

# Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece



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TO THE	0.1
RIGHT HONORABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLY,	0.2
Earl of Southampton, and Baron of Tichfield.	0.3
The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning,	0.4
is but a superfluous moiety.	0.5
The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of	0.6
acceptance.	0.7
What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours.	0.8
Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your lordship, to	0.9
whom I	
wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.	0.10
Your lordship's in all duty,	0.11
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.	0.12
The Argument	0.13
Lucius Tarquinius, for his excessive pride surnamed Superbus, after he had caused his	0.14
own father-in-law Servius Tullius to be cruelly murdered, and, contrary to the Roman	0.15
laws and customs, not requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had possessed	0.16
himself of the kingdom, went, accompanied with his sons and other noblemen of	0.17
Rome, to besiege Ardea. During which siege the principal men of the army meeting	0.18
one evening at the tent of Sextus Tarquinius, the king's son, in their discourses after	0.19
supper every one commended the virtues of his own wife: among whom Collatinus	0.20
extolled the incomparable chastity of his wife Lucretia. In that pleasant humour they	0.21
posted to Rome; and intending, by their secret and sudden arrival, to make trial of that	0.22
which every one had before avouched, only Collatinus finds his wife, though it were	0.23
late in the night, spinning amongst her maids: the other ladies were all found dancing	0.24
and revelling, or in several disports. Whereupon the noblemen yielded Collatinus the	0.25
victory, and his wife the fame. At that time Sextus Tarquinius being inflamed with	0.26
Lucrece' beauty, yet smothering his passions for the present, departed with the rest	0.27
back to the camp; from whence he shortly after privily withdrew himself, and was,	0.28
according to his estate, royally entertained and lodged by Lucrece at Collatium.	0.29
The same night he treacherously stealeth into her chamber, violently ravished her, and	0.30
early in the morning speedeth away. Lucrece, in this lamentable plight, hastily	0.31
dispatcheth messengers, one to Rome for her father, another to the camp for Collatine.	0.32
They came, the one accompanied with Junius Brutus, the other with Publius Valerius;	0.33
and finding Lucrece attired in mourning habit, demanded the cause of her sorrow.	0.34
She, first taking an oath of them for her revenge, revealed the actor, and whole	0.35
manner of his dealing, and withal suddenly stabbed herself. Which done, with one	0.36
consent they all vowed to root out the whole hated family of the Tarquins; and	0.37

## The Rape of Lucrece

bearing the dead body to Rome, Brutus acquainted the people with the doer and 0.38  
manner of the vile deed, with a bitter invective against the tyranny of the king: 0.39  
wherewith the people were so moved, that with one consent and a general acclamation 0.40  
the Tarquins were all exiled, and the state government changed from kings to consuls. 0.41

From the besieged Ardea all in post, 1  
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire, 2  
Lust-breathed Tarquin leaves the Roman host, 3  
And to Collatium bears the lightless fire 4  
Which, in pale embers hid, lurks to aspire 5  
And girdle with embracing flames the waist 6  
Of Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste. 7

Haply that name of 'chaste' unhappily set 8  
This bateless edge on his keen appetite; 9  
When Collatine unwisely did not let 10  
To praise the clear unmatched red and white 11  
Which triumph'd in that sky of his delight, 12  
Where mortal stars, as bright as heaven's beauties, 13  
With pure aspects did him peculiar duties. 14

For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent, 15  
Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state; 16  
What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent 17  
In the possession of his beauteous mate; 18  
Reckoning his fortune at such high-proud rate, 19  
That kings might be espoused to more fame, 20  
But king nor peer to such a peerless dame. 21

O happiness enjoy'd but of a few! 22  
And, if possess'd, as soon decay'd and done 23  
As is the morning's silver-melting dew 24  
Against the golden splendor of the sun! 25  
An expired date, cancell'd ere well begun: 26  
Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms, 27  
Are weakly fortress'd from a world of harms. 28

Beauty itself doth of itself persuade 29  
The eyes of men without an orator; 30  
What needeth then apologies be made, 31  
To set forth that which is so singular? 32  
Or why is Collatine the publisher 33  
Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown 34  
From thievish ears, because it is his own? 35

## The Rape of Lucrece

Perchance his boast of Lucrece' sovereignty	36
Suggested this proud issue of a king;	37
For by our ears our hearts oft tainted be:	38
Perchance that envy of so rich a thing,	39
Braving compare, disdainfully did sting	40
His high-pitch'd thoughts, that meaner men should vaunt	41
That golden hap which their superiors want.	42
But some untimely thought did instigate	43
His all-too-timeless speed, if none of those:	44
His honour, his affairs, his friends, his state,	45
Neglected all, with swift intent he goes	46
To quench the coal which in his liver glows.	47
O rash false heat, wrapp'd in repentant cold,	48
Thy hasty spring still blasts, and ne'er grows old!	49
When at Collatium this false lord arrived,	50
Well was he welcomed by the Roman dame,	51
Within whose face beauty and virtue strived	52
Which of them both should underprop her fame:	53
When virtue bragg'd, beauty would blush for shame;	54
When beauty boasted blushes, in despite	55
Virtue would stain that o'er with silver white.	56
But beauty, in that white intituled,	57
From Venus' doves doth challenge that fair field:	58
Then virtue claims from beauty beauty's red,	59
Which virtue gave the golden age to gild	60
Their silver cheeks, and call'd it then their shield;	61
Teaching them thus to use it in the fight,	62
When shame assail'd, the red should fence the white.	63
This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen,	64
Argued by beauty's red and virtue's white	65
Of either's colour was the other queen,	66
Proving from world's minority their right:	67
Yet their ambition makes them still to fight;	68
The sovereignty of either being so great,	69
That oft they interchange each other's seat.	70
Their silent war of lilies and of roses,	71
Which Tarquin view'd in her fair face's field,	72
In their pure ranks his traitor eye encloses;	73
Where, lest between them both it should be kill'd,	74
The coward captive vanquished doth yield	75
To those two armies that would let him go,	76
Rather than triumph in so false a foe.	77

## The Rape of Lucrece

Now thinks he that her husband's shallow tongue,--	78
The niggard prodigal that praised her so,--	79
In that high task hath done her beauty wrong,	80
Which far exceeds his barren skill to show:	81
Therefore that praise which Collatine doth owe	82
Enchanted Tarquin answers with surmise,	83
In silent wonder of still-gazing eyes.	84
This earthly saint, adored by this devil,	85
Little suspecteth the false worshipper;	86
For unstain'd thoughts do seldom dream on evil;	87
Birds never limed no secret bushes fear:	88
So guiltless she securely gives good cheer	89
And reverend welcome to her princely guest,	90
Whose inward ill no outward harm express'd:	91
For that he colour'd with his high estate,	92
Hiding base sin in plaits of majesty;	93
That nothing in him seem'd inordinate,	94
Save something too much wonder of his eye,	95
Which, having all, all could not satisfy;	96
But, poorly rich, so wanteth in his store,	97
That, cloy'd with much, he pineth still for more.	98
But she, that never coped with stranger eyes,	99
Could pick no meaning from their parling looks,	100
Nor read the subtle-shining secrecies	101
Writ in the glassy margents of such books:	102
She touch'd no unknown baits, nor fear'd no hooks;	103
Nor could she moralize his wanton sight,	104
More than his eyes were open'd to the light.	105
He stories to her ears her husband's fame,	106
Won in the fields of fruitful Italy;	107
And decks with praises Collatine's high name,	108
Made glorious by his manly chivalry	109
With bruised arms and wreaths of victory:	110
Her joy with heaved-up hand she doth express,	111
And, wordless, so greets heaven for his success.	112
Far from the purpose of his coming hither,	113
He makes excuses for his being there:	114
No cloudy show of stormy blustering weather	115
Doth yet in his fair welkin once appear;	116
Till sable Night, mother of Dread and Fear,	117
Upon the world dim darkness doth display,	118
And in her vaulty prison stows the Day.	119

## The Rape of Lucrece

For then is Tarquin brought unto his bed,	120
Intending weariness with heavy spright;	121
For, after supper, long he questioned	122
With modest Lucrece, and wore out the night:	123
Now leaden slumber with life's strength doth fight;	124
And every one to rest themselves betake,	125
Save thieves, and cares, and troubled minds, that wake.	126
As one of which doth Tarquin lie revolving	127
The sundry dangers of his will's obtaining;	128
Yet ever to obtain his will resolving,	129
Though weak-built hopes persuade him to abstaining:	130
Despair to gain doth traffic oft for gaining;	131
And when great treasure is the meed proposed,	132
Though death be adjunct, there's no death supposed.	133
Those that much covet are with gain so fond,	134
For what they have not, that which they possess	135
They scatter and unloose it from their bond,	136
And so, by hoping more, they have but less;	137
Or, gaining more, the profit of excess	138
Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain,	139
That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich gain.	140
The aim of all is but to nurse the life	141
With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;	142
And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,	143
That one for all, or all for one we gage;	144
As life for honour in fell battle's rage;	145
Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth cost	146
The death of all, and all together lost.	147
So that in venturing ill we leave to be	148
The things we are for that which we expect;	149
And this ambitious foul infirmity,	150
In having much, torments us with defect	151
Of that we have: so then we do neglect	152
The thing we have; and, all for want of wit,	153
Make something nothing by augmenting it.	154
Such hazard now must doting Tarquin make,	155
Pawning his honour to obtain his lust;	156
And for himself himself he must forsake:	157
Then where is truth, if there be no self-trust?	158
When shall he think to find a stranger just,	159
When he himself himself confounds, betrays	160
To slanderous tongues and wretched hateful days?	161

## The Rape of Lucrece

Now stole upon the time the dead of night, 162  
When heavy sleep had closed up mortal eyes: 163  
No comfortable star did lend his light, 164  
No noise but owls' and wolves' death-boding cries; 165  
Now serves the season that they may surprise 166  
The silly lambs: pure thoughts are dead and still, 167  
While lust and murder wake to stain and kill. 168

And now this lustful lord leap'd from his bed, 169  
Throwing his mantle rudely o'er his arm; 170  
Is madly toss'd between desire and dread; 171  
Th' one sweetly flatters, th' other feareth harm; 172  
But honest fear, bewitch'd with lust's foul charm, 173  
Doth too too oft betake him to retire, 174  
Beaten away by brain-sick rude desire. 175

His falchion on a flint he softly smiteth, 176  
That from the cold stone sparks of fire do fly; 177  
Whereat a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth, 178  
Which must be lode-star to his lustful eye; 179  
And to the flame thus speaks advisedly, 180  
'As from this cold flint I enforced this fire, 181  
So Lucrece must I force to my desire.' 182

Here pale with fear he doth premeditate 183  
The dangers of his loathsome enterprise, 184  
And in his inward mind he doth debate 185  
What following sorrow may on this arise: 186  
Then looking scornfully, he doth despise 187  
His naked armour of still-slaughter'd lust, 188  
And justly thus controls his thoughts unjust: 189

'Fair torch, burn out thy light, and lend it not 190  
To darken her whose light excelleth thine: 191  
And die, unhallow'd thoughts, before you blot 192  
With your uncleanness that which is divine; 193  
Offer pure incense to so pure a shrine: 194  
Let fair humanity abhor the deed 195  
That spots and stains love's modest snow-white weed. 196

