

## THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

A line-by-line translation

## Shakespeare

*Dedication*: TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLY,  
Earl of Southampton, and Baron of Tichfield.

The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end;

5 whereof

this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous  
moiety.

The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not  
the worth

10 of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance.

What I

have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being  
part in

all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my

15 duty would

show greater; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your  
lordship,

to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all  
happiness.

20 Your lordship's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

*Argument*: Lucius Tarquinius, for his excessive pride

25 surnamed Superbus, after he had caused his own  
father-in-law Servius Tullius to be cruelly murdered,

and, contrary to the Roman laws and customs, not  
requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had

possessed himself of the kingdom, went, accompanied with  
his sons and other noblemen of Rome, to besiege Ardea.

30 During which siege the principal men of the army meeting

one evening at the tent of Sextus Tarquinius, the king's  
son, in their discourses after supper every one

commended the virtues of his own wife: among whom  
Collatinus extolled the incomparable chastity of his

35 wife Lucretia. In that pleasant humour they posted to  
Rome; and intending, by their secret and sudden arrival,

to make trial of that which every one had before  
avouched, only Collatinus finds his wife, though it were

late in the night, spinning amongst her maids: the  
other ladies were all found dancing and revelling, or in

40 several disports. Whereupon the noblemen yielded  
Collatinus the victory, and his wife the fame. At that

time Sextus Tarquinius being inflamed with Lucrece'  
beauty, yet smothering his passions for the present,

45 departed with the rest back to the camp; from whence he  
shortly after privily withdrew himself, and was,

according to his estate, royally entertained and lodged  
by Lucrece at Collatium. The same night he treacherously

stealth into her chamber, violently ravished her, and  
early in the morning speedeth away. Lucrece, in this

50 lamentable plight, hastily dispatcheth messengers, one  
to Rome for her father, another to the camp for

Collatine. They came, the one accompanied with Junius  
Brutus, the other with Publius Valerius; and finding

55 Lucrece attired in mourning habit, demanded the cause of  
her sorrow. She, first taking an oath of them for her

vengeance, revealed the actor, and whole manner of his  
dealing, and withal suddenly stabbed herself. Which


done, with one consent they all vowed to root out the  
whole hated family of the Tarquins; and bearing the dead

60 body to Rome, Brutus acquainted the people with the  
doer and manner of the vile deed, with a bitter

invective against the tyranny of the king: wherewith the  
people were so moved, that with one consent and a


65 general acclamation the Tarquins were all exiled, and  
the state government changed from kings to consuls.


## Shakescleare Translation


*Dedication*: To the Right Honorable Henry Wriothesly ,  
Earl of Southampton, and Baron of Tichfield:

I have unending love to dedicate to you, sir; to be frank, this  
poem is just a trivial little piece of it. I know you'll accept it--  
not because my poetry is any good, but because you're a  
nice guy. Everything I've written is yours. What I'll write in  
the future is yours. And since you're a part of everything I  
do, I am yours, too. If I were a more powerful person, my  
service to you would be more valuable. As it is, I'm loyal to  
you, sir, and I wish you a long, happy life.

Your faithful servant,  
William Shakespleare

*Plot Summary*: After Lucius Tarquinius (nicknamed  
"Superbus" for his excessive pride) had his own father-in-  
law cruelly murdered, he ignored Roman laws and customs  
and didn't allow the people to vote. He took over the  
kingdom and took his followers and other Roman  
noblemen to attack Ardea. During the siege, the army  
leaders met one evening in a tent belonging to Sextus  
Tarquinius , the king's son. As they talked after dinner,  
everyone bragged about the virtues of their wives. Collatine  
praised his wife Lucrece's incomparable sexual morality.  
Having fun, they quickly went back to Rome to see if they  
could catch their wives (whom they'd just been bragging  
about) by surprise, to test them. Only Collatine's wife was  
found sewing with her maids, even though it was late at  
night. All the other ladies were found dancing and partying,  
or in bed with their lovers. At that point the noblemen  
admitted Collatine had won the contest, and that his wife  
was impressive. Afterward, Sextus Tarquinius was attracted  
to Lucrece's beauty, but he kept it to himself for the  
moment, and went back to the camp with the others. It  
wasn't long until he secretly snuck away. Lucrece  
entertained him and boarded him royally because he was a  
prince. That same night, he snuck into her room, violently  
raped her, and ran away in the morning. Poor Lucrece  
immediately sent messengers: one to her father in Rome  
and the other to Collatine in the camp. They arrived, her  
father accompanied by Junius Brutus and her husband  
accompanied by Publius Valerius. When they found Lucrece  
wearing mourning clothes, they demanded to know why  
she was grieving. After making them swear they would take  
revenge, she revealed the offender and the complete  
circumstances of his crime. Then, suddenly, she stabbed  
herself. After that, the men all unanimously agreed to  
destroy the entire hateful Tarquin family. They took the  
dead body to Rome. Brutus explained to people who the  
offender was, and told them about the horrible deed he  
had done, riling them up to rebel against the tyrannical  
king. The people were so moved that they united to force  
the Tarquins into exile, and the country's government  
changed from a monarchy to a democracy.

 After "Venus and Adonis," this is  
the second work that Shakespeare  
dedicated to his patron Henry  
Wriothesley, the third Earl of  
Southampton. "Right Honorable" is a  
formal address for members of the  
English nobility of Wriothesley's rank.

 Sextus Tarquinius, the poem's  
villain, will be known simply as  
"Tarquin." Shakespeare uses various  
forms of his characters' names (for  
example, "Lucrece" or "Lucretia") to  
suit his meter.

FROM the besieged Ardea all in post,  
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire,  
Lust-breathed Tarquin leaves the Roman host,  
70 And to Collatium bears the lightless fire  
Which, in pale embers hid, lurks to aspire  
And girdle with embracing flames the waist  
Of Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste.

Haply that name of 'chaste' unhappily set  
75 This bateless edge on his keen appetite;  
When Collatine unwisely did not let  
To praise the clear unmatched red and white  
Which triumph'd in that sky of his delight,  
Where mortal stars, as bright as heaven's beauties,  
80 With pure aspects did him peculiar duties.

For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent,  
Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state;  
What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent  
In the possession of his beautiful mate;  
85 Reckoning his fortune at such high-proud rate,  
That kings might be espoused to more fame,  
But king nor peer to such a peerless dame.

O happiness enjoy'd but of a few!  
And, if possess'd, as soon decay'd and done  
90 As is the morning's silver-melting dew  
Against the golden splendor of the sun!  
An expired date, cancell'd ere well begun:  
Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,  
Are weakly fortress'd from a world of harms.


Beauty itself doth of itself persuade  
The eyes of men without an orator;  
What needeth then apologies be made,  
To set forth that which is so singular?  
Or why is Collatine the publisher  
100 Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown  
From thievish ears, because it is his own?

Perchance his boast of Lucrece' sovereignty  
Suggested this proud issue of a king;  
For by our ears our hearts oft tainted be:  
105 Perchance that envy of so rich a thing,  
Braving compare, disdainfully did sting  
His high-pitch'd thoughts, that meaner men should vaunt  
That golden hap which their superiors want.

But some untimely thought did instigate  
His all-too-timeless speed, if none of those:  
His honour, his affairs, his friends, his state,  
Neglected all, with swift intent he goes  
To quench the coal which in his liver glows.  
O rash false heat, wrapp'd in repentant cold,  
115 Thy hasty spring still blasts, and ne'er grows old!

When at Collatium this false lord arrived,  
Well was he welcomed by the Roman dame,  
Within whose face beauty and virtue strived  
Which of them both should underprop her fame:  
120 When virtue bragg'd, beauty would blush for shame;  
When beauty boasted blushes, in despite  
Virtue would stain that o'er with silver white.

But beauty, in that white intitled,  
From Venus' doves doth challenge that fair field:  
125 Then virtue claims from beauty beauty's red,  
Which virtue gave the golden age to gild  
Their silver cheeks, and call'd it then their shield;  
Teaching them thus to use it in the fight,  
When shame assail'd, the red should fence the white.

Spurred on by evil lust , Tarquin races away from Ardea, where he was stationed with the Roman army to protect the city while it was under attack. He's on his way to Collatium, filled with cold, calculating desire to get hot and heavy with Lucrece, the virtuous wife of Collatine.

Unfortunately, it was the word "virtuous" that whetted his bottomless appetite. Collatine foolishly kept on bragging about his wife's unparalleled fair skin, red cheeks--which made her beloved face delightfully beautiful--and her eyes which, as bright as stars, were only for him.


Last night in Tarquin's tent, Collatine told everyone how happy he was. He talked about how the gods had blessed him with a priceless, beautiful wife who was better than riches. He figured he was so fortunate that, while it was true that kings might be more famous than him, no king or nobleman was married to such an unmatched lady.


So few get to be that happy! And, if they are that happy, the happiness is short-lived, over and gone as quickly as morning dew evaporates in the sun! Virtue and beauty wrapped up together in one person are about as likely to last as a date that's canceled before it begins. That person--and her virtue and beauty--are vulnerable to a world of hurt.


Beauty in and of itself catches men's eyes; there's no explanation needed. What is there to be said to explain something that's so obviously special? And why would Collatine brag about his own precious wife, when he should be protecting her from listeners who would try to steal her?


Collatine's bragging about Lucrece's perfection was probably what enticed Tarquin, the son of a king. The things we hear often poison our hearts. Maybe he was so jealous of Collatine's valuable possession--Lucrece--that he'd do anything to compete, and the thought of it took over his mind. He was annoyed that a lesser man would brag about his good luck, which his superiors couldn't help but envy.


Whatever the case, a poorly-timed thought prompted his all-too-hasty speed. He forgot all about his reputation, his job, his friends, and his country. He was dead-set to go and put out the fire burning in his heart. No matter how old and past our prime we get, impulsive desires can still overtake us like they do young men!

When this evil man arrived at Collatium, the Roman lady welcomed him. It was hard to say whether beauty or modesty  was her most defining attribute--it was like a competition between the two. When someone mentioned how modest she was, her beautiful face would blush, embarrassed. And when she looked all the more beautiful because she was blushing, she'd get shy and become pale again, showing how modest she was.

But  she looked beautiful when she was pale, too, so that it seemed like beauty was winning. But then shyness would make her blush, rather than beauty--the kind of blush that has made modest people simply beautiful since the Stone Age. Modesty has always fought with beauty in the same way, making beautiful people shy so that their red blushes overcome their pale, white faces.

 "Lust" is a key word in this poem. For Shakespeare, it means a purely bodily sexual desire, sometimes (as in Tarquin's case) to the point of depravity. According to Christian teaching, lust was one of the "Seven Deadly Sins."

 For Shakespeare, "virtue" can mean "sexual morality." A woman's "virtue" was her virginity or, upon marriage, fidelity to her husband ("chastity"). Christian doctrine endowed chastity with spiritual value, and European patriarchal culture--in which wives were considered their husband's property--emphasized sex and childbearing within the confines of wedlock.

 Shakespeare personifies Lucrece's beauty and chastity as opposing sides in a war. Beauty's color (another word for flag, like a banner in battle) is red since Lucrece's face, blushing from embarrassment, is beautiful. Modesty's color is white, since Shakespeare suggests a pale face indicates cold, passionless discipline--

130 This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen,  
Argued by beauty's red and virtue's white  
Of either's colour was the other queen,  
Proving from world's minority their right:  
Yet their ambition makes them still to fight;  
135 The sovereignty of either being so great,  
That oft they interchange each other's seat.

Their silent war of lilies and of roses,  
Which Tarquin view'd in her fair face's field,  
In their pure ranks his traitor eye encloses;  
140 Where, lest between them both it should be kill'd,  
The coward captive vanquished doth yield  
To those two armies that would let him go,  
Rather than triumph in so false a foe.

Now thinks he that her husband's shallow tongue,--  
145 The niggard prodigal that praised her so,--  
In that high task hath done her beauty wrong,  
Which far exceeds his barren skill to show:  
Therefore that praise which Collatine doth owe  
Enchanted Tarquin answers with surmise,  
150 In silent wonder of still-gazing eyes.

This earthly saint, adored by this devil,  
Little suspecteth the false worshipper;  
For unstain'd thoughts do seldom dream on evil;  
Birds never limed no secret bushes fear:  
155 So guiltless she securely gives good cheer  
And reverend welcome to her princely guest,  
Whose inward ill no outward harm express'd:

For that he colour'd with his high estate,  
Hiding base sin in plaits of majesty;  
160 That nothing in him seem'd inordinate,  
Save something too much wonder of his eye,  
Which, having all, all could not satisfy;  
But, poorly rich, so wanteth in his store,  
That, cloy'd with much, he pineth still for more.

165 But she, that never coped with stranger eyes,  
Could pick no meaning from their parling looks,  
Nor read the subtle-shining secrecies  
Writ in the glassy margents of such books:  
She touch'd no unknown baits, nor fear'd no hooks;  
170 Nor could she moralize his wanton sight,  
More than his eyes were open'd to the light.

He stories to her ears her husband's fame,  
Won in the fields of fruitful Italy;  
And decks with praises Collatine's high name,  
175 Made glorious by his manly chivalry  
With bruised arms and wreaths of victory:  
Her joy with heaved-up hand she doth express,  
And, wordless, so greets heaven for his success.

Far from the purpose of his coming hither,  
180 He makes excuses for his being there:  
No cloudy show of stormy blustering weather  
Doth yet in his fair welkin once appear;  
Till sable Night, mother of Dread and Fear,

You could see the changing colors in Lucrece's face. Her beautiful, red blush and her modest, pale face were both perfect in their own right, making a case for one and then the other has her most impressive quality. But both beauty and modesty wanted to win, so they keep fighting. And both of them were so powerful that they would each beat each other at times, often changing places.

Tarquin could see this silent battle between white and red going on in the delicate skin of her face. He stared at her through it all, allowing himself to be equally captivated by both her beauty and her modesty, without picking sides, and decided he would **conquer** both of them and take them for himself.

Now he realized that her husband's weak compliments were actually stingy. He didn't praise her beauty as much as it deserved--and, really, he couldn't have done it justice. Tarquin made up for the compliments Collatine didn't give by staring at her, silently, in wonder.

She was like a **saint** on earth. She had no idea that her admirer was a **lying devil**--innocent minds can't imagine anything evil. A bird that's never been caught doesn't know to be afraid of a trap. Without suspecting anything, she gave her royal guest a warm, hearty welcome. He didn't make his malicious plans obvious.

Because he was a wealthy prince, he could **hide** his intention to sin behind his fancy clothes and manners. Nothing seemed out of place with him, unless it was his slightly excessive staring. No matter how much he looked at her, it wasn't enough. Although he'd stared for a long time, he didn't feel like he had. He wanted more, like a person who **eats too much** and is still hungry.

But she'd never seen a stranger before. She didn't pick up on the meaning of his looks. She couldn't read the secret subtext in his eyes. She wasn't afraid of taking the bait. She didn't realize she was walking into a trap. She didn't know any better; she could only make of his eyes what they permitted her to see.

He told her stories about the reputation her husband had made for himself in the fields of Italy. He paid Collatine all kinds of compliments, talking about how his war-wounds and victory medals made him a hero. She threw up her hands in a prayer of thanks, praising the heavens for his success.

He didn't tell her why he had really come there; he made all kinds of excuses for being there. He didn't get even a little bit **angry** or violent at this point--not yet. He was waiting until pitch-black night fell--the time of fear and dread when the world goes dark and day is locked away.

*the opposite of the heat of desire, which could also make a woman's face flush.*

**7** As Lucrece face alternately blushes and grows pale (which Shakespeare figures as a battle between beauty and virtue), Tarquin imagines himself as a third side in the war--the conqueror of Lucrece's beauty and chastity. The playful martial imagery quickly gives way to Tarquin's imminent violence.

**8** A saint is an exemplary Christian elevated to a special status as a messenger between humans and God. Tarquin is a "false worshipper" because he pays lip service to Lucrece and her husband--and, by extension, to sexual morality--but plots contrary actions in his heart.

**9** The contrast between external appearances and internal realities is one of this poem's most important themes. Tarquin appears to be a good person but is really evil; later, Lucrece will believe her body to be sullied by the assault in contrast to her pure mind and heart.

**10** Gluttony (eating too much) was another of the Seven Deadly Sins. The point of comparing his sexual desire to gluttony is to underline Tarquin's holistically sinful nature.

**11** Shakespeare compares Tarquin's violent emotions to a storm--his desire is a "cloudy show;" his anger, "blustering" (bad) weather; and his face, a "welkin" (sky).

Upon the world dim darkness doth display,  
185 And in her vaulty prison stows the Day.

For then is Tarquin brought unto his bed,  
Intending weariness with heavy spright;  
For, after supper, long he questioned  
With modest Lucrece, and wore out the night:  
190 Now leaden slumber with life's strength doth fight;  
And every one to rest themselves betake,  
Save thieves, and cares, and troubled minds, that wake.

As one of which doth Tarquin lie revolving  
The sundry dangers of his will's obtaining;  
195 Yet ever to obtain his will resolving,  
Though weak-built hopes persuade him to abstaining:  
Despair to gain doth traffic oft for gaining;  
And when great treasure is the meed proposed,  
Though death be adjunct, there's no death supposed.

Those that much covet are with gain so fond,  
For what they have not, that which they possess  
They scatter and unloose it from their bond,  
And so, by hoping more, they have but less;  
Or, gaining more, the profit of excess  
205 Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain,  
That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich gain.

The aim of all is but to nurse the life  
With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;  
And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,  
210 That one for all, or all for one we gage;  
As life for honour in fell battle's rage;  
Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth cost  
The death of all, and all together lost.

So that in venturing ill we leave to be  
The things we are for that which we expect;  
And this ambitious foul infirmity,  
In having much, torments us with defect  
Of that we have: so then we do neglect  
The thing we have; and, all for want of wit,  
220 Make something nothing by augmenting it.

Such hazard now must doting Tarquin make,  
Pawning his honour to obtain his lust;  
And for himself himself he must forsake:  
Then where is truth, if there be no self-trust?  
225 When shall he think to find a stranger just,  
When he himself himself confounds, betrays  
To slanderous tongues and wretched hateful days?

Now stole upon the time the dead of night,  
When heavy sleep had closed up mortal eyes:  
230 No comfortable star did lend his light,  
No noise but owls' and wolves' death-boding cries;  
Now serves the season that they may surprise  
The silly lambs: pure thoughts are dead and still,  
While lust and murder wake to stain and kill.

And now this lustful lord leap'd from his bed,  
Throwing his mantle rudely o'er his arm;  
Is madly toss'd between desire and dread;  
Th' one sweetly flatters, th' other feareth harm;  
But honest fear, bewitch'd with lust's foul charm,  
240 Doth too too oft betake him to retire,  
Beaten away by brain-sick rude desire.

His falchion on a flint he softly smiteth,  
That from the cold stone sparks of fire do fly;  
Whereat a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth,  
245 Which must be lode-star to his lustful eye;  
And to the flame thus speaks advisedly,

Then Tarquin was shown to his bed. He pretended he was really tired, since, after dinner, he had questioned the modest Lucrece for a long time, far into the night. At that time, everyone fought against their heavy eyelids until they eventually fell asleep--with the exception of thieves, worriers, and people who lay awake thinking.

Tarquin was the latter, lying awake revolving in his head the dangers involved in getting what he wanted. And yet, he was still set on getting what he wanted, despite the voice of his conscience telling him not to do it. When someone's desperate to get something, they'll do anything. And when the thing they want is really [valuable](#) <sup>11</sup>, they'll even risk going to their death for it.

[Jealous](#) <sup>12</sup> people love getting what they don't have--going so far as to let go of anything they *do* have. As it turns out, by trying to get more, they end up having less. Or, if they get it and then end up having too much, they're the worse for it, ending up without anything after all.

The goal is to get yourself a good reputation, plenty of money, and relaxation in your old age--but there are a lot of obstacles in the way. We tend to put all our efforts into getting one, so that then we don't get any of the others. For example, if we live for a good reputation, we might end up dying in battle. Or we confuse our good reputation with having a lot of money, which leads to us lose everything.

When we take that kind of risk--forgetting who we are in the pursuit of the things we want--we're unable to appreciate the things we have. Because of our disgusting, weak ambition, we think we don't have enough. Then we forget what we have, and turn something into nothing by trying to get more.

Tarquin was thinking these thoughts exactly, considering how he'd be giving up his reputation to satisfy his desire. He'd have to betray himself for his own self's sake. If you can't trust yourself, then what is truth? How could he trust a stranger, when he'd already confused himself by betraying himself to gossip and rejection for the rest of his life?

Pretty soon it got to be the middle of the night, and most people were sound asleep. Not a single star was shining. There was no noise except for hunting cries of owls and wolves, since it was the time of night for them to catch silly lambs <sup>13</sup>. Innocent minds were at rest. Only lustful and murderous minds were awake, ready to rape and kill.

This lecherous man jumped out of bed and hastily threw his robe on. He was going crazy, torn between desire and fear. His desire pushed him on while his fear drew him back. But fear, a weak emotion, was eventually overtaken by the overwhelming mania of desire.

He struck his sword gently against some flint, sparks flying off the stone to light the candle that would lead his raunchy way. He confided in the flame, saying, "Just like I forced this cold flint to produce fire, I'll force Lucrece to do what I want."

<sup>11</sup> By describing Lucrece's body in monetary terms--as "treasure" and "meed" (profit), Shakespeare alludes to greed, another deadly sin. In the next stanza, he brings in another sin--envy.

