

'Poor flower,' quoth she, 'this was thy father's  
guise,  
Sweet issue of a more sweet-smelling sire  
For every little grief to wet his eyes:  
To grow unto himself was his desire, 1180  
And so 'tis thine; but know, it is as good  
To wither in my breast as in his blood.

Here was thy father's bed, here in my breast;  
Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right:  
Lo! in this hollow cradle take thy rest, 1185  
My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and  
night:  
There shall not be one minute in an hour  
Wherein I will not kiss my sweet love's  
flower.' 1188

Thus weary of the world, away she hies,  
And yokes her silver doves; by whose swift aid  
Their mistress, mounted, through the empty  
skies  
In her light chariot quickly is convey'd; 1192  
Holding their course to Paphos, where their  
queen  
Means to immure herself and not be seen.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLY

EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON AND BARON OF TICHFIELD

Your lordship's in all duty,  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

**LUCIUS TARQUINIUS**,—for his excessive pride surnamed Superbus,—after he had caused his own father-in-law, Servius Tullius, to be cruelly murdered, and contrary to the Roman laws and customs, not requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had possessed himself of the kingdom, went, accompanied with his sons and other noblemen of Rome, to besiege Ardea. During which siege the principal men of the army meeting one evening at the tent of Sextus Tarquinius, the king's son, in their discourses after supper, every one commended the virtues of his own wife; among whom Collatinus extolled the incomparable chastity of his wife Lucretia. In that pleasant humour they all posted to Rome; and intending, by their secret and sudden arrival, to make trial of that which every one had before avouched, only Collatinus finds his wife,—though it were late in the night—spinning amongst her maids: the other ladies were all found dancing and revelling, or in several disports. Whereupon the noblemen yielded Collatinus the victory, and his wife the fame. At that time Sextus Tarquinius, being inflamed with Lucrece' beauty, yet smothering his passions for the present, departed with the rest back to the camp; from whence he shortly after privily withdrew himself, and was, according to his estate, royally entertained and lodged by Lucrece at Collatium. The same night he treacherously stealth into her chamber, violently ravished her, and early in the morning speedeth away. Lucrece, in this lamentable plight, hastily dispatcheth messengers, one to Rome for her father, and another to the camp for Collatine. They came, the one accompanied with Junius Brutus, the other with Publius Valerius; to the camp for Collatine. They came, the one accompanied with Junius Brutus, the other with Publius Valerius; to find finding Lucrece attired in mourning habit, demanded the cause of her sorrow. She, first taking an oath of them for her revenge, revealed the actor, and the whole manner of his dealing, and withal suddenly stabbed herself. Which done, with one consent they all vowed to root out the whole hated family of the Tarquins; and, bearing the dead body to Rome, Brutus acquainted the people with the doer and manner of the vile deed, with a bitter invective against the tyranny of the king: wherewith the people were so moved, that with one consent and a general acclamation the Tarquins were all exiled, and the state government changed from kings to consuls.

An expir'd date, cancell'd ere well begun:  
Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,  
Are weakly fortress'd from a world of harms.

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

Perchance his boast of Lucrece' sovereignty 38  
Suggested this proud issue of a king;  
For by our ears our hearts oft tainted be:  
Perchance that envy of so rich a thing,  
Braving compare, disdainfully did sting 40  
His high-pitch'd thoughts, that meaner men  
Should vaunt  
That golden hap which their superiors want

But some untimely thought did instigate  
His all-too-timeless speed, if none of those: 4  
His honour, his affairs, his friends, his state,  
Neglected all, with swift intent he goes  
To quench the coal which in his liver glows.  
O! rash false heat, wrapp'd in repentant cold.  
4 Thy hasty spring still blasts, and ne'er grow  
old.