'O shame to knighthood and to shining arms! 197  
O foul dishonour to my household's grave! 198  
O impious act, including all foul harms! 199  
A martial man to be soft fancy's slave! 200  
True valour still a true respect should have; 201  
Then my digression is so vile, so base, 202  
That it will live engraven in my face. 203

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Yea, though I die, the scandal will survive,	204
And be an eye-sore in my golden coat;	205
Some loathsome dash the herald will contrive,	206
To cipher me how fondly I did dote;	207
That my posterity, shamed with the note	208
Shall curse my bones, and hold it for no sin	209
To wish that I their father had not bin.	210
'What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?	211
A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy.	212
Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?	213
Or sells eternity to get a toy?	214
For one sweet grape who will the vine destroy?	215
Or what fond beggar, but to touch the crown,	216
Would with the sceptre straight be stricken down?	217
'If Collatinus dream of my intent,	218
Will he not wake, and in a desperate rage	219
Post hither, this vile purpose to prevent?	220
This siege that hath engirt his marriage,	221
This blur to youth, this sorrow to the sage,	222
This dying virtue, this surviving shame,	223
Whose crime will bear an ever-during blame?	224
'O, what excuse can my invention make,	225
When thou shalt charge me with so black a deed?	226
Will not my tongue be mute, my frail joints shake,	227
Mine eyes forego their light, my false heart bleed?	228
The guilt being great, the fear doth still exceed;	229
And extreme fear can neither fight nor fly,	230
But coward-like with trembling terror die.	231
'Had Collatinus kill'd my son or sire,	232
Or lain in ambush to betray my life,	233
Or were he not my dear friend, this desire	234
Might have excuse to work upon his wife,	235
As in revenge or quittal of such strife:	236
But as he is my kinsman, my dear friend,	237
The shame and fault finds no excuse nor end.	238
'Shameful it is; ay, if the fact be known:	239
Hateful it is; there is no hate in loving:	240
I'll beg her love; but she is own:	241
The worst is but denial and reproving:	242
My will is strong, past reason's weak removing.	243
Who fears a sentence or an old man's saw	244
Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe.'	245

## The Rape of Lucrece

Thus, graceless, holds he disputation	246
'Tween frozen conscience and hot-burning will,	247
And with good thoughts make dispensation,	248
Urging the worser sense for vantage still;	249
Which in a moment doth confound and kill	250
All pure effects, and doth so far proceed,	251
That what is vile shows like a virtuous deed.	252
Quoth he, 'She took me kindly by the hand,	253
And gazed for tidings in my eager eyes,	254
Fearing some hard news from the warlike band,	255
Where her beloved Collatinus lies.	256
O, how her fear did make her colour rise!	257
First red as roses that on lawn we lay,	258
Then white as lawn, the roses took away.	259
'And how her hand, in my hand being lock'd	260
Forced it to tremble with her loyal fear!	261
Which struck her sad, and then it faster rock'd,	262
Until her husband's welfare she did hear;	263
Whereat she smiled with so sweet a cheer,	264
That had Narcissus seen her as she stood,	265
Self-love had never drown'd him in the flood.	266
'Why hunt I then for colour or excuses?	267
All orators are dumb when beauty pleadeth;	268
Poor wretches have remorse in poor abuses;	269
Love thrives not in the heart that shadows dreadeth:	270
Affection is my captain, and he leadeth;	271
And when his gaudy banner is display'd,	272
The coward fights and will not be dismay'd.	273
'Then, childish fear, avaunt! debating, die!	274
Respect and reason, wait on wrinkled age!	275
My heart shall never countermand mine eye:	276
Sad pause and deep regard beseem the sage;	277
My part is youth, and beats these from the stage:	278
Desire my pilot is, beauty my prize;	279
Then who fears sinking where such treasure lies?'	280
As corn o'ergrown by weeds, so heedful fear	281
Is almost choked by unresisted lust.	282
Away he steals with open listening ear,	283
Full of foul hope and full of fond mistrust;	284
Both which, as servitors to the unjust,	285
So cross him with their opposite persuasion,	286
That now he vows a league, and now invasion.	287



## The Rape of Lucrece

Within his thought her heavenly image sits,	288
And in the self-same seat sits Collatine:	289
That eye which looks on her confounds his wits;	290
That eye which him beholds, as more divine,	291
Unto a view so false will not incline;	292
But with a pure appeal seeks to the heart,	293
Which once corrupted takes the worser part;	294
And therein heartens up his servile powers,	295
Who, flatter'd by their leader's jocund show,	296
Stuff up his lust, as minutes fill up hours;	297
And as their captain, so their pride doth grow,	298
Paying more slavish tribute than they owe.	299
By reprobate desire thus madly led,	300
The Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece' bed.	301
The locks between her chamber and his will,	302
Each one by him enforced, retires his ward;	303
But, as they open, they all rate his ill,	304
Which drives the creeping thief to some regard:	305
The threshold grates the door to have him heard;	306
Night-wandering weasels shriek to see him there;	307
They fright him, yet he still pursues his fear.	308
As each unwilling portal yields him way,	309
Through little vents and crannies of the place	310
The wind wars with his torch to make him stay,	311
And blows the smoke of it into his face,	312
Extinguishing his conduct in this case;	313
But his hot heart, which fond desire doth scorch,	314
Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch:	315
And being lighted, by the light he spies	316
Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks:	317
He takes it from the rushes where it lies,	318
And griping it, the needle his finger pricks;	319
As who should say 'This glove to wanton tricks	320
Is not inured; return again in haste;	321
Thou see'st our mistress' ornaments are chaste.'	322
But all these poor forbiddings could not stay him;	323
He in the worst sense construes their denial:	324
The doors, the wind, the glove, that did delay him,	325
He takes for accidental things of trial;	326
Or as those bars which stop the hourly dial,	327
Who with a lingering slay his course doth let,	328
Till every minute pays the hour his debt.	329

## The Rape of Lucrece

'So, so,' quoth he, 'these lets attend the time, 330  
Like little frosts that sometime threat the spring, 331  
To add a more rejoicing to the prime, 332  
And give the sneaped birds more cause to sing. 333  
Pain pays the income of each precious thing; 334  
Huge rocks, high winds, strong pirates, shelves and sands, 335  
The merchant fears, ere rich at home he lands.' 336

Now is he come unto the chamber-door, 337  
That shuts him from the heaven of his thought, 338  
Which with a yielding latch, and with no more, 339  
Hath barr'd him from the blessed thing he sought. 340  
So from himself impiety hath wrought, 341  
That for his prey to pray he doth begin, 342  
As if the heavens should countenance his sin. 343

But in the midst of his unfruitful prayer, 344  
Having solicited th' eternal power 345  
That his foul thoughts might compass his fair fair, 346  
And they would stand auspicious to the hour, 347  
Even there he starts: quoth he, 'I must deflower: 348  
The powers to whom I pray abhor this fact, 349  
How can they then assist me in the act? 350

'Then Love and Fortune be my gods, my guide! 351  
My will is back'd with resolution: 352  
Thoughts are but dreams till their effects be tried; 353  
The blackest sin is clear'd with absolution; 354  
Against love's fire fear's frost hath dissolution. 355  
The eye of heaven is out, and misty night 356  
Covers the shame that follows sweet delight.' 357

This said, his guilty hand pluck'd up the latch, 358  
And with his knee the door he opens wide. 359  
The dove sleeps fast that this night-owl will catch: 360  
Thus treason works ere traitors be espied. 361  
Who sees the lurking serpent steps aside; 362  
But she, sound sleeping, fearing no such thing, 363  
Lies at the mercy of his mortal sting. 364

Into the chamber wickedly he stalks, 365  
And gazeth on her yet unstained bed. 366  
The curtains being close, about he walks, 367  
Rolling his greedy eyeballs in his head: 368  
By their high treason is his heart misled; 369  
Which gives the watch-word to his hand full soon 370  
To draw the cloud that hides the silver moon. 371

## The Rape of Lucrece

Look, as the fair and fiery-pointed sun,	372
Rushing from forth a cloud, bereaves our sight;	373
Even so, the curtain drawn, his eyes begun	374
To wink, being blinded with a greater light:	375
Whether it is that she reflects so bright,	376
That dazzleth them, or else some shame supposed;	377
But blind they are, and keep themselves enclosed.	378
O, had they in that darksome prison died!	379
Then had they seen the period of their ill;	380
Then Collatine again, by Lucrece' side,	381
In his clear bed might have reposed still:	382
But they must ope, this blessed league to kill;	383
And holy-thoughted Lucrece to their sight	384
Must sell her joy, her life, her world's delight.	385
Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under,	386
Cozening the pillow of a lawful kiss;	387
Who, therefore angry, seems to part in sunder,	388
Swelling on either side to want his bliss;	389
Between whose hills her head entombed is:	390
Where, like a virtuous monument, she lies,	391
To be admired of lewd unhallow'd eyes.	392
Without the bed her other fair hand was,	393
On the green coverlet; whose perfect white	394
Show'd like an April daisy on the grass,	395
With pearly sweat, resembling dew of night.	396
Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheathed their light,	397
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,	398
Till they might open to adorn the day.	399
Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her breath;	400
O modest wantons! wanton modesty!	401
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,	402
And death's dim look in life's mortality:	403
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify,	404
As if between them twain there were no strife,	405
But that life lived in death, and death in life.	406
Her breasts, like ivory globes circled with blue,	407
A pair of maiden worlds unconquered,	408
Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,	409
And him by oath they truly honoured.	410
These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred;	411
Who, like a foul usurper, went about	412
From this fair throne to heave the owner out.	413

## The Rape of Lucrece

What could he see but mightily he noted?	414
What did he note but strongly he desired?	415
What he beheld, on that he firmly doted,	416
And in his will his wilful eye he tired.	417
With more than admiration he admired	418
Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,	419
Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin.	420
As the grim lion fawneth o'er his prey,	421
Sharp hunger by the conquest satisfied,	422
So o'er this sleeping soul doth Tarquin stay,	423
His rage of lust by gazing qualified;	424
Slack'd, not suppress'd; for standing by her side,	425
His eye, which late this mutiny restrains,	426
Unto a greater uproar tempts his veins:	427
And they, like straggling slaves for pillage fighting,	428
Obdurate vassals fell exploits effecting,	429
In bloody death and ravishment delighting,	430
Nor children's tears nor mothers' groans respecting,	431
Swell in their pride, the onset still expecting:	432
Anon his beating heart, alarum striking,	433
Gives the hot charge and bids them do their liking.	434
His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye,	435
His eye commends the leading to his hand;	436
His hand, as proud of such a dignity,	437
Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand	438
On her bare breast, the heart of all her land;	439
Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did scale,	440
Left there round turrets destitute and pale.	441
They, mustering to the quiet cabinet	442
Where their dear governess and lady lies,	443
Do tell her she is dreadfully beset,	444
And fright her with confusion of their cries:	445
She, much amazed, breaks ope her lock'd-up eyes,	446
Who, peeping forth this tumult to behold,	447
Are by his flaming torch dimm'd and controll'd.	448
Imagine her as one in dead of night	449
From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking,	450
That thinks she hath beheld some ghastly sprite,	451
Whose grim aspect sets every joint a-shaking;	452
What terror or 'tis! but she, in worsè taking,	453
From sleep disturbed, heedfully doth view	454
The sight which makes supposed terror true.	455