<sup>12</sup> Stanzas like this one read a bit like parables. Shakespeare uses this style of writing ("sententiae," or "wise sayings") to prompt his reader to think about what the poem says about human nature more broadly. He caters to Renaissance readers' tastes, which valued poetry that expressed moral truths.

<sup>13</sup> In this situation, Tarquin is the wolf and Lucrece is the innocent lamb.

'As from this cold flint I enforced this fire,  
So Lucrece must I force to my desire.'

250 Here pale with fear he doth premeditate  
The dangers of his loathsome enterprise,  
And in his inward mind he doth debate  
What following sorrow may on this arise:  
Then looking scornfully, he doth despise  
His naked armour of still-slaughter'd lust,  
255 And justly thus controls his thoughts unjust:

'Fair torch, burn out thy light, and lend it not  
To darken her whose light excelleth thine:  
And die, unhallow'd thoughts, before you blot  
With your uncleanness that which is divine;  
260 Offer pure incense to so pure a shrine:  
Let fair humanity abhor the deed  
That spots and stains love's modest snow-white weed.

'O shame to knighthood and to shining arms!  
O foul dishonour to my household's grave!  
265 O impious act, including all foul harms!  
A martial man to be soft fancy's slave!  
True valour still a true respect should have;  
Then my digression is so vile, so base,  
That it will live engraven in my face.

270 'Yea, though I die, the scandal will survive,  
And be an eye-sore in my golden coat;  
Some loathsome dash the herald will contrive,  
To cipher me how fondly I did dote;  
That my posterity, shamed with the note  
275 Shall curse my bones, and hold it for no sin  
To wish that I their father had not bin.

'What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?  
A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy.  
Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?  
280 Or sells eternity to get a toy?  
For one sweet grape who will the vine destroy?  
Or what fond beggar, but to touch the crown,  
Would with the sceptre straight be stricken down?

'If Collatinus dream of my intent,  
285 Will he not wake, and in a desperate rage  
Post hither, this vile purpose to prevent?  
This siege that hath engirt his marriage,  
This blur to youth, this sorrow to the sage,  
This dying virtue, this surviving shame,  
290 Whose crime will bear an ever-during blame?

'O, what excuse can my invention make,  
When thou shalt charge me with so black a deed?  
Will not my tongue be mute, my frail joints shake,  
Mine eyes forego their light, my false heart bleed?  
295 The guilt being great, the fear doth still exceed;  
And extreme fear can neither fight nor fly,  
But coward-like with trembling terror die.

'Had Collatinus kill'd my son or sire,  
Or lain in ambush to betray my life,  
300 Or were he not my dear friend, this desire  
Might have excuse to work upon his wife,  
As in revenge or quittal of such strife:  
But as he is my kinsman, my dear friend,  
The shame and fault finds no excuse nor end.

305 'Shameful it is; ay, if the fact be known:  
Hateful it is; there is no hate in loving:  
I'll beg her love; but she is not her own:  
The worst is but denial and reproving:  
My will is strong, past reason's weak removing.  
310 Who fears a sentence or an old man's saw  
Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe.'

Pale and afraid, he considered how dangerous it would be to commit this crime. He debated with himself in his mind, knowing how tragically it could end. Getting angry with himself, he started to hate his naked body and his desire, which was (as of yet) still in control. He responded rightly to his evil thoughts,

"Put out your light, candle. Don't shine darkly on Lucrece, who's brighter than you. And go away, evil thoughts, before your dirtiness corrupts Lucrece, who's good. Instead, since she's pure, you should offer her a pure gift. The whole world looks down on rape, which violates a modest, innocent woman.

"I'd be bringing shame to my social class, and my position as a soldier! I'd be dishonoring my family members in their graves! It's a sinful thing to do, and would hurt so many people! For a man of war to be a slave to his own desire! A truly heroic man should be handsome, too...my crime is so evil, so low, that it will show in my very face.

"Even after I die, the scandal will live on, and will continue to ruin my otherwise perfect reputation. They'll change my family's coat of arms <sup>14</sup> to represent how hard I fell in love, so that my children will have to bear the shame. They'll curse my bones, and won't hesitate to wish I hadn't been their father.

"What do I gain if I succeed in doing this? A dream, a snap of the fingers--momentary satisfaction. Who would trade a minute of fun for a week's worth of tears? Or would damn their eternal soul for nothing? Who would destroy a vine for the sake of one, sweet grape? What poor beggar would risk getting smacked with the king's scepter just for the chance to touch his crown?

"If Collatinus has any idea what I'm up to, won't he wake up and rush over here in a rage to stop me from doing this horrible thing? How could he put up with this threat to his marriage, this dark mark on his youth, this heartbreak in spite of his wisdom? Won't the end of his wife's sexual purity--and, afterward, her continuing shame--cause him to blame me forever for the crime?

"What excuse could my mind come up with when you accuse me of doing such a dark thing? Won't I be tongue-tied, my weak legs shaking, my eyes watering, my lying heart bleeding? I'll be even more afraid than I am guilty! And when you're that afraid, you can't really fight or run away. You can just die, trembling and terrified, like a coward.

"I might have an excuse to rape <sup>15</sup> Collatinus' wife if he'd killed my son or my father; or if he'd ambushed me to murder me; or if he weren't a good friend of mine. Then it could be my revenge, or a way to end the suffering. But considering he's related to me, and a good friend, it's endlessly shameful and wrong.

"Yes, it is shameful, to tell you the truth. It's hateful. But there's no hate in love. I could ask her to love me! But she's not single. And being denied and rejected is the worst. I want this so much, I'm past rational judgment. Let people who are afraid of punishment or getting their head chopped off be afraid of the law!"

<sup>14</sup> A coat of arms was an emblem for a rich family. It usually contained symbols (like a lily for purity or a lion for strength), and was reproduced on clothing, decoration, and documents. The coat of arms was meant to express identity--Tarquin says that if he becomes a rapist, his emblem (and face) will identify him as evil.

<sup>15</sup> Tarquin refers to the feudal logic of revenge or "blood-debt," a retaliatory, tit-for-tat system of violence that was technically illegal in Shakespeare's time.

Thus, graceless, holds he disputation  
 'Tween frozen conscience and hot-burning will,  
 And with good thoughts make dispensation,  
 315 Urging the worsen sense for vantage still;  
 Which in a moment doth confound and kill  
 All pure effects, and doth so far proceed,  
 That what is vile shows like a virtuous deed.

Quoth he, 'She took me kindly by the hand,  
 320 And gazed for tidings in my eager eyes,  
 Fearing some hard news from the warlike band,  
 Where her beloved Collatinus lies.  
 O, how her fear did make her colour rise!  
 First red as roses that on lawn we lay,  
 325 Then white as lawn, the roses took away.

'And how her hand, in my hand being lock'd  
 Forced it to tremble with her loyal fear!  
 Which struck her sad, and then it faster rock'd,  
 Until her husband's welfare she did hear;  
 330 Whereat she smiled with so sweet a cheer,  
 That had Narcissus seen her as she stood,  
 Self-love had never drown'd him in the flood.

'Why hunt I then for colour or excuses?  
 All orators are dumb when beauty pleadeth;  
 335 Poor wretches have remorse in poor abuses;  
 Love thrives not in the heart that shadows dreadeth:  
 Affection is my captain, and he leadeth;  
 And when his gaudy banner is display'd,  
 The coward fights and will not be dismay'd.

'Then, childish fear, avaunt! debating, die!  
 Respect and reason, wait on wrinkled age!  
 My heart shall never countermand mine eye:  
 Sad pause and deep regard besem the sage;  
 340 My part is youth, and beats these from the stage:  
 Desire my pilot is, beauty my prize;  
 345 Then who fears sinking where such treasure lies?'

As corn o'ergrown by weeds, so heedful fear  
 Is almost choked by unresisted lust.  
 Away he steals with open listening ear,  
 350 Full of foul hope and full of fond mistrust;  
 Both which, as servitors to the unjust,  
 So cross him with their opposite persuasion,  
 That now he vows a league, and now invasion.

Within his thought her heavenly image sits,  
 355 And in the self-same seat sits Collatine:  
 That eye which looks on her confounds his wits;  
 That eye which him beholds, as more divine,  
 Unto a view so false will not incline;  
 But with a pure appeal seeks to the heart,  
 360 Which once corrupted takes the worsen part;

And therein heartens up his servile powers,  
 Who, flatter'd by their leader's jocund show,  
 Stuff up his lust, as minutes fill up hours;  
 And as their captain, so their pride doth grow,  
 365 Paying more slavish tribute than they owe.  
 By reprobate desire thus madly led,  
 The Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece' bed.

The locks between her chamber and his will,  
 Each one by him enforced, retires his ward;  
 370 But, as they open, they all rate his ill,  
 Which drives the creeping thief to some regard:  
 The threshold grates the door to have him heard;

Just like that, he argued with himself, going back and forth between his conscience and his burning desire. When he'd think good thoughts, he'd only encourage his bad thoughts to work harder to get the advantage. Then, all of a sudden, his bad thoughts silenced and killed the good ones, to the point that he convinced himself an evil deed was a virtuous one.

He said, "She kindly took my hand and looked into my eager eyes, trying to guess the news. She was afraid of bad news from the army camp where her beloved Collatinus sleeps at this very moment. Her fear made her blush! First her cheeks were as red as the roses you would embroider on a white fabric, then as white as the fabric itself, without the roses.

"And her hand, which was holding mine tightly, trembled with fear! Then she got sad, and trembled even harder until she heard that her husband was safe. Then she smiled so sweetly and happily that even the most self-obsessed man <sup>16</sup> would have forgotten himself and fallen in love with her.

"So why am I looking for a reason or an excuse? All speeches are useless when beauty speaks to us. Only idiots feel guilty for inconsequential crimes; a heart that's afraid of the dark can never know love. I'm following my heart wherever love leads <sup>17</sup>. So, now that it's time to charge in, I can't back down, and I won't be afraid.

"So go away, childish fear! Stop this internal debate! Respect and rationality will have to be put on hold until I'm an old man! I've seen what I've seen, and I can't help but love. Pathetic inaction and deep morals? Leave those to the wise. I'm a young man <sup>18</sup> and I have no time for that. I'm driven by desire; beauty is what I want. How could I be afraid of the consequences when the reward is so great?"

His lust choked out his fear, just like corn gets overgrown by weeds. He crept into the hallway, listening carefully, both disgustingly hopeful and earnestly suspicious. These two feelings together were a bad combination. They were opposite impulses, so that he went back and forth between planning to just do a little bit, and then to go all the way.

He could see her in his mind's eye, but right next to her was Collatine. With one eye, Tarquin looked at Lucrece (which totally stupefied him). With the other eye he looked at Collatine. He found it hard to keep his gazed fixed on her because Collatine was so good and Tarquin himself was betraying her. He found himself getting remorseful for a second, but then became even more evilly determined.

So he gathered all his strength <sup>19</sup>, encouraged by his own lighthearted rejection of the image of Collatine in his mind. His own pride fueled his sexual excitement and he could feel himself getting aroused. He was getting all puffed up over nothing. The Roman prince marched to Lucrece's bed, led by his evil desires.

He forced open each locked door between himself and her room. Each of the doors gave into him but, as they did so, they resisted <sup>20</sup> him as if they were trying to stop his evil plot. This made him consider what a sneaking thief he was. One door grated against the threshold as if it wanted him to

<sup>16</sup> According to classical mythology, Narcissus was a handsome man who fell in love with his own reflection. When he tried to kiss his reflection in the water, he fell in and drowned.

<sup>17</sup> Love is personified as an army captain or knight leading his forces (of male lovers) into battle. Tarquin considers himself a kind of hero, pursuing and conquering Lucrece's beauty and virtue.

<sup>18</sup> Fear and morality, two forces personified in Tarquin's debate with himself, are now "beat from the stage" like actors booed by an audience. Tarquin says his "part is youth"—in the play that is his life, his role is the lover and hero, not the coward or moral man. The theatrical metaphor emphasizes Tarquin's performance, and the split between external and internal realities.

<sup>19</sup> Now Tarquin's heart—symbolizing his lust—is personified as a military "captain" who commands his other body parts.

<sup>20</sup> The house, animals, and the elements resist Tarquin, symbolizing that both human society and the natural world oppose his actions.

Night-wandering weasels shriek to see him there;  
They fright him, yet he still pursues his fear.

375 As each unwilling portal yields him way,  
Through little vents and crannies of the place  
The wind wars with his torch to make him stay,  
And blows the smoke of it into his face,  
Extinguishing his conduct in this case;  
380 But his hot heart, which fond desire doth scorch,  
Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch:

And being lighted, by the light he spies  
Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks:  
He takes it from the rushes where it lies,  
385 And griping it, the needle his finger pricks;  
As who should say 'This glove to wanton tricks  
Is not inured; return again in haste;  
Thou see'st our mistress' ornaments are chaste.'

But all these poor forbiddings could not stay him;  
390 He in the worst sense construes their denial:  
The doors, the wind, the glove, that did delay him,  
He takes for accidental things of trial;  
Or as those bars which stop the hourly dial,  
Who with a lingering slay his course doth let,  
395 Till every minute pays the hour his debt.

'So, so,' quoth he, 'these lets attend the time,  
Like little frosts that sometime threat the spring,  
To add a more rejoicing to the prime,  
And give the sneaped birds more cause to sing.  
400 Pain pays the income of each precious thing;  
Huge rocks, high winds, strong pirates, shelves and  
sands,  
The merchant fears, ere rich at home he lands.'

Now is he come unto the chamber-door,  
405 That shuts him from the heaven of his thought,  
Which with a yielding latch, and with no more,  
Hath barr'd him from the blessed thing he sought.  
So from himself impiety hath wrought,  
That for his prey to pray he doth begin,  
410 As if the heavens should countenance his sin.

But in the midst of his unfruitful prayer,  
Having solicited th' eternal power  
That his foul thoughts might compass his fair fair,  
And they would stand auspicious to the hour,  
415 Even there he starts: quoth he, 'I must deflower:  
The powers to whom I pray abhor this fact,  
How can they then assist me in the act?

'Then Love and Fortune be my gods, my guide!  
My will is back'd with resolution:  
420 Thoughts are but dreams till their effects be tried;  
The blackest sin is clear'd with absolution;  
Against love's fire fear's frost hath dissolution.  
The eye of heaven is out, and misty night  
Covers the shame that follows sweet delight.'

425 This said, his guilty hand pluck'd up the latch,  
And with his knee the door he opens wide.  
The dove sleeps fast that this night-owl will catch:  
Thus treason works ere traitors be espied.  
Who sees the lurking serpent steps aside;  
430 But she, sound sleeping, fearing no such thing,  
Lies at the mercy of his mortal sting.

Into the chamber wickedly he stalks,  
And gazeth on her yet unstained bed.  
The curtains being close, about he walks,  
435 Rolling his greedy eyeballs in his head:

be heard. Nocturnal cats shrieked when they saw him. They  
scared him, but he kept going anyway.

As each door unwillingly let him through, the wind blew  
through every nook and cranny of the house, trying to snuff  
out his candle and blowing the smoke in his face as if it  
would cool him off, too. But his heart still burned <sup>21</sup> with  
desire. He wouldn't let the wind stop him; he just lit the  
candle again.

By the light of the candle he saw Lucrece's sewing glove  
with her needle sticking in it. He picked it up off the floor  
and gripped it tightly. The needle pricked his finger, as if to  
say, "This glove is not about to let you get away with your  
reckless tricks. Go back quickly. As you can see, even  
Lucrece's clothes are modest."

But none of these little inconveniences could stop him. He  
completely misunderstood what they were about. He  
figured the doors, the wind, and the glove that held him up  
were all random accidents. It was like when the hour hand  
on a clock is a few seconds slow--in a single hour, those  
seconds don't matter, but after a few hours the clock is  
minutes behind.

He said, "Well, well. All these delays are making my journey  
longer, but they're only like the little frosts that sometimes  
come in the spring. Those frosts make spring more  
beautiful, and give the birds even more reason to sing.  
Precious things are worth the pain and cost. A merchant  
will risk huge rocks, high winds, strong pirates, and running  
aground on coral reefs and sandy banks to get home with  
his cargo."

He arrived at her bedroom door, the only thing separating  
him from the paradise he had imagined. Just the turn of a  
doorknob--and nothing else--kept him from the holy girl he  
was after. He had so convinced himself that what he was  
doing wasn't wrong that he started to pray <sup>22</sup> for her, as if  
he thought heaven wouldn't mind his sin.

In the middle of his pointless prayer, after he'd asked the  
gods to let his lovemaking with Lucrece live up to  
everything he'd imagined and to give him success, he  
stopped. He said, "I'm about to rape her. The gods I pray to  
condemn it, so how can I ask for their help?

"Well, then love and luck can be my gods and my guides!  
I'm completely decided that this is what I want. Thoughts  
are just that--thoughts--until we put them into action. And  
we can pray for forgiveness for any sin. Fear is no match for  
burning love. The gods aren't watching now--the dark of  
night will cover our fun and the shame that follows."

That said, he turned the doorknob with a guilty hand, and  
used his knee to pull the door open wide. Lucrece was fast  
asleep, like a dove unaware of the owl that was about to  
catch her. So he betrayed her before she even saw him.  
Anyone who sees a snake in the grass knows not to step on  
it, but since she was sleeping soundly she didn't know to be  
afraid--she was at the mercy of his poisonous bite.

He stalked evilly into her room and gazed at her in her (as of  
yet) pure bed <sup>23</sup>. The bed's curtains were drawn shut, so he  
walked around it, his eyes rolling back in his head with  
greed. His eyes had led his heart astray. His eyes had led to

<sup>21</sup> Tarquin's lustful heart is described as burning--with desire and single-minded intent. Shakespeare links Tarquin's heart with fire imagery.

<sup>22</sup> The homophones "pray" and "prey" emphasize (especially when read aloud) Tarquin's false reasoning and misguided decision making. He convinces himself a bad thing is really good, just as he thinks he can "pray" for a woman he is turning into his "prey."

<sup>23</sup> The bed, which Lucrece would normally share with her husband, in

By their high treason is his heart misled;  
Which gives the watch-word to his hand full soon  
To draw the cloud that hides the silver moon.

440 Look, as the fair and fiery-pointed sun,  
Rushing from forth a cloud, bereaves our sight;  
Even so, the curtain drawn, his eyes begun  
To wink, being blinded with a greater light:  
Whether it is that she reflects so bright,  
That dazzleth them, or else some shame supposed;  
445 But blind they are, and keep themselves enclosed.

O, had they in that darksome prison died!  
Then had they seen the period of their ill;  
Then Collatine again, by Lucrece' side,  
In his clear bed might have reposed still:  
450 But they must ope, this blessed league to kill;  
And holy-thoughted Lucrece to their sight  
Must sell her joy, her life, her world's delight.

Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under,  
Cozening the pillow of a lawful kiss;  
455 Who, therefore angry, seems to part in sunder,  
Swelling on either side to want his bliss;  
Between whose hills her head entombed is:  
Where, like a virtuous monument, she lies,  
To be admired of lewd unhallow'd eyes.

460 Without the bed her other fair hand was,  
On the green coverlet; whose perfect white  
Show'd like an April daisy on the grass,  
With pearly sweat, resembling dew of night.  
Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheathed their light,  
465 And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,  
Till they might open to adorn the day.

Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her breath;  
O modest wantons! wanton modesty!  
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,  
470 And death's dim look in life's mortality:  
Each in her sleep themselves so beautiful,  
As if between them twain there were no strife,  
But that life lived in death, and death in life.

Her breasts, like ivory globes circled with blue,  
475 A pair of maiden worlds unconquered,  
Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,  
And him by oath they truly honoured.  
These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred;  
Who, like a foul usurper, went about  
480 From this fair throne to heave the owner out.

What could he see but mightily he noted?  
What did he note but strongly he desired?  
What he beheld, on that he firmly doted,  
And in his will his wilful eye he tired.  
485 With more than admiration he admired  
Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,  
Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin.

As the grim lion fawneth o'er his prey,  
Sharp hunger by the conquest satisfied,  
490 So o'er this sleeping soul doth Tarquin stay,  
His rage of lust by gazing qualified;  
Slack'd, not suppress'd; for standing by her side,  
His eye, which late this mutiny restrains,  
Unto a greater uproar tempts his veins:

495 And they, like straggling slaves for pillage fighting,  
Obdurate vassals fell exploits effecting,  
In bloody death and ravishment delighting,  
Nor children's tears nor mothers' groans respecting,  
Swell in their pride, the onset still expecting:  
500 Anon his beating heart, alarm striking,  
Gives the hot charge and bids them do their liking.

this moment, when his hands moved to draw back the  
curtains and reveal Lucrece sleeping there.

As he drew back the curtain, and saw Lucrece <sup>24</sup>, he was temporarily blinded. He blinked his eyes. It was like when the bright, burning sun comes out from behind a cloud and makes us squint. Whether it was her herself reflecting the moonlight, or his sense of shame that dazzled him, his eyes were blind and he kept them closed.

If only his eyes had never opened again! Then he might have stopped his mischief, and Collatine might be sleeping next to Lucrece in their perfect bed again. But his eyes opened, ready to do the job, ready to rob the innocent Lucrece of all her joy, her life, and the light of her world.

Her rosy cheek rested on her white hand so that her lips didn't touch the pillow. The pillow rose on either side of the dent her head made in it, as if each half of the pillow was trying to get closer to those lips and steal a kiss. She looked as impressive as a statue <sup>25</sup> lying there, although naughty eyes were admiring her at the moment.

Her other pretty hand rested outside of the covers, on the green quilt. It was perfectly white, looking like a spring daisy in the grass, with just a little sweat on it, like nighttime dew. Her shining eyes were closed, hidden behind the darkness of her eyelids until the morning, when she'd open them again.

