

THIS IS AN ONLINE SAMPLE
OF THE FIRST TEN PAGES OF

LUCRECE

from the narrative poem by William Shakespeare
adapted for the stage by Callie Kimball

Please direct inquiries
to calliekimball@gmail.com.



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calliekimball@gmail.com
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PRODUCTION HISTORY

LUCRECE was first performed at Washington Shakespeare Company under the title “Shakespeare’s ‘Rape of Lucrece.’” It was a commissioned last-minute replacement for a cancelled production of “King Lear.” The play was commissioned on January 12th, opened February 9th, and closed March 11th. The play was directed by Sarah Denhardt, and featured Denman C. Anderson, Parker Dixon, Theo Hadjimichael, Robert Lavery, Betsy Rosen, Colin Smith, and Abby Wood.

SOURCE MATERIAL

Text in bold is from Shakespeare’s epic narrative poem, “The Rape of Lucrece.”

SETTING

The Forum in Rome.
A January dawn in 503 BC, seven years after the establishment of the Roman Republic.

CHARACTERS

LUCRETIA COLLATINUS

Early 20s.
Grounded, vulnerable, intelligent, open-hearted, passionate, great sense of humor.

AUGUSTA

19. Lucretia’s Maid.
Immature in a sweet way. Adores Lucrece.

MAIA

Early 20s. Lucretia’s Maid.
More of a goth mini-feminist. Has a girlcrush on Lucrece.

COLLATINUS

Mid-30s. Lucretia’s husband.
A virile, handsome, confident warrior who’s had a LOT of battle successes.
Loves Lucrece, though he’d readily list her as property on any inventory of his estate.

LUCRETIUS

50-ish.
Lucrece’s papa. An elder statesman who is nonetheless a bit of a self-important yammerer.

BRUTUS

Mid-30s. Collatinus’ friend.
Smart, cool, detached, almost chillingly so. A great mix of idealism and pragmatism.
A true politician in the best sense. Also an ancestor of Brutus that killed Caesar.

PRINCE TARQUIN

Around 30. Son of King Tarquin the Proud.
 Young, handsome, charming when it suits his ends but can be abrupt or dismissive.
 Is probably a serial date rapist and unaware he has a problem, because no one files a
 complaint since the punishment for being raped is execution.

JANUS 1

God of Fate and Beginnings.

The more aggressive of the pair. More yangy than yinny. More excited to get events rolling
 along. Representative of the corrupt, selfish monarchy. A little menacing. Played by a male.

JANUS 2

God of Doorways and Endings.

Slightly softer take on things. Knows the rape is necessary and doesn't want to stop it, yet
 regrets the sorrow that will follow. A kinder, gentler Janus representing the new Republic.

SABINA

Ghostly representative Sabine woman.

Is reconciled to her fate.

SILVIA

Spirit of Rhea Silvia, raped and murdered mother of Romulus and Remus.

Is less resigned to her fate.

Augusta, Sabina, and Janus 1 should be played by the same man.

Maia, Silvia, and Janus 2 should be played by the same woman.

NOTE

A virgule (/) indicates the point at which the next line should begin.

An ellipsis (...) indicates a pause or a trailing off of an unfinished thought.

A dash (—) indicates an interruption.

NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

[printed in the program for the original production]

Rape. It's kind of an old story by now. Even the idea of rape as a weapon of war isn't news. The International War Crimes Tribunal educated us about Serbian rape camps, wherein an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 Muslim Bosnian women and girls were systematically gang-raped as a tool of genocide. Most female Iraqi prisoners released from Abu Ghraib have denied being raped in order that they might only be divorced or disowned by their families; but many who emerged pregnant have since "disappeared," presumably killed to salvage the family's honor.

In movies and on television, rape has had to compete with itself for increased shock value, and so now we have anal rape, child rape, and rape with household objects. We consider ourselves sophisticated consumers who understand that rape isn't about Sex, it's about Power. Under these circumstances, it's nearly impossible to not become somewhat inured to the very personal horror of rape.

When I consulted my trusty dramaturg, Wikipedia, I learned that the rape of Lucrece occurred in Rome in 510 BC. Any of us who struggled through high school Latin will recall that, in 750 BC on the Palatine Hill, Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, twin boys raised by a she-wolf. What you may not know is that the reason they were raised by a she-wolf was because their mother, Silvia, had been raped and, once the boys were delivered, was drowned (or horsewhipped to death, reports vary). One of Romulus' first accomplishments as king was to kidnap several Sabine women, carry them back to Rome, and rape them in order to populate the citizenry.

Blah blah blah, kings were good, kings were not so good.