# RAPE OF LUCRECE

1088

When at Collatium this false lord arriv'd,  
Well was he welcom'd by the Roman dame,  
Within whose face beauty and virtue striv'd 52  
Which of them both should underproph her fame:  
When virtue bragg'd, beauty would blush for  
shame;  
When beauty boasted blushes, in despite  
Virtue would stain that o'er with silver  
white. 56

But beauty, in that white intituled,  
From Venus' doves doth challenge that fair  
field;  
Then virtue claims from beauty beauty's red,  
Which virtue gave the golden age to gild 60  
Their silver cheeks, and call'd it then their  
shield;  
Teaching them thus to use it in the fight,  
When shame assail'd, the red should fence  
the white.

This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen, 64  
Argu'd by beauty's red and virtue's white:  
Of either's colour was the other queen,  
Proving from world's minority their right:  
Yet their ambition makes them still to fight; 68  
The sovereignty of either being so great,  
That oft they interchange each other's seat.

This silent war of lilies and of roses,  
Which Tarquin view'd in her fair face's field, 72  
In their pure ranks his traitor eye encloses:  
Where, lest between them both it should be  
kill'd,  
The coward captive vanquished doth yield  
To those two armies that would let him go, 76  
Rather than triumph in so false a foe.

Now thinks he that her husband's shallow  
tongue—  
The niggard prodigal that prais'd her so—  
In that high task hath done her beauty wrong,  
Which far exceeds his barren skill to show: 81  
Therefore that praise which Collatine doth  
owe  
Enchanted Tarquin answers with surmise,  
In silent wonder of still-gazing eyes. 84

This earthly saint, adored by this devil,  
Little suspecteth the false worshipper;  
For unstain'd thoughts do seldom dream on  
evil,  
Birds never lim'd no secret bushes fear: 88  
So guiltless she securely gives good cheer  
And reverend welcome to her princely guest,  
Whose inward ill no outward harm express'd:

For that he colour'd with his high estate, 92  
Hiding base sin in plaits of majesty;  
That nothing in him seem'd inordinate,  
Save sometime too much wonder of his eye,  
Which, having all, all could not satisfy; 96  
But, poorly rich, so wanteth in his store,  
That, cloy'd with much, he pineth still for  
more.

But she, that never cop'd with stranger eyes,  
Could pick no meaning from their parling  
looks, 100  
Nor read the subtle-shining secrecies  
Write in the glassy margents of such books:  
She touch'd no unknown baits, nor fear'd no  
hooks;  
Nor could she moralize his wanton sight, 104  
More than his eyes were open'd to the light.

He stories to her ears her husband's fame,  
Won in the fields of fruitful Italy;  
And decks with praises Collatine's high name,  
Made glorious by his manly chivalry 109  
With bruised arms and wreaths of victory:  
Her joy with heav'd-up hand she doth ex-  
press,  
And, wordless, so greets heaven for his suc-  
cess. 112

Far from the purpose of his coming thither,  
He makes excuses for his being there:  
No cloudy show of stormy blustering weather  
Doth yet in this fair welkin once appear; 116  
Till sable Night, mother of Dread and Fear,  
Upon the world dim darkness doth display,  
And in her vaulty prison stows the Day.

For then is Tarquin brought unto his bed, 120  
Intending weariness with heavy spright;  
For after supper long he questioned  
With modest Lucrece, and wore out the night:  
Now leaden slumber with life's strength doth  
fight, 124  
And every one to rest themselves betake,  
Save thieves, and cares, and troubled minds,  
that wake.

As one of which doth Tarquin lie revolving  
The sundry dangers of his will's obtaining; 128  
Yet ever to obtain his will resolving,  
Though weak-built hopes persuade him to ab-  
staining:  
Despair to gain doth traffic oft for gaining;  
And when great treasure is the meed pro-  
pos'd, 132  
Though death be adjunct, there's no death  
suppos'd.