## The Rape of Lucrece

Wrapp'd and confounded in a thousand fears, 456  
Like to a new-kill'd bird she trembling lies; 457  
She dares not look; yet, winking, there appears 458  
Quick-shifting antics, ugly in her eyes: 459  
Such shadows are the weak brain's forgeries; 460  
Who, angry that the eyes fly from their lights, 461  
In darkness daunts them with more dreadful sights. 462

His hand, that yet remains upon her breast,-- 463  
Rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall!-- 464  
May feel her heart-poor citizen!--distress'd, 465  
Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall, 466  
Beating her bulk, that his hand shakes withal. 467  
This moves in him more rage and lesser pity, 468  
To make the breach and enter this sweet city. 469

First, like a trumpet, doth his tongue begin 470  
To sound a parley to his heartless foe; 471  
Who o'er the white sheet peers her whiter chin, 472  
The reason of this rash alarm to know, 473  
Which he by dumb demeanor seeks to show; 474  
But she with vehement prayers urgeth still 475  
Under what colour he commits this ill. 476

Thus he replies: 'The colour in thy face, 477  
That even for anger makes the lily pale, 478  
And the red rose blush at her own disgrace, 479  
Shall plead for me and tell my loving tale: 480  
Under that colour am I come to scale 481  
Thy never-conquer'd fort: the fault is thine, 482  
For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine. 483

'Thus I forestall thee, if thou mean to chide: 484  
Thy beauty hath ensnared thee to this night, 485  
Where thou with patience must my will abide; 486  
My will that marks thee for my earth's delight, 487  
Which I to conquer sought with all my might; 488  
But as reproof and reason beat it dead, 489  
By thy bright beauty was it newly bred. 490

'I see what crosses my attempt will bring; 491  
I know what thorns the growing rose defends; 492  
I think the honey guarded with a sting; 493  
All this beforehand counsel comprehends: 494  
But will is deaf and hears no heedful friends; 495  
Only he hath an eye to gaze on beauty, 496  
And dotes on what he looks, 'gainst law or duty. 497

## The Rape of Lucrece

'I have debated, even in my soul,	498
What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall breed;	499
But nothing can affection's course control,	500
Or stop the headlong fury of his speed.	501
I know repentant tears ensue the deed,	502
Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity;	503
Yet strive I to embrace mine infamy.'	504
This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,	505
Which, like a falcon towering in the skies,	506
Coucheth the fowl below with his wings' shade,	507
Whose crooked beak threatens if he mount he dies:	508
So under his insulting falchion lies	509
Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells	510
With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcon's bells.	511
'Lucrece,' quoth he, 'this night I must enjoy thee:	512
If thou deny, then force must work my way,	513
For in thy bed I purpose to destroy thee:	514
That done, some worthless slave of thine I'll slay,	515
To kill thine honour with thy life's decay;	516
And in thy dead arms do I mean to place him,	517
Swearing I slew him, seeing thee embrace him.	518
'So thy surviving husband shall remain	519
The scornful mark of every open eye;	520
Thy kinsmen hang their heads at this disdain,	521
Thy issue blurr'd with nameless bastardy:	522
And thou, the author of their obloquy,	523
Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rhymes,	524
And sung by children in succeeding times.	525
'But if thou yield, I rest thy secret friend:	526
The fault unknown is as a thought unacted;	527
A little harm done to a great good end	528
For lawful policy remains enacted.	529
The poisonous simple sometimes is compacted	530
In a pure compound; being so applied,	531
His venom in effect is purified.	532
'Then, for thy husband and thy children's sake,	533
Tender my suit: bequeath not to their lot	534
The shame that from them no device can take,	535
The blemish that will never be forgot;	536
Worse than a slavish wipe or birth-hour's blot:	537
For marks descried in men's nativity	538
Are nature's faults, not their own infamy.'	539

## The Rape of Lucrece

Here with a cockatrice' dead-killing eye 540  
He rouseth up himself and makes a pause; 541  
While she, the picture of pure piety, 542  
Like a white hind under the gripe's sharp claws, 543  
Pleads, in a wilderness where are no laws, 544  
To the rough beast that knows no gentle right, 545  
Nor aught obeys but his foul appetite. 546

But when a black-faced cloud the world doth threat, 547  
In his dim mist the aspiring mountains hiding, 548  
From earth's dark womb some gentle gust doth get, 549  
Which blows these pitchy vapours from their bidding, 550  
Hindering their present fall by this dividing; 551  
So his unhallow'd haste her words delays, 552  
And moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays. 553

Yet, foul night-waking cat, he doth but dally, 554  
While in his hold-fast foot the weak mouse panteth: 555  
Her sad behavior feeds his vulture folly, 556  
A swallowing gulf that even in plenty wanteth: 557  
His ear her prayers admits, but his heart granteth 558  
No penetrable entrance to her plaining: 559  
Tears harden lust, though marble wear with raining. 560

Her pity-pleading eyes are sadly fix'd 561  
In the remorseless wrinkles of his face; 562  
Her modest eloquence with sighs is mix'd, 563  
Which to her oratory adds more grace. 564  
She puts the period often from his place; 565  
And midst the sentence so her accent breaks, 566  
That twice she doth begin ere once she speaks. 567

She conjures him by high almighty Jove, 568  
By knighthood, gentry, and sweet friendship's oath, 569  
By her untimely tears, her husband's love, 570  
By holy human law, and common troth, 571  
By heaven and earth, and all the power of both, 572  
That to his borrow'd bed he make retire, 573  
And stoop to honour, not to foul desire. 574

Quoth she, 'Reward not hospitality 575  
With such black payment as thou hast pretended; 576  
Mud not the fountain that gave drink to thee; 577  
Mar not the thing that cannot be amended; 578  
End thy ill aim before thy shoot be ended; 579  
He is no woodman that doth bend his bow 580  
To strike a poor unseasonable doe. 581

## The Rape of Lucrece

'My husband is thy friend; for his sake spare me: 582  
Thyself art mighty; for thine own sake leave me: 583  
Myself a weakling; do not then ensnare me: 584  
Thou look'st not like deceit; do not deceive me. 585  
My sighs, like whirlwinds, labour hence to heave thee: 586  
If ever man were moved with woman moans, 587  
Be moved with my tears, my sighs, my groans: 588

'All which together, like a troubled ocean, 589  
Beat at thy rocky and wreck-threatening heart, 590  
To soften it with their continual motion; 591  
For stones dissolved to water do convert. 592  
O, if no harder than a stone thou art, 593  
Melt at my tears, and be compassionate! 594  
Soft pity enters at an iron gate. 595

'In Tarquin's likeness I did entertain thee: 596  
Hast thou put on his shape to do him shame? 597  
To all the host of heaven I complain me, 598  
Thou wrong'st his honour, wound'st his princely name. 599  
Thou art not what thou seem'st; and if the same, 600  
Thou seem'st not what thou art, a god, a king; 601  
For kings like gods should govern everything. 602

'How will thy shame be seeded in thine age, 603  
When thus thy vices bud before thy spring! 604  
If in thy hope thou darest do such outrage, 605  
What darest thou not when once thou art a king? 606  
O, be remember'd, no outrageous thing 607  
From vassal actors can be wiped away; 608  
Then kings' misdeeds cannot be hid in clay. 609

'This deed will make thee only loved for fear; 610  
But happy monarchs still are fear'd for love: 611  
With foul offenders thou perforce must bear, 612  
When they in thee the like offences prove: 613  
If but for fear of this, thy will remove; 614  
For princes are the glass, the school, the book, 615  
Where subjects' eyes do learn, do read, do look. 616

'And wilt thou be the school where Lust shall learn? 617  
Must he in thee read lectures of such shame? 618  
Wilt thou be glass wherein it shall discern 619  
Authority for sin, warrant for blame, 620  
To privilege dishonour in thy name? 621  
Thou black'st reproach against long-living laud, 622  
And makest fair reputation but a bawd. 623



## The Rape of Lucrece

'Hast thou command? by him that gave it thee, 624  
From a pure heart command thy rebel will: 625  
Draw not thy sword to guard iniquity, 626  
For it was lent thee all that brood to kill. 627  
Thy princely office how canst thou fulfil, 628  
When, pattern'd by thy fault, foul sin may say, 629  
He learn'd to sin, and thou didst teach the way? 630

'Think but how vile a spectacle it were, 631  
To view thy present trespass in another. 632  
Men's faults do seldom to themselves appear; 633  
Their own transgressions partially they smother: 634  
This guilt would seem death-worthy in thy brother. 635  
O, how are they wrapp'd in with infamies 636  
That from their own misdeeds askance their eyes! 637

'To thee, to thee, my heaved-up hands appeal, 638  
Not to seducing lust, thy rash relier: 639  
I sue for exiled majesty's repeal; 640  
Let him return, and flattering thoughts retire: 641  
His true respect will prison false desire, 642  
And wipe the dim mist from thy dotting eyne, 643  
That thou shalt see thy state and pity mine.' 644

'Have done,' quoth he: 'my uncontrolled tide 645  
Turns not, but swells the higher by this let. 646  
Small lights are soon blown out, huge fires abide, 647  
And with the wind in greater fury fret: 648  
The petty streams that pay a daily debt 649  
To their salt sovereign, with their fresh falls' haste 650  
Add to his flow, but alter not his taste.' 651

'Thou art,' quoth she, 'a sea, a sovereign king; 652  
And, lo, there falls into thy boundless flood 653  
Black lust, dishonour, shame, misgoverning, 654  
Who seek to stain the ocean of thy blood. 655  
If all these pretty ills shall change thy good, 656  
Thy sea within a puddle's womb is hearsed, 657  
And not the puddle in thy sea dispersed. 658

'So shall these slaves be king, and thou their slave; 659  
Thou nobly base, they basely dignified; 660  
Thou their fair life, and they thy fouler grave: 661  
Thou loathed in their shame, they in thy pride: 662  
The lesser thing should not the greater hide; 663  
The cedar stoops not to the base shrub's foot, 664  
But low shrubs wither at the cedar's root. 665

## The Rape of Lucrece

'So let thy thoughts, low vassals to thy state'-- 666  
No more,' quoth he; 'by heaven, I will not hear thee: 667  
Yield to my love; if not, enforced hate, 668  
Instead of love's coy touch, shall rudely tear thee; 669  
That done, despitefully I mean to bear thee 670  
Unto the base bed of some rascal groom, 671  
To be thy partner in this shameful doom.' 672

This said, he sets his foot upon the light, 673  
For light and lust are deadly enemies: 674  
Shame folded up in blind concealing night, 675  
When most unseen, then most doth tyrannize. 676  
The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries; 677  
Till with her own white fleece her voice controll'd 678  
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold: 679

For with the nightly linen that she wears 680  
He pens her piteous clamours in her head; 681  
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears 682  
That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed. 683  
O, that prone lust should stain so pure a bed! 684  
The spots whereof could weeping purify, 685  
Her tears should drop on them perpetually. 686

But she hath lost a dearer thing than life, 687  
And he hath won what he would lose again: 688  
This forced league doth force a further strife; 689  
This momentary joy breeds months of pain; 690  
This hot desire converts to cold disdain: 691  
Pure Chastity is rifled of her store, 692  
And Lust, the thief, far poorer than before. 693

Look, as the full-fed hound or gorged hawk, 694  
Unapt for tender smell or speedy flight, 695  
Make slow pursuit, or altogether balk 696  
The prey wherein by nature they delight; 697  
So surfeit-taking Tarquin fares this night: 698  
His taste delicious, in digestion souring, 699  
Devours his will, that lived by foul devouring. 700

