**The Blessed Damozel**

1 [The blessed damozel lean'd out](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#0)

2     From the gold bar of Heaven;

3 Her eyes were deeper than the depth

4     Of waters still'd at even;

5 She had three lilies in her hand,

6     And the stars in her hair were seven.

7 Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,

8     No wrought flowers did adorn,

9 But a white rose of Mary's gift,

10     For service meetly worn;

11 Her hair that lay along her back

12     Was yellow like ripe corn.

13 Her seem'd she scarce had been a day

14     One of God's choristers;

15 The wonder was not yet quite gone

16     From that still look of hers;

17 Albeit, to them she left, her day

18     Had counted as ten years.

19 (To one, it is ten years of years.

20     . . . Yet now, and in this place,

21 Surely she lean'd o'er me--her hair

22     Fell all about my face ....

23 Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.

24     The whole year sets apace.)

25 It was the rampart of God's house

26     That she was standing on;

27 By God built over the sheer depth

28     The which is Space begun;

29 So high, that looking downward thence

30     She scarce could see the sun.

31 It lies in Heaven, across the flood

32     Of ether, as a bridge.

33 Beneath, the tides of day and night

34     With flame and darkness ridge

35 The void, as low as where this earth

36     Spins like a fretful midge.

37 Around her, lovers, newly met

38     'Mid deathless love's acclaims,

39 Spoke evermore among themselves

40     Their heart-remember'd names;

41 And the souls mounting up to God

42     Went by her like thin flames.

43 And still she bow'd herself and stoop'd

44     Out of the circling charm;

45 Until her bosom must have made

46     The bar she lean'd on warm,

47 And the lilies lay as if asleep

48     Along her bended arm.

49 From the fix'd place of Heaven she saw

50     Time like a pulse shake fierce

51 Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove

52     Within the gulf to pierce

53 Its path; and now she spoke as when

54[The stars sang in their spheres.](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#53)

55 The sun was gone now; the curl'd moon

56     Was like a little feather

57 Fluttering far down the gulf; and now

58     She spoke through the still weather.

59 Her voice was like the voice the stars

60        Had when they sang together.

61 (Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,

62     Strove not her accents there,

63 Fain to be hearken'd? When those bells

64     Possess'd the mid-day air,

65 Strove not her steps to reach my side

66     Down all the echoing stair?)

67 "I wish that he were come to me,

68     For he will come," she said.

69 "Have I not pray'd in Heaven?--on earth,

70     Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?

71 Are not two prayers a perfect strength?

72     And shall I feel afraid?

73 "When round his head the aureole clings,

74     And he is cloth'd in white,

75 I'll take his hand and go with him

76     To the deep wells of light;

77 As unto a stream we will step down,

78     And bathe there in God's sight.

79 "We two will stand beside that shrine,

80     Occult, withheld, untrod,

81 Whose lamps are stirr'd continually

82     With prayer sent up to God;

83 And see our old prayers, granted, melt

84     Each like a little cloud.

85 "We two will lie i' the shadow of

86[That living mystic tree](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#85)

87 Within whose secret growth the Dove

88[Is sometimes felt to be,](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#87)

89 While every leaf that His plumes touch

90     Saith His Name audibly.

91 "And I myself will teach to him,

92     I myself, lying so,

93 The songs I sing here; which his voice

94     Shall pause in, hush'd and slow,

95 And find some knowledge at each pause,

96     Or some new thing to know."

97 (Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!

98     Yea, one wast thou with me

99 That once of old. But shall God lift

100     To endless unity

101 The soul whose likeness with thy soul

102     Was but its love for thee?)

103 "We two," she said, "will seek the groves

104     Where the lady Mary is,

105 With her five handmaidens, whose names

106     Are five sweet symphonies,

107 [Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#106)

108     Margaret and Rosalys.

109 "Circlewise sit they, with bound locks

110     And foreheads garlanded;

111 Into the fine cloth white like flame

112     Weaving the golden thread,

113 To fashion the birth-robes for them

114     Who are just born, being dead.

115 "He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:

116     Then will I lay my cheek

117 To his, and tell about our love,

118     Not once abash'd or weak:

119 And the dear Mother will approve

120     My pride, and let me speak.

121 "Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,

122     To Him round whom all souls

123 Kneel, the clear-rang'd unnumber'd heads

124     Bow'd with their aureoles:

125 And angels meeting us shall sing

126     To their citherns and citoles.

127 "There will I ask of Christ the Lord

128     Thus much for him and me:--

129 Only to live as once on earth

130     With Love,--only to be,

131 As then awhile, for ever now

132     Together, I and he."

133 She gaz'd and listen'd and then said,

134     Less sad of speech than mild,--

135 "All this is when he comes." She ceas'd.

136     The light thrill'd towards her, fill'd

137 With angels in strong level flight.

138     Her eyes pray'd, and she smil'd.

139 (I saw her smile.) But soon their path

140     Was vague in distant spheres:

141 And then she cast her arms along

142     The golden barriers,

143 And laid her face between her hands,

144     And wept. (I heard her tears.)

**Notes**

[1]](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#poemline-0) The poem was revised for publication in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1856, and again before its appearance in *Poems*, 1870. Thirty years after its first appearance Rossetti told Hall Caine that he had written "The Blessed Damozel" as a sequel to Poe's "The Raven" (published in 1845): "I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven." Rossetti's early study of Dante, especially the *Paradiso*, has influenced the general conception and many of the details of the poem.

[54]](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#poemline-53) Rossetti probably had in mmd both the Pythagorean concept of the music of the spheres and the reference in Job 38:7 to the singing of the morning stars on the day of creation.

[86]](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#poemline-85) That living mystic tree. Cf. Revelations 22: 2: "... the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

[88]](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#poemline-87) the Dove: the Holy Spirit.

[107]](https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/blessed-damozel#poemline-106) The five saints were chosen for their musical names rather than for any special significance as attendants on the Virgin Mary.

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