Strands of her blonde hair moved slightly as she breathed. Such modest carelessness! Careless modesty! She looked so alive, even as death was drawing close to her. And yet, there was something death-like about her sleep; she looked so vulnerable, so mortal. She beautifully united death and life in her sleep, eliminating the boundary between those two states.

Her pale, round breasts were unconquered virgin territory <sup>26</sup>. Only her husband had gotten his hands on them, and they'd been faithful to him. Seeing them, Tarquin started making even bolder plans. He wanted her for himself, forever—even if he'd have to kill her husband to have her.

Was there any detail he didn't observe closely? Did he see anything he didn't desire urgently? Everything he saw, he loved; and what he saw further solidified his resolution. He greatly admired her blue veins, her white skin, her pink lips, and her white, dimpled chin.

Tarquin paused over the sleeping girl, his intense lust momentarily satisfied by looking--like a lion's hunger goes away once he has his prey to play with. Well, his lust paused for a second; it didn't go away entirely. As he stood next to her, his eyes got tired of looking and his blood began to boil.

His heart began to beat quickly, making him hot and anxious to get what he wanted. His eyes <sup>27</sup> and his heart together were like the lowest soldiers who fight with each other at the end of a war, stealing everything they can, enjoying murdering and raping without caring at all about children's tears or mothers' groans. In other words, they were puffed up with pride, anticipating what was to come.

*itself symbolizes her sexual "virtue," or marital fidelity.*

<sup>24</sup> Lucrece's fair skin might literally seem bright in the moonlight, but this hyperbolic description of Tarquin's blinding also suggests Lucrece's spiritual and moral excellence, as if she were a goddess.

<sup>25</sup> The imagery in this stanza likens Lucrece's bed to a tomb, foreshadowing her death at the end of the poem.

<sup>26</sup> Lucrece's breasts are personified as newly-discovered countries that had been colonized by Collatine. In Shakespeare's day, English colonization of the Americas was just beginning, so the metaphor had a particular resonance.

<sup>27</sup> Tarquin's eyes (symbolizing greed) and his heart (symbolizing lust) are personified as soldiers on the same side who end up fighting each other for spoils after the war is over. Earlier, Tarquin imagined himself as a war hero for conquering Lucrece; now,



His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye,  
His eye commends the leading to his hand;  
His hand, as proud of such a dignity,  
505 Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand  
On her bare breast, the heart of all her land;  
Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did scale,  
Left their round turrets destitute and pale.

They, mustering to the quiet cabinet  
510 Where their dear governess and lady lies,  
Do tell her she is dreadfully beset,  
And fright her with confusion of their cries:  
She, much amazed, breaks open her lock'd-up eyes,  
Who, peeping forth this tumult to behold,  
515 Are by his flaming torch dimm'd and controll'd.

Imagine her as one in dead of night  
From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking,  
That thinks she hath beheld some ghastly sprite,  
Whose grim aspect sets every joint a-shaking;  
520 What terror 'tis! but she, in worse taking,  
From sleep disturbed, heedfully doth view  
The sight which makes supposed terror true.

Wrapp'd and confounded in a thousand fears,  
Like to a new-kill'd bird she trembling lies;  
525 She dares not look; yet, winking, there appears  
Quick-shifting antics, ugly in her eyes:  
Such shadows are the weak brain's forgeries;  
Who, angry that the eyes fly from their lights,  
In darkness daunts them with more dreadful sights.

His hand, that yet remains upon her breast,--  
Rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall!--  
May feel her heart--poor citizen!--distress'd,  
Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall,  
Beating her bulk, that his hand shakes withal.  
535 This moves in him more rage and lesser pity,  
To make the breach and enter this sweet city.

First, like a trumpet, doth his tongue begin  
To sound a parley to his heartless foe;  
Who o'er the white sheet peers her whiter chin,  
540 The reason of this rash alarm to know,  
Which he by dumb demeanor seeks to show;  
But she with vehement prayers urgeth still  
Under what colour he commits this ill.

Thus he replies: 'The colour in thy face,  
545 That even for anger makes the lily pale,  
And the red rose blush at her own disgrace,  
Shall plead for me and tell my loving tale:  
Under that colour am I come to scale  
Thy never-conquer'd fort: the fault is thine,  
550 For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine.

'Thus I forestall thee, if thou mean to chide:  
Thy beauty hath ensnared thee to this night,  
Where thou with patience must my will abide;  
My will that marks thee for my earth's delight,  
555 Which I to conquer sought with all my might;  
But as reproof and reason beat it dead,  
By thy bright beauty was it newly bred.

'I see what crosses my attempt will bring;  
I know what thorns the growing rose defends;  
560 I think the honey guarded with a sting;  
All this beforehand counsel comprehends:  
But will is deaf and hears no heedful friends;  
Only he hath an eye to gaze on beauty,  
And dotes on what he looks, 'gainst law or duty.

Then his heart beat, sounding the alarm and telling his eyes  
and hands that they could do what they wanted.

*Shakespeare suggests that this vision  
is already corrupted.*

His heart raced, and he looked at her more intently. As he  
looked, his hand reached out. His hand--filled with pride  
and itching to claim her--grabbed her breast, her most  
beautiful part. As he fondled the roundness of her breast <sup>28</sup>  
, he noticed the blue veins in her translucent skin, thinking  
her breast became even paler.

<sup>28</sup> *The war/colonization imagery  
continues, with Lucrece's breast being  
compared to the capital of an enemy  
country, and to a "turret" (castle)  
besieged by Tarquin's personified  
heart, eyes, and hands.*

It was as if the blood in the sweet girl's veins was rushing to  
her sleeping head and her heart to tell her she was in  
trouble; to wake her up by crying out, confused. Startled,  
she opened her eyes. She tried to make out what was  
happening, but it was difficult in the dim candlelight.

Imagine her like someone woken up from a deep sleep by a  
nightmare, who thinks she's seen a terrifying ghost, her  
whole body shaking with fear. It's terrifying! But her  
situation was worse: when she woke up, she saw something  
that confirmed her nightmare was real.

A thousand fears filled her mind as she trembled there like  
a freshly-killed bird. She didn't dare to look. She peered out  
from under her eyelids, hoping that what she saw was just a  
trick of her imagination, something her eyes simply thought  
they'd seen in the near-darkness.

His hand was still on her breast (and what an assault <sup>29</sup> it  
was on something so pure!). He could feel her heart (poor  
thing!) pounding itself to death, distressed. It beat so fast  
the entirety of her breast moved up and down, shaking his  
hand. Instead of pitying her, he got more fired up to  
penetrate her body.

<sup>29</sup> *A battering ram was used to break  
down the walls of a city during an  
attack. Now Lucrece's breast is the  
city wall that protects the "citizen,"  
her heart. Tarquin's metaphorical war  
on Lucrece's body, then, will take a  
physical, emotional, and moral toll.*

But first, he began to say something, as if to announce to  
his petrified enemy that the battle was on. Her white chin  
peeked out from under the white sheet, as if to ask him why  
he was doing this impulsive thing. He intended to just do it  
silently, but the pleading look on her face urged him to  
explain his reasoning.

So he replied, "Your blushing says it all; it makes my case--  
even though you're flushed with anger this time, you're still  
as pale as a lily and as red as a rose that knows it's  
disgraced. I came here to rape you because of that blush.  
It's your fault. Your own looks betrayed you to me.

"So, if you were about to criticize me, I have to stop you  
there. It's your beauty that got you where you are tonight,  
so you'll have to be patient with me doing what I will. I've  
decided to enjoy you and I'll do anything in my power to  
have you. And just as my better judgment convinced me not  
to do it, I was spurred on by your beauty.

"I can see the consequences that lie ahead. I know that  
roses are defended by thorns, and that honey is guarded by  
stinging bees. I understood all this before, but I wanted you  
so much that I couldn't listen to my own advice. I desired to  
look at your beautiful body, and make love to you, despite  
the law and my personal duty.

565 'I have debated, even in my soul,  
What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall breed;  
But nothing can affection's course control,  
Or stop the headlong fury of his speed.  
I know repentant tears ensue the deed,  
570 Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity;  
Yet strive I to embrace mine infamy.'

This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,  
Which, like a falcon towering in the skies,  
Coucheth the fowl below with his wings' shade,  
575 Whose crooked beak threatens if he mount he dies:  
So under his insulting falchion lies  
Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells  
With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcon's bells.

'Lucrece,' quoth he, 'this night I must enjoy thee:  
580 If thou deny, then force must work my way,  
For in thy bed I purpose to destroy thee:  
That done, some worthless slave of thine I'll slay,  
To kill thine honour with thy life's decay;  
And in thy dead arms do I mean to place him,  
585 Swearing I slew him, seeing thee embrace him.

'So thy surviving husband shall remain  
The scornful mark of every open eye;  
Thy kinsmen hang their heads at this disdain,  
Thy issue blurr'd with nameless bastardy:  
590 And thou, the author of their obloquy,  
Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rhymes,  
And sung by children in succeeding times.

'But if thou yield, I rest thy secret friend:  
The fault unknown is as a thought unacted;  
595 A little harm done to a great good end  
For lawful policy remains enacted.  
The poisonous simple sometimes is compacted  
In a pure compound; being so applied,  
His venom in effect is purified.

600 'Then, for thy husband and thy children's sake,  
Tender my suit: bequeath not to their lot  
The shame that from them no device can take,  
The blemish that will never be forgot;  
Worse than a slavish wipe or birth-hour's blot:  
605 For marks descried in men's nativity  
Are nature's faults, not their own infamy.'

Here with a cockatrice' dead-killing eye  
He rouseth up himself and makes a pause;  
While she, the picture of pure piety,  
610 Like a white hind under the gripe's sharp claws,  
Pleads, in a wilderness where are no laws,  
To the rough beast that knows no gentle right,  
Nor aught obeys but his foul appetite.

But when a black-faced cloud the world doth threat,  
615 In his dim mist the aspiring mountains hiding,  
From earth's dark womb some gentle gust doth get,  
Which blows these pitchy vapours from their bidding,  
Hindering their present fall by this dividing;  
So his unhallow'd haste her words delays,  
620 And moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays.

Yet, foul night-waking cat, he doth but dally,  
While in his hold-fast foot the weak mouse panteth:  
Her sad behavior feeds his vulture folly,  
A swallowing gulf that even in plenty wanteth:  
625 His ear her prayers admits, but his heart granteth  
No penetrable entrance to her plaining:  
Tears harden lust, though marble wear with raining.

Her pity-pleading eyes are sadly fix'd  
In the remorseless wrinkles of his face;  
630

"I debated with myself about how wrong this is, and about the shame and sadness it will cause. But nothing can control the direction or the single-minded speed of love. I know I'll cry and repent after this. I'll criticize myself, hate myself, and make my friends into enemies. And yet, I'm ready to embrace my disgrace."

After he said that, he unsheathed his Roman sword <sup>30</sup>, holding it over Lucrece like a falcon that flies down, pins a smaller bird by its wing, and raises its beak as a threat--letting him know that if it moves, it dies. Defenseless, Lucrece lay underneath his menacing sword, listening to what he said, trembling with fear like a bird that hears a falcon coming.

<sup>30</sup> The sword is a literal sword, but suggests Tarquin's penis. Shakespeare doesn't describe the actual rape, most likely owing to the strict censorship laws of his day, which forbid sexually explicit content.

"Lucrece," he said, "I have to have sex with you tonight. If you say 'no,' I'll have to force my way, since I've made up my mind to destroy you here in your bed. After that, I'll kill some worthless slave of yours to ruin your reputation along with your life; I'll put him in your dead arms and swear I killed him after I caught you with him.

"Your husband will live on to be scorned by everyone. His own family will shake their heads at your mistake, linking your name forever with an unmentionable crime. And you, who caused their suffering, will be the subject of children's rhymes. They'll sing about your disgrace in the days to come.

"But if you say 'yes' to me, I'll be a friend to you, and I'll keep the secret. No one will know; it'll be like it never happened. The little wrong will be made right in the long run, since it'll lead to a good end. Sometimes a little poison is mixed in with something safe to drink. The mixture effectively purifies the poison, rendering it harmless.

"So, for your husband and your children's sake, give in to me. Don't saddle them with shame they'll never be able to get rid of, or with a dark mark on their record that can't be erased. For them, it'd be worse than being born with a birthmark or deformity, since the marks we're born with are nature's fault, not our own."

Like a monster <sup>31</sup> that kills you just by looking at you, he got up and paused. Meanwhile she, like a perfect saint, or like a white deer in a vulture's claws, begged him. But there are no laws in the wild, and he was an animal that didn't care about being polite; he obeyed nothing but his own disgusting appetite.

<sup>31</sup> A cockatrice (or basilisk) was a mythological monster said to kill humans with a look.

Despite his foul impatience, he waited to hear her speak. He was like a dark cloud in the sky that hides even the tallest mountains in a dim mist. From the depths of the earth, a gentle wind could blow such a cloud away, keeping it from raining on the ground below. Her death <sup>32</sup> was delayed another minute while he listened.

<sup>32</sup> Pluto was the ancient Roman god of the underworld. According to legend, the poet and musician Orpheus visited the underworld on an ultimately doomed mission to recover his dead wife Eurydice.

But, like a nocturnal cat that's pounced on a mouse, he was only lingering. Her fed off her sadness. He listened to her prayers, but he didn't really entertain her requests. Unlike marble--which erodes with rain--lust grows harder with tears.

Her eyes, begging for pity, were fixed sadly on his remorseless, wrinkled face. She sighed as she spoke, which

Her modest eloquence with sighs is mix'd,  
Which to her oratory adds more grace.  
She puts the period often from his place;  
And midst the sentence so her accent breaks,  
That twice she doth begin ere once she speaks.

635 She conjures him by high almighty Jove,  
By knighthood, gentry, and sweet friendship's oath,  
By her untimely tears, her husband's love,  
By holy human law, and common troth,  
640 By heaven and earth, and all the power of both,  
That to his borrow'd bed he make retire,  
And stoop to honour, not to foul desire.

Quoth she, 'Reward not hospitality  
With such black payment as thou hast pretended;  
Mud not the fountain that gave drink to thee;  
645 Mar not the thing that cannot be amended;  
End thy ill aim before thy shoot be ended;  
He is no woodman that doth bend his bow  
To strike a poor unseasonable doe.

'My husband is thy friend; for his sake spare me:  
650 Thyself art mighty; for thine own sake leave me:  
Myself a weakling; do not then ensnare me:  
Thou look'st not like deceit; do not deceive me.  
My sighs, like whirlwinds, labour hence to heave thee:  
If ever man were moved with woman moans,  
655 Be moved with my tears, my sighs, my groans:

'All which together, like a troubled ocean,  
Beat at thy rocky and wreck-threatening heart,  
To soften it with their continual motion;  
For stones dissolved to water do convert.  
660 O, if no harder than a stone thou art,  
Melt at my tears, and be compassionate!  
Soft pity enters at an iron gate.

'In Tarquin's likeness I did entertain thee:  
Hast thou put on his shape to do him shame?  
665 To all the host of heaven I complain me,  
Thou wrong'st his honour, wound'st his princely name.  
Thou art not what thou seem'st; and if the same,  
Thou seem'st not what thou art, a god, a king;  
For kings like gods should govern everything.

670 'How will thy shame be seeded in thine age,  
When thus thy vices bud before thy spring!  
If in thy hope thou dares do such outrage,  
What dares thou not when once thou art a king?  
O, be remember'd, no outrageous thing  
675 From vassal actors can be wiped away;  
Then kings' misdeeds cannot be hid in clay.

'This deed will make thee only loved for fear;  
But happy monarchs still are fear'd for love:  
With foul offenders thou perforce must bear,  
680 When they in thee the like offences prove:  
If but for fear of this, thy will remove;  
For princes are the glass, the school, the book,  
Where subjects' eyes do learn, do read, do look.

'And wilt thou be the school where Lust shall learn?  
685 Must he in thee read lectures of such shame?  
Wilt thou be glass wherein it shall discern  
Authority for sin, warrant for blame,  
To privilege dishonour in thy name?  
Thou back'st reproach against long-living laud,  
690 And makest fair reputation but a bawd.

'Hast thou command? by him that gave it thee,  
From a pure heart command thy rebel will:  
Draw not thy sword to guard iniquity,  
For it was lent thee all that brood to kill.  
695 Thy princely office how canst thou fulfil,

increased the overall effect of her eloquence. At time she could hardly finish a sentence--her voice would break off in the middle. She stopped and started twice before she was able to speak.

In the name of the powerful god [Jove](#) <sup>33</sup>, knights, the aristocracy, friendship, her own tears, her husband's love, holy human law, and common decency, in the name of heaven and earth and the combined power of both: she asked him to go back to his bed, and to do the right thing rather than caving into his perverted desires.

<sup>33</sup> Jove was king of the ancient Roman gods.

She said, "Don't reward my hospitality with the horrible crimes you've described. Don't bite the hand that feeds you. Don't break something you can't fix. Stop aiming for this target before you shoot. A man who kills a poor deer out of season is hardly an accomplished hunter.

"My husband is your friend. Spare me for his sake. You yourself are powerful. Leave me for your own sake. I'm weak, so don't trap me. You don't look like a liar, so don't lie to me. I'm sighing because that's all I can do to make you leave. If it's possible for a man to be moved by what a woman does, let my tears, sighs, and groans move you.

"All these together are like a stormy sea [B4](#) beating against your rocky heart, which threatens to shipwreck me. My tears are meant to soften you, like waves soften rocks and, eventually, turn them into water. Are you harder than stone? Let my tears move you! Be compassionate! Although you're tough, I believe you can still feel pity.

<sup>34</sup> Lucrece compares her tears and sighs to rain and wind, figuring her bodily reactions to Tarquin as a storm trying to erode a hard rock (symbolizing his evil heart).

"I welcomed you as I would Tarquin himself. Why would you disrespect him this way? I'll pray to the gods, saying you betrayed him and dishonored his royal name. You're not what you seem. If you are what you seem, that you're seeming like something you're not. You should be a god, a king. Kings, like gods, are supposed to rule over everything.

"If you're this bad as a young man, imagine how terrible you'll be when you're old! And if you'd do something this outrageous when you're only a prince, what will you do when you're a king? Don't forget: if common people's sins can't be wiped away, then kings can't hide theirs, either.

"If you do this, people will be afraid of you, but the best monarchs are loved, not just feared. Once people find out what you've done, they might become the worst kind of criminals, too--or they might take you out of office because they're afraid that might happen. You see, [princes](#) <sup>35</sup> are like a mirror, a school, and a book in which subjects look, learn, and read how they're supposed to act.

<sup>35</sup> Lucrece argues that, if Tarquin commits rape, his subjects will follow his example because he is their role model.

"And do you want to be setting an example of following lust? Do you want people to follow your shameful lead? Are you going to be the mirror in which criminals look, finding an excuse for sin and blame? Do you want them to commit crimes in your name? You're giving up what could have been a lifetime of praise. Your reputation will become a joke.

"Aren't you powerful? In the king's name, keep your rebellious heart in check [36](#). Don't use your sword to defend something that's wrong; you got it to triumph over evil. How can you be a good prince if you're giving people

<sup>36</sup> Lucrece appeals to Tarquin's political and military role, asking him to command his heart and his actions like a military leader commands troops. This contradicts his heroic

When, pattern'd by thy fault, foul sin may say,  
He learn'd to sin, and thou didst teach the way?

'Think but how vile a spectacle it were,  
To view thy present trespass in another.  
700 Men's faults do seldom to themselves appear;  
Their own transgressions partially they smother:  
This guilt would seem death-worthy in thy brother.  
O, how are they wrapp'd in with infamies  
That from their own misdeeds askance their eyes!

705 'To thee, to thee, my heaved-up hands appeal,  
Not to seducing lust, thy rash relier:  
I sue for exiled majesty's repeal;  
Let him return, and flattering thoughts retire:  
His true respect will prison false desire,  
710 And wipe the dim mist from thy dotting eyne,  
That thou shalt see thy state and pity mine.'

'Have done,' quoth he: 'my uncontrolled tide  
Turns not, but swells the higher by this let.  
Small lights are soon blown out, huge fires abide,  
715 And with the wind in greater fury fret:  
The petty streams that pay a daily debt  
To their salt sovereign, with their fresh falls' haste  
Add to his flow, but alter not his taste.'

'Thou art,' quoth she, 'a sea, a sovereign king;  
720 And, lo, there falls into thy boundless flood  
Black lust, dishonour, shame, misgoverning,  
Who seek to stain the ocean of thy blood.  
If all these petty ills shall change thy good,  
Thy sea within a puddle's womb is hearsed,  
725 And not the puddle in thy sea dispersed.'

'So shall these slaves be king, and thou their slave;  
Thou nobly base, they basely dignified;  
Thou their fair life, and they thy fouler grave:  
Thou loathed in their shame, they in thy pride:  
730 The lesser thing should not the greater hide;  
The cedar stoops not to the base shrub's foot,  
But low shrubs wither at the cedar's root.'

'So let thy thoughts, low vassals to thy state'--  
No more,' quoth he; 'by heaven, I will not hear thee:  
735 Yield to my love; if not, enforced hate,  
Instead of love's coy touch, shall rudely tear thee;  
That done, despitefully I mean to bear thee  
Unto the base bed of some rascal groom,  
To be thy partner in this shameful doom.'