O, deeper sin than bottomless conceit 701  
Can comprehend in still imagination! 702  
Drunken Desire must vomit his receipt, 703  
Ere he can see his own abomination. 704  
While Lust is in his pride, no exclamation 705  
Can curb his heat or rein his rash desire, 706  
Till like a jade Self-will himself doth tire. 707

## The Rape of Lucrece

And then with lank and lean discolour'd cheek, 708  
With heavy eye, knit brow, and strengthless pace, 709  
Feeble Desire, all recreant, poor, and meek, 710  
Like to a bankrupt beggar wails his case: 711  
The flesh being proud, Desire doth fight with Grace, 712  
For there it revels; and when that decays, 713  
The guilty rebel for remission prays. 714

So fares it with this faultful lord of Rome, 715  
Who this accomplishment so hotly chased; 716  
For now against himself he sounds this doom, 717  
That through the length of times he stands disgraced: 718  
Besides, his soul's fair temple is defaced; 719  
To whose weak ruins muster troops of cares, 720  
To ask the spotted princess how she fares. 721

She says, her subjects with foul insurrection 722  
Have batter'd down her consecrated wall, 723  
And by their mortal fault brought in subjection 724  
Her immortality, and made her thrall 725  
To living death and pain perpetual: 726  
Which in her prescience she controlled still, 727  
But her foresight could not forestall their will. 728

Even in this thought through the dark night he stealeth, 729  
A captive victor that hath lost in gain; 730  
Bearing away the wound that nothing healeth, 731  
The scar that will, despite of cure, remain; 732  
Leaving his spoil perplex'd in greater pain. 733  
She bears the load of lust he left behind, 734  
And he the burden of a guilty mind. 735

He like a thievish dog creeps sadly thence; 736  
She like a wearied lamb lies panting there; 737  
He scowls and hates himself for his offence; 738  
She, desperate, with her nails her flesh doth tear; 739  
He faintly flies, sneaking with guilty fear; 740  
She stays, exclaiming on the direful night; 741  
He runs, and chides his vanish'd, loathed delight. 742

He thence departs a heavy convertite; 743  
She there remains a hopeless castaway; 744  
He in his speed looks for the morning light; 745  
She prays she never may behold the day, 746  
'For day,' quoth she, 'nights scapes doth open lay, 747  
And my true eyes have never practised how 748  
To cloak offences with a cunning brow. 749

## The Rape of Lucrece

'They think not but that every eye can see 750  
The same disgrace which they themselves behold; 751  
And therefore would they still in darkness be, 752  
To have their unseen sin remain untold; 753  
For they their guilt with weeping will unfold, 754  
And grave, like water that doth eat in steel, 755  
Upon my cheeks what helpless shame I feel.' 756

Here she exclaims against repose and rest, 757  
And bids her eyes hereafter still be blind. 758  
She wakes her heart by beating on her breast, 759  
And bids it leap from thence, where it may find 760  
Some purer chest to close so pure a mind. 761  
Frantic with grief thus breathes she forth her spite 762  
Against the unseen secrecy of night: 763

'O comfort-killing Night, image of hell! 764  
Dim register and notary of shame! 765  
Black stage for tragedies and murders fell! 766  
Vast sin-concealing chaos! nurse of blame! 767  
Blind muffled bawd! dark harbour for defame! 768  
Grim cave of death! whispering conspirator 769  
With close-tongued treason and the ravisher! 770

'O hateful, vaporious, and foggy Night! 771  
Since thou art guilty of my cureless crime, 772  
Muster thy mists to meet the eastern light, 773  
Make war against proportion'd course of time; 774  
Or if thou wilt permit the sun to climb 775  
His wonted height, yet ere he go to bed, 776  
Knit poisonous clouds about his golden head. 777

'With rotten damps ravish the morning air; 778  
Let their exhaled unwholesome breaths make sick 779  
The life of purity, the supreme fair, 780  
Ere he arrive his weary noon-tide prick; 781  
And let thy misty vapours march so thick, 782  
That in their smoky ranks his smother'd light 783  
May set at noon and make perpetual night. 784

'Were Tarquin Night, as he is but Night's child, 785  
The silver-shining queen he would distain; 786  
Her twinkling handmaids too, by him defiled, 787  
Through Night's black bosom should not peep again: 788  
So should I have co-partners in my pain; 789  
And fellowship in woe doth woe assuage, 790  
As palmers' chat makes short their pilgrimage. 791

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Where now I have no one to blush with me,	792
To cross their arms and hang their heads with mine,	793
To mask their brows and hide their infamy;	794
But I alone alone must sit and pine,	795
Seasoning the earth with showers of silver brine,	796
Mingling my talk with tears, my grief with groans,	797
Poor wasting monuments of lasting moans.	798
'O Night, thou furnace of foul-reeking smoke,	799
Let not the jealous Day behold that face	800
Which underneath thy black all-hiding cloak	801
Immodestly lies martyr'd with disgrace!	802
Keep still possession of thy gloomy place,	803
That all the faults which in thy reign are made	804
May likewise be sepulchred in thy shade!	805
'Make me not object to the tell-tale Day!	806
The light will show, character'd in my brow,	807
The story of sweet chastity's decay,	808
The impious breach of holy wedlock vow:	809
Yea the illiterate, that know not how	810
To cipher what is writ in learned books,	811
Will quote my loathsome trespass in my looks.	812
'The nurse, to still her child, will tell my story,	813
And fright her crying babe with Tarquin's name;	814
The orator, to deck his oratory,	815
Will couple my reproach to Tarquin's shame;	816
Feast-finding minstrels, tuning my defame,	817
Will tie the hearers to attend each line,	818
How Tarquin wronged me, I Collatine.	819
'Let my good name, that senseless reputation,	820
For Collatine's dear love be kept unspotted:	821
If that be made a theme for disputation,	822
The branches of another root are rotted,	823
And undeserved reproach to him allotted	824
That is as clear from this attain of mine	825
As I, ere this, was pure to Collatine.	826
'O unseen shame! invisible disgrace!	827
O unfelt sore! crest-wounding, private scar!	828
Reproach is stamp'd in Collatinus' face,	829
And Tarquin's eye may read the mot afar,	830
How he in peace is wounded, not in war.	831
Alas, how many bear such shameful blows,	832
Which not themselves, but he that gives them knows!	833

## The Rape of Lucrece

'If, Collatine, thine honour lay in me, 834  
From me by strong assault it is bereft. 835  
My honour lost, and I, a drone-like bee, 836  
Have no perfection of my summer left, 837  
But robb'd and ransack'd by injurious theft: 838  
In thy weak hive a wandering wasp hath crept, 839  
And suck'd the honey which thy chaste bee kept. 840

'Yet am I guilty of thy honour's wrack; 841  
Yet for thy honour did I entertain him; 842  
Coming from thee, I could not put him back, 843  
For it had been dishonour to disdain him: 844  
Besides, of weariness he did complain him, 845  
And talk'd of virtue: O unlook'd-for evil, 846  
When virtue is profaned in such a devil! 847

'Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud? 848  
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests? 849  
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud? 850  
Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts? 851  
Or kings be breakers of their own behests? 852  
But no perfection is so absolute, 853  
That some impurity doth not pollute. 854

'The aged man that coffers-up his gold 855  
Is plagued with cramps and gouts and painful fits; 856  
And scarce hath eyes his treasure to behold, 857  
But like still-pining Tantalus he sits, 858  
And useless barns the harvest of his wits; 859  
Having no other pleasure of his gain 860  
But torment that it cannot cure his pain. 861

'So then he hath it when he cannot use it, 862  
And leaves it to be master'd by his young; 863  
Who in their pride do presently abuse it: 864  
Their father was too weak, and they too strong, 865  
To hold their cursed-blessed fortune long. 866  
The sweets we wish for turn to loathed sours 867  
Even in the moment that we call them ours. 868

'Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring; 869  
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers; 870  
The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing; 871  
What virtue breeds iniquity devours: 872  
We have no good that we can say is ours, 873  
But ill-annexed Opportunity 874  
Or kills his life or else his quality. 875

## The Rape of Lucrece

'O Opportunity, thy guilt is great!	876
'Tis thou that executest the traitor's treason:	877
Thou set'st the wolf where he the lamb may get;	878
Whoever plots the sin, thou 'point'st the season;	879
'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason;	880
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,	881
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.	882
'Thou makest the vestal violate her oath;	883
Thou blow'st the fire when temperance is thaw'd;	884
Thou smother'st honesty, thou murder'st troth;	885
Thou foul abettor! thou notorious bawd!	886
Thou plantest scandal and displacest laud:	887
Thou ravisher, thou traitor, thou false thief,	888
Thy honey turns to gall, thy joy to grief!	889
'Thy secret pleasure turns to open shame,	890
Thy private feasting to a public fast,	891
Thy smoothing titles to a ragged name,	892
Thy sugar'd tongue to bitter wormwood taste:	893
Thy violent vanities can never last.	894
How comes it then, vile Opportunity,	895
Being so bad, such numbers seek for thee?	896
'When wilt thou be the humble suppliant's friend,	897
And bring him where his suit may be obtain'd?	898
When wilt thou sort an hour great strifes to end?	899
Or free that soul which wretchedness hath chain'd?	900
Give physic to the sick, ease to the pain'd?	901
The poor, lame, blind, halt, creep, cry out for thee;	902
But they ne'er meet with Opportunity.	903
'The patient dies while the physician sleeps;	904
The orphan pines while the oppressor feeds;	905
Justice is feasting while the widow weeps;	906
Advice is sporting while infection breeds:	907
Thou grant'st no time for charitable deeds:	908
Wrath, envy, treason, rape, and murder's rages,	909
Thy heinous hours wait on them as their pages.	910
'When Truth and Virtue have to do with thee,	911
A thousand crosses keep them from thy aid:	912
They buy thy help; but Sin ne'er gives a fee,	913
He gratis comes; and thou art well appaid	914
As well to hear as grant what he hath said.	915
My Collatine would else have come to me	916
When Tarquin did, but he was stay'd by thee.	917

## The Rape of Lucrece

Guilty thou art of murder and of theft,	918
Guilty of perjury and subornation,	919
Guilty of treason, forgery, and shift,	920
Guilty of incest, that abomination;	921
An accessory by thine inclination	922
To all sins past, and all that are to come,	923
From the creation to the general doom.	924
'Mis-shapen Time, copesmate of ugly Night,	925
Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care,	926
Eater of youth, false slave to false delight,	927
Base watch of woes, sin's pack-horse, virtue's snare;	928
Thou nursest all and murder'st all that are:	929
O, hear me then, injurious, shifting Time!	930
Be guilty of my death, since of my crime.	931
'Why hath thy servant, Opportunity,	932
Betray'd the hours thou gavest me to repose,	933
Cancell'd my fortunes, and enchained me	934
To endless date of never-ending woes?	935
Time's office is to fine the hate of foes;	936
To eat up errors by opinion bred,	937
Not spend the dowry of a lawful bed.	938
'Time's glory is to calm contending kings,	939
To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light,	940
To stamp the seal of time in aged things,	941
To wake the morn and sentinel the night,	942
To wrong the wronger till he render right,	943
To ruinate proud buildings with thy hours,	944
And smear with dust their glittering golden towers;	945
'To fill with worm-holes stately monuments,	946
To feed oblivion with decay of things,	947
To blot old books and alter their contents,	948
To pluck the quills from ancient ravens' wings,	949
To dry the old oak's sap and cherish springs,	950
To spoil antiquities of hammer'd steel,	951
And turn the giddy round of Fortune's wheel;	952
'To show the beldam daughters of her daughter,	953
To make the child a man, the man a child,	954
To slay the tiger that doth live by slaughter,	955
To tame the unicorn and lion wild,	956
To mock the subtle in themselves beguiled,	957
To cheer the ploughman with increaseful crops,	958
And waste huge stones with little water drops.	959