Two-hundred-odd years later, when Prince Tarquin raped Lucrece, the citizenry had been disappointed in their monarchy for some time. Any good revolution needs a final catalyst to get the ball rolling. This rape was it. The monarchy was chased out of Rome by Lucrece's husband, Collatinus, and his friend, Brutus. Upon the consequent founding of the Roman Republic, both men immediately were elected as the very first First Consuls of Rome. So the rape and suicide of this woman were directly, causally related to the establishment of the Roman Republic. When I re-read Shakespeare's epic poem, I was surprised to see that he did not place the rape in much of a historical, social, or political context—he limited the action to Lucrece's rape and suicide.

Great social and political change often demands violence, and violence requires victims. Lucrece could have kept living if she'd kept quiet. She chose to speak and to act for reasons that are slippery and elusive. Apparently, to her, the worst sort of violence would have been silence.

Callie Kimball
January 26, 2007

LUCRECE

PROLOGUE

Bells in the distance. It is dawn in winter. Seven actors circle the stage.

***Lucrece.* How shines the morning silver-melting dew
Against the rising splendor of the sun!**

Augusta. Full seven / years have passed since fair Lucrece /
Was raped, dishonored, and found sweet surcease.

Collatinus. Seven years.

Lucretius. Lucrece.

Brutus. Her virtue cancelled by a royal will
That sooner breaks its sweetest supplicant.
We seven stand each on a Roman hill
To honor chaste Lucretia's / monument.

Maia. We seven stand on seven hills.

***Lucrece.* How shines the morning silver-melting dew--**

Collatinus. Seven years hath fled since this event
Sent monarchs fleeing into banishment
Establishing Republic sentiment;
From kings true Romans are / forever rent.

***Lucrece.* Against the rising splendor of the sun.**

Maia. We now shall re-enact in seven scenes
The lusting crime that gave us reason grave,
For deposition of Rome's seventh king,
Whose son, Prince Tarquin, raped our stainless / maid.

Lucretius. In consequence whereof Lucrece did kill
Her fair sweet self to keep her honor still.

Maia and Augusta. Lucrece!

Collatinus and Lucretius. Lucrece!

Tarquin. Lucrece.

Augusta. We call all citizens to witness how
Lucretia, with such excellence unmatched;
Was from her vestal hearth so rudely / snatched.

Collatinus. His hardened lust her virtue should have blunted,
Instead her unprovoking innocence he / hunted.

Lucretius. A prince she entertain'd with open arms,
And rous'd his will with sweetest eyes and charms.
**For honour and beauty, in th' owner's arms,
Are weakly fortified from a world / of harms.**

Brutus. **How base is Tarquin, from a king,
To shame his hope with deeds degenerate.
The mightier man, the mightier the thing
That makes him honored or begets him hate;
For greatest scandal waits on greatest state.**

Augusta. [*As birds fly overhead.*] Now birds of prey like omens sweep the sky!

*[During the following, MAIA and AUGUSTA show physically how they will
play themselves, then JANUS, and finally SILVIA and SABINA.]*

Maia. We two shall play her loving handmaidens,
Devoted to Lucrece and Collatine;
Once played, two-headed Janus takes his turn
And coldly spurs vile Tarquin to his crime;
Impassive god in whose cold month the time
Unlocked Rome's proud beginning from its gate
By urging fair Lucretia to her fate.

Augusta. Alas, no comfort from the gods she found,
And so she sought sweet solace from her kind:

[They don red shawls to show SILVIA and SABINA.]

Silvia and Sabina, raped mothers of Rome,
Consoled and led Lucretia from her shame
And on th' immortal path she found her home.

Brutus. We ask all hearers to attend each line,
How Tarquin wronged Lucrece and / Collatine.

Augusta. Now birds of / prey--

Lucrece. **“For she that was thy Lucrece, now attend me:**

**Be suddenly revenged on my foe,
If thou wouldst defend me, the help thou lend me
Comes too late, yet let the traitor die;
For sparing justice feeds / iniquity."**

[LUCRECE assumes a statue pose through the following.]

Maia. --like omens sweep the / sky.

Collatinus. See Rome's beloved daughter cruelly wronged
Her strength in trial stands a paragon
For all to strive and set example on;
'Tis but Lucrece's shadow that was felled
So honor might shine bright when flesh was stilled.

Lucretius. *[To LUCRECE.]* **Poor broken glass, I often did behold
In thy sweet semblance my old age new born;
But now that fair fresh mirror, dim and old,
Shows me a bare-boned death by time outworn;
Then live, my dear Lucrece, again, and see
Thy father die and not thy father / thee.**

[MAIA and AUGUSTA transform into the JANUSes.]

Janus 2. --like omens--

Lucretius. Almighty Janus! God of portals safe,
Of endings and beginnings, and of fate.
Observe our rites that we may so return
To save Lucrece that she may be reborn.

Janus 1. You trembling stand between two worlds of stone,
In greyness on the edge of dawn exposed
To unrelenting cold and groaning wind,
Yet half-awake with fevered dreams / of sin.