740 This said, he sets his foot upon the light,  
For light and lust are deadly enemies:  
Shame folded up in blind concealing night,  
When most unseen, then most doth tyrannize.  
The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries;  
745 Till with her own white fleece her voice controll'd  
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold:

For with the nightly linen that she wears  
He pens her piteous clamours in her head;  
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears  
750 That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed.  
O, that prone lust should stain so pure a bed!  
The spots whereof could weeping purify,  
Her tears should drop on them perpetually.

755 But she hath lost a dearer thing than life,  
And he hath won what he would lose again:  
This forced league doth force a further strife;

license to commit the worst sins, and teaching them how to do it?

"Think about how revolted you'd be if you saw someone else making the same gross mistake <sup>37</sup>. Men usually can't see their own faults; they hide them from themselves. You'd put another man to death for this. You're setting yourself up for trouble by refusing to recognize your own evil!

"I beg you, I beg you, with my hands raised: don't rape me. I appeal to the royal sensibility <sup>38</sup> that you left at the door. Bring it back, and you won't want to do this anymore. The respect you owe me will put this desire to rest, help you to see yourself clearly, and force you to pity me."

"Enough," he said. "My uncontrollable desire isn't going away; it's getting stronger with all this talking. You can blow out a small light, but huge fires remain and grow larger when the wind blows. The tiny streams that flow into the sea might add water, but they don't change the salty taste."

She said, "You're a royal king. You're like a sea whose waters are polluted with lust, dishonor, shame, and wrongdoing. If you commit this 'petty' crime, it'll cancel out everything that's good about you. This puddle will swallow up your sea, instead of the puddle getting lost in it.

"If you do this, your actions will define you. You'll be a slave to them. You'll be stooping down to their level. You'll give these thoughts life, and they'll be the death of you. You'll be hated for and ashamed of what you did, and you'll hate yourself for being prideful enough to do it. A great man like you shouldn't be defined by something like this. A tree doesn't reach down to where a bush grows, does it? No. Bushes shrivel up at the foot of a tree.

"So, get control of your ugly thoughts--" "No more," he said, "I swear I won't listen to you. Either give into my love or prepare yourself, because instead of caressing you lovingly and gently, I'll forcefully tear you up. After that, I intend to take your body to the some low-level servant's bed, to make him share your sad fate."

Having said that, he knocked the candle over with his foot. Lust can't survive in the light, but it thrives in the concealing darkness of night, when atrocious things go unseen. The wolf had seized his prey. The poor lamb screamed, but he stuffed her own white sheet between her lips to silence her.

He <sup>39</sup> used her own bed sheets to keep her from saying what she thought, and placed his hot face against hers, wet with the most innocent tears <sup>40</sup> that modest eyes ever shed. How terrible for such a pure girl to be raped! If she could undo his crime by crying, her tears would have washed it all away.

She lost something more valuable than life itself, and he got something he regretted. The rape led to further trouble. His momentary satisfaction caused months of pain. His hot

*self-image, which he also described in political and military terms.*

<sup>37</sup> Now Lucrece points to Tarquin's hypocrisy; as king, he would eventually have to prosecute people for similar crimes to the one he plans to commit.

<sup>38</sup> Lucrece imagines there are two Tarquins: Prince Tarquin (the morally upstanding soldier and future king) and Rapist Tarquin (who stands before her now). She asks Tarquin to bring back the Prince, so that Prince Tarquin can defeat Rapist Tarquin.

<sup>39</sup> In this stanza, the actual details of the assault are omitted. Instead, Shakespeare describes the faces of the two individuals and, particularly, Lucrece's tears.

<sup>40</sup> There's a contrast here between Lucrece's cool, fearful tears and Tarquin's hot, angry lust. Water and fire are two opposite elements associated with Lucrece and Tarquin, respectively.

This momentary joy breeds months of pain;  
 This hot desire converts to cold disdain:  
 Pure Chastity is rifled of her store,  
 760 And Lust, the thief, far poorer than before.

Look, as the full-fed hound or gorged hawk,  
 Unapt for tender smell or speedy flight,  
 Make slow pursuit, or altogether balk  
 The prey wherein by nature they delight;  
 765 So surfeit-taking Tarquin fares this night:  
 His taste delicious, in digestion souring,  
 Devours his will, that lived by foul devouring.

O, deeper sin than bottomless conceit  
 Can comprehend in still imagination!  
 770 Drunken Desire must vomit his receipt,  
 Ere he can see his own abomination.  
 While Lust is in his pride, no exclamation  
 Can curb his heat or rein his rash desire,  
 Till like a jade Self-will himself doth tire.

And then with lank and lean discolour'd cheek,  
 With heavy eye, knit brow, and strengthless pace,  
 Feeble Desire, all recreant, poor, and meek,  
 Like to a bankrupt beggar wails his case:  
 The flesh being proud, Desire doth fight with Grace,  
 780 For there it revels; and when that decays,  
 The guilty rebel for remission prays.

So fares it with this faultful lord of Rome,  
 Who this accomplishment so hotly chased;  
 For now against himself he sounds this doom,  
 785 That through the length of times he stands disgraced:  
 Besides, his soul's fair temple is defaced;  
 To whose weak ruins muster troops of cares,  
 To ask the spotted princess how she fares.

She says, her subjects with foul insurrection  
 Have batter'd down her consecrated wall,  
 And by their mortal fault brought in subjection  
 Her immortality, and made her thrall  
 To living death and pain perpetual:  
 Which in her prescience she controlled still,  
 795 But her foresight could not forestall their will.

Even in this thought through the dark night he  
 stealth,  
 A captive victor that hath lost in gain;  
 Bearing away the wound that nothing healeth,  
 800 The scar that will, despite of cure, remain;  
 Leaving his spoil perplex'd in greater pain.  
 She bears the load of lust he left behind,  
 And he the burden of a guilty mind.

He like a thievish dog creeps sadly thence;  
 805 She like a wearied lamb lies panting there;  
 He scowls and hates himself for his offence;  
 She, desperate, with her nails her flesh doth tear;  
 He faintly flies, sneaking with guilty fear;  
 She stays, exclaiming on the direful night;  
 810 He runs, and chides his vanish'd, loathed delight.

He thence departs a heavy convertite;  
 She there remains a hopeless castaway;  
 He in his speed looks for the morning light;  
 She prays she never may behold the day,  
 815 'For day,' quoth she, 'nights scapes doth open lay,  
 And my true eyes have never practised how  
 To cloak offences with a cunning brow.

'They think not but that every eye can see  
 The same disgrace which they themselves behold;  
 820 And therefore would they still in darkness be,  
 To have their unseen sin remain untold;  
 For they their guilt with weeping will unfold,

desire turned into cold hatred. Lucrece was robbed of her sexual modesty, and Tarquin, the thief, was poorer than before.

Just like a well-fed dog or a stuffed hawk--unable to smell well or fly quickly--will pursue their desired prey lazily or even reject it entirely, Tarquin took more than his fill that night. He thought she tasted good at first, but he quickly got indigestion. Now that he'd gotten what he wanted, he regretted doing it.

Oh, it's a worse sin than anyone could imagine in their wildest dreams! Tarquin was drunk with desire, but now he'd rather throw up than see the horrible thing he'd just done. When his lust was burning, nothing could cool him off or rein him in--not until he got tired of his own depravity.

After desire left him, he was like a poor, feeble, bankrupt beggar trying to make excuses. His face was pale and drawn. With narrowed eyes, he frowned and lost all his strength. He was a proud man, so once his desire had its way and started to wane, he had to deal with the consequences. Feeling guilty, he started praying for forgiveness.

That's how it was with the criminal prince of Rome. After pursuing this moment so passionately, he realized his own impending doom, knowing that in a very short time he'd be in disgrace. Besides, he damned his eternal soul. Trying to salvage what decency he had left, he asked the ravished princess how she was doing.

She said she'd lost control of her emotions and her own body was rebelling against her, having betrayed her to death and unending pain. While she was in her right mind she could stay calm <sup>41</sup>, she said, but wasn't sure she'd be able to much longer.

<sup>41</sup> Lucrece masters the art of self-control, even when her bodily reaction (tears) would be justified. Her virtuous actions contrast with Tarquin's.

He stole away through the darkness still thinking about what she said. Though he'd gotten what he wanted, he'd lost something, too. He was marked by a cut that would never heal, a scar that would stay with him despite attempts to cure it. He left his victim to deal with worse pain. She was left to deal with the consequences of the rape; all he had to deal with was his guilty mind.

He crept away sadly, like a dog that steals scraps from the table. She lay there, panting, like a tired lamb. He frowned, hating himself for his crime. She desperately scratched her face with her nails. He walked quickly and quietly, sneaking, guilty and afraid. She stayed, wishing that night had never happened. He ran, regretting and hating his pleasure.

He left her room like a serious convert. She remained there like a hopeless castaway. He wanted morning to come quickly. She hoped the day would never come. She said, "In the daytime, everyone will find out <sup>42</sup> what happened tonight, since I don't know how to lie and pretend that nothing happened.

<sup>42</sup> Whereas Tarquin's external appearance conceals his internal reality, Lucrece's external appearance gives away an internal reality--the disgrace she perceives herself to be in.

"I feel like everyone else can see in my eyes the disgrace I see in myself. I wish I could shut my eyes forever so that no one would ever find out about my sin. I'll give away my guilt by crying, and my tears will cut into my cheeks like water erodes steel, showing the shame I feel."

And grave, like water that doth eat in steel,  
Upon my cheeks what helpless shame I feel!

825 Here she exclaims against repose and rest,  
And bids her eyes hereafter still be blind.  
She wakes her heart by beating on her breast,  
And bids it leap from thence, where it may find  
Some purer chest to close so pure a mind.  
830 Frantic with grief thus breathes she forth her spite  
Against the unseen secrecy of night:

'O comfort-killing Night, image of hell!  
Dim register and notary of shame!  
Black stage for tragedies and murders fell!  
835 Vast sin-concealing chaos! nurse of blame!  
Blind muffled bawd! dark harbour for defame!  
Grim cave of death! whispering conspirator  
With close-tongued treason and the ravisher!

'O hateful, vaporous, and foggy Night!  
840 Since thou art guilty of my cureless crime,  
Muster thy mists to meet the eastern light,  
Make war against proportion'd course of time;  
Or if thou wilt permit the sun to climb  
His wonted height, yet ere he go to bed,  
845 Knit poisonous clouds about his golden head.

'With rotten damps ravish the morning air;  
Let their exhaled unwholesome breaths make sick  
The life of purity, the supreme fair,  
Ere he arrive his weary noon-tide prick;  
850 And let thy misty vapours march so thick,  
That in their smoky ranks his smother'd light  
May set at noon and make perpetual night.

'Were Tarquin Night, as he is but Night's child,  
The silver-shining queen he would disdain;  
855 Her twinkling handmaids too, by him defiled,  
Through Night's black bosom should not peep again:  
So should I have co-partners in my pain;  
And fellowship in woe doth woe assuage,  
As palmers' chat makes short their pilgrimage.

860 'Where now I have no one to blush with me,  
To cross their arms and hang their heads with mine,  
To mask their brows and hide their infamy;  
But I alone alone must sit and pine,  
Seasoning the earth with showers of silver brine,  
865 Mingling my talk with tears, my grief with groans,  
Poor wasting monuments of lasting moans.

'O Night, thou furnace of foul-reeking smoke,  
Let not the jealous Day behold that face  
Which underneath thy black all-hiding cloak  
870 Immodestly lies martyr'd with disgrace!  
Keep still possession of thy gloomy place,  
That all the faults which in thy reign are made  
May likewise be sepulchred in thy shade!

'Make me not object to the tell-tale Day!  
875 The light will show, character'd in my brow,  
The story of sweet chastity's decay,  
The impious breach of holy wedlock vow:  
Yea the illiterate, that know not how  
To cipher what is writ in learned books,  
880 Will quote my loathsome trespass in my looks.

'The nurse, to still her child, will tell my story,  
And fright her crying babe with Tarquin's name;  
The orator, to deck his oratory,  
Will couple my reproach to Tarquin's shame;  
885 Feast-finding minstrels, tuning my defame,  
Will tie the hearers to attend each line,  
How Tarquin wronged me, I Collatine.

Though she didn't want to lie down and sleep any more, she kept her eyes shut, wishing she were blind. As her heart pounded, she wished it would jump out of her chest and go find a purer body to live in, one as pure as she wished she was. Frantic and grieving, she shouted angrily into the dark secrecy of the night:

"Damn this night <sup>43</sup>, it's ruined me! The darkness kept anyone from noticing my shame! Its chaos concealed my sin! It let this happen! Blind, silent night! Reputations are lost in the darkness! Death creeps in! The night was in cahoots with that lying, treacherous rapist!

<sup>43</sup> Lucrece personifies the night as a villain and addresses him directly.

"I hate you, you foggy, misty night! Since I blame you for this unforgivable crime, now I'm asking you to keep it dark--don't allow the sun to rise. Fight against the natural progression of time. Or, if you're going to let the sun rise in the sky, cover him with clouds all throughout the day.

"Keep the morning air damp. Let your breath be unhealthy winds, and make the day sick. Ruin what might have been a pure, beautiful day before it even gets to noon. Lay a thick fog over everything to smother the sun's life, so that it sets at noon and makes the whole day night.

"Tarquin is a man of the night. If he could, he'd rape the night <sup>44</sup> itself, ravishing the bright, silver moon and all the stars. He'd make them so dirty that they wouldn't be able to shine in the dark of night ever again. Then I'd have someone to share my pain. Misery loves company as much as people on a journey like to pass the time by chatting.

<sup>44</sup> Now Lucrece feminizes night, imagining Tarquin assaulted it too.

"But instead I'm alone now. There's no one to blush with me, no one to cross their arms and hang their heads with me, no one else covering their faces to hide their shame. I'm alone, all alone, to sit and cry, covering the earth with showers of tears, talking and crying, grieving and groaning. And yet the cries I'm able to make can't do justice to my sadness, which will never end.

"This night is an oven filled with stinky smoke. Night, don't let the light of day see my face--I'm hiding in your blackness, lying here immodestly, like a disgraceful martyr. Stay where you are--keep it gloomy so that all the crimes committed in the night can stay buried in the darkness.

"Don't make me face the light of day! The light will reveal the whole story of my rape--and of my broken marriage vows <sup>45</sup>--that's written in my face. Even illiterate people who've never learned to read in their lives will be able to take one look and me and understand my awful crime.

<sup>45</sup> Lucrece assigns herself blame for failing in sexual virtue by having sex with someone other than her husband. This is consistent with classical and (to an extent) Renaissance views of sexual assault.

"Nannies will tell my story to their children. They'll scare them with Tarquin's name. Politicians will use mine and Tarquin's shame as an anecdote in their speeches. Musicians at feasts will sing about my disgrace. They'll have their listeners hanging on every line as they tell how Tarquin wronged me, and how I wronged Collatine in turn.

'Let my good name, that senseless reputation,  
For Collatine's dear love be kept unspotted:  
890 If that be made a theme for disputation,  
The branches of another root are rotted,  
And undeserved reproach to him allotted  
That is as clear from this attain of mine  
As I, ere this, was pure to Collatine.

895 'O unseen shame! invisible disgrace!  
O unfelt sore! crest-wounding, private scar!  
Reproach is stamp'd in Collatinus' face,  
And Tarquin's eye may read the mot afar,  
How he in peace is wounded, not in war.  
900 Alas, how many bear such shameful blows,  
Which not themselves, but he that gives them knows!

'If, Collatine, thine honour lay in me,  
From me by strong assault it is bereft.  
My honour lost, and I, a drone-like bee,  
905 Have no perfection of my summer left,  
But robb'd and ransack'd by injurious theft:  
In thy weak hive a wandering wasp hath crept,  
And suck'd the honey which thy chaste bee kept.

'Yet am I guilty of thy honour's wrack;  
910 Yet for thy honour did I entertain him;  
Coming from thee, I could not put him back,  
For it had been dishonour to disdain him:  
Besides, of weariness he did complain him,  
And talk'd of virtue: O unlook'd-for evil,  
915 When virtue is profaned in such a devil!

'Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?  
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests?  
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud?  
Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts?  
920 Or kings be breakers of their own behests?  
But no perfection is so absolute,  
That some impurity doth not pollute.

'The aged man that coffers-up his gold  
Is plagued with cramps and gouts and painful fits;  
925 And scarce hath eyes his treasure to behold,  
But like still-pining Tantalus he sits,  
And useless barns the harvest of his wits;  
Having no other pleasure of his gain  
But torment that it cannot cure his pain.

930 'So then he hath it when he cannot use it,  
And leaves it to be master'd by his young;  
Who in their pride do presently abuse it:  
Their father was too weak, and they too strong,  
To hold their cursed-blessed fortune long.  
935 The sweets we wish for turn to loathed sours  
Even in the moment that we call them ours.

'Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring;  
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers;  
The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing;  
940 What virtue breeds iniquity devours:  
We have no good that we can say is ours,  
But ill-annexed Opportunity  
Or kills his life or else his quality.

'O Opportunity, thy guilt is great!  
945 'Tis thou that executest the traitor's treason:  
Thou set'st the wolf where he the lamb may get;  
Whoever plots the sin, thou 'point'st the season;

"Let my name and my innocent reputation stay clean for  
Collatine's sake. If my name is ruined, so is Collatine's, since  
we're necessarily connected. He doesn't deserve that. He's  
as free of blame now as I was before this, when I was  
faithful to him.

"Oh, my unseen shame and invisible disgrace! My new hurt,  
my wounded heart, my private scar! Collatinus is ruined,  
too, and Tarquin knows it--knows that Collatinus has been  
wounded in peace rather than in war. It's a shame that so  
many people are hurt this way. They have no idea; only the  
people who hurt them know!

"Collatinus, if your reputation was staked on me, then I've  
lost it all for you. My modesty is gone. I'm like a bee who's  
been robbed of his honey and has nothing left when the  
summer is over. A wandering wasp crept into your poorly-  
defended hive and sucked out all the honey that I, your  
faithful bee, had.

"But I'm guilty of destroying your reputation! I only  
welcomed him out of duty to you. Since he came from your  
camp, I couldn't send him back. It would have been wrong  
to insult him that way. Besides, he said he was tired, and he  
was talking about your military victories. It's hard to spot  
the devil when he's talking pretty!

"Why do worms eat away at innocent flowers <sup>46</sup>? Why do  
evil cuckoos destroy sparrows' eggs, and put their own in  
their place in the nest? Why do toads pollute pretty  
fountains with their dirty mud? Why do good people do  
foolish, violent things? Why do kings break their own  
promises? And yet, even the most perfect things are  
imperfect in some ways.

"An old man <sup>47</sup> who puts his money away in the vault  
suffers from cramps, gout, and painful fits--and is barely  
able to enjoy his own wealth. He has everything he wants,  
but keeps it out of arms' reach <sup>48</sup>. He distances himself  
from the fruits of his own labor, as if he enjoys tormenting  
himself by having it and not using it to help himself.

"Then when he dies and leaves his money to his children,  
they pridefully waste it. Their father was too weak and they  
were too strong. They couldn't hold onto their fortune for  
very long; it was both a blessing and a curse. The candy we  
want turns sour the very moment we have it in hand.

"Peaceful spring ends in harsh storms; gross weeds grow  
among precious flowers; snakes hiss where sweet birds  
sing. Anything that's good is swallowed up by bad. We can  
barely call good things our own before someone else takes  
the opportunity to destroy them, or at least devalue them.

"It's opportunity <sup>49</sup> that's the problem! Opportunity,  
you're the reason a traitor commits treason. You're the one  
who tells the wolf where he can find the lamb. When  
anyone's up to no good, you tell them the best time to do it.

<sup>46</sup> Lucrece uses images of natural beauty corrupted by parasitic and predatorial forces to figure her own desecration by Tarquin.

<sup>47</sup> In the previous stanza, Lucrece laments good things that end too soon. In this one, she laments good things that are never enjoyed, and are thus wasted. Together, these two arguments depict the inability to fully enjoy, respect, and utilize good and beautiful things on earth (like chastity and personal attraction).

<sup>48</sup> In classical mythology, Tantalus' punishment in hell is to stand in chin-deep water under a fruit tree. Starving and dying of thirst, he could neither reach the fruit to eat, nor drink the water.

<sup>49</sup> Lucrece personifies Opportunity and addresses it directly. Along with Night (the time that Tarquin committed his crime), she blames

950 'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason;  
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,  
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.

'Thou makest the vestal violate her oath;  
Thou blow'st the fire when temperance is thaw'd;  
Thou smother'st honesty, thou murder'st troth;  
Thou foul abettor! thou notorious bawd!  
955 Thou plantest scandal and displacest laud:  
Thou ravisher, thou traitor, thou false thief,  
Thy honey turns to gall, thy joy to grief!

'Thy secret pleasure turns to open shame,  
Thy private feasting to a public fast,  
960 Thy smoothing titles to a ragged name,  
Thy sugar'd tongue to bitter wormwood taste:  
Thy violent vanities can never last.  
How comes it then, vile Opportunity,  
Being so bad, such numbers seek for thee?

965 'When wilt thou be the humble suppliant's friend,  
And bring him where his suit may be obtain'd?  
When wilt thou sort an hour great strifes to end?  
Or free that soul which wretchedness hath chain'd?  
Give physic to the sick, ease to the pain'd?  
970 The poor, lame, blind, halt, creep, cry out for thee;  
But they ne'er meet with Opportunity.

'The patient dies while the physician sleeps;  
The orphan pines while the oppressor feeds;  
Justice is feasting while the widow weeps;  
975 Advice is sporting while infection breeds:  
Thou grant'st no time for charitable deeds:  
Wrath, envy, treason, rape, and murder's rages,  
Thy heinous hours wait on them as their pages.