## The Rape of Lucrece

'Why work'st thou mischief in thy pilgrimage,	960
Unless thou couldst return to make amends?	961
One poor retiring minute in an age	962
Would purchase thee a thousand thousand friends,	963
Lending him wit that to bad debtors lends:	964
O, this dread night, wouldst thou one hour come back,	965
I could prevent this storm and shun thy wrack!	966
'Thou ceaseless lackey to eternity,	967
With some mischance cross Tarquin in his flight:	968
Devise extremes beyond extremity,	969
To make him curse this cursed crimeful night:	970
Let ghastly shadows his lewd eyes affright;	971
And the dire thought of his committed evil	972
Shape every bush a hideous shapeless devil.	973
'Disturb his hours of rest with restless trances,	974
Afflict him in his bed with bedrid groans;	975
Let there bechance him pitiful mischances,	976
To make him moan; but pity not his moans:	977
Stone him with harden'd hearts harder than stones;	978
And let mild women to him lose their mildness,	979
Wilder to him than tigers in their wildness.	980
'Let him have time to tear his curled hair,	981
Let him have time against himself to rave,	982
Let him have time of Time's help to despair,	983
Let him have time to live a loathed slave,	984
Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave,	985
And time to see one that by alms doth live	986
Disdain to him disdained scraps to give.	987
'Let him have time to see his friends his foes,	988
And merry fools to mock at him resort;	989
Let him have time to mark how slow time goes	990
In time of sorrow, and how swift and short	991
His time of folly and his time of sport;	992
And ever let his unrecalling crime	993
Have time to wail th' abusing of his time.	994
'O Time, thou tutor both to good and bad,	995
Teach me to curse him that thou taught'st this ill!	996
At his own shadow let the thief run mad,	997
Himself himself seek every hour to kill!	998
Such wretched hands such wretched blood should spill;	999
For who so base would such an office have	1000
As slanderous death's-man to so base a slave?	1001

## The Rape of Lucrece

'The baser is he, coming from a king, 1002  
To shame his hope with deeds degenerate: 1003  
The mightier man, the mightier is the thing 1004  
That makes him honour'd, or begets him hate; 1005  
For greatest scandal waits on greatest state. 1006  
The moon being clouded presently is miss'd, 1007  
But little stars may hide them when they list. 1008

'The crow may bathe his coal-black wings in mire, 1009  
And unperceived fly with the filth away; 1010  
But if the like the snow-white swan desire, 1011  
The stain upon his silver down will stay. 1012  
Poor grooms are sightless night, kings glorious day: 1013  
Gnats are unnoted wheresoe'er they fly, 1014  
But eagles gazed upon with every eye. 1015

'Out, idle words, servants to shallow fools! 1016  
Unprofitable sounds, weak arbitrators! 1017  
Busy yourselves in skill-contending schools; 1018  
Debate where leisure serves with dull debaters; 1019  
To trembling clients be you mediators: 1020  
For me, I force not argument a straw, 1021  
Since that my case is past the help of law. 1022

'In vain I rail at Opportunity, 1023  
At Time, at Tarquin, and uncheerful Night; 1024  
In vain I cavil with mine infamy, 1025  
In vain I spurn at my confirm'd despite: 1026  
This helpless smoke of words doth me no right. 1027  
The remedy indeed to do me good 1028  
Is to let forth my foul-defiled blood. 1029

'Poor hand, why quiver'st thou at this decree? 1030  
Honour thyself to rid me of this shame: 1031  
For if I die, my honour lives in thee; 1032  
But if I live, thou livest in my defame: 1033  
Since thou couldst not defend thy loyal dame, 1034  
And wast afraid to scratch her wicked foe, 1035  
Kill both thyself and her for yielding so.' 1036

This said, from her be-tumbled couch she starteth, 1037  
To find some desperate instrument of death: 1038  
But this no slaughterhouse no tool imparteth 1039  
To make more vent for passage of her breath; 1040  
Which, thronging through her lips, so vanisheth 1041  
As smoke from AEtna, that in air consumes, 1042  
Or that which from discharged cannon fumes. 1043

## The Rape of Lucrece

'In vain,' quoth she, 'I live, and seek in vain 1044  
Some happy mean to end a hapless life. 1045  
I fear'd by Tarquin's falchion to be slain, 1046  
Yet for the self-same purpose seek a knife: 1047  
But when I fear'd I was a loyal wife: 1048  
So am I now: O no, that cannot be; 1049  
Of that true type hath Tarquin rifled me. 1050

'O, that is gone for which I sought to live, 1051  
And therefore now I need not fear to die. 1052  
To clear this spot by death, at least I give 1053  
A badge of fame to slander's livery; 1054  
A dying life to living infamy: 1055  
Poor helpless help, the treasure stol'n away, 1056  
To burn the guiltless casket where it lay! 1057

'Well, well, dear Collatine, thou shalt not know 1058  
The stained taste of violated troth; 1059  
I will not wrong thy true affection so, 1060  
To flatter thee with an infringed oath; 1061  
This bastard graff shall never come to growth: 1062  
He shall not boast who did thy stock pollute 1063  
That thou art doting father of his fruit. 1064

'Nor shall he smile at thee in secret thought, 1065  
Nor laugh with his companions at thy state: 1066  
But thou shalt know thy interest was not bought 1067  
Basely with gold, but stol'n from forth thy gate. 1068  
For me, I am the mistress of my fate, 1069  
And with my trespass never will dispense, 1070  
Till life to death acquit my forced offence. 1071

'I will not poison thee with my attain, 1072  
Nor fold my fault in cleanly-coin'd excuses; 1073  
My sable ground of sin I will not paint, 1074  
To hide the truth of this false night's abuses: 1075  
My tongue shall utter all; mine eyes, like sluices, 1076  
As from a mountain-spring that feeds a dale, 1077  
Shall gush pure streams to purge my impure tale.' 1078

By this, lamenting Philomel had ended 1079  
The well-tuned warble of her nightly sorrow, 1080  
And solemn night with slow sad gait descended 1081  
To ugly hell; when, lo, the blushing morrow 1082  
Lends light to all fair eyes that light will borrow: 1083  
But cloudy Lucrece shames herself to see, 1084  
And therefore still in night would cloister'd be. 1085

## The Rape of Lucrece

Revealing day through every cranny spies, 1086  
And seems to point her out where she sits weeping; 1087  
To whom she sobbing speaks: 'O eye of eyes, 1088  
Why pry'st thou through my window? leave thy peeping: 1089  
Mock with thy tickling beams eyes that are sleeping: 1090  
Brand not my forehead with thy piercing light, 1091  
For day hath nought to do what's done by night.' 1092

Thus cavils she with every thing she sees: 1093  
True grief is fond and testy as a child, 1094  
Who wayward once, his mood with nought agrees: 1095  
Old woes, not infant sorrows, bear them mild; 1096  
Continuance tames the one; the other wild, 1097  
Like an unpractised swimmer plunging still, 1098  
With too much labour drowns for want of skill. 1099

So she, deep-drenched in a sea of care, 1100  
Holds disputation with each thing she views, 1101  
And to herself all sorrow doth compare; 1102  
No object but her passion's strength renews; 1103  
And as one shifts, another straight ensues: 1104  
Sometime her grief is dumb and hath no words; 1105  
Sometime 'tis mad and too much talk affords. 1106

The little birds that tune their morning's joy 1107  
Make her moans mad with their sweet melody: 1108  
For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy; 1109  
Sad souls are slain in merry company; 1110  
Grief best is pleased with grief's society: 1111  
True sorrow then is feelingly sufficed 1112  
When with like semblance it is sympathized. 1113

'Tis double death to drown in ken of shore; 1114  
He ten times pines that pines beholding food; 1115  
To see the salve doth make the wound ache more; 1116  
Great grief grieves most at that would do it good; 1117  
Deep woes roll forward like a gentle flood, 1118  
Who being stopp'd, the bounding banks o'erflows; 1119  
Grief dallied with nor law nor limit knows. 1120

'You mocking-birds,' quoth she, 'your tunes entomb 1121  
Within your hollow-swelling feather'd breasts, 1122  
And in my hearing be you mute and dumb: 1123  
My restless discord loves no stops nor rests; 1124  
A woeful hostess brooks not merry guests: 1125  
Relish your nimble notes to pleasing ears; 1126  
Distress likes dumps when time is kept with tears. 1127

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Come, Philomel, that sing'st of ravishment, 1128  
Make thy sad grove in my dishevell'd hair: 1129  
As the dank earth weeps at thy languishment, 1130  
So I at each sad strain will strain a tear, 1131  
And with deep groans the diapason bear; 1132  
For burden-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still, 1133  
While thou on Tereus descant'st better skill. 1134

'And whiles against a thorn thou bear'st thy part, 1135  
To keep thy sharp woes waking, wretched I, 1136  
To imitate thee well, against my heart 1137  
Will fix a sharp knife to affright mine eye; 1138  
Who, if it wink, shall thereon fall and die. 1139  
These means, as frets upon an instrument, 1140  
Shall tune our heart-strings to true languishment. 1141

'And for, poor bird, thou sing'st not in the day, 1142  
As shaming any eye should thee behold, 1143  
Some dark deep desert, seated from the way, 1144  
That knows not parching heat nor freezing cold, 1145  
Will we find out; and there we will unfold 1146  
To creatures stern sad tunes, to change their kinds: 1147  
Since men prove beasts, let beasts bear gentle minds.' 1148

As the poor frightened deer, that stands at gaze, 1149  
Wildly determining which way to fly, 1150  
Or one encompass'd with a winding maze, 1151  
That cannot tread the way out readily; 1152  
So with herself is she in mutiny, 1153  
To live or die which of the twain were better, 1154  
When life is shamed, and death reproach's debtor. 1155

'To kill myself,' quoth she, 'alack, what were it, 1156  
But with my body my poor soul's pollution? 1157  
They that lose half with greater patience bear it 1158  
Than they whose whole is swallow'd in confusion. 1159  
That mother tries a merciless conclusion 1160  
Who, having two sweet babes, when death takes one, 1161  
Will slay the other and be nurse to none. 1162

'My body or my soul, which was the dearer, 1163  
When the one pure, the other made divine? 1164  
Whose love of either to myself was nearer, 1165  
When both were kept for heaven and Collatine? 1166  
Ay me! the bark peel'd from the lofty pine, 1167  
His leaves will wither and his sap decay; 1168  
So must my soul, her bark being peel'd away. 1169

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Her house is sack'd, her quiet interrupted, 1170  
Her mansion batter'd by the enemy; 1171  
Her sacred temple spotted, spoil'd, corrupted, 1172  
Grossly engirt with daring infamy: 1173  
Then let it not be call'd impiety, 1174  
If in this blemish'd fort I make some hole 1175  
Through which I may convey this troubled soul. 1176