Those that much covet are with gain so fond,  
For what they have not, that which they possess  
They scatter and unloose it from their bond, 136  
And so, by hoping more, they have but less;  
Or, gaining more, the profit of excess  
Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain,  
That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich  
gain. 140

The aim of all is but to nurse the life  
With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;  
And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,  
That one for all, or all for one we gage; 144  
As life for honour in fell battles' rage;  
Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth  
cost  
The death of all, and all together lost.

1089

# RAPE OF LUCRECE

So that in venturing ill we leave to be 148  
The things we are for that which we expect;  
And this ambitious foul infirmity,  
In having much, torments us with defect 152  
Of that we have: so then we do neglect  
The thing we have: and, all for want of wit,  
Make something nothing by augmenting it.

Such hazard now must doting Tarquin make,  
Pawning his honour to obtain his lust, 156  
And for himself himself he must forsake:  
Then where is truth, if there be no self-trust?  
When shall he think to find a stranger just,  
When he himself himself confounds, betrays  
To slanderous tongues and wretched hateful  
days? 161

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Yea, though I die, the scandal will survive, 204  
And be an eye-sore in my golden coat;  
Some loathsome dash the herald will contrive,  
To cipher me how fondly I did dote;  
That my posterity sham'd with the note, 208  
Shall curse my bones, and hold it for no sin  
To wish that I their father had not been.

'What win I if I gain the thing I seek?  
A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy, 212  
Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?  
Or sells eternity to get a toy?  
For one sweet grape who will the vine destroy?  
Or what fond beggar, but to touch the crown,  
Would with the sceptre straight be stricken  
down? 217

'If Collatinus dream of my intent,  
Will he not wake, and in a desperate rage  
Post hither, this vile purpose to prevent? 220  
This siege that hath engirt his marriage,  
This blur to youth, this sorrow to the sage,  
This dying virtue, this surviving shame,  
Whose crime will bear an ever-during blame?

'O! what excuse can my invention make, 225  
When thou shalt charge me with so black a  
deed?  
Will not my tongue be mute, my frail joints  
shake,  
Mine eyes forego their light, my false heart  
bleed? 228  
The guilt being great, the fear doth still exceed;  
And extreme fear can neither fight nor fly,  
But coward-like with trembling terror die.

'Had Collatinus kill'd my son or sire, 232  
Or lain in ambush to betray my life,  
Or were he not my dear friend, this desire  
Might have excuse to work upon his wife,  
As in revenge or quittal of such strife: 236  
But as he is my kinsman, my dear friend,  
The shame and fault finds no excuse nor end.

'Shameful it is; ay, if the fact be known:  
Hateful it is; there is no hate in loving: 240  
I'll beg her love; but she is not her own:  
The worst is but denial and reproving:  
My will is strong, past reason's weak removing.  
Who fears a sentence, or an old man's saw,  
Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe.' 245

Thus, graceless, holds he disputation  
'Tween frozen conscience and hot-burning will,  
And with good thoughts makes dispensation,  
Urging the worse sense for vantage still; 249  
Which in a moment doth confound and kill  
All pure effects, and doth so far proceed,  
That what is vile shows like a virtuous deed.

Quoth he, 'She took me kindly by the hand, 253  
And gaz'd for tidings in my eager eyes,  
Fearing some hard news from the war-like band  
Where her beloved Collatinus lies. 256  
O! how her fear did make her colour rise:  
First red as roses that on lawn we lay,  
Then white as lawn, the roses took away.



# RAPE OF LUCRECE

1090

'And how her hand, in my hand being lock'd,  
Forc'd it to tremble with her loyal fear! 261  
Which struck her sad, and then it faster rock'd,  
Until her husband's welfare she did hear;  
Whereat she smiled with so sweet a cheer, 264  
That had Narcissus seen her as she stood,  
Self-love had never drown'd him in the flood.