'When Truth and Virtue have to do with thee,  
980 A thousand crosses keep them from thy aid:  
They buy thy help; but Sin ne'er gives a fee,  
He gratis comes; and thou art well appaid  
As well to hear as grant what he hath said.  
My Collatine would else have come to me  
985 When Tarquin did, but he was stay'd by thee.

Guilty thou art of murder and of theft,  
Guilty of perjury and subornation,  
Guilty of treason, forgery, and shift,  
Guilty of incest, that abomination;  
990 An accessory by thine inclination  
To all sins past, and all that are to come,  
From the creation to the general doom.

'Mis-shapen Time, copesmate of ugly Night,  
Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care,  
995 Eater of youth, false slave to false delight,  
Base watch of woes, sin's pack-horse, virtue's snare;  
Thou nursest all and murder'st all that are:  
O, hear me then, injurious, shifting Time!  
Be guilty of my death, since of my crime.

1000 'Why hath thy servant, Opportunity,  
Betray'd the hours thou gavest me to repose,  
Cancell'd my fortunes, and enchained me  
To endless date of never-ending woes?  
Time's office is to fine the hate of foes;  
1005 To eat up errors by opinion bred,  
Not spend the dowry of a lawful bed.

'Time's glory is to calm contending kings,  
To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light,  
To stamp the seal of time in aged things,  
1010 To wake the morn and sentinel the night,  
To wrong the wronger till he render right,

You laugh at what's right, at the law, and at reason. You and sin work together, lying low to capture people when you can.

"Opportunity, you'd make a nun violate her vow of chastity. You rile us up the moment our self-discipline is relaxed. With you there's no chance for honesty, or kept promises--you dirty scoundrel! You notorious pimp! You spread gossip and stop compliments in their tracks. You rapist, you traitor, you lying thief: you turn honey into vomit, and joy into grief!

"Opportunity, what you convince us to enjoy in secret leads to public shame. When you let us eat our fill in private, it leads to widespread starvation. When we take advantage of you to boost our reputations, we end up dragging our names through the mud. Opportunity, you're sweet but taste bitter because what you give us can never last. So, gross Opportunity, why is it that--if you're so bad--so many people search for you?

"When <sup>50</sup> will you come to the humble beggar's aid, and help him get what he needs? When will you find time to end serious suffering, or free the man who was wrongfully imprisoned? When will you heal the sick, and comfort those in pain? Poor, lame, blind, unsuccessful, and low-down men cry out for you, but they never get an opportunity.

"The patient dies while the doctor sleeps. The orphan cries while the dictator eats. The judge celebrates while the widow cries. There's no good advice to be found when disease spreads. Opportunity, you don't make time for works of charity. Instead, you give every available hour to the rages of anger, jealousy, treason, rape, and murder.

"When honest, virtuous people need you, a thousand obstacles stand in their way. They have to pay to find an opportunity, but sin doesn't charge--no, sin comes free. Opportunity, you're always quick to answer anything that sinful people ask for, and to do anything they say. Otherwise, Collatine would have come to save me from Tarquin. But he didn't have the opportunity.

"Opportunity, you're guilty of murder and theft; guilty of lying under oath and giving false testimony; guilty of treason, forgery, and fraud; guilty of incest and abomination. By your very nature, you've been an accomplice to every sin that's ever been committed, and to those that will be committed in the future, from the beginning of the world to the end of time.

"Opportunity teamed up with corrupted Time <sup>51</sup> and ugly Night. Time, you carry secret messages quickly, cause the young to grow old, and convince people to waste their lives pursuing empty pleasures. You let suffering go on and on, you carry out sin, and you trip up virtue. You pass the days of our lives from our birth to our deaths. So listen to me, you offensive, untrustworthy Time! You're guilty of my rape and of my death.

"How come your friend Opportunity let Tarquin know when I was sleeping, ruined my life, and set me up for an eternity of never-ending suffering? Time is supposed to put an end to enemies' hatred and correct mistakes, not ruin a perfectly good marriage.

"Time, you're supposed to end civil wars; to reveal lies and bring truth to light; to verify things as they age over time; to watch over morning and night; to make sure justice is served; and to make excessively gaudy buildings fall into

*Opportunity (variables that inspired and allowed Tarquin to rape) for her plight.*

<sup>50</sup> *The argument is that Opportunity favors evil people, contributing to suffering and hardship in the world. Lucrece's picture of human society is bleak: good people suffer and bad people get ahead.*

<sup>51</sup> *Time, the third personification, can best be understood as the progress of time rather than a Father Time figure. Lucrece criticizes Time for not living up to the proverbs about it (e.g. "time heals all wounds," "all in good time," etc.).*



To ruinate proud buildings with thy hours,  
And smear with dust their glittering golden towers;

1015 'To fill with worm-holes stately monuments,  
To feed oblivion with decay of things,  
To blot old books and alter their contents,  
To pluck the quills from ancient ravens' wings,  
To dry the old oak's sap and cherish springs,  
To spoil antiquities of hammer'd steel,  
1020 And turn the giddy round of Fortune's wheel;

'To show the beldam daughters of her daughter,  
To make the child a man, the man a child,  
To slay the tiger that doth live by slaughter,  
To tame the unicorn and lion wild,  
1025 To mock the subtle in themselves beguiled,  
To cheer the ploughman with increaseful crops,  
And waste huge stones with little water drops.

'Why work'st thou mischief in thy pilgrimage,  
Unless thou couldst return to make amends?  
1030 One poor retiring minute in an age  
Would purchase thee a thousand thousand friends,  
Lending him wit that to bad debtors lends:  
O, this dread night, wouldst thou one hour come back,  
I could prevent this storm and shun thy wrack!

1035 'Thou ceaseless lackey to eternity,  
With some mischance cross Tarquin in his flight:  
Devise extremes beyond extremity,  
To make him curse this cursed crimeful night:  
Let ghastly shadows his lewd eyes affright;  
1040 And the dire thought of his committed evil  
Shape every bush a hideous shapeless devil.

'Disturb his hours of rest with restless trances,  
Afflict him in his bed with bedrid groans;  
Let there bechance him pitiful mischances,  
1045 To make him moan; but pity not his moans:  
Stone him with harden'd hearts harder than stones;  
And let mild women to him lose their mildness,  
Wildier to him than tigers in their wildness.

'Let him have time to tear his curled hair,  
Let him have time against himself to rave,  
Let him have time of Time's help to despair,  
Let him have time to live a loathed slave,  
Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave,  
And time to see one that by alms doth live  
1055 Disdain to him disdained scraps to give.

'Let him have time to see his friends his foes,  
And merry fools to mock at him resort;  
Let him have time to mark how slow time goes  
In time of sorrow, and how swift and short  
1060 His time of folly and his time of sport;  
And ever let his unrecalling crime  
Have time to wail th' abusing of his time.

'O Time, thou tutor both to good and bad,  
Teach me to curse him that thou taught'st this ill!  
1065 At his own shadow let the thief run mad,  
Himself himself seek every hour to kill!  
Such wretched hands such wretched blood should spill;  
For who so base would such an office have  
As slanderous death's-man to so base a slave?

1070 'The baser is he, coming from a king,  
To shame his hope with deeds degenerate:  
The mightier man, the mightier is the thing  
That makes him honour'd, or begets him hate;  
For greatest scandal waits on greatest state.  
1075 The moon being clouded presently is miss'd,  
But little stars may hide them when they list.

disrepair as you cover their glittering, golden towers with dust...

"...to let worms destroy public monuments; to make people forget; to make things decay; to smear the words in old books and change what they say; to kill birds so that their feathers can become quill pens; to dry up tree sap so it can become amber; to create hot springs; to rust old metal antiques; and change everyone's luck from time to time...


"...to allow a grandmother to see her grandchildren; to make children grow up into men, and men become weak in their old age; to end a tiger's life after years of being a predator; to tame wild lions and unicorns; to punish tricksters who outsmart themselves; to allow farmers to harvest their crops; and to erode huge rocks with tiny rain drops.

"Time, why would you do something wrong that you can't correct or balance out later? If, once a century, you'd let us change even a minute in the past, you'd make a lot of friends and would help people who'd made mistakes. If only this horrible night would go back one hour so that I could prevent this storm from coming!

"Time, you're just eternity's slave. Please give Tarquin bad luck as he runs away. Figure out some kind of extreme obstacle so that he, too, will wish he could go back and change the crimes he committed tonight. Make him afraid of scary shadows. Fill his mind with desperate thoughts, make him regret the evil he did, and make him think every bush he sees in the dark is a hideous devil.

"Don't let him sleep--make him wake up in the night. Make him groan in his bed. Then, when he groans, send people in to check on him. But don't let them pity him at all; instead, have them make him even more upset. Make their hearts as hard as stone. Make even the sweetest women be less than sweet to him; make them be as mean to him as wild tigers.

"Give him the [time](#) to start pulling out his curly hair. Give him the time to curse himself. Give him the time to wish he hadn't had the time. Give him the time to live his life out like a low-down slave. Give him the time to starve, and give him the time to see that a beggar who has to live off charity wouldn't even eat the scraps he has to eat...

 After criticizing Time for not putting things right, Lucrece now asks Time to curse Tarquin, taking revenge on him after failing in its normal duties to progress toward justice.

...give him time to see his friends become his enemies, and for court jesters to make fun of him. Give him time to notice how slowly time passes when he's sad, and how quickly it passed when he was having his stupid fun. And give him all the time in the world to remember his crime and wish he hadn't wasted his time that way.

"Time, you allow both good and bad things to happen. You gave Tarquin the time to rape me, now give me the time to curse him! Let him be afraid of his own shadow, and make him want to commit suicide every other minute! He should use his wretched hands to kill his wretched self. Who else would stoop to that level, to kill someone so worthless?

"He's an even worse person because he's the son of a king. The king must be embarrassed by his criminal actions. The more powerful a man is, the more intense the consequences of his actions--whether for good or bad. The biggest scandals happen to the most important people. You notice when the moon is hidden behind a cloud, but little stars can hide whenever they want.

'The crow may bathe his coal-black wings in mire,  
And unperceived fly with the filth away;  
But if the like the snow-white swan desire,  
1080 The stain upon his silver down will stay.  
Poor grooms are sightless night, kings glorious day:  
Gnats are unnoted wheresoe'er they fly,  
But eagles gazed upon with every eye.

'Out, idle words, servants to shallow fools!  
1085 Unprofitable sounds, weak arbitrators!  
Busy yourselves in skill-contending schools;  
Debate where leisure serves with dull debaters;  
To trembling clients be you mediators:  
For me, I force not argument a straw,  
1090 Since that my case is past the help of law.

'In vain I rail at Opportunity,  
At Time, at Tarquin, and uncheerful Night;  
In vain I cavil with mine infamy,  
In vain I spurn at my confirm'd despite:  
1095 This helpless smoke of words doth me no right.  
The remedy indeed to do me good  
Is to let forth my foul-defiled blood.

'Poor hand, why quiver'st thou at this decree?  
Honour thyself to rid me of this shame:  
1100 For if I die, my honour lives in thee;  
But if I live, thou livest in my defame:  
Since thou couldst not defend thy loyal dame,  
And wast afraid to scratch her wicked foe,  
Kill both thyself and her for yielding so.'

This said, from her be-tumbled couch she starteth,  
To find some desperate instrument of death:  
But this no slaughterhouse no tool imparteth  
To make more vent for passage of her breath;  
Which, thronging through her lips, so vanisheth  
1110 As smoke from Aetna, that in air consumes,  
Or that which from discharged cannon fumes.

'In vain,' quoth she, 'I live, and seek in vain  
Some happy mean to end a hapless life.  
I fear'd by Tarquin's falchion to be slain,  
1115 Yet for the self-same purpose seek a knife:  
But when I fear'd I was a loyal wife:  
So am I now: O no, that cannot be;  
Of that true type hath Tarquin rifled me.

'O, that is gone for which I sought to live,  
1120 And therefore now I need not fear to die.  
To clear this spot by death, at least I give  
A badge of fame to slander's livery;  
A dying life to living infamy:  
Poor helpless help, the treasure stol'n away,  
1125 To burn the guiltless casket where it lay!


'Well, well, dear Collatine, thou shalt not know  
The stained taste of violated troth;  
I will not wrong thy true affection so,  
To flatter thee with an infringed oath;  
1130 This bastard graff shall never come to growth:  
He shall not boast who did thy stock pollute  
That thou art doting father of his fruit.


'Nor shall he smile at thee in secret thought,  
Nor laugh with his companions at thy state:  
1135 But thou shalt know thy interest was not bought  
Basely with gold, but stol'n from forth thy gate.  
For me, I am the mistress of my fate,  
And with my trespass never will dispense,  
Till life to death acquit my forced offence.

1140 'I will not poison thee with my attaint,  
Nor fold my fault in cleanly-coin'd excuses;  
My sable ground of sin I will not paint,

"The crow can cover his coal-black wings with mud and fly  
away without anyone noticing. But if a snow-white swan  
wanted to do the same thing, he'd stain his silver feathers.  
Poor servants are like the dark of night, and kings are like  
the bright daytime. No one notices where gnats fly, but  
everyone looks up when they see an eagle.

"Forget useless words, they're only for fools! Worthless  
sounds that don't do anything! Words, you can get into  
discussions at the university, debate anywhere where  
people have the free time to have a boring debate. Words  
are useful for people who go to plead their case in court. As  
for me? I can't argue my case, since it's beyond the help of  
law.

"It's pointless for me to shout at Opportunity, Time,  
Tarquin, and gloomy Night. It's pointless for me to argue  
against my shame, and pointless for me to reject my  
obvious disgrace. This useless cloud of words isn't doing  
me any good. Actually, what would really help me would be  
to [kill myself](#) .

 *Ritual suicides and killings to  
preserve honor are common in  
classical literature, in line with ancient  
Roman cultural standards.*

"Why are my hands shaking when I say this? I have to  
commit suicide to get rid of this shame. If I die, my  
reputation is preserved. But if I live, it's my own fault for not  
killing myself. Because my hands weren't strong enough to  
either defend myself from Tarquin, or scratch his eyes out, I  
need to use them to kill myself as a punishment."

As she said this, she got up from her rumpled bed to find a  
weapon with which to kill herself. But she couldn't find any  
weapons in the room that she could use to slit her throat.  
Her weak breath escaped through her lips and vanished  
into the air like smoke from a volcano, or from a cannon  
that's been fired.

She said, "I don't want to be alive, but I can't find anything  
to end my unlucky life with. I was afraid Tarquin would kill  
me with his sword, but now I'm looking for a knife to do the  
same thing. But back then, I was a loyal wife. And I am now-  
oh, no, that can't be. Tarquin robbed me of that right.

"I've lost everything I lived for, so now I'm not afraid to die.  
If I die, at least the people who find out what happened can  
say that I did the right thing. If I live, I'd live a life of shame.  
But if I die, at least I redeem my life. It's pathetic, really, but  
I have to destroy my body since it's been defiled!

"Well, Collatine, you'll never have to deal with the bitter  
taste of a ruined marriage. I wouldn't wrong you that way,  
and make you stay true to the vows I've broken. I'll never  
give birth to an illegitimate child, and Tarquin won't be able  
to say that you're raising his child as your own.

"And Tarquin won't be able to smile when he thinks about  
you, secretly. He won't be able to laugh at your situation  
with his friends. Instead, you'll know up front that I was  
raped here in your house, not bought with money like a  
common prostitute. I control my own destiny. I'll never get  
over what's happened unless I end my life and end my  
shame.

"I won't ruin you the way I've been ruined, and I won't  
make easy excuses for my mistake. I won't paint over my  
black sin to hide the truth of the crimes that took place

To hide the truth of this false night's abuses:  
My tongue shall utter all; mine eyes, like sluices,  
1145 As from a mountain-spring that feeds a dale,  
Shall gush pure streams to purge my impure tale.'

By this, lamenting Philomel had ended  
The well-tuned warble of her nightly sorrow,  
And solemn night with slow sad gait descended  
1150 To ugly hell; when, lo, the blushing morrow  
Lends light to all fair eyes that light will borrow:  
But cloudy Lucrece shames herself to see,  
And therefore still in night would cloister'd be.

Revealing day through every cranny spies,  
1155 And seems to point her out where she sits weeping;  
To whom she sobbing speaks: 'O eye of eyes,  
Why pry'st thou through my window? leave thy peeping:  
Mock with thy tickling beams eyes that are sleeping:  
Brand not my forehead with thy piercing light,  
1160 For day hath nought to do what's done by night.'

Thus cavils she with every thing she sees:  
True grief is fond and testy as a child,  
Who wayward once, his mood with nought agrees:  
1165 Old woes, not infant sorrows, bear them mild;  
Continuance tames the one; the other wild,  
Like an unpractised swimmer plunging still,  
With too much labour drowns for want of skill.

So she, deep-drenched in a sea of care,  
Holds disputation with each thing she views,  
1170 And to herself all sorrow doth compare;  
No object but her passion's strength renews;  
And as one shifts, another straight ensues:  
Sometime her grief is dumb and hath no words;  
Sometime 'tis mad and too much talk affords.

The little birds that tune their morning's joy  
Make her moans mad with their sweet melody:  
For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy;  
Sad souls are slain in merry company;  
Grief best is pleased with grief's society:  
1180 True sorrow then is feelingly sufficed  
When with like semblance it is sympathized.

'Tis double death to drown in ken of shore;  
He ten times pines that pines beholding food;  
To see the salve doth make the wound ache more;  
1185 Great grief grieves most at that would do it good;  
Deep woes roll forward like a gentle flood,  
Who being stopp'd, the bounding banks o'erflows;  
Grief dallied with nor law nor limit knows.

'You mocking-birds,' quoth she, 'your tunes entomb  
1190 Within your hollow-swelling feather'd breasts,  
And in my hearing be you mute and dumb:  
My restless discord loves no stops nor rests;  
A woeful hostess brooks not merry guests:  
Relish your nimble notes to pleasing ears;  
1195 Distress likes dumps when time is kept with tears.

'Come, Philomel, that sing'st of ravishment,  
Make thy sad grove in my dishevel'd hair:  
As the dank earth weeps at thy languishment,  
1200 So I at each sad strain will strain a tear,  
And with deep groans the diapason bear;  
For burden-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still,  
While thou on Tereus descant'st better skill.

'And whiles against a thorn thou bear'st thy part,  
To keep thy sharp woes waking, wretched I,  
1205 To imitate thee well, against my heart  
Will fix a sharp knife to affright mine eye;  
Who, if it wink, shall thereon fall and die.

tonight. I'll tell everything. I'll cry crystal-clear tears that'll  
purify my dirty story like water from a mountain stream,  
flowing into a valley."

And so the poor victim<sup>54</sup> of rape ended her sad but  
beautiful song that night. Night was coming to an end, its  
darkness descending back into hell. Day was dawning,  
shining its light into the eyes of anyone who opened them.  
But Lucrece, depressed, was ashamed to see herself. She  
wished the night would go on forever, covering her in  
darkness.

The light of day shined into every corner of the room,  
seeming to point out Lucrece where she sat weeping. She  
said to the sun, sobbing, "Sun, why are you peeking your  
eyes through my window? Stop looking. Go wake up  
sleeping people with your beams. Don't shine your piercing  
light on me, exposing me! It's none of day's business what  
happens in the night."

So she argued with everything that she saw.<sup>55</sup> True grief  
makes people as selfish and irritable as naughty children  
whom nothing can please. Old grief is easier to bear than  
fresh grief; over time, the old grief loses its sting. On the  
other hand, a person dealing with fresh grief goes crazy, like  
someone who doesn't know how to swim, falls into the  
water, splashes around (not knowing what to do), and  
drowns.

So Lucrece, drowning in her sadness, talked to everything  
that she saw and compared it to her internal sadness. Each  
object made her more emotional. From one thing, she  
looked straight to another. Sometimes her sadness was  
quiet and had no words; at other times, it got crazy and  
talked too much.

The little birds singing their sweet morning song made her  
weep uncontrollably. Happiness annoys depressed people;  
they can't bear to be around others having a good time.  
Grief is most at ease around other grieving people. True  
sadness is the most fulfilled when it can sympathize with  
others feeling the same way.

Drowning in sight of land is like drowning twice. A hungry  
man feels ten times hungrier when he can see food. Seeing  
medicine makes a wound hurt more. Serious grief grieves  
the most when it sees something good. Waves of sadness  
roll forward like a flood, overflowing the banks. There's no  
stopping grief; it knows no limits.

"You mockingbirds," she said, "should keep your songs in  
your own swollen, feathery chests, since you're silent to  
me. My restless heart will never stop or rest. A sad hostess  
can't put up with happy guests--go take your songs to  
someone who wants to hear them. I'd prefer something  
distressing while I'm passing the time with tears.

"Come here, nightingale<sup>56</sup>: sing your song of rape; perch  
in my disheveled hair. I'll cry a tear for each note of your  
song, and groan along with your music, just like the rain  
that falls and moistens the earth when you sing outside. I'll  
keep humming about Tarquin while you sing beautifully  
about your rapist.

"You sing<sup>57</sup> both to bear your sorrow and also to keep the  
pain fresh. I'll imitate you. I'll hold a sharp knife up to my  
heart, to scare my eyes. If I blink, I'll fall on the blade and  
die. That way you and I will tune our hearts to sing our  
sorrows, like turning the frets on a guitar.