'Yet die I will not till my Collatine 1177  
Have heard the cause of my untimely death; 1178  
That he may vow, in that sad hour of mine, 1179  
Revenge on him that made me stop my breath. 1180  
My stained blood to Tarquin I'll bequeath, 1181  
Which by him tainted shall for him be spent, 1182  
And as his due writ in my testament. 1183

'My honour I'll bequeath unto the knife 1184  
That wounds my body so dishonoured. 1185  
'Tis honour to deprive dishonour'd life; 1186  
The one will live, the other being dead: 1187  
So of shame's ashes shall my fame be bred; 1188  
For in my death I murder shameful scorn: 1189  
My shame so dead, mine honour is new-born. 1190

'Dear lord of that dear jewel I have lost, 1191  
What legacy shall I bequeath to thee? 1192  
My resolution, love, shall be thy boast, 1193  
By whose example thou revenged mayest be. 1194  
How Tarquin must be used, read it in me: 1195  
Myself, thy friend, will kill myself, thy foe, 1196  
And for my sake serve thou false Tarquin so. 1197

'This brief abridgement of my will I make: 1198  
My soul and body to the skies and ground; 1199  
My resolution, husband, do thou take; 1200  
Mine honour be the knife's that makes my wound; 1201  
My shame be his that did my fame confound; 1202  
And all my fame that lives disbursed be 1203  
To those that live, and think no shame of me. 1204

'Thou, Collatine, shalt oversee this will; 1205  
How was I overseen that thou shalt see it! 1206  
My blood shall wash the slander of mine ill; 1207  
My life's foul deed, my life's fair end shall free it. 1208  
Faint not, faint heart, but stoutly say 'So be it!' 1209  
Yield to my hand; my hand shall conquer thee: 1210  
Thou dead, both die, and both shall victors be.' 1211

## The Rape of Lucrece

This Plot of death when sadly she had laid, 1212  
And wiped the brinish pearl from her bright eyes, 1213  
With untuned tongue she hoarsely calls her maid, 1214  
Whose swift obedience to her mistress hies; 1215  
For fleet-wing'd duty with thought's feathers flies. 1216  
Poor Lucrece' cheeks unto her maid seem so 1217  
As winter meads when sun doth melt their snow. 1218

Her mistress she doth give demure good-morrow, 1219  
With soft-slow tongue, true mark of modesty, 1220  
And sorts a sad look to her lady's sorrow, 1221  
For why her face wore sorrow's livery; 1222  
But durst not ask of her audaciously 1223  
Why her two suns were cloud-eclipsed so, 1224  
Nor why her fair cheeks over-wash'd with woe. 1225

But as the earth doth weep, the sun being set, 1226  
Each flower moisten'd like a melting eye; 1227  
Even so the maid with swelling drops gan wet 1228  
Her circled eyne, enforced by sympathy 1229  
Of those fair suns set in her mistress' sky, 1230  
Who in a salt-waved ocean quench their light, 1231  
Which makes the maid weep like the dewy night. 1232

A pretty while these pretty creatures stand, 1233  
Like ivory conduits coral cisterns filling: 1234  
One justly weeps; the other takes in hand 1235  
No cause, but company, of her drops spilling: 1236  
Their gentle sex to weep are often willing; 1237  
Grieving themselves to guess at others' smarts, 1238  
And then they drown their eyes or break their hearts. 1239

For men have marble, women waxen, minds, 1240  
And therefore are they form'd as marble will; 1241  
The weak oppress'd, the impression of strange kinds 1242  
Is form'd in them by force, by fraud, or skill: 1243  
Then call them not the authors of their ill, 1244  
No more than wax shall be accounted evil 1245  
Wherein is stamp'd the semblance of a devil. 1246

Their smoothness, like a goodly champaign plain, 1247  
Lays open all the little worms that creep; 1248  
In men, as in a rough-grown grove, remain 1249  
Cave-keeping evils that obscurely sleep: 1250  
Through crystal walls each little mote will peep: 1251  
Though men can cover crimes with bold stern looks, 1252  
Poor women's faces are their own fault's books. 1253

## The Rape of Lucrece

No man inveigh against the wither'd flower, 1254  
But chide rough winter that the flower hath kill'd: 1255  
Not that devour'd, but that which doth devour, 1256  
Is worthy blame. O, let it not be hild 1257  
Poor women's faults, that they are so fulfill'd 1258  
With men's abuses: those proud lords, to blame, 1259  
Make weak-made women tenants to their shame. 1260

The precedent whereof in Lucrece view, 1261  
Assail'd by night with circumstances strong 1262  
Of present death, and shame that might ensue 1263  
By that her death, to do her husband wrong: 1264  
Such danger to resistance did belong, 1265  
That dying fear through all her body spread; 1266  
And who cannot abuse a body dead? 1267

By this, mild patience bid fair Lucrece speak 1268  
To the poor counterfeit of her complaining: 1269  
'My girl,' quoth she, 'on what occasion break 1270  
Those tears from thee, that down thy cheeks are 1271  
raining? 1272  
If thou dost weep for grief of my sustaining, 1273  
Know, gentle wench, it small avails my mood: 1274  
If tears could help, mine own would do me good. 1275

'But tell me, girl, when went'--and there she stay'd 1276  
Till after a deep groan--'Tarquin from hence?' 1277  
'Madam, ere I was up,' replied the maid, 1278  
'The more to blame my sluggard negligence: 1279  
Yet with the fault I thus far can dispense; 1280  
Myself was stirring ere the break of day, 1281  
And, ere I rose, was Tarquin gone away. 1282

'But, lady, if your maid may be so bold, 1283  
She would request to know your heaviness.' 1284  
'O, peace!' quoth Lucrece: 'if it should be told, 1285  
The repetition cannot make it less; 1286  
For more it is than I can well express: 1287  
And that deep torture may be call'd a hell 1288  
When more is felt than one hath power to tell. 1289

'Go, get me hither paper, ink, and pen: 1290  
Yet save that labour, for I have them here. 1291  
What should I say? One of my husband's men 1292  
Bid thou be ready, by and by, to bear 1293  
A letter to my lord, my love, my dear; 1294  
Bid him with speed prepare to carry it; 1295  
The cause craves haste, and it will soon be writ.' 1296



## The Rape of Lucrece

Her maid is gone, and she prepares to write, 1297  
First hovering o'er the paper with her quill: 1298  
Conceit and grief an eager combat fight; 1299  
What wit sets down is blotted straight with will; 1300  
This is too curious-good, this blunt and ill: 1301  
Much like a press of people at a door, 1302  
Throng her inventions, which shall go before. 1303

At last she thus begins: 'Thou worthy lord 1304  
Of that unworthy wife that greeteth thee, 1305  
Health to thy person! next vouchsafe t' afford-- 1306  
If ever, love, thy Lucrece thou wilt see-- 1307  
Some present speed to come and visit me. 1308  
So, I commend me from our house in grief: 1309  
My woes are tedious, though my words are brief.' 1310

Here folds she up the tenor of her woe, 1311  
Her certain sorrow writ uncertainly. 1312  
By this short schedule Collatine may know 1313  
Her grief, but not her grief's true quality: 1314  
She dares not thereof make discovery, 1315  
Lest he should hold it her own gross abuse, 1316  
Ere she with blood had stain'd her stain'd excuse. 1317

Besides, the life and feeling of her passion 1318  
She hoards, to spend when he is by to hear her: 1319  
When sighs and groans and tears may grace the fashion 1320  
Of her disgrace, the better so to clear her 1321  
From that suspicion which the world might bear her. 1322  
To shun this blot, she would not blot the letter 1323  
With words, till action might become them better. 1324

To see sad sights moves more than hear them told; 1325  
For then eye interprets to the ear 1326  
The heavy motion that it doth behold, 1327  
When every part a part of woe doth bear. 1328  
'Tis but a part of sorrow that we hear: 1329  
Deep sounds make lesser noise than shallow fords, 1330  
And sorrow ebbs, being blown with wind of words. 1331

Her letter now is seal'd, and on it writ 1332  
'At Ardea to my lord with more than haste.' 1333  
The post attends, and she delivers it, 1334  
Charging the sour-faced groom to hie as fast 1335  
As lagging fowls before the northern blast: 1336  
Speed more than speed but dull and slow she deems: 1337  
Extremity still urgeth such extremes. 1338

## The Rape of Lucrece

The homely villain court'sies to her low; 1339  
And, blushing on her, with a steadfast eye 1340  
Receives the scroll without or yea or no, 1341  
And forth with bashful innocence doth hie. 1342  
But they whose guilt within their bosoms lie 1343  
Imagine every eye beholds their blame; 1344  
For Lucrece thought he blush'd to her see shame: 1345

When, silly groom! God wot, it was defect 1346  
Of spirit, Life, and bold audacity. 1347  
Such harmless creatures have a true respect 1348  
To talk in deeds, while others saucily 1349  
Promise more speed, but do it leisurely: 1350  
Even so this pattern of the worn-out age 1351  
Pawn'd honest looks, but laid no words to gage. 1352

His kindled duty kindled her mistrust, 1353  
That two red fires in both their faces blazed; 1354  
She thought he blush'd, as knowing Tarquin's lust, 1355  
And, blushing with him, wistly on him gazed; 1356  
Her earnest eye did make him more amazed: 1357  
The more she saw the blood his cheeks replenish, 1358  
The more she thought he spied in her some blemish. 1359

But long she thinks till he return again, 1360  
And yet the duteous vassal scarce is gone. 1361  
The weary time she cannot entertain, 1362  
For now 'tis stale to sigh, to weep, and groan: 1363  
So woe hath wearied woe, moan tired moan, 1364  
That she her plaints a little while doth stay, 1365  
Pausing for means to mourn some newer way. 1366

At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece 1367  
Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy: 1368  
Before the which is drawn the power of Greece. 1369  
For Helen's rape the city to destroy, 1370  
Threatening cloud-kissing Ilion with annoy; 1371  
Which the conceited painter drew so proud, 1372  
As heaven, it seem'd, to kiss the turrets bow'd. 1373

A thousand lamentable objects there, 1374  
In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life: 1375  
Many a dry drop seem'd a weeping tear, 1376  
Shed for the slaughter'd husband by the wife: 1377  
The red blood reek'd, to show the painter's strife; 1378  
And dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashy lights, 1379  
Like dying coals burnt out in tedious nights. 1380

## The Rape of Lucrece

There might you see the labouring pioner 1381  
Begrimed with sweat, and smeared all with dust; 1382  
And from the towers of Troy there would appear 1383  
The very eyes of men through loop-holes thrust, 1384  
Gazing upon the Greeks with little lust: 1385  
Such sweet observance in this work was had, 1386  
That one might see those far-off eyes look sad. 1387

In great commanders grace and majesty 1388  
You might behold, triumphing in their faces; 1389  
In youth, quick bearing and dexterity; 1390  
Pale cowards, marching on with trembling paces; 1391  
Which heartless peasants did so well resemble, 1392  
That one would swear he saw them quake and tremble. 1393

In Ajax and Ulysses, O, what art 1394  
Of physiognomy might one behold! 1395  
The face of either cipher'd either's heart; 1396  
Their face their manners most expressly told: 1397  
In Ajax' eyes blunt rage and rigor roll'd; 1398  
But the mild glance that sly Ulysses lent 1399  
Show'd deep regard and smiling government. 1400