Janus 2. You weep and wonder at inexorable time
And wrongly wish to stay a brutal / crime.

Janus 1. For fair Lucrece's pain divideth all
Just as the broad horizon firmly breaks
A baser world from higher realms above,
Though sorrow o'erflows at splitting / gall.

Janus 2. Her brave and selfless testament divides
A brightened earth from sorrow-gloomed divine

And so the deeds of fair Lucrece hath set
Majestic Rome on greater glory / yet.

Janus 1. Now documenting ritual commence
With ceremony and with sweet incense.

Janus 2. Once all is played and for observing such
The gods will bless with providential touch.

Janus 1. This January morn the bells were rung
So you might witness this, the rape of Rome.

SCENE 1

Outside Prince TARQUIN's tent at Ardea, and a room in Collatine's estate, Collatium, in Rome. Evening. BRUTUS and COLLATINUS are talking aside before entering the tent.

Collatinus. I will not bide. I will not.

Brutus. Collatinus, cool yourself.

Collatinus. He hath now wasted all in this his latest
Ill-timed sally. Marcus, Numius, Servius
Gone. Brutus, we will lose.

Brutus. We must not lose.

Collatinus. He decides not as a man but a childish, spoiled--

Brutus. Hush. Your father-in-law and the prince. Draw near.
My lord!

Tarquin. Brutus.

Collatinus. My lord. Lucretius.

Lucretius. Collatinus,
I was just praising our young Prince Tarquin
For the fine strategy played out afield today.

Collatinus. Many were lost.

Tarquin. A few must be sacrificed for the good of many.
That is war. Let us go inside where it is warm

And fuel our blood with meat and our spirits with wine.

Lucretius. Collatinus, why look you so grim?

Collatinus. It is cold, father.

Lucretius. Ah! Wrestling will cure that!

Collatinus. I would prefer not to.

Lucretius. Oh, come! It will do you good. You and Brutus,
It is decided.

Tarquin. Yes you will wrestle. I am cold and thirsty.

Brutus. [*As he enters the tent.*] Let us seek your remedy inside, my Prince.

Collatinus. "I am cold and thirsty." Now we wait upon him.

Brutus. Come, Collatinus. We are commanded to wrestle.
'Twill be a good way to vent your spleen.
You should wear a better face. I read your looks.

Collatinus. I will win.

Brutus. Only because I will let you.

[They enter the tent. The men's action is silent, the wrestling is stylized as to be quiet through the women's scene. Lights up on a comfortable room at Collatium, estate of COLLATINUS and LUCRECE. AUGUSTA and MAIA sit on the floor, and LUCRECE is doing whatever a virtuous Roman wife would do.]

Augusta. You freeze, Lucrece, shall I increase the fire.

Lucrece. Yes, Augusta, please. There is a chilling wind.

Maia. As you increase Marcellus' fire, ay, do. You'd build and feed and raise the heat enough to turn the atrium of our Collatium to burning furnace and by stroking and stoking raise all matter through the gaping open flu.

Augusta. You speak in riddles, dearest Maia.

Maia. Your natural skill to draw and pull great heat through smallest whispers, urges fire to devour the very breath that fuels it.

Lucrece. A steady fire must be contained and bound
Within its gated edge, else all is lost.

Maia. Ay, do note, sweet Augusta, and mind the edge, that strong and noble bladed
edge, or every morsel of Marcellus shall be consumed by thy fragrant breath.

Augusta. I fan his fire not with my breath, nor do I hope to consume him at once.

Maia. Ah, leave an ember to feed with bellows.

Augusta. Careful, one might think you jealous.

Maia. Jealous!
Of Marcellus!

He is but a scrap of sweetmeat dropped in the road you long to steal and devour like the
ragged, dragging, skulking cat you are. Do not lie, Augusta. I have heard you dream him
from your murmuring lips. Do not lie.

Augusta. I do not lie. Longing and taking are several favors.

Maia. You misread my meaning: do not lie. Do not lie beneath him, on him, by him, else
you'll groan and cry and crave his favors having breathed his manly savors.

Lucrece. Maia, hold your judgment.
Augusta, stop to think, Marcellus draws with easy verse
And hopes to trial with easy virtue; give him no hope
And see how long he longs for maiden mildness.
You are heedless of the fickleness of men,
Who no longer wish for the thing they have,
They press your honor but do not wish attainment
For once won, worthless is the achievement.

Maia. Do you note, sweet Augusta?

Lucrece. I wonder what my Collatine does now.

*[The scene switches back to camp. The wrestling leaps into normal speed
toward a grunting, grasping finish.]*

Lucretius. Collatine! Again!

Brutus. Good fight, my friend.

Collatinus. I told you I would win.

Tarquin. Is there anything you lose at, Collatine?