<sup>54</sup> *Philomela--a character in Ovid's poetry (which Shakespeare partially used as a source for this poem)--was raped, and killed herself. She then turned into a nightingale to sing sad songs forever.*

<sup>55</sup> *Here, Shakespeare uses the poetic technique of "pathetic fallacy"--imagining nature reflects human emotions.*

<sup>56</sup> *In another reference to Ovid's story, grieving Lucrece prefers the mournful--and particularly feminine--nightingale's song to other birds' cheerful songs.*

<sup>57</sup> *The song Lucrece imagines herself singing with the nightingale is both a way to express her grief and a way to forestall her own death.*

These means, as frets upon an instrument,  
Shall tune our heart-strings to true languishment.

- 1210 'And for, poor bird, thou sing'st not in the day,  
As shaming any eye should thee behold,  
Some dark deep desert, seated from the way,  
That knows not parching heat nor freezing cold,  
Will we find out; and there we will unfold  
1215 To creatures stern sad tunes, to change their kinds:  
Since men prove beasts, let beasts bear gentle minds.'

- As the poor frightened deer, that stands at gaze,  
Wildly determining which way to fly,  
Or one encompass'd with a winding maze,  
1220 That cannot tread the way out readily;  
So with herself is she in mutiny,  
To live or die which of the twain were better,  
When life is shamed, and death reproach's debtor.

- 'To kill myself,' quoth she, 'alack, what were it,  
1225 But with my body my poor soul's pollution?  
They that lose half with greater patience bear it  
Than they whose whole is swallow'd in confusion.  
That mother tries a merciless conclusion  
Who, having two sweet babes, when death takes one,  
1230 Will slay the other and be nurse to none.

- 'My body or my soul, which was the dearer,  
When the one pure, the other made divine?  
Whose love of either to myself was nearer,  
When both were kept for heaven and Collatine?  
1235 Ay me! the bark peel'd from the lofty pine,  
His leaves will wither and his sap decay;  
So must my soul, her bark being peel'd away.

- 'Her house is sack'd, her quiet interrupted,  
Her mansion batter'd by the enemy;  
1240 Her sacred temple spotted, spoil'd, corrupted,  
Grossly engirt with daring infamy:  
Then let it not be call'd impiety,  
If in this blemish'd fort I make some hole  
Through which I may convey this troubled soul.

- 1245 'Yet die I will not till my Collatine  
Have heard the cause of my untimely death;  
That he may vow, in that sad hour of mine,  
Revenge on him that made me stop my breath.  
My stained blood to Tarquin I'll bequeath,  
1250 Which by him tainted shall for him be spent,  
And as his due writ in my testament.

- 'My honour I'll bequeath unto the knife  
That wounds my body so dishonoured.  
'Tis honour to deprive dishonour'd life;  
1255 The one will live, the other being dead:  
So of shame's ashes shall my fame be bred;  
For in my death I murder shameful scorn:  
My shame so dead, mine honour is new-born.

- 'Dear lord of that dear jewel I have lost,  
1260 What legacy shall I bequeath to thee?  
My resolution, love, shall be thy boast,  
By whose example thou revenged mayest be.  
How Tarquin must be used, read it in me:  
Myself, thy friend, will kill myself, thy foe,  
1265 And for my sake serve thou false Tarquin so.

- 'This brief abridgement of my will I make:  
My soul and body to the skies and ground;  
My resolution, husband, do thou take;  
Mine honour be the knife's that makes my wound;  
1270 My shame be his that did my fame confound;  
And all my fame that lives disbursed be  
To those that live, and think no shame of me.

"And since you don't sing in the daytime, poor bird, anyone who does see you is deeply affected. Then, we find our own deep, dark secrets which are hidden within ourselves, never having known the boiling heat or the freezing cold. When we do, we start to tell the birds about our problems, as if they were people. Well, since men are animals, why shouldn't animals have human hearts?"

Lucrece was at war with herself, like a poor, frightened deer that stares straight ahead, trying to figure out which way was to run; or like someone caught in a maze who doesn't know how to get out. She couldn't decide whether it would be better to live or to die, considering her life would be a life of shame, and her death would still in some ways be wrong.

She said, "What would it mean to kill myself? Would I put an end to my poor soul's suffering along with my body? People who lose half of their possessions can deal with it better than people who lose everything and go completely crazy. A mother who loses one of her two babies will lose her mind; she'll kill the other one and be mother to no one.

"Back when my body <sup>58</sup> was pure and my soul was bound for heaven, which did I love more? Which one did I love more back when my body and soul belonged to the gods and Collatine? Poor me! My soul will wither away, like a tall pine tree whose leaves fall and sap stops flowing when its bark is peeled away.

"My body <sup>59</sup>, my soul's home, has been robbed, its quiet disturbed, its walls broken down by the enemy. Its sacred temple has been stained, spoiled, and corrupted, terrifyingly surrounded by shame. Don't call it a sin if I kick in the door, allowing my soul to leave its damaged home.

"But I won't truly die until Collatine finds out about my untimely death. At that sad moment he might decide to take revenge on the man who killed me. I'll name Tarquin as the villain, since I'm killing myself because of something he did. My blood will be the testament to his guilt.

"I'll thank the knife that wounds my dishonored body. It's only right to kill a dishonored person, because when the person dies, they get their honor back. I would have been a scandal; now I'll be a hero. By killing myself, I murder the wrong that was done to me, and allow my modesty to be reborn.

"My dear husband, what legacy <sup>60</sup> am I leaving for you? You can brag, my love, about my determination. Once I'm dead, you can take your revenge and kill Tarquin as I killed myself. I'm your wife and therefore your friend, but I also betrayed you, so I'm your enemy, too. Once I kill myself, for my sake give Tarquin what he deserves.

"I'll make my will <sup>61</sup> very short: I leave my soul and body to the heavens and the earth. Husband, you take my determination and the honor I'll win back by killing myself. To Tarquin, who ruined me, I leave my shame. And to everyone who lives, I give my reputation, in the hopes that they won't look down on me.

<sup>58</sup> The body/soul contrast recalls the beauty/virtue contrast in the stanzas that first introduced Lucrece's character. Her struggle is a disconnect between her physical and spiritual being, both for her own sake and in the eyes of her society.

<sup>59</sup> Lucrece compares her body to a house, a physical home for her immaterial soul. She longs to free her soul from her body since she believes her body is tainted. The house metaphor emphasizes the divide between body and soul.

<sup>60</sup> Lucrece compares her sexual morality to a jewel. Tarquin also called her sexual charm a "treasure" and a "meed;" the language of commodification materializes what is otherwise intangible.

<sup>61</sup> Lucrece dictates a mock will and testament (instructions for what to do with one's belongings after death).

1275 'Thou, Collatine, shalt oversee this will;  
How was I overseen that thou shalt see it!  
My blood shall wash the slander of mine ill;  
My life's foul deed, my life's fair end shall free it.  
Faint not, faint heart, but stoutly say 'So be it':  
Yield to my hand; my hand shall conquer thee:  
Thou dead, both die, and both shall victors be.'

1280 This Plot of death when sadly she had laid,  
And wiped the brinish pearl from her bright eyes,  
With untuned tongue she hoarsely calls her maid,  
Whose swift obedience to her mistress hies;  
For fleet-wing'd duty with thought's feathers flies.  
1285 Poor Lucrece' cheeks unto her maid seem so  
As winter meads when sun doth melt their snow.

Her mistress she doth give demure good-morrow,  
With soft-slow tongue, true mark of modesty,  
And sorts a sad look to her lady's sorrow,  
1290 For why her face wore sorrow's livery;  
But durst not ask of her audaciously  
Why her two suns were cloud-eclipsed so,  
Nor why her fair cheeks over-wash'd with woe.

But as the earth doth weep, the sun being set,  
1295 Each flower moisten'd like a melting eye;  
Even so the maid with swelling drops gan wet  
Her circled eyne, enforced by sympathy  
Of those fair suns set in her mistress' sky,  
Who in a salt-waved ocean quench their light,  
1300 Which makes the maid weep like the dewy night.

A pretty while these pretty creatures stand,  
Like ivory conduits coral cisterns filling:  
One justly weeps; the other takes in hand  
No cause, but company, of her drops spilling:  
1305 Their gentle sex to weep are often willing;  
Grieving themselves to guess at others' smarts,  
And then they drown their eyes or break their hearts.

For men have marble, women waxen, minds,  
And therefore are they form'd as marble will;  
1310 The weak oppress'd, the impression of strange kinds  
Is form'd in them by force, by fraud, or skill:  
Then call them not the authors of their ill,  
No more than wax shall be accounted evil  
Wherein is stamp'd the semblance of a devil.

1315 Their smoothness, like a goodly champaign plain,  
Lays open all the little worms that creep;  
In men, as in a rough-grown grove, remain  
Cave-keeping evils that obscurely sleep:  
Through crystal walls each little mote will peep:  
1320 Though men can cover crimes with bold stern looks,  
Poor women's faces are their own fault's books.

No man inveigh against the wither'd flower,  
But chide rough winter that the flower hath kill'd:  
Not that devour'd, but that which doth devour,  
1325 Is worthy blame. O, let it not be hild  
Poor women's faults, that they are so fulfill'd  
With men's abuses: those proud lords, to blame,  
Make weak-made women tenants to their shame.

The precedent whereof in Lucrece view,  
1330 Assail'd by night with circumstances strong  
Of present death, and shame that might ensue  
By that her death, to do her husband wrong:  
Such danger to resistance did belong,  
That dying fear through all her body spread;  
1335 And who cannot abuse a body dead?

By this, mild patience bid fair Lucrece speak  
To the poor counterfeit of her complaining:  
'My girl,' quoth she, 'on what occasion break

"You, Collatine, will oversee this will--and by that time, you will have seen my dead body! My blood will wash away the shame of my rape. My honorable suicide will cancel out that crime. Oh my heart, don't be weak. Just say, in a strong voice, 'So be it.' I'll stab my heart with this knife. Then I'll die, and I will have won."

So, having planned her own sad death, she wiped the salty tears from her bright eyes and hoarsely, roughly called out to her maid. She came quickly and obediently to her mistress, thinking something might be wrong, and ready to do her duty. The maid thought that Lucrece's cheeks looked as pale as a winter meadow when the snow begins to melt.

She quietly said "good morning" to her mistress. Her slow, soft voice was the mark of her modesty. She looked sadly at Lucrece, wondering why her face was so distraught. But she wasn't so bold as to ask why her eyes <sup>62</sup> were downcast, or why her cheeks were streaked with tears.

The maid began to cry out of sympathy for Lucrece, her tears <sup>63</sup> like the dew which, after sunset, moistens the ground and every drooping flower. Lucrece's eyes were suns, their rays drowned beneath ocean waves. It was for love of Lucrece's eyes that the maid wept like a dewy night.

The two women stood there for a long time, crying as if they would fill themselves up with tears. One weeps for a reason; the other one has no reason to cry other than to give Lucrece company. Women are usually willing to cry. They grieve themselves for other women's problems, and cry, their own hearts breaking.

Men's minds are made of marble; women's minds are made of wax. For that reason women usually conform to their husbands' minds. Because their minds are weak, they can be swayed by the force of any skilled liar or fraud. So don't blame them for crying; it's not their fault. It'd be like saying wax is evil just because someone stamped the mark of the devil into it.

You can spot a fault from a mile away in a woman <sup>64</sup>, like a snake on an open plain. Men, on the other hand, are like thick groves of trees that keep evil locked away in caves, even when the darkness peeks out of the stony walls. Though men can keep their faults hidden by looking confident and strong, poor women's faces are open books.

You <sup>65</sup> can't blame a withered flower; you have to blame the rough winter that killed it. The prey isn't to blame; it's the predator. So don't blame women for their faults; blame the men who abuse them. Proud men make women--the weaker sex-- bear the consequences of their actions.

Lucrece was a great example of this. She was raped in the night and knew that the only way to end her own shame and her husband's was to kill herself. She was strong and resistant. The fear of death spread through her entire body. Who could blame a dead person?

When Lucrece saw the poor girl was crying, too, she said, "My dear, what's with the tears running down your cheeks? If you're weeping because I seem sad, then you should

<sup>62</sup> Lucrece's eyes are compared to the sun--now dim--and her tears, once more, to rain.

<sup>63</sup> The water and sun imagery continues, but here has a sense of lateness, ending, and decay. Sunsets, storms, and rising tides build the sense of doom and foreboding, darkening Shakespeare's earlier imagery.

<sup>64</sup> Here's another famous "sententious" or proverbial passage. Shakespeare applies the theme we've seen in *Lucrece* and *Tarquin*--the external/internal divide--to women and men more generally.

<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, Shakespeare frees Lucrece from the blame she ascribes to herself, but does so on the grounds of feminine weakness--a typical Renaissance view on women.

1340 Those tears from thee, that down thy cheeks are  
raining?  
If thou dost weep for grief of my sustaining,  
Know, gentle wench, it small avails my mood:  
If tears could help, mine own would do me good.

1345 'But tell me, girl, when went'--and there she stay'd  
Till after a deep groan--'Tarquin from hence?'  
'Madam, ere I was up,' replied the maid,  
'The more to blame my sluggard negligence:  
Yet with the fault I thus far can dispense;  
1350 Myself was stirring ere the break of day,  
And, ere I rose, was Tarquin gone away.

1355 'But, lady, if your maid may be so bold,  
She would request to know your heaviness.'  
'O, peace!' quoth Lucrece: 'if it should be told,  
The repetition cannot make it less;  
For more it is than I can well express:  
And that deep torture may be call'd a hell  
When more is felt than one hath power to tell.

1360 'Go, get me hither paper, ink, and pen:  
Yet save that labour, for I have them here.  
What should I say? One of my husband's men  
Bid thou be ready, by and by, to bear  
A letter to my lord, my love, my dear;  
Bid him with speed prepare to carry it;  
The cause craves haste, and it will soon be writ.'

1365 Her maid is gone, and she prepares to write,  
First hovering o'er the paper with her quill:  
Conceit and grief an eager combat fight;  
What wit sets down is blotted straight with will;  
This is too curious-good, this blunt and ill:  
1370 Much like a press of people at a door,  
Throng her inventions, which shall go before.

At last she thus begins: 'Thou worthy lord  
Of that unworthy wife that greeteth thee,  
Health to thy person! next vouchsafe t' afford--  
1375 If ever, love, thy Lucrece thou wilt see--  
Some present speed to come and visit me.  
So, I commend me from our house in grief:  
My woes are tedious, though my words are brief!

1380 Here folds she up the tenor of her woe,  
Her certain sorrow writ uncertainly.  
By this short schedule Collatine may know  
Her grief, but not her grief's true quality:  
She dares not thereof make discovery,  
Lest he should hold it her own gross abuse,  
1385 Ere she with blood had stain'd her stain'd excuse.

Besides, the life and feeling of her passion  
She hoards, to spend when he is by to hear her:  
When sighs and groans and tears may grace the fashion  
Of her disgrace, the better so to clear her  
1390 From that suspicion which the world might bear her.  
To shun this blot, she would not blot the letter  
With words, till action might become them better.

1395 To see sad sights moves more than hear them told;  
For then eye interprets to the ear  
The heavy motion that it doth behold,  
When every part a part of woe doth bear.  
'Tis but a part of sorrow that we hear:  
Deep sounds make lesser noise than shallow fords,  
And sorrow ebbs, being blown with wind of words.

1400 Her letter now is seal'd, and on it writ  
'At Ardea to my lord with more than haste.'  
The post attends, and she delivers it,  
Charging the sour-faced groom to hie as fast  
As lagging fowls before the northern blast:  
1405

know that it doesn't help my mood at all. If tears could help, my own would do me good.

"But tell me, when--" she paused, groaning deeply, "did Tarquin leave here?" "Ma'am, before I woke up," the maid replied, "and I blame myself for being lazy and neglecting my duties. And yet I have to excuse myself, since I was up before the break of day. But Tarquin was gone before I got up.

"But ma'am, if I could be so bold, can I ask why you're so down?" "Oh, hush!" said Lucrece. "Even if I told you, I can't make it go away by repeating it. And I can't really express it. It's as torturous as hell to feel something so strong you can't even speak.

"Go bring me some paper, ink, and a pen. Actually, forget that; I have some here. What should I write? Tell one of my husband's servants to be ready on standby to deliver a letter to my husband, my love, my dear. Tell him to get ready to take it quickly. The message is urgent and I'll write it soon."

Her maid left and she prepared to write. First she hovered with her pen over the paper, her grief and her desire to act struggling against each other. There were too many things she wanted to say, but couldn't. She felt crazy; all her terrible thoughts were like a crowd of people trying to get through a single door. There was so much in her head that she couldn't even begin.

At last she wrote, "Greetings, sir, from your unworthy wife. I hope you're well! If you ever want to see me again, and you can manage it, you should come as fast as you can to visit me. I'm writing here from our house, grieving. My sadness would take a long time to explain, although this letter is short."

So she folded up the letter that contained hints of her sadness. From her short note, Collatine would get that she was upset, but he wouldn't understand why. She didn't yet dare to tell him the whole truth. Otherwise, he'd be angry with her before she had the chance to kill and redeem herself.

Anyway, she saved up all the life and emotion that she had left for when he would be there. Her sighs, groans, and tears would speak volumes about her shame, and would clear her name from the world's suspicion. To put the pain behind her, she wouldn't write down any specifics. She'd wait until her actions could speak louder than words.

Seeing something sad with your own eyes is more powerful than just hearing about it. Then you can see and understand the gravity of a person consumed with sadness. When we hear about sadness, we can only understand part of it. An [ocean](#) <sup>96</sup> is quieter than a shallow stream. In the same way, sorrow seems less serious when we try to express it in words.

She sealed her letter and wrote on it: "To my husband in Ardea, quickly." The postman arrived and she gave him the letter, telling the frowning servant to go as quickly as birds fly to beat a northern wind. To her, even the speediest

<sup>96</sup> This stanza uses imagery of oceans and storms to figure the difference between verbal communication and visual understanding.

Speed more than speed but dull and slow she deems:  
Extremity still urgeth such extremes.

The homely villain court'sies to her low;  
And, blushing on her, with a steadfast eye  
Receives the scroll without or yea or no,  
1410 And forth with bashful innocence doth hie.  
But they whose guilt within their bosoms lie  
Imagine every eye beholds their blame;  
For Lucrece thought he blush'd to her see shame:

When, silly groom! God wot, it was defect  
1415 Of spirit, Life, and bold audacity.  
Such harmless creatures have a true respect  
To talk in deeds, while others saucily  
Promise more speed, but do it leisurely:  
Even so this pattern of the worn-out age  
1420 Pawn'd honest looks, but laid no words to gage.

His kindled duty kindled her mistrust,  
That two red fires in both their faces blazed;  
She thought he blush'd, as knowing Tarquin's lust,  
And, blushing with him, wistly on him gazed;  
1425 Her earnest eye did make him more amazed:  
The more she saw the blood his cheeks replenish,  
The more she thought he spied in her some blemish.

But long she thinks till he return again,  
And yet the duteous vassal scarce is gone.  
1430 The weary time she cannot entertain,  
For now 'tis stale to sigh, to weep, and groan:  
So woe hath wearied woe, moan tired moan,  
That she her plaints a little while doth stay,  
Pausing for means to mourn some newer way.

At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece  
Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy:  
Before the which is drawn the power of Greece.  
For Helen's rape the city to destroy,  
Threatening cloud-kissing Ilion with annoy;  
1440 Which the conceited painter drew so proud,  
As heaven, it seem'd, to kiss the turrets bow'd.

A thousand lamentable objects there,  
In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life:  
Many a dry drop seem'd a weeping tear,  
1445 Shed for the slaughter'd husband by the wife:  
The red blood reek'd, to show the painter's strife;  
And dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashy lights,  
Like dying coals burnt out in tedious nights.

There might you see the labouring pioneer  
1450 Begrimed with sweat, and smeared all with dust;  
And from the towers of Troy there would appear  
The very eyes of men through loop-holes thrust,  
Gazing upon the Greeks with little lust:  
Such sweet observance in this work was had,  
1455 That one might see those far-off eyes look sad.

In great commanders grace and majesty  
You might behold, triumphing in their faces;  
In youth, quick bearing and dexterity;  
And here and there the painter interlaces  
1460 Pale cowards, marching on with trembling paces;  
Which heartless peasants did so well resemble,  
That one would swear he saw them quake and tremble.

In Ajax and Ulysses, O, what art  
Of physiognomy might one behold!  
1465 The face of either cipher'd either's heart;

speed seemed slow. Desperate times called for desperate measures.

The ugly servant bowed low to her, blushed, and looked straight ahead as he received the letter without saying yes or no. He left embarrassed and innocent. But because Lucrece <sup>67</sup> carried her guilty secret, she thought he knew, and blushed to see her disgraced.

Hurry up, servant! Hopefully he wouldn't be too slow and slack. Sometimes people like him talk a lot and say they'll get there quickly, but then take their time. But this one did his duty according to tradition. He looked at her respectfully and didn't say anything.

Although he was just doing his job, she mistrusted him. They both blushed--she thought he blushed because he knew Tarquin had raped her, so she blushed along with him. As she gazed at him wistfully, her intense stare made him more embarrassed. The redder he got, the more she thought he could see something wrong with her.

He had barely left and she already felt like it would be a long time until he returned. She couldn't find anything to do to pass the time; she didn't want to sigh, weep, and groan anymore. She was tired of her sadness, tired of her moans. So she stopped crying for a while and tried to figure out a new way to grieve.

Suddenly she remembered where there was a masterful painting <sup>68</sup> of the Trojan War, depicting the Greek army advancing on Priam <sup>69</sup>'s Troy. The army was there to destroy the city and its sky-scraping towers to avenge the rape of Helen. The talented painter drew the city so that its very buildings looked proud, as if the sky itself were bending down to kiss the towers.