There pleading might you see grave Nestor stand, 1401  
As 'twere encouraging the Greeks to fight; 1402  
Making such sober action with his hand, 1403  
That it beguiled attention, charm'd the sight: 1404  
In speech, it seem'd, his beard, all silver white, 1405  
Wagg'd up and down, and from his lips did fly 1406  
Thin winding breath, which purl'd up to the sky. 1407

About him were a press of gaping faces, 1408  
Which seem'd to swallow up his sound advice; 1409  
All jointly listening, but with several graces, 1410  
As if some mermaid did their ears entice, 1411  
Some high, some low, the painter was so nice; 1412  
The scalps of many, almost hid behind, 1413  
To jump up higher seem'd, to mock the mind. 1414

Here one man's hand lean'd on another's head, 1415  
His nose being shadow'd by his neighbour's ear; 1416  
Here one being throng'd bears back, all boll'n and 1417  
red; 1418  
Another smother'd seems to pelt and swear; 1419  
And in their rage such signs of rage they bear, 1420  
As, but for loss of Nestor's golden words, 1421  
It seem'd they would debate with angry swords. 1422

## The Rape of Lucrece

For much imaginary work was there; 1423  
Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind, 1424  
That for Achilles' image stood his spear, 1425  
Griped in an armed hand; himself, behind, 1426  
Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind: 1427  
A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head, 1428  
Stood for the whole to be imagined. 1429

And from the walls of strong-besieged Troy 1430  
When their brave hope, bold Hector, march'd to 1431  
field, 1432  
Stood many Trojan mothers, sharing joy 1433  
To see their youthful sons bright weapons wield; 1434  
And to their hope they such odd action yield, 1435  
That through their light joy seemed to appear, 1436  
Like bright things stain'd, a kind of heavy fear. 1437

And from the strand of Dardan, where they fought, 1438  
To Simois' reedy banks the red blood ran, 1439  
Whose waves to imitate the battle sought 1440  
With swelling ridges; and their ranks began 1441  
To break upon the galled shore, and than 1442  
Retire again, till, meeting greater ranks, 1443  
They join and shoot their foam at Simois' banks. 1444

To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come, 1445  
To find a face where all distress is stell'd. 1446  
Many she sees where cares have carved some, 1447  
But none where all distress and dolour dwell'd, 1448  
Till she despairing Hecuba beheld, 1449  
Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes, 1450  
Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies. 1451

In her the painter had anatomized 1452  
Time's ruin, beauty's wreck, and grim care's reign: 1453  
Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguised; 1454  
Of what she was no semblance did remain: 1455  
Her blue blood changed to black in every vein, 1456  
Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed, 1457  
Show'd life imprison'd in a body dead. 1458

On this sad shadow Lucrece spends her eyes, 1459  
And shapes her sorrow to the beldam's woes, 1460  
Who nothing wants to answer her but cries, 1461  
And bitter words to ban her cruel foes: 1462  
The painter was no god to lend her those; 1463  
And therefore Lucrece swears he did her wrong, 1464  
To give her so much grief and not a tongue. 1465

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Poor instrument,' quoth she,'without a sound, 1466  
I'll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue; 1467  
And drop sweet balm in Priam's painted wound, 1468  
And rail on Pyrrhus that hath done him wrong; 1469  
And with my tears quench Troy that burns so long; 1470  
And with my knife scratch out the angry eyes 1471  
Of all the Greeks that are thine enemies. 1472

'Show me the strumpet that began this stir, 1473  
That with my nails her beauty I may tear. 1474  
Thy heat of lust, fond Paris, did incur 1475  
This load of wrath that burning Troy doth bear: 1476  
Thy eye kindled the fire that burneth here; 1477  
And here in Troy, for trespass of thine eye, 1478  
The sire, the son, the dame, and daughter die. 1479

'Why should the private pleasure of some one 1480  
Become the public plague of many moe? 1481  
Let sin, alone committed, light alone 1482  
Upon his head that hath transgressed so; 1483  
Let guiltless souls be freed from guilty woe: 1484  
For one's offence why should so many fall, 1485  
To plague a private sin in general? 1486

'Lo, here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies, 1487  
Here manly Hector faints, here Troilus swoonds, 1488  
Here friend by friend in bloody channel lies, 1489  
And friend to friend gives unadvised wounds, 1490  
And one man's lust these many lives confounds: 1491  
Had doting Priam cheque'd his son's desire, 1492  
Troy had been bright with fame and not with fire.' 1493

Here feelingly she weeps Troy's painted woes: 1494  
For sorrow, like a heavy-hanging bell, 1495  
Once set on ringing, with his own weight goes; 1496  
Then little strength rings out the doleful knell: 1497  
So Lucrece, set a-work, sad tales doth tell 1498  
To pencill'd pensiveness and colour'd sorrow; 1499  
She lends them words, and she their looks doth borrow. 1500

She throws her eyes about the painting round, 1501  
And whom she finds forlorn she doth lament. 1502  
At last she sees a wretched image bound, 1503  
That piteous looks to Phrygian shepherds lent: 1504  
His face, though full of cares, yet show'd content; 1505  
Onward to Troy with the blunt swains he goes, 1506  
So mild, that Patience seem'd to scorn his woes. 1507

## The Rape of Lucrece

In him the painter labour'd with his skill 1508  
To hide deceit, and give the harmless show 1509  
An humble gait, calm looks, eyes wailing still, 1510  
A brow unbent, that seem'd to welcome woe; 1511  
Cheeks neither red nor pale, but mingled so 1512  
That blushing red no guilty instance gave, 1513  
Nor ashy pale the fear that false hearts have. 1514

But, like a constant and confirmed devil, 1515  
He entertain'd a show so seeming just, 1516  
And therein so ensconced his secret evil, 1517  
That jealousy itself could not mistrust 1518  
False-creeping craft and perjury should thrust 1519  
Into so bright a day such black-faced storms, 1520  
Or blot with hell-born sin such saint-like forms. 1521

The well-skill'd workman this mild image drew 1522  
For perjured Sinon, whose enchanting story 1523  
The credulous old Priam after slew; 1524  
Whose words like wildfire burnt the shining glory 1525  
Of rich-built Ilion, that the skies were sorry, 1526  
And little stars shot from their fixed places, 1527  
When their glass fell wherein they view'd their faces. 1528

This picture she advisedly perused, 1529  
And chid the painter for his wondrous skill, 1530  
Saying, some shape in Sinon's was abused; 1531  
So fair a form lodged not a mind so ill: 1532  
And still on him she gazed; and gazing still, 1533  
Such signs of truth in his plain face she spied, 1534  
That she concludes the picture was belied. 1535

'It cannot be,' quoth she, 'that so much guile'-- 1536  
She would have said 'can lurk in such a look;' 1537  
But Tarquin's shape came in her mind the while, 1538  
And from her tongue 'can lurk' from 'cannot' took: 1539  
'It cannot be' she in that sense forsook, 1540  
And turn'd it thus, 'It cannot be, I find, 1541  
But such a face should bear a wicked mind. 1542

'For even as subtle Sinon here is painted. 1543  
So sober-sad, so weary, and so mild, 1544  
As if with grief or travail he had fainted, 1545  
To me came Tarquin armed; so beguiled 1546  
With outward honesty, but yet defiled 1547  
With inward vice: as Priam him did cherish, 1548  
So did I Tarquin; so my Troy did perish. 1549

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Look, look, how listening Priam wets his eyes, 1550  
To see those borrow'd tears that Sinon sheds! 1551  
Priam, why art thou old and yet not wise? 1552  
For every tear he falls a Trojan bleeds: 1553  
His eye drops fire, no water thence proceeds; 1554  
Those round clear pearls of his, that move thy pity, 1555  
Are balls of quenchless fire to burn thy city. 1556

'Such devils steal effects from lightless hell; 1557  
For Sinon in his fire doth quake with cold, 1558  
And in that cold hot-burning fire doth dwell; 1559  
These contraries such unity do hold, 1560  
Only to flatter fools and make them bold: 1561  
So Priam's trust false Sinon's tears doth flatter, 1562  
That he finds means to burn his Troy with water.' 1563

Here, all enraged, such passion her assails, 1564  
That patience is quite beaten from her breast. 1565  
She tears the senseless Sinon with her nails, 1566  
Comparing him to that unhappy guest 1567  
Whose deed hath made herself herself detest: 1568  
At last she smilingly with this gives o'er; 1569  
'Fool, fool!' quoth she, 'his wounds will not be sore.' 1570

Thus ebbs and flows the current of her sorrow, 1571  
And time doth weary time with her complaining. 1572  
She looks for night, and then she longs for morrow, 1573  
And both she thinks too long with her remaining: 1574  
Short time seems long in sorrow's sharp sustaining: 1575  
Though woe be heavy, yet it seldom sleeps, 1576  
And they that watch see time how slow it creeps. 1577

Which all this time hath overslipp'd her thought, 1578  
That she with painted images hath spent; 1579  
Being from the feeling of her own grief brought 1580  
By deep surmise of others' detriment; 1581  
Losing her woes in shows of discontent. 1582  
It easeth some, though none it ever cured, 1583  
To think their dolour others have endured. 1584

But now the mindful messenger, come back, 1585  
Brings home his lord and other company; 1586  
Who finds his Lucrece clad in mourning black: 1587  
And round about her tear-stained eye 1588  
Blue circles stream'd; like rainbows in the sky: 1589  
These water-galls in her dim element 1590  
Foretell new storms to those already spent. 1591

## The Rape of Lucrece

Which when her sad-beholding husband saw, 1592  
Amazedly in her sad face he stares: 1593  
Her eyes, though sod in tears, look'd red and raw, 1594  
Her lively colour kill'd with deadly cares. 1595  
He hath no power to ask her how she fares: 1596  
Both stood, like old acquaintance in a trance, 1597  
Met far from home, wondering each other's chance. 1598

At last he takes her by the bloodless hand, 1599  
And thus begins: 'What uncouth ill event 1600  
Hath thee befall'n, that thou dost trembling stand? 1601  
Sweet love, what spite hath thy fair colour spent? 1602  
Why art thou thus attired in discontent? 1603  
Unmask, dear dear, this moody heaviness, 1604  
And tell thy grief, that we may give redress.' 1605

Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire, 1606  
Ere once she can discharge one word of woe: 1607  
At length address'd to answer his desire, 1608  
She modestly prepares to let them know 1609  
Her honour is ta'en prisoner by the foe; 1610  
While Collatine and his consorted lords 1611  
With sad attention long to hear her words. 1612

And now this pale swan in her watery nest 1613  
Begins the sad dirge of her certain ending; 1614  
'Few words,' quoth she, 'Shall fit the trespass best, 1615  
Where no excuse can give the fault amending: 1616  
In me moe woes than words are now depending; 1617  
And my laments would be drawn out too long, 1618  
To tell them all with one poor tired tongue. 1619

'Then be this all the task it hath to say 1620  
Dear husband, in the interest of thy bed 1621  
A stranger came, and on that pillow lay 1622  
Where thou was wont to rest thy weary head; 1623  
And what wrong else may be imagined 1624  
By foul enforcement might be done to me, 1625  
From that, alas, thy Lucrece is not free. 1626

'For in the dreadful dead of dark midnight, 1627  
With shining falchion in my chamber came 1628  
A creeping creature, with a flaming light, 1629  
And softly cried 'Awake, thou Roman dame, 1630  
And entertain my love; else lasting shame 1631  
On thee and thine this night I will inflict, 1632  
If thou my love's desire do contradict. 1633



