

Phil's Dedications

- To Wendy, for sharing presents, presence and partnership. Some gifts never fade.
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Our Sponsors

We would especially like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors. Their generosity is truly the driving force that made *Goblin Markets* a tangible reality.

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GOBLIN MARKETS

The Glitter Trade®

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Introduction:

Commerce is the Dream of Man

“Come on, she says.
“We’re almost there.”

Lydia’s leading me down a winding street in Old Town — one that’s been abandoned since, like, 1973. Sunset’s giving way to shadow and the streets are growing dark. Here and there, streetlights buzz, giving just enough light to freak me out. This is not a place I want to be at night.

“Lydia,” I say, “you’re insane.” Only half of me is joking.

October wind rushes through the streets. Leaves rattle against broken curbs. It’s not just the wind that’s got me cold, though. A shopping trip in cracktown? What the hell? Still, I agreed to this and I don’t want to pull out now. Yeah, I’m scared, but I’m curious, too.

“It’s just another block,” my friend says, grinning like Angelina Jolie.

“Another block?” I don’t want to whine but it sounds like whining anyway. “You’re gonna get us killed!”

“Don’t be such a baby. We’re totally safe.”

Right. Sure.

My mind jumps at every shadow. Nothing comes near us, though. Far off, I hear music, clear and pretty. It’s coming from... the mall? Richfield Mall has been closed for years. The doors are all bricked shut. Folks call it Roachfield Mall, and no one goes near it. Not even squatters or runaways; it’s like a tomb. And yet, there it is — that music, coming from inside.

“Lydia...” I pretend it’s the wind that’s making me shiver. “Why are we going toward Roachfield?”

Her smile just gets crazier. “That’s where I went shopping last week! It’s really cool!”

“It’s really closed!”

“It’s really not.”

Leaves chase each other through the parking lot before flying off again. Lydia takes out one of those little keychain flashlights and shines it at the ground. The pavement looks like World War III. She’s nuts. What are we doing here?

Crossing the parking lot, I feel like I’m in some action movie — one that takes place after the end of the world. Still, the end of the world doesn’t have music like that around, and I want to see what’s making it. So then we’re at the main door — bricked up and covered up with graffiti and old posters.

“Okay,” I say, “Now what?”

I can barely see her smile: “Watch.”

Lydia shines the flashlight on the bricks and whistles up a tune like the one inside. The bricks start to... glow. And move. And fade into smoke. There’s so much light inside. After the long dark walk, it’s blinding. And there are people inside. And shops. And it’s all so...

“Isn’t it cool?!” Lydia takes my arm. I let her. “C’mon,” she says with a grin. “Let’s go shopping...”

Name Your Price

Business makes our world go 'round. Those who have something valuable and those who value it have been trading favors for as long as anyone can remember. It's the foundation of language, culture, money and yes, values. We dream about the perfect deal or fight to get what's coming to us. Commerce is the dream of man. And in *Deliria*, every dream has its price.

For in the goblin market, dreams are for sale. Lost heirlooms, old toys, the thing you've missed and the thing you never knew you wanted until now all beckon from the stalls of miracle merchants. Some of their goods are "magical" in the usual sense, but most of them are mundane to all except the right buyer. You see, miracle merchants understand that true value lies in the eyes of the beholder... and if that beholder wants what you have badly enough, all sorts of trades are possible.

What sorts of trades? Well, they might involve cash but usually don't. More often, these so-called "glitter" trades involve more ephemeral things: names, dreams, favors, memories, or locks of hair. Occasionally these prices can get pretty stiff: the name of your first-born child, your favorite dream, a promise to steal Malachi Fortune's favorite coat — you get the point. So welcome to the glitter trade, the cross-world commerce of *Deliria*! Here, miracle merchants and searching souls gather. Among the shelves and stalls of the goblin marketplace, we'll find plenty of adventures. What do things cost? What are you prepared to pay? The goblin market takes all kinds of coin. How much are dreams worth to you?

So What is a Goblin Market?

Inspired by Christina Rossetti's poem of that name, the term *goblin market* refers to the places where mortals and faeries buy and sell things to one another. The goods range from mundane items to magical trinkets to lost treasures and seemingly impossible goods. Services are rendered and products are exchanged. It's an odd dance — and a very old one, too. The courtship between the mortal world and Faerie takes many forms, but few of them are as intriguing as the goblin market.

Like Rossetti's marketplace, such places are characterized by strangeness. No matter how mundane a goblin market might appear on the surface — and some of them seem pretty mundane at first glance! — there's a weird undercurrent in any such shop. Most of these "glitter troves" are temporary, open at dusk, gone by dawn

Equal-Opportunity Employment

Goblin Markets is an equal-opportunity saga book. With a few *Deliria*-specific exceptions, the places, characters, systems and advice presented in this book work for any fantasy roleplaying setting.

You can add goblin markets to sword & sorcery campaigns, dark fantasy chronicles and even super-hero adventures. It's imagination, not a game system, that creates a successful fantasy setting. Play up a combination of cool goodies, high drama and emotional reality, and your goblin market will be in business for some time to come!

"If you are a dreamer; come in. If you are a dreamer, a
wisher, a liar, a hoper, a prayer, a magic-bean-buyer.

If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire,
for we have some ax-golden tales to spin.

Come in! Come in!"

— Shel Silverstein



and ruled by odd proprietors. The goods on sale are not standard Wal-Mart issue, and may not even qualify as “goods” at all. There are merchants who sell services or dream-stuff, memories of your past or potential for your future. Yes, you can buy a pack of cigarettes at some goblin markets, but the smoke may curl into dog shapes and bark at you before it slips away.

Most goblin markets are transitory, marking crossroads of circumstance. You find them when you need them, rarely before or afterward. When you go back, they’re gone — sometimes for a season, often forever. No one seems to remember such places when they go.

That store front? Nope, it’s been empty for years! The “goblins” have moved on. Their trade was needed elsewhere.

Some goblin markets, though, are permanent. Folks need the services they offer. Even then, however, that market shifts in time and space. You can get lost for hours in a Qwest-Mart store, wandering in one door and leaving through another that you hadn’t known existed. The store

itself is permanent but reality takes a different form when you’re there.

Things *happen* when you’re in a goblin market, too: you meet people who change your life, confront issues you thought were buried, or find trinkets from the past that, until now, had been lost. A goblin market shopper discovers truths about his life and self. If commerce is the dream of man, then the glitter trade is lucid dreaming.

And then there are the merchants themselves, odd folks who often seem to be part of the stores in which they work. Occasionally mortal, usually fey and often somewhere in between, the proprietors of these mystery shops literally live for the deal. Many of them are shimmerlings born of desire. A handful of them are mortals whose restlessness drives them from market to market. A few might even qualify as gods of commerce, worshipping and worshipped through the medium of trade. Regardless of their pedigree, these folks share salesmanship and a roving spirit that cannot and will not remain settled for long.