A thousand tiny details in the painting made it look real <sup>70</sup> -even realer than life. Although made of dry paint, the tear drops looked fresh on the cheeks of wives grieving for their slaughtered husbands. The red blood shined, showing the painter's skill. Dying eyes dimmed like the ashes of coals burning out over the course of a long night.

In the painting you could see a working farmer, covered with sweat and smeared with dust. You could see men peering through the peepholes of the Trojan towers to spy on the Greeks. The work was so painstakingly detailed that you could even see a sad look in their little eyes.

You could see grace and majesty in the top commanders' faces. The young men looked quick and agile. And here and there the painter put in pale cowards, marching on with trembling steps. They looked so much like real peasants that you'd swear you saw them shake and tremble.

Ajax and Ulysses <sup>71</sup>' bodies were so artfully done! You could read their hearts in their faces; their faces told you everything you needed to know about them. Ajax's eyes

<sup>67</sup> Since Tarquin betrayed her trust, and her own reputation is compromised, Lucrece finds it hard to believe that anyone is what they seem.

<sup>68</sup> The long digression of the painting is known as an "ekphrasis," or detailed description of a work of art within a poem. Ekphrases are common in classical epics like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*--all of which relate to the Trojan War, this painting's subject.

<sup>69</sup> Priam was the king of Troy.

<sup>70</sup> This is one of Shakespeare's recurring themes: art exceeds life and idealizes beauty, humanity, and nature beyond earthly limits. Unlike many Renaissance poets, Shakespeare was unconcerned with the poet's duty to depict things as they really were. This passage can also be read as a work of literary criticism commenting on the purpose of poetry.

<sup>71</sup> Ajax and Ulysses were soldiers on the Greek side of the Trojan War.

Their face their manners most expressly told:  
In Ajax' eyes blunt rage and rigor roll'd;  
But the mild glance that sly Ulysses lent  
Show'd deep regard and smiling government.

1470 There pleading might you see grave Nestor stand,  
As 'twere encouraging the Greeks to fight;  
Making such sober action with his hand,  
That it beguiled attention, charm'd the sight:  
1475 In speech, it seem'd, his beard, all silver white,  
Wagg'd up and down, and from his lips did fly  
Thin winding breath, which purl'd up to the sky.

About him were a press of gaping faces,  
Which seem'd to swallow up his sound advice;  
All jointly listening, but with several graces,  
1480 As if some mermaid did their ears entice,  
Some high, some low, the painter was so nice;  
The scalps of many, almost hid behind,  
To jump up higher seem'd, to mock the mind.

Here one man's hand lean'd on another's head,  
1485 His nose being shadow'd by his neighbour's ear;  
Here one being throng'd bears back, all boll'n and red;  
Another smother'd seems to pelt and swear;  
And in their rage such signs of rage they bear,  
As, but for loss of Nestor's golden words,  
1490 It seem'd they would debate with angry swords.

For much imaginary work was there;  
Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind,  
That for Achilles' image stood his spear,  
Griped in an armed hand; himself, behind,  
1495 Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind:  
A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,  
Stood for the whole to be imagined.

And from the walls of strong-besieged Troy  
When their brave hope, bold Hector, march'd to field,  
1500 Stood many Trojan mothers, sharing joy  
To see their youthful sons bright weapons wield;  
And to their hope they such odd action yield,  
That through their light joy seemed to appear,  
Like bright things stain'd, a kind of heavy fear.

And from the strand of Dardan, where they fought,  
1505 To Simois' reedy banks the red blood ran,  
Whose waves to imitate the battle sought  
With swelling ridges; and their ranks began  
To break upon the galled shore, and than  
1510 Retire again, till, meeting greater ranks,  
They join and shoot their foam at Simois' banks.

To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come,  
To find a face where all distress is stell'd.  
Many she sees where cares have carved some,  
1515 But none where all distress and dolour dwell'd,  
Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,  
Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,  
Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies.

In her the painter had anatomized  
1520 Time's ruin, beauty's wreck, and grim care's reign:  
Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguised;  
Of what she was no semblance did remain:  
Her blue blood changed to black in every vein,  
Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed,  
1525 Show'd life imprison'd in a body dead.

On this sad shadow Lucrece spends her eyes,  
And shapes her sorrow to the beldam's woes,  
Who nothing wants to answer her but cries,  
And bitter words to ban her cruel foes:  
1530 The painter was no god to lend her those;  
And therefore Lucrece swears he did her wrong,

rolled with angry power. Ulysses' mild, sly glance showed  
his deep intelligence and two-faced trickery.

You could see old Nestor <sup>72</sup> standing there pleading, as if  
he were encouraging the Greeks to fight. He made a strong  
gesture with his hand that drew your attention and made  
you look closer. It seemed like his silvery-white beard went  
up and down when he spoke, and that his weak, raspy  
breath escaped from his lips and went up into the sky.

<sup>72</sup> Nestor was an aged Greek king; a major character in the *Iliad*.

Faces crowded around him, seeming to swallow up his  
sound advice. They all listened but in their own way, as if  
they were listening to a siren song. Some men looked  
aristocratic; others looked common. The painter was very  
skilled. Their heads, almost hidden, seemed to move,  
tricking your eye.

One man's hand rested on another man's head, his nose  
hitting his neighbor in the ear. Another man was being  
pushed back by the crowd, swollen and red. Another one  
who was pushed down seemed to swagger and swear. They  
looked enraged, as if--without Nestor's soothing words--  
they would have started fighting with swords.

It was such an imaginative painting. It looked so  
convincingly real, so dense, so emotional. All you saw of  
Achilles <sup>74</sup> was his spear, gripped in his armored hand. His  
body was implied behind it, but left unseen to all but your  
mind's eye. The hand, foot, leg, face, and head that you  
could see prompted you to imagine the whole.

<sup>74</sup> Achilles was notoriously prideful and was defeated by being wounded in his only vulnerable spot--the back of his heel.

Lots of Trojan mothers stood at the top of Troy's strong  
walls during the siege to see their hero, Hector <sup>74</sup>, march  
into the field along with their beloved young sons carrying  
their weapons. They looked hopeful, but distressed. You  
could tell through their smiles that they were deeply afraid.

<sup>74</sup> Hector is the primary Trojan hero in the *Iliad*; Priam's oldest son.

From Dardan <sup>75</sup> Beach where they fought to the Simois  
River, the water ran red with blood. The waves looked like  
they were in a battle, too: they swelled up high, broke on  
the shore as if they were attacking it, then went back again  
to gather their forces, shooting foam at the Simois' banks.

<sup>75</sup> The Dardan (or Dardanelles) is a strait on the sea near Troy.

Lucrece walked up to this expertly-painted piece, looking  
for a distressed face. She saw lots of faces that looked  
worried, but none that looked distressed and in pain. Then  
she saw old Hecuba <sup>76</sup> staring at her husband Priam's  
wounds as he lay bleeding under Pyrrhus <sup>77</sup>' proud foot.

<sup>76</sup> Hecuba was queen of Troy; Priam's wife and Hector's mother.

<sup>77</sup> Pyrrhus was Achilles' son, who disguised himself as Achilles in order to duel Priam.

The painter had embodied in her <sup>78</sup> the disintegration of  
old age, the destruction of beauty, and the total effects of  
despair. Her cheeks were chapped and wrinkled. There was  
no hint of her former beauty left. Her noble blood ran black  
in her veins; she was a walking dead woman now that her  
husband was killed.

<sup>78</sup> Lucrece identifies herself and her grief in the image of Hecuba. Unable to articulate herself and deprived of female community, Lucrece imagines an empathetic relationship between herself and the fictional character in this painting.

Lucrece stared at this poor ghost, modeling her sorrow on  
the old lady's. The woman wanted to hear nothing but cries  
and bitter curses against her cruel enemies. The painter  
was no god; he hadn't been able to make her speak.  
Lucrece swore the painter had done her wrong by giving her  
so much grief and no tongue to express it.



To give her so much grief and not a tongue.

1535 'Poor instrument,' quoth she, 'without a sound,  
I'll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue;  
And drop sweet balm in Priam's painted wound,  
And rail on Pyrrhus that hath done him wrong;  
And with my tears quench Troy that burns so long;  
And with my knife scratch out the angry eyes  
Of all the Greeks that are thine enemies.

1540 'Show me the strumpet that began this stir,  
That with my nails her beauty I may tear.  
Thy heat of lust, fond Paris, did incur  
This load of wrath that burning Troy doth bear:  
Thy eye kindled the fire that burneth here;  
1545 And here in Troy, for trespass of thine eye,  
The sire, the son, the dame, and daughter die.

1550 'Why should the private pleasure of some one  
Become the public plague of many more?  
Let sin, alone committed, light alone  
Upon his head that hath transgressed so;  
Let guiltless souls be freed from guilty woe:  
For one's offence why should so many fall,  
To plague a private sin in general?

1555 'Lo, here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies,  
Here manly Hector faints, here Troilus swoonds,  
Here friend by friend in bloody channel lies,  
And friend to friend gives unadvised wounds,  
And one man's lust these many lives confounds:  
Had doting Priam cheque'd his son's desire,  
1560 Troy had been bright with fame and not with fire.'

1565 Here feelingly she weeps Troy's painted woes:  
For sorrow, like a heavy-hanging bell,  
Once set on ringing, with his own weight goes;  
Then little strength rings out the doleful knell:  
So Lucrece, set a-work, sad tales doth tell  
To pencill'd pensiveness and colour'd sorrow;  
She lends them words, and she their looks doth borrow.

1570 She throws her eyes about the painting round,  
And whom she finds forlorn she doth lament.  
At last she sees a wretched image bound,  
That piteous looks to Phrygian shepherds lent:  
His face, though full of cares, yet show'd content;  
Onward to Troy with the blunt swains he goes,  
So mild, that Patience seem'd to scorn his woes.

1575 In him the painter labour'd with his skill  
To hide deceit, and give the harmless show  
An humble gait, calm looks, eyes wailing still,  
A brow unbent, that seem'd to welcome woe;  
Cheeks neither red nor pale, but mingled so  
1580 That blushing red no guilty instance gave,  
Nor ashy pale the fear that false hearts have.

1585 But, like a constant and confirmed devil,  
He entertain'd a show so seeming just,  
And therein so ensconced his secret evil,  
That jealousy itself could not mistrust  
False-creeping craft and perjury should thrust  
Into so bright a day such black-faced storms,  
Or blot with hell-born sin such saint-like forms.

1590 The well-skill'd workman this mild image drew  
For perjured Sinon, whose enchanting story  
The credulous old Priam after slew;  
Whose words like wildfire burnt the shining glory  
Of rich-built Ilium, that the skies were sorry,  
And little stars shot from their fixed places,  
1595 When their glass fell wherein they view'd their faces.

"Poor thing," she said, "you can't speak, so I'll say what you're thinking. I'll put medicine on Priam's painted wound. I'll shout at Pyrrhus who wounded him. My tears will put out the fires that burned in Troy for so long after it was defeated. I'll scratch out your Greek enemies eyes with my knife.

"Show me the whore <sup>79</sup> that started this war so that I can tear her pretty face with my nails. Paris, your uncontrollable lust brought all this destruction on Troy. Your look of desire started the fire that burns here. Because you couldn't look away, fathers, sons, mothers, and daughters died here in Troy.

"Why should one man <sup>80</sup>'s personal pleasure become a public problem that affects so many more? If a sin is committed by one man, he should deal with the consequences on his own. Innocent people shouldn't have to suffer. Why should so many die for one man's sin? And why should his private actions become a public crisis?

"Here's Hecuba weeping. Here's Priam dying. Here's Hector fainting. Here's Troilus <sup>81</sup> fainting. Here's brother and brother lying together in a bloody river, brother fighting against brother--all these lives ruined for one man's lust. If sweet Priam had put a stop to his son's desire, Troy would be famous today instead of burned to the ground."

She cried out of sympathy for painted Troy's destruction. Sadness is like a heavy-hanging bell: once it starts ringing, it gathers momentum--a little push can make it ring for a long time. Just like that, Lucrece was set off by the sad stories drawn and painted there. She gave them words and started to mimic their looks in turn.

She looked all around the painting and cried for each person she found who looked sad. At last she saw the heartbreaking figure of a Trojan <sup>82</sup> shepherd looking pitifully at the other shepherds with him. Although he was clearly worried, he looked content, too. He walked toward Troy with the other shepherds mildly and patiently in the face of tragedy.

The painter worked hard on the shepherd <sup>83</sup>, showing how he disguised his treachery. He gave the poor shepherd a humble posture, calm face, weeping eyes, and a forehead that, instead of frowning, seemed to welcome sadness. His cheeks weren't completely red or pale; they were a mix of the two. He didn't have the blushing red cheeks of a guilty man or the ashy pale ones of a fearful coward.

Like a complete and total devil, he kept up the appearance of being good, concealing that he was secretly evil. Even the most suspicious person wouldn't have suspected him; he was so good at lying and creeping around that he would do it in the light of day. No one could imagine someone so demonic and sinful could look so saint-like.

The skillful artist had drawn this man to represent Sinon the traitor. Priam believed his lies, but later killed him. His false testimony was Troy's downfall; it burned because of him. Shooting stars shot through the sky as if the sky itself were sympathetic to the city's plight; as if the stars couldn't bear to stand still and watch.

<sup>79</sup> According to legend, the Trojan War began when prince Paris fell in love with Helen (wife of the Greek king Menelaus), and stole her away to Troy. Menelaus roused Greek armies to wage war on Troy and bring Helen back. Helen was used in the Renaissance as an example of the sexually immoral female (a foil to Lucrece herself).

<sup>80</sup> Lucrece identifies Paris' destructive, selfish lust with Tarquin's.

<sup>81</sup> In medieval romances (including Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, which Shakespeare adapted into a play), the Trojan prince Troilus fell in love with Cressida, who abandoned him and defected to the Greeks.

<sup>82</sup> Phrygian and Iliian are poetic synonyms for Trojan.

<sup>83</sup> Sinon was a legendary traitor to the Trojans during the war.

This picture she advisedly perused,  
 And chid the painter for his wondrous skill,  
 Saying, some shape in Sinon's was abused;  
 So fair a form lodged not a mind so ill:  
 1600 And still on him she gazed; and gazing still,  
 Such signs of truth in his plain face she spied,  
 That she concludes the picture was belied.

'It cannot be,' quoth she, 'that so much guile'--  
 She would have said 'can lurk in such a look;'  
 1605 But Tarquin's shape came in her mind the while,  
 And from her tongue 'can lurk' from 'cannot' took:  
 'It cannot be' she in that sense forsook,  
 And turn'd it thus; 'It cannot be, I find,  
 But such a face should bear a wicked mind.

1610 'For even as subtle Sinon here is painted,  
 So sober-sad, so weary, and so mild,  
 As if with grief or travail he had fainted,  
 To me came Tarquin armed; so beguiled  
 With outward honesty, but yet defiled  
 1615 With inward vice: as Priam him did cherish,  
 So did I Tarquin; so my Troy did perish.

'Look, look, how listening Priam wets his eyes,  
 To see those borrow'd tears that Sinon sheds!  
 Priam, why art thou old and yet not wise?  
 1620 For every tear he falls a Trojan bleeds:  
 His eye drops fire, no water thence proceeds;  
 Those round clear pearls of his, that move thy pity,  
 Are balls of quenchless fire to burn thy city.

'Such devils steal effects from lightless hell;  
 1625 For Sinon in his fire doth quake with cold,  
 And in that cold hot-burning fire doth dwell;  
 These contraries such unity do hold,  
 Only to flatter fools and make them bold:  
 So Priam's trust false Sinon's tears doth flatter,  
 1630 That he finds means to burn his Troy with water.'

Here, all enraged, such passion her assails,  
 That patience is quite beaten from her breast.  
 She tears the senseless Sinon with her nails,  
 Comparing him to that unhappy guest  
 1635 Whose deed hath made herself herself detest:  
 At last she smilingly with this gives o'er;  
 'Fool, fool!' quoth she, 'his wounds will not be sore.'

Thus ebbs and flows the current of her sorrow,  
 And time doth weary time with her complaining.  
 1640 She looks for night, and then she longs for morrow,  
 And both she thinks too long with her remaining:  
 Short time seems long in sorrow's sharp sustaining:  
 Though woe be heavy, yet it seldom sleeps,  
 And they that watch see time how slow it creeps.

1645 Which all this time hath overslipp'd her thought,  
 That she with painted images hath spent;  
 Being from the feeling of her own grief brought  
 By deep surmise of others' detriment;  
 Losing her woes in shows of discontent.  
 1650 It easeth some, though none it ever cured,  
 To think their dolour others have endured.

But now the mindful messenger, come back,  
 Brings home his lord and other company;  
 Who finds his Lucrece clad in mourning black:  
 1655 And round about her tear-stained eye  
 Blue circles stream'd; like rainbows in the sky:

She looked carefully at the picture, wishing the painter hadn't been so wonderfully talented. She thought Sinon looked too handsome to be evil, but she kept gazing at him. After gazing for a while, she thought she could see a look of honesty in his face, and decided the picture was wrong.

She said, "So much deception<sup>84</sup> could hardly--" She stopped. She would have said, "lurk in such a handsome face," but then Tarquin's face came to her mind, and she couldn't finish her sentence. She left the sentence hanging there, and then changed what she was going to say, continuing, "Well, I have to say there's an evil mind behind that face.

"When Tarquin came to me, he looked just like Sinon is painted here: serious, tired, and kind, as if he were about to faint from grief or exhaustion. His outward appearance convinced me he was trustworthy, but he was really evil inside. Priam trusted Sinon, and I trusted Tarquin. That's how I lost my Troy<sup>85</sup> .

"Look, look how Priam's eyes are watering as he sees Sinon's fake tears! Priam, how can you be so old and still not be wise? For every one of his tears that falls, a Trojan dies. His tears are made of fire, not water. Those round, clear drops of his--those tears that make you pity him--are balls of fire coming to burn your city.

"Devils like Tarquin and Sinon get their powers from hell. Sinon's tears will lead to fiery destruction, but they're still tears. In fact, the tears are the gateway to destruction. Although fire and water are opposites, they come together in Sinon. He harnesses them to control foolish people, forcing them to do what he says. By believing Sinon's tears, Priam<sup>86</sup> is effectively signing a death warrant for his city, Troy."

Enraged, Lucrece was overcome with passion; her patience was completely gone. She tore the spot where Sinon was painted with her nails. In her mind, she compared him to that unfortunate guest whose actions had made her hate herself. At last, she smiled and stopped. "You idiot!" she said, "he can't feel those wounds."

Her sadness ebbed and flowed as she got tired of complaining for so long. She wished that night would come and then, when it was night, that it would be tomorrow already. She felt like both the day and night were exceptionally long. Time seems to pass slowly when you're sad. Grief is a heavy burden that never gets lighter and never lets you sleep. People who are up and awake in the night can tell how slowly time creeps by.

However, she lost track of time when she was talking to the painted people. She temporarily forgot about her own grief while she tried to empathize with others', her own sadness drowned in the tears she cried for them. Even if it doesn't cure them, it helps some people to know other people have suffered the way that they have.

The careful messenger came back along with his master and some other men. They found Lucrece wearing black mourning clothes, her eyes streaked with tears in the same way that rainbows streak the sky. Her tears showed that, in

<sup>84</sup> Through Sinon, Lucrece comes to terms with Tarquin's deceptive appearances and treachery. Though his crime seems to be personal, Lucrece's husband and father will call it a political--equating rape with treason, a crime comparable to Sinon's.

<sup>85</sup> Now Troy is a figure for Lucrece's body and sexual morality. Earlier, Shakespeare used metaphors of war and conquest, even calling Lucrece's breast a city under siege. The Troy painting embodies some of these metaphors as a correlative to Lucrece's state.

<sup>86</sup> Priam, like Collatine, put his trust in the wrong people. Priam lost Troy just like Collatine lost Lucrece--as a result of some poorly-timed words.

These water-galls in her dim element  
Foretell new storms to those already spent.

1660 Which when her sad-beholding husband saw,  
Amazedly in her sad face he stares:  
Her eyes, though sod in tears, look'd red and raw,  
Her lively colour kill'd with deadly cares.  
He hath no power to ask her how she fares:  
Both stood, like old acquaintance in a trance,  
1665 Met far from home, wondering each other's chance.

At last he takes her by the bloodless hand,  
And thus begins: 'What uncouth ill event  
Hath thee befall'n, that thou dost trembling stand?  
Sweet love, what spite hath thy fair colour spent?  
1670 Why art thou thus attired in discontent?  
Unmask, dear dear, this moody heaviness,  
And tell thy grief, that we may give redress.'

Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire,  
Ere once she can discharge one word of woe:  
1675 At length address'd to answer his desire,  
She modestly prepares to let them know  
Her honour is ta'en prisoner by the foe;  
While Collatine and his consorted lords  
With sad attention long to hear her words.

1680 And now this pale swan in her watery nest  
Begins the sad dirge of her certain ending;  
'Few words,' quoth she, 'Shall fit the trespass best,  
Where no excuse can give the fault amending:  
In me moe woes than words are now depending;  
1685 And my laments would be drawn out too long,  
To tell them all with one poor tired tongue.

'Then be this all the task it hath to say:  
Dear husband, in the interest of thy bed  
A stranger came, and on that pillow lay  
1690 Where thou was wont to rest thy weary head;  
And what wrong else may be imagined  
By foul enforcement might be done to me,  
From that, alas, thy Lucrece is not free.

'For in the dreadful dead of dark midnight,  
With shining falchion in my chamber came  
A creeping creature, with a flaming light,  
And softly cried 'Awake, thou Roman dame,  
And entertain my love; else lasting shame  
On thee and thine this night I will inflict,  
1700 If thou my love's desire do contradict.