'Why hunt I then for colour or excuses?  
All orators are dumb when beauty pleadeth; 268  
Poor wretches have remorse in poor abuses;  
Love thrives not in the heart that shadows  
dreadeth:

Affection is my captain, and he leadeth;  
And when his gaudy banner is display'd, 272  
The coward fights and will not be dismay'd.

'Then, childish fear, avaunt! debating, die!  
Respect and reason, wait on wrinkled age!  
My heart shall never countermand mine eye:  
Sad pause and deep regard beseech the sage; 277  
My part is youth, and beats these from the stage.  
Desire my pilot is, beauty my prize;  
Then who fears sinking where such treasure  
lies?' 280

As corn o'ergrown by weeds, so heedful fear  
Is almost chok'd by unresisted lust.  
Away he steals with open listening ear,  
Full of foul hope, and full of fond mistrust; 284  
Both which, as servitors to the unjust,  
So cross him with their opposite persuasion,  
That now he vows a league, and now invasion.

Within his thought her heavenly image sits, 288  
And in the self-same seat sits Collatine:  
That eye which looks on her confounds his wits;  
That eye which him beholds, as more divine,  
Unto a view so false will not incline; 292  
But with a pure appeal seeks to the heart,  
Which once corrupted, takes the worse part;

And therein heartens up his servile powers,  
Who, flatter'd by their leader's jocund show,  
Stuff up his lust, as minutes fill up hours; 297  
And as their captain, so their pride doth grow,  
Paying more slavish tribute than they owe.  
By reprobate desire thus madly led, 300  
The Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece' bed.

The locks between her chamber and his will,  
Each one by him enforc'd, retires his ward;  
But as they open they all rate his ill, 304  
Which drives the creeping thief to some regard:  
The threshold grates the door to have him heard;  
Night-wandering weasels shriek to see him  
there;  
They fright him, yet he still pursues his fear.

As each unwilling portal yields him way, 309  
Through little vents and crannies of the place  
The wind wars with his torch to make him stay,  
And blows the smoke of it into his face, 312  
Extinguishing his conduct in this case;  
But his hot heart, which fond desire doth  
scorch,  
Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch:

And being lighted, by the light he spies 316  
Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks:  
He takes it from the rushes where it lies,  
And griping it, the needl his finger pricks;  
As who should say, 'This glove to wanton  
tricks 320  
Is not inur'd; return again in haste;  
Thou seest our mistress' ornaments are  
chaste.'

But all these poor forbiddings could not stay  
him;  
He in the worst sense construes their denial: 324  
The door, the wind, the glove, that did delay  
him,  
He takes for accidental things of trial;  
Or as those bars which stop the hourly dial,  
Who with a ling'ring stay his course doth let,  
Till every minute pays the hour his debt. 329

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

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

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

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

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

1091

# RAPE OF LUCRECE

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

Look, as the fair and fiery-pointed sun, 372  
Rushing from forth a cloud, bereaves our sight;  
Even so, the curtain drawn, his eyes begun  
To wink, being blinded with a greater light:  
Whether it is that she reflects so bright, 376  
That dazzleth them, or else some shame sup-  
posed,  
But blind they are, and keep themselves en-  
closed.

O! had they in that darksome prison died,  
Then had they seen the period of their ill; 380  
Then Collatine again, by Lucrece' side,  
In his clear bed might have repos'd still:  
But they must ope, this blessed league to kill,  
And holy-thoughted Lucrece to their sight 384  
Must sell her joy, her life, her world's delight.

Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under,  
Cozening the pillow of a lawful kiss;  
Who, therefore angry, seems to part in sunder,  
Swelling on either side to want his bliss; 389  
Between whose hills her head entombed is:  
Where, like a virtuous monument she lies,  
To be admir'd of lewd unhallow'd eyes. 392

Without the bed her other fair hand was,  
On the green coverlet; whose perfect white  
Show'd like an April daisy on the grass,  
With pearly sweat, resembling dew of night. 396  
Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheath'd their  
light,  
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,  
Till they might open to adorn the day.

Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her  
breath; 400  
O modest wantons! wanton modesty!  
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,  
And death's dim look in life's mortality:  
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify, 404  
As if between them twain there were no strife,  
But that life liv'd in death, and death in life.

Her breasts, like ivory globes circled with blue,  
A pair of maiden worlds unconquered, 408  
Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,  
And him by oath they truly honoured.  
These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred;  
Who, like a foul usurper, went about 412  
From this fair throne to heave the owner out.

What could he see but mightily he noted?  
What did he note but strongly he desir'd? 416  
What he beheld, on that he firmly doted,  
And in his will his wilful eye he tir'd.  
With more than admiration he admir'd  
Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,  
Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin.

As the grim lion fawneth o'er his prey, 421  
Sharp hunger by the conquest satisfied,  
So o'er this sleeping soul doth Tarquin stay,  
His rage of lust by gazing qualified; 424  
Slack'd, not suppress'd; for standing by her  
side,  
His eye, which late this mutiny restrains,  
Unto a greater uproar tempts his veins:

And they, like straggling slaves for pillage fight-  
ing, 428  
Obdurate vassals fell exploits effecting,  
In bloody death and ravishment delighting,  
Nor children's tears nor mothers' groans re-  
specting,  
Swell in their pride, the onset still expecting: 432  
Anon his beating heart, alarm striking,  
Gives the hot charge and bids them do their  
liking.

His drumming heart cheers up his burning  
eye,  
His eye commends the leading to his hand; 436  
His hand, as proud of such a dignity,  
Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his  
stand  
On her bare breast, the heart of all her land;  
Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did  
scale, 440  
Left their round turrets destitute and pale.

They, mustering to the quiet cabinet  
Where their dear governess and lady lies,  
Do tell her she is dreadfully beset, 444  
And fright her with confusion of their cries:  
She, much amaz'd, breaks ope her lock'd-up  
eyes,  
Who, peeping forth this tumult to behold,  
Are by his flaming torch dimm'd and con-  
troll'd. 448

Imagine her as one in dead of night  
From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking,  
That thinks she hath beheld some ghastly sprite,  
Whose grim aspect sets every joint a-shaking;  
What terror 'tis! but she, in worse taking, 453  
From sleep disturbed, heedfully doth view  
The sight which makes supposed terror true.

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

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



# RAPE OF LUCRECE

1092

First, like a trumpet, doth his tongue begin  
To sound a parley to his heartless foe;  
Who o'er the white sheet peers her whiter  
chin, 472

The reason of this rash alarm to know,  
Which he by dumb demeanour seeks to show;  
But she with vehement prayers urgeth still  
Under what colour he commits this ill. 476

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

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

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

'I have debated, even in my soul,  
What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall  
breed;  
But nothing can affection's course control, 500  
Or stop the headlong fury of his speed.  
I know repentant tears ensue the deed,  
Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity;  
Yet strive I to embrace mine infamy.' 504

This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,  
Which like a falcon towering in the skies,  
Coucheth the fowl below with his wings' shade,  
Whose crooked beak threats if he mount he  
dies: 508  
So under his insulting falchion lies  
Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells  
With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcon's  
bells.

'Lucretia,' quoth he, 'this night I must enjoy  
thee: 512  
If thou deny, then force must work my way,  
For in thy bed I purpose to destroy thee:  
That done, some worthless slave of thine I'll  
slay,  
To kill thine honour with thy life's decay; 516  
And in thy dead arms do I mean to place him,  
Swearing I slew him, seeing thee embrace him.

'So thy surviving husband shall remain  
The scornful mark of every open eye; 520  
Thy kinsmen hang their heads at this disdain,

Thy issue blurr'd with nameless bastardy:  
And thou, the author of their obloquy,  
Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rimes, 524  
And sung by children in succeeding times.