## The Rape of Lucrece

'For some hard-favour'd groom of thine,' quoth he, 1634  
'Unless thou yoke thy liking to my will, 1635  
I'll murder straight, and then I'll slaughter thee 1636  
And swear I found you where you did fulfil 1637  
The loathsome act of lust, and so did kill 1638  
The lechers in their deed: this act will be 1639  
My fame and thy perpetual infamy.' 1640

'With this, I did begin to start and cry; 1641  
And then against my heart he sets his sword, 1642  
Swearing, unless I took all patiently, 1643  
I should not live to speak another word; 1644  
So should my shame still rest upon record, 1645  
And never be forgot in mighty Rome 1646  
Th' adulterate death of Lucrece and her groom. 1647

'Mine enemy was strong, my poor self weak, 1648  
And far the weaker with so strong a fear: 1649  
My bloody judge forbade my tongue to speak; 1650  
No rightful plea might plead for justice there: 1651  
His scarlet lust came evidence to swear 1652  
That my poor beauty had purloin'd his eyes; 1653  
And when the judge is robb'd the prisoner dies. 1654

'O, teach me how to make mine own excuse! 1655  
Or at the least this refuge let me find; 1656  
Though my gross blood be stain'd with this abuse, 1657  
Immaculate and spotless is my mind; 1658  
That was not forced; that never was inclined 1659  
To accessory yieldings, but still pure 1660  
Doth in her poison'd closet yet endure.' 1661

Lo, here, the hopeless merchant of this loss, 1662  
With head declined, and voice damm'd up with woe, 1663  
With sad set eyes, and wretched arms across, 1664  
From lips new-waxen pale begins to blow 1665  
The grief away that stops his answer so: 1666  
But, wretched as he is, he strives in vain; 1667  
What he breathes out his breath drinks up again. 1668

As through an arch the violent roaring tide 1669  
Outruns the eye that doth behold his haste, 1670  
Yet in the eddy boundeth in his pride 1671  
Back to the strait that forced him on so fast; 1672  
In rage sent out, recall'd in rage, being past: 1673  
Even so his sighs, his sorrows, make a saw, 1674  
To push grief on, and back the same grief draw. 1675

## The Rape of Lucrece

Which speechless woe of his poor she attendeth, 1676  
And his untimely frenzy thus awaketh: 1677  
'Dear lord, thy sorrow to my sorrow lendeth 1678  
Another power; no flood by raining slaketh. 1679  
My woe too sensible thy passion maketh 1680  
More feeling-painful: let it then suffice 1681  
To drown one woe, one pair of weeping eyes. 1682

'And for my sake, when I might charm thee so, 1683  
For she that was thy Lucrece, now attend me: 1684  
Be suddenly revenged on my foe, 1685  
Thine, mine, his own: suppose thou dost defend me 1686  
From what is past: the help that thou shalt lend me 1687  
Comes all too late, yet let the traitor die; 1688  
For sparing justice feeds iniquity. 1689

'But ere I name him, you fair lords,' quoth she, 1690  
Speaking to those that came with Collatine, 1691  
'Shall plight your honourable faiths to me, 1692  
With swift pursuit to venge this wrong of mine; 1693  
For 'tis a meritorious fair design 1694  
To chase injustice with revengeful arms: 1695  
Knights, by their oaths, should right poor ladies' harms.' 1696

At this request, with noble disposition 1697  
Each present lord began to promise aid, 1698  
As bound in knighthood to her imposition, 1699  
Longing to hear the hateful foe bewray'd. 1700  
But she, that yet her sad task hath not said, 1701  
The protestation stops. 'O, speak, ' quoth she, 1702  
'How may this forced stain be wiped from me? 1703

'What is the quality of mine offence, 1704  
Being constrain'd with dreadful circumstance? 1705  
May my pure mind with the foul act dispense, 1706  
My low-declined honour to advance? 1707  
May any terms acquit me from this chance? 1708  
The poison'd fountain clears itself again; 1709  
And why not I from this compelled stain?' 1710

With this, they all at once began to say, 1711  
Her body's stain her mind untainted clears; 1712  
While with a joyless smile she turns away 1713  
The face, that map which deep impression bears 1714  
Of hard misfortune, carved in it with tears. 1715  
'No, no,' quoth she, 'no dame, hereafter living, 1716  
By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving.' 1717

## The Rape of Lucrece

Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break, 1718  
She throws forth Tarquin's name; 'He, he,' she says, 1719  
But more than 'he' her poor tongue could not speak; 1720  
Till after many accents and delays, 1721  
Untimely breathings, sick and short assays, 1722  
She utters this, 'He, he, fair lords, 'tis he, 1723  
That guides this hand to give this wound to me.' 1724

Even here she sheathed in her harmless breast 1725  
A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathed: 1726  
That blow did that it from the deep unrest 1727  
Of that polluted prison where it breathed: 1728  
Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeath'd 1729  
Her winged sprite, and through her wounds doth fly 1730  
Life's lasting date from cancell'd destiny. 1731

Stone-still, astonish'd with this deadly deed, 1732  
Stood Collatine and all his lordly crew; 1733  
Till Lucrece' father, that beholds her bleed, 1734  
Himself on her self-slaughter'd body threw; 1735  
And from the purple fountain Brutus drew 1736  
The murderous knife, and, as it left the place, 1737  
Her blood, in poor revenge, held it in chase; 1738

And bubbling from her breast, it doth divide 1739  
In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood 1740  
Circles her body in on every side, 1741  
Who, like a late-sack'd island, vastly stood 1742  
Bare and unpeopled in this fearful flood. 1743  
Some of her blood still pure and red remain'd, 1744  
And some look'd black, and that false Tarquin stain'd. 1745

About the mourning and congealed face 1746  
Of that black blood a watery rigol goes, 1747  
Which seems to weep upon the tainted place: 1748  
And ever since, as pitying Lucrece' woes, 1749  
Corrupted blood some watery token shows; 1750  
And blood untainted still doth red abide, 1751  
Blushing at that which is so putrified. 1752

'Daughter, dear daughter,' old Lucretius cries, 1753  
'That life was mine which thou hast here deprived. 1754  
If in the child the father's image lies, 1755  
Where shall I live now Lucrece is unliv'd? 1756  
Thou wast not to this end from me derived. 1757  
If children predecease progenitors, 1758  
We are their offspring, and they none of ours. 1759

## The Rape of Lucrece

'Poor broken glass, I often did behold 1760  
In thy sweet semblance my old age new born; 1761  
But now that fresh fair mirror, dim and old, 1762  
Shows me a bare-boned death by time out-worn: 1763  
O, from thy cheeks my image thou hast torn, 1764  
And shivered all the beauty of my glass, 1765  
That I no more can see what once I was! 1766

'O time, cease thou thy course and last no longer, 1767  
If they surcease to be that should survive. 1768  
Shall rotten death make conquest of the stronger 1769  
And leave the faltering feeble souls alive? 1770  
The old bees die, the young possess their hive: 1771  
Then live, sweet Lucrece, live again and see 1772  
Thy father die, and not thy father thee! 1773

By this, starts Collatine as from a dream, 1774  
And bids Lucretius give his sorrow place; 1775  
And then in key-cold Lucrece' bleeding stream 1776  
He falls, and bathes the pale fear in his face, 1777  
And counterfeits to die with her a space; 1778  
Till manly shame bids him possess his breath 1779  
And live to be revenged on her death. 1780

The deep vexation of his inward soul 1781  
Hath served a dumb arrest upon his tongue; 1782  
Who, mad that sorrow should his use control, 1783  
Or keep him from heart-easing words so long, 1784  
Begins to talk; but through his lips do throng 1785  
Weak words, so thick come in his poor heart's aid, 1786  
That no man could distinguish what he said. 1787

Yet sometime 'Tarquin' was pronounced plain, 1788  
But through his teeth, as if the name he tore. 1789  
This windy tempest, till it blow up rain, 1790  
Held back his sorrow's tide, to make it more; 1791  
At last it rains, and busy winds give o'er: 1792  
Then son and father weep with equal strife 1793  
Who should weep most, for daughter or for wife. 1794

The one doth call her his, the other his, 1795  
Yet neither may possess the claim they lay. 1796  
The father says 'She's mine.' 'O, mine she is,' 1797  
Replies her husband: 'do not take away 1798  
My sorrow's interest; let no mourner say 1799  
He weeps for her, for she was only mine, 1800  
And only must be wail'd by Collatine.' 1801

## The Rape of Lucrece

'O,' quoth Lucretius,' I did give that life 1802  
Which she too early and too late hath spill'd.' 1803  
'Woe, woe,' quoth Collatine, 'she was my wife, 1804  
I owed her, and 'tis mine that she hath kill'd.' 1805  
'My daughter' and 'my wife' with clamours fill'd 1806  
The dispersed air, who, holding Lucrece' life, 1807  
Answer'd their cries, 'my daughter' and 'my wife.' 1808

Brutus, who pluck'd the knife from Lucrece' side, 1809  
Seeing such emulation in their woe, 1810  
Began to clothe his wit in state and pride, 1811  
Burying in Lucrece' wound his folly's show. 1812  
He with the Romans was esteemed so 1813  
As silly-jeering idiots are with kings, 1814  
For sportive words and uttering foolish things: 1815

But now he throws that shallow habit by, 1816  
Wherein deep policy did him disguise; 1817  
And arm'd his long-hid wits advisedly, 1818  
To cheque the tears in Collatinus' eyes. 1819  
'Thou wronged lord of Rome,' quoth he, 'arise: 1820  
Let my unsounded self, supposed a fool, 1821  
Now set thy long-experienced wit to school. 1822

'Why, Collatine, is woe the cure for woe? 1823  
Do wounds help wounds, or grief help grievous deeds? 1824  
Is it revenge to give thyself a blow 1825  
For his foul act by whom thy fair wife bleeds? 1826  
Such childish humour from weak minds proceeds: 1827  
Thy wretched wife mistook the matter so, 1828  
To slay herself, that should have slain her foe. 1829

'Courageous Roman, do not steep thy heart 1830  
In such relenting dew of lamentations; 1831  
But kneel with me and help to bear thy part, 1832  
To rouse our Roman gods with invocations, 1833  
That they will suffer these abominations, 1834  
Since Rome herself in them doth stand disgraced, 1835  
By our strong arms from forth her fair streets chased. 1836

'Now, by the Capitol that we adore, 1837  
And by this chaste blood so unjustly stain'd, 1838  
By heaven's fair sun that breeds the fat earth's 1839  
store, 1840  
By all our country rights in Rome maintain'd, 1841  
And by chaste Lucrece' soul that late complain'd 1842  
Her wrongs to us, and by this bloody knife, 1843  
We will revenge the death of this true wife.' 1844

## The Rape of Lucrece

This said, he struck his hand upon his breast, 1845  
And kiss'd the fatal knife, to end his vow; 1846  
And to his protestation urged the rest, 1847  
Who, wondering at him, did his words allow: 1848  
Then jointly to the ground their knees they bow; 1849  
And that deep vow, which Brutus made before, 1850  
He doth again repeat, and that they swore. 1851

When they had sworn to this advised doom, 1852  
They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence; 1853  
To show her bleeding body thorough Rome, 1854  
And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence: 1855  
Which being done with speedy diligence, 1856  
The Romans plausibly did give consent 1857  
To Tarquin's everlasting banishment. 1858

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