich and tempting, appealing to the senses. Lizzie warns Laura not to listen to the goblins, as she remembers the fate of Jeanie, a girl who ate their fruit and died.

Laura's Temptation and Fall

Despite Lizzie's warnings, Laura is drawn to the goblins. She has no money, so she gives them a lock of her golden hair in exchange for the fruit. She eats greedily and enjoys the taste but soon finds herself craving more.

Laura's Decline

After eating the fruit, Laura begins to change. She stops hearing the goblins' calls and feels weak, pale, and sick. She loses interest in daily work and wastes away like Jeanie. Lizzie worries for her but doesn't know how to save her.

Lizzie's Bravery and Sacrifice

Seeing Laura near death, Lizzie decides to help. She goes to the goblins but refuses to eat the fruit. The goblins become angry, attacking her and smearing the fruit juices on her face and body. Lizzie bravely endures the assault and returns home.

Laura's Redemption

Lizzie tells Laura to lick the juice off her body, hoping it will cure her. Though the taste is bitter, Laura does so and experiences a violent reaction, as if she is dying. However, by morning, she is healed, her beauty restored.

Ending: The Moral Message

Years later, Laura and Lizzie become wives and mothers. Laura tells their children the story, teaching them that sisterly love and sacrifice can save even those who have fallen into temptation.

1. Themes in Goblin Market

Temptation and Sin – Laura’s desire for the goblin fruit mirrors Eve’s fall in the Bible.

Redemption and Sacrifice – Lizzie acts like Christ, enduring suffering to save her sister.

Sisterhood and Female Strength – The poem emphasizes women helping women rather than relying on men.

Sexuality and Desire – The fruit can symbolize forbidden desires, possibly sexual awakening.

Capitalism and Consumerism – The goblins are like greedy salesmen, trapping buyers in addiction.

2. Symbolism in Goblin Market

Goblin Fruit – Represents dangerous desires, like sin, addiction, or sexual temptation.

Golden Hair – Laura trades her hair, symbolizing lost purity or innocence.

Lizzie's Resistance – Lizzie's refusal to eat the fruit shows moral strength.

Water and Cleansing – Laura's painful recovery symbolizes spiritual rebirth.

3. Literary Techniques in Goblin Market

Sensory Imagery – Rich descriptions of fruit make temptation feel real.

Repetition – “Come buy, come buy!” mimics market calls, reinforcing pressure.

Contrast – The goblins' dark world vs. the sisters' pure life highlights good vs. evil.

Biblical Allusions – Mirrors Eve's temptation and Christ's sacrifice.