'But if thou yield, I rest thy secret friend:  
The fault unknown is as a thought unacted;  
A little harm done to a great good end, 528  
For lawful policy remains enacted.  
The poisonous simple sometimes is compacted  
In a pure compound; being so applied,  
His venom in effect is purified. 532

'Then for thy husband and thy children's sake,  
Tender my suit: bequeath not to their lot  
The shame that from them no device can take,  
The blemish that will never be forgot; 536  
Worse than a slavish wipe or birth-hour's blot:  
For marks descried in men's nativity  
Are nature's faults, not their own infamy.'

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

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

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

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

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

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# RAPE OF LUCRECE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Thou art,' quoth she, 'a sea, a sovereign  
king; 652  
And lo! there falls into thy boundless flood  
Black lust, dishonour, shame, misgoverning,  
Who seek to stain the ocean of thy blood.  
If all these petty ills shall change thy good, 656  
Thy sea within a puddle's womb is hears'd,  
And not the puddle in thy sea dispers'd.

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

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



RAPE OF LUCRECE

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

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

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

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

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

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

So fares it with this faultful lord of Rome,  
Who this accomplishment so hotly chas'd; 716  
For now against himself he sounds this doom,  
That through the length of times he stands dis-  
grac'd;  
Besides, his soul's fair temple is defac'd;  
To whose weak ruins muster troops of cares, 721  
To ask the spotted princess how she fares.

She says, her subjects with foul insurrection  
Have batter'd down her consecrated wall,  
And by their mortal fault brought in subjection  
Her immortality, and made her thrall 725  
To living death, and pain perpetual:

Which in her prescience she controlled still,  
But her foresight could not forestall their  
will. 728

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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RAPE OF LUCRECE

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

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

'Where now I have no one to blush with me,  
To cross their arms and hang their heads with  
mine, 793  
To mask their brows and hide their infamy;  
But I alone alone must sit and pine,  
Seasoning the earth with showers of silver  
brine, 796  
Mingling my talk with tears, my grief with  
groans,  
Poor wasting monuments of lasting moans.

'O Night! thou furnace of foul-reeking smoke,  
Let not the jealous Day behold that face 800  
Which underneath thy black all-hiding cloak  
Immodestly lies martyr'd with disgrace:  
Keep still possession of thy gloomy place,  
That all the faults which in thy reign are 804  
made  
May likewise be sepulchred in thy shade.

'Make me not object to the tell-tale Day!  
The light will show, character'd in my brow, 808  
The story of sweet chastity's decay,  
The impious breach of holy wedlock vow:  
Yea, the illiterate, that know not how  
To cipher what is writ in learned books,  
Will quote my loathsome trespass in my 812  
looks.

'The nurse, to still her child, will tell my story,  
And fright her crying babe with Tarquin's name;  
The orator, to deck his oratory,  
Will couple my reproach to Tarquin's shame; 817  
Feast-finding minstrels, tuning my defame,  
Will tie the hearers to attend each line,  
How Tarquin wronged me, I Collatine.

'Let my good name, that senseless reputation,  
For Collatine's dear love be kept unspotted: 821  
If that be made a theme for disputation,  
The branches of another root are rotted,  
And undeserv'd reproach to him allotted 824  
That is as clear from this attain of mine,  
As I ere this was pure to Collatine.

'O unseen shame! invisible disgrace!  
O unfelt sore! crest-wounding, private scar! 828

Reproach is stamp'd in Collatinus' face,  
And Tarquin's eye may read the mot afar,  
How he in peace is wounded, not in war.  
Alas! how many bear such shameful blows,  
Which not themselves, but he that gives them 833  
knows.

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

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

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

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

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

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

'O Opportunity! thy guilt is great, 876  
'Tis thou that execut'st the traitor's treason;  
Thou sett'st the wolf where he the lamb may get;  
Whoever plots the sin, thou point'st the season;  
'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at 880  
reason;  
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy  
him,  
Sits Sin to seize the souls that wander by him.