'For some hard-favour'd groom of thine,' quoth he,  
'Unless thou yoke thy liking to my will,  
I'll murder straight, and then I'll slaughter thee  
And swear I found you where you did fulfil  
1705 The loathsome act of lust, and so did kill  
The lechers in their deed: this act will be  
My fame and thy perpetual infamy.'

'With this, I did begin to start and cry;  
And then against my heart he sets his sword,  
1710 Swearing, unless I took all patiently,  
I should not live to speak another word;  
So should my shame still rest upon record,  
And never be forgot in mighty Rome  
Th' adulterate death of Lucrece and her groom.

1715 'Mine enemy was strong, my poor self weak,  
And far the weaker with so strong a fear:  
My bloody judge forbade my tongue to speak;  
No rightful plea might plead for justice there:  
His scarlet lust came evidence to swear  
1720 That my poor beauty had purloin'd his eyes;  
And when the judge is robb'd the prisoner dies.

addition to what she'd dealt with already, there was still  
worse to come.

Her husband was sad to see her that way. He stared,  
amazed, into her sad face. Her eyes were red, raw, and full  
of tears. Her cheeks were pale now from worrying. He didn't  
have the strength to ask her how she was doing. Both of  
them stood in a trance, like two old acquaintances who run  
into each other far away from home and can't believe it.

At last, he grasped her bloodless hand and said, "Has  
something horrible happened to you? Why are you  
trembling like that? Sweetheart, why are you so pale? Why  
are you wearing mourning clothes? My dear, tell us why  
you're upset. Tell us why you're crying, so that we can make  
it better."

She sighed three times, getting rid of her sadness before  
she could say a single sad word. When she was finally ready  
to answer his question, she gathered her courage to tell  
them she'd been [raped](#) <sup>87</sup> and ruined. Sad and attentive,  
Collatine and his friends waited for a long time to hear what  
she would say.

<sup>87</sup> Lucrece's sexual virtue is metaphorically compared to a prisoner of war taken by Tarquin's enemy forces.

Like a pale swan <sup>88</sup> in her watery nest, she began the sad  
song of her impending death. She said, "It's better to keep  
my speech short in regards to this crime, since no excuse  
can undo what's been done. I have more sorrow than I have  
words to explain, so it would take way too long for me to  
tell you all my grievances myself.

<sup>88</sup> The swan, like the nightingale, is a symbol of grief and mourning.

"So suffice it to say this: My dear husband, a man came  
looking to take your place in our bed. He wanted to lay his  
head on your very own pillow. Anything else you might  
imagine was forced on me--well, all that happened to me,  
your Lucrece.

"A creature crept into my room in the dark of midnight, a  
shining sword by his side and a flaming candle in his hand.  
He whispered, 'Wake up, Roman lady, and make love to me!  
Otherwise, if you reject my desire, I'll ruin your life and your  
family members' lives tonight.

"Unless you do what I say,' he said, 'I'll murder some low-  
down servant of yours. Then I'll kill you and swear I found  
you having sex with him. I'll say I killed you in the act, and  
for that, I'll be renowned as a hero forever, and you'll be the  
villain!'

"With that, I started to shake and cry. He pointed his sword  
at my heart, swearing I wouldn't live to speak another word  
unless I obeyed him patiently. If I fought back, my  
reputation would be ruined forever. Throughout all Rome,  
no one would ever forget the death of Lucrece and her  
servant in adultery.

"My enemy was strong and I was weak--even weaker than  
usual because I was so afraid. My [would-be murderer](#) <sup>89</sup>  
told me not to speak. I couldn't plead for justice the way  
that I wanted to. He said his lust was so strong because my  
poor beauty had caught his eye. He said that if he didn't get  
what he wanted, I would die.

<sup>89</sup> Lucrece calls Tarquin her "judge," suggesting he failed in his duty as a king, soldier, man, and representative of the law. In all of these capacities, he had jurisdiction over her, which he abused.

'O, teach me how to make mine own excuse!  
Or at the least this refuge let me find;  
Though my gross blood be stain'd with this abuse,  
1725 Immaculate and spotless is my mind;  
That was not forced; that never was inclined  
To accessary yieldings, but still pure  
Doth in her poison'd closet yet endure.'

Lo, here, the hopeless merchant of this loss,  
1730 With head declined, and voice damm'd up with woe,  
With sad set eyes, and wretched arms across,  
From lips new-waxen pale begins to blow  
The grief away that stops his answer so:  
But, wretched as he is, he strives in vain;  
1735 What he breathes out his breath drinks up again.

As through an arch the violent roaring tide  
Outruns the eye that doth behold his haste,  
Yet in the eddy boundeth in his pride  
Back to the strait that forced him on so fast;  
1740 In rage sent out, recall'd in rage, being past:  
Even so his sighs, his sorrows, make a saw,  
To push grief on, and back the same grief draw.

Which speechless woe of his poor she attendeth,  
And his untimely frenzy thus awaketh:  
1745 'Dear lord, thy sorrow to my sorrow lendeth  
Another power; no flood by raining slaketh.  
My woe too sensible thy passion maketh  
More feeling-painful: let it then suffice  
To drown one woe, one pair of weeping eyes.

'And for my sake, when I might charm thee so,  
For she that was thy Lucrece, now attend me:  
Be suddenly revenged on my foe,  
Thine, mine, his own: suppose thou dost defend me  
From what is past: the help that thou shalt lend me  
1750 Comes all too late, yet let the traitor die;  
For sparing justice feeds iniquity.

'But ere I name him, you fair lords,' quoth she,  
Speaking to those that came with Collatine,  
'Shall plight your honourable faiths to me,  
1760 With swift pursuit to venge this wrong of mine;  
For 'tis a meritorious fair design  
To chase injustice with revengeful arms:  
Knights, by their oaths, should right poor ladies'  
harms.'

At this request, with noble disposition  
Each present lord began to promise aid,  
As bound in knighthood to her imposition,  
Longing to hear the hateful foe bewray'd.  
But she, that yet her sad task hath not said,  
1770 The protestation stops. 'O, speak, ' quoth she,  
'How may this forced stain be wiped from me?

'What is the quality of mine offence,  
Being constrain'd with dreadful circumstance?  
May my pure mind with the foul act dispense,  
1775 My low-declined honour to advance?  
May any terms acquit me from this chance?  
The poison'd fountain clears itself again;  
And why not I from this compelled stain?'

With this, they all at once began to say,  
1780 Her body's stain her mind untainted clears;  
While with a joyless smile she turns away  
The face, that map which deep impression bears  
Of hard misfortune, carved in it with tears.  
'No, no,' quoth she, 'no dame, hereafter living,  
1785 By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving.'

Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break,  
She throws forth Tarquin's name; 'He, he,' she says,

"I wish I could make excuses for myself! Although my body is dirty after this assault, I can at least take comfort in the fact that my mind is immaculate and spotless. My mind wasn't raped. My mind has never been forced to do something it didn't want to do. It's still pure inside my dirty body."

Her husband--who had lost something, too--hung his head, a lump in his throat. His eyes were sad, his wretched arms were crossed, and his pale lips let out his breath, as if he were about to say something. But he was so upset that he couldn't speak. When he breathed out, he could only breathe back in again.

His sadness was like the roaring tide of a river when a dam is raised: it pushed him forward, but there was a counter-current that pushed him back again. He started with intensity, and intensely stopped. His sighs and tears pushed his grief on, but then drew that same grief back in.

She watched his speechless sadness, suddenly shouting out, "My dear, your sadness is making me even sadder--rain doesn't put an end to a flood. I'm too sensitive to your emotions, and this is making it all more painful. Let me do the crying; let me bear it all.

"Listen to me, for my sake--or for the sake of the woman I once was, when I could charm you. Take revenge on my enemy immediately. He's your enemy, my enemy, and his own enemy. Pretend you're defending me from what already happened. Even though your help is too late, kill him anyway. That justice will put an end to my shame.

"But before I tell you his name, sirs," she said, speaking to the men who came with Collatine. "All of you need to swear to me. Swear <sup>90</sup> that you'll avenge this crime against me as quickly as possible. It's an honorable task, taking revenge and putting an end to injustice. By trade, soldiers should protect poor ladies from harm."

<sup>90</sup> Recall that Tarquin considered how he could justify his rape of Lucrece if it were a revenge for a previous crime. This logic actually justifies Collatine's revenge against Tarquin.

At her request, each of the men nobly promised to help her. Now bound to her by an oath, these soldiers longed to hear the enemy's name. But even before she had said it, she started to argue with herself. She said, "Oh, but how can I ever make myself clean again after this dirty crime?"

"How serious is my offense, considering that I was forced under dreadful circumstances? Can the purity of my mind cancel out the dirty deed? Can it save my ruined reputation? Can anything redeem me from this charge? A polluted fountain eventually gets clear again, so why can't I rid myself of this forced corruption?"

At once they all rushed to tell her that her pure mind did purify her soiled body. But as she turned away with a joyless smile, tears were running down her cheeks. Her face was like a map, and the tear-tracks were the roads worn in during her hardship. "No, no," she said, "no woman who lives through such a thing can excuse herself!"

She sighed as if her heart would break, and then said Tarquin's name. She said, "He--" but she couldn't say more

1790 But more than 'he' her poor tongue could not speak;  
Till after many accents and delays,  
Untimely breathings, sick and short assays,  
She utters this, 'He, he, fair lords, 'tis he,  
That guides this hand to give this wound to me.'

1795 Even here she sheathed in her harmless breast  
A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathed:  
That blow did bail it from the deep unrest  
Of that polluted prison where it breathed:  
Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeath'd  
Her winged sprite, and through her wounds doth fly  
Life's lasting date from cancell'd destiny.

1800 Stone-still, astonish'd with this deadly deed,  
Stood Collatine and all his lordly crew;  
Till Lucrece' father, that beholds her bleed,  
Himself on her self-slaughter'd body threw;  
And from the purple fountain Brutus drew  
1805 The murderous knife, and, as it left the place,  
Her blood, in poor revenge, held it in chase;

And bubbling from her breast, it doth divide  
In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood  
Circles her body in on every side,  
1810 Who, like a late-sack'd island, vastly stood  
Bare and unpeopled in this fearful flood.  
Some of her blood still pure and red remain'd,  
And some look'd black, and that false Tarquin stain'd.

1815 About the mourning and congealed face  
Of that black blood a watery rigol goes,  
Which seems to weep upon the tainted place:  
And ever since, as pitying Lucrece' woes,  
Corrupted blood some watery token shows;  
And blood untainted still doth red abide,  
1820 Blushing at that which is so putrified.

'Daughter, dear daughter,' old Lucretius cries,  
'That life was mine which thou hast here deprived.  
If in the child the father's image lies,  
Where shall I live now Lucrece is unliv'd?  
1825 Thou wast not to this end from me derived.  
If children predecease progenitors,  
We are their offspring, and they none of ours.

'Poor broken glass, I often did behold  
In thy sweet semblance my old age new born;  
1830 But now that fresh fair mirror, dim and old,  
Shows me a bare-boned death by time out-worn:  
O, from thy cheeks my image thou hast torn,  
And shivered all the beauty of my glass,  
That I no more can see what once I was!

1835 'O time, cease thou thy course and last no longer,  
If they surcease to be that should survive.  
Shall rotten death make conquest of the stronger  
And leave the faltering feeble souls alive?  
The old bees die, the young possess their hive:  
1840 Then live, sweet Lucrece, live again and see  
Thy father die, and not thy father thee!'

By this, starts Collatine as from a dream,  
And bids Lucretius give his sorrow place;  
And then in key-cold Lucrece' bleeding stream  
1845 He falls, and bathes the pale fear in his face,  
And counterfeits to die with her a space;  
Till manly shame bids him possess his breath  
And live to be revenged on her death.

The deep vexation of his inward soul  
1850 Hath served a dumb arrest upon his tongue;

than that. She stuttered and stopped, breathing sick, short,  
heavy breaths. Then she said, "He, sirs. It was he that did  
this to me."

At that moment, she plunged a sharp knife into her  
innocent chest and killed herself. She freed her [soul](#) <sup>91</sup>  
from its deep unrest inside her polluted body. Her  
remorseful sighs blew her soul on wings up to heaven. By  
wounding herself, she freed herself from her fate.

<sup>91</sup> Lucrece's suicide is characterized as heroic and moral. She frees her soul from a body her society saw as tainted, and in doing so preserved the sexual "virtue" or morality she thought Tarquin had ruined. The problem of the poem--the divide between external and internal realities--is "solved" by Lucrece freeing her internal, immaterial soul from its embodied, imperfect state.

Collatine and all his noble friends stood stock-still,  
astonished by her suicide. Lucrece's father watched her  
bleed and then threw himself on her murdered body.  
Brutus pulled the knife out of her chest. As it came out, her  
blood gushed after it.

Bubbling out of her chest, her blood flowed in two rivers  
over each side of her body, encircling her with crimson  
blood. She looked like a conquered island standing bare  
and unpopulated in the middle of the terrifying flood. Some  
of her blood still looked pure and red. Some of it looked  
black--that was the blood stained by the treacherous  
Tarquin.

A ripple of that black blood flowed over her sad, frozen face,  
which seemed like it was still crying over her pollution. Ever  
since--as if blood itself pitied Lucrece's fate--corrupted  
blood turns black, while pure blood stays red, blushing at  
the putrified black blood next to it.

Old Lucretius cried, "My dear daughter, you've killed me,  
too. A child is a part of her father, so how can I go on living  
now that Lucrece is dead? It wasn't supposed to end this  
way. If children die before their parents, it makes us into  
their children, instead of them being ours.

"My darling [daughter](#) <sup>92</sup>, when I looked at you I saw so  
much of my younger self; it was like looking in a mirror. But  
now when I look at you, you're not fresh and beautiful  
anymore; you're dark and old, and all I can see is bare-  
boned death before its time. You don't look like me  
anymore! You're no longer my mirror! I can't look at your  
beauty and see myself as I once was!

<sup>92</sup> Lucretius compares his daughter to a mirror in which he saw the image of himself--though a younger version.

"Time should stop right where it is--and never begin again--  
since someone has died who should have survived. How  
can death kill the strong and leave the old, feeble folks  
alive? When old bees die, young bees take over the hive. So  
come back to life, sweet Lucrece! Come back to life so that  
you can see your father die, not the other way around!"

Hearing that, Collatine shook himself as if he were waking  
up from a dream. He asked Lucretius to trade places with  
him, and then fell himself into the bloody stream around  
Lucrece's cold body. He covered his pale, fearful face with  
her blood. He acted like he wanted to die with her. Then his  
manly pride forced him to breathe normally again and to  
live to avenge her death.

His deep internal struggle left him tongue-tied. He started  
to talk, angry that he was overcome by his grief and that he

Who, mad that sorrow should his use control,  
Or keep him from heart-easing words so long,  
Begins to talk; but through his lips do throng  
Weak words, so thick come in his poor heart's aid,  
1855 That no man could distinguish what he said.

Yet sometime 'Tarquin' was pronounced plain,  
But through his teeth, as if the name he tore.  
This windy tempest, till it blow up rain,  
Held back his sorrow's tide, to make it more;  
1860 At last it rains, and busy winds give o'er:  
Then son and father weep with equal strife  
Who should weep most, for daughter or for wife.

The one doth call her his, the other his,  
Yet neither may possess the claim they lay.  
1865 The father says 'She's mine.' 'O, mine she is,'  
Replies her husband: 'do not take away  
My sorrow's interest; let no mourner say  
He weeps for her, for she was only mine,  
And only must be wail'd by Collatine.'

'O,' quoth Lucretius, 'I did give that life  
Which she too early and too late hath spill'd.'  
'Woe, woe,' quoth Collatine, 'she was my wife,  
I owed her, and 'tis mine that she hath kill'd.'  
1870 'My daughter' and 'my wife' with clamours fill'd  
1875 The dispersed air, who, holding Lucrece' life,  
Answer'd their cries, 'my daughter' and 'my wife.'

Brutus, who pluck'd the knife from Lucrece' side,  
Seeing such emulation in their woe,  
Began to clothe his wit in state and pride,  
1880 Burying in Lucrece' wound his folly's show.  
He with the Romans was esteemed so  
As silly-jeering idiots are with kings,  
For sportive words and uttering foolish things:

But now he throws that shallow habit by,  
1885 Wherein deep policy did him disguise;  
And arm'd his long-hid wits advisedly,  
To cheque the tears in Collatinus' eyes.  
'Thou wronged lord of Rome,' quoth he, 'arise:  
Let my unsounded self, supposed a fool,  
1890 Now set thy long-experienced wit to school.

'Why, Collatine, is woe the cure for woe?  
Do wounds help wounds, or grief help grievous deeds?  
Is it revenge to give thyself a blow  
For his foul act by whom thy fair wife bleeds?  
1895 Such childish humour from weak minds proceeds:  
Thy wretched wife mistook the matter so,  
To slay herself, that should have slain her foe.

'Courageous Roman, do not steep thy heart  
In such relenting dew of lamentations;  
1900 But kneel with me and help to bear thy part,  
To rouse our Roman gods with invocations,  
That they will suffer these abominations,  
Since Rome herself in them doth stand disgraced,  
By our strong arms from forth her fair streets chased.

'Now, by the Capitol that we adore,  
And by this chaste blood so unjustly stain'd,  
By heaven's fair sun that breeds the fat earth's store,  
By all our country rights in Rome maintain'd,  
And by chaste Lucrece' soul that late complain'd  
1910 Her wrongs to us, and by this bloody knife,  
We will revenge the death of this true wife.'

This said, he struck his hand upon his breast,  
And kiss'd the fatal knife, to end his vow;  
And to his protestation urged the rest,  
1915 Who, wondering at him, did his words allow:

couldn't find comforting words to say. But his lips got caught on his words. He couldn't express his poor heart, considering no one could understand what he said.

They could clearly make out the word "Tarquin," but he said it through his teeth like he was tearing it. There was a windy storm inside him, keeping his grief pent up until it would overflow and make his tears start flowing. Finally it rained, and the winds stopped. So Collatine and Lucretius wept together. It was impossible to tell who grieved more: the one who had lost a daughter, or the one who had lost a wife.

Each of them had a claim to her, but there was nothing worth having for either of them anymore. Her father said, "She's mine." Her husband replied, "Oh, but she's mine. Don't take away the object of my grief. Don't let anyone else mourn for her. She's mine, and only I, Collatine, will mourn her."

Lucretius said, "But I gave her life--although she's ended it too soon." "Oh, no!" said Collatine, "She was my wife. That's what I called her. It's my wife that's been killed." Cries of "my daughter" and "my wife" filled the air. Each of them valued Lucrece's life and wanted the rights to her body, so they continued to cry out, "my daughter" and "my wife."

Brutus <sup>33</sup> (who pulled the knife out of Lucrece's chest) saw their equal grief and started to prepare an elegant speech. Lucrece's death was his opportunity to stop acting like an idiot. He had a reputation with his fellow Romans for telling funny jokes and saying stupid things, like silly court jesters do with kings.

But he put all that shallow stuff aside now, a serious look on his face. He showed the intelligence he'd been hiding for so long. He made use of it now to help Collatine stop crying. "You've been wronged, sir," he said. "Get up! Everyone thinks I'm dumb, but I'm about to teach you--the wiser man--something new.

"Collatine, can sadness cure sadness? Does hurt help hurt? Does grief undo terrible deeds? Would it really be taking revenge on Tarquin to kill yourself after the rape that killed your wife? Such childish thoughts are for weaker men than you. Your poor wife was mistaken. Instead of killing herself, she should have killed Tarquin.

"Brave Roman, give your heart a break and stop crying. Instead, you can kneel with me and do your part: pray that our Roman gods will help us avenge these crimes, since Rome itself is disgraced by them. We'll chase the guilty man out of Rome's streets with our swords.

"I swear by our respected Roman government; by Lucrece, a modest woman who was unjustly killed; by the beautiful sun in the sky that makes plants grow in the earth; by all our rights as citizens of Rome; by sweet Lucrece's soul that only just told us what happened to her; and by this bloody knife: we will take revenge for this faithful wife's death."

That said, he placed his hand over his heart, and kissed the fatal knife to seal his promise. He urged the others to do the same. Wondering at him, they did as he said. They knelt

<sup>33</sup> Lucrece's actions make her fellow Romans want to be morally upstanding heroes, too. Notice how her example affects Brutus, who completely changes his character here.

Then jointly to the ground their knees they bow;  
And that deep vow, which Brutus made before,  
He doth again repeat, and that they swore.

1920 When they had sworn to this advised doom,  
They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence;  
To show her bleeding body thorough Rome,  
And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence:  
Which being done with speedy diligence,  
The Romans plausibly did give consent  
1925 To Tarquin's everlasting banishment.

together at the same time. Brutus repeated his serious  
promise again, and they all swore to it.

When they had sworn to to carry out this revenge, they  
decided to take Lucrece's body with them to Rome. They  
would show her bleeding body throughout the city to  
proclaim Tarquin's disgusting crime. After they did that, the  
Romans quickly and faithfully agreed to banish Tarquin  
forever.

## How to Cite

To cite this Shakescleare translation:

### MLA

Sincx, Bailey. "The Rape of Lucrece: A Shakescleare Translation."  
LitCharts. LitCharts LLC, 17 Jul 2017. Web. 14 Sep 2017.

### Chicago Manual

Sincx, Bailey. "The Rape of Lucrece: A Shakescleare Translation."  
LitCharts LLC, July 17, 2017. Retrieved September 14, 2017.  
<http://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-rape-of-lucrece>.