Collatine. Generally, no, my lord.

Lucretius. My lord, I have heard of an arena
In Athens newly built under Cleisthenes there.
It is enclosed with five stages for wrestling
And staired steps for watching.

Tarquin. Is there anything you do not know, Lucretius?

Lucretius. You should build one similar, my lord.
A giant arena to outdo that of Athens'.

Tarquin. Nor anything you would not command?

Lucretius. Forgive me, my lord, I only wish to improve
Upon the glory of your Tarquinian legacy.

Tarquin. Dear coz, how your adoptive father
Looks out for us. Methinks it is to increase his own estate.

Collatinus. He is a thoughtful man.

Lucretius. I think not of myself but of my grandchildren,
That they might grow up in a better Rome.

Tarquin. Methinks it fairly fine as it is.

Lucretius. O yes, Prince, it is fine, but more fineness
Can always be had, do you not agree?

[Momentary switch back to LUCRECE.]

Lucrece. You are heedless of the fickleness of men,
Who no longer wish for the thing they have,
They press your honor but do not wish attainment
For once won, worthless is the achievement.

Maia. Do you note, sweet Augusta.

Lucretius. More fineness
Can always be had, do you not agree?

Tarquin. Is there anything you lose at, Collatine?

Collatinus. Generally, no, my lord.

Tarquin. I wish to try you.

Collatinus. My lord?

Tarquin. Let us wrestle.
One prince against such a warrior, athlete, landowner.

Collatinus. Do not forget husband and father.

Tarquin. I have a wife and do not
Rate that an achievement.

[They begin to wrestle in a stylized manner.]

Lucretius. My daughter, Lucrece,
Is the finest prize he owns. She was nearly chosen
As a vestal virgin, you know.

Tarquin. Nearly so?

Collatine. 'Twas my good fortune she prefers
Harpasta to weaving. She is mild and sweet and fair
Beyond compare—

Lucretius. —beyond compare, my lord. So fair.

Collatine. And what's most of all, more virtuous
Than all your wives combined.

Lucretius. I'll warrant.

Tarquin. You bet against your own wife?

Lucretius. In favor of my daughter, always.

Tarquin. How is't I have never seen her?

Collatinus. She is modest and stays at home.

Tarquin. And your wife, Brutus? Is she fair?

Brutus. I chose my wife for practical ends.

Lucretius. She is ugly as a horse, my lord.

Tarquin. Is this true?

Brutus. I prize her not for her beauty
But for her virtue. I would not have a fair aspect alone
Raise my children.

Collatinus. Do you claim virtue and beauty
Live not entwined, dear Brutus?

Brutus. It is unusual.

Lucretius. It satisfies your pride to stoutly swear
You could not have a pretty and chaste wife.

Collatinus. So strive you to console yourself in life.

Tarquin. And your wife, good Lucretius?
Is she chaste and ugly or pretty and whorish?

Lucretius. Oh, no, my lord, not whorish.
But ugly, sure, for aren't all wives?

Collatinus. Except Lucrece.

Lucretius. Except Lucrece.
No, my wife is stooped and pinched and speaks
Only in mewling melancholy tones.
My wife will not endure me, nor I her.
I see her only a few times yearly.

Tarquin. Now I see why you choose to be afield.

Lucretius. She is shriveled.

Brutus. So are you, old man.

Tarquin. My wife, Silvia, is so chaste
I must go elsewhere for my taste.

Lucretius. With such a name as Silvia, she *should* be pure,
Adorned in chaste Diana's habitat.

Collatinus. Silvia. My wife has set that same name on her cat.

[With this insult, COLLATINUS wins the match.]

Tarquin. This wife—

Lucretius. Lucrece.

Tarquin. This Lucrece,
Of whom you boast, what think you she does
Now?

Collatinus. Spins and pines for me.

Brutus. You sound quite sure.

Collatinus. I am.

[Back to LUCRECE, MAIA, and AUGUSTA who are having silly fun.]

Augusta. Well, I heard she let the fire die on purpose.

Maia. Why would she risk dishonor and death?

Augusta. I heard she was tired of being a vestal virgin.

Maia. They could bury her alive.

Lucrece. As a girl, I wanted to be chosen.

Maia. Tell us again.

Lucrece. The high priest on several occasions
Had come to observe me at home.
It was my father's wish and so
Of course it was mine, too. During each visit,
I kept my chin tilted down and sang
More softly than I was wont to do.
One day, the priest arrived unannounced and found
Me playing harpasta with my brothers in the sun.
Suddenly I was vile and unfit and the high priest said
Such an immodest girl should be whipped
Into obedience. My father beat my mother,
Not me, saying I was heartbroken enough.

Maia. I am glad you were not chosen to be a vestal virgin.
Then you would not be here with us.

Augusta. And you would have to work all the time.