

*When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
 I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
 And trouble deaf heav'n with my bootless cries,  
 And look upon my self, and curse my fate;  
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
 Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
 Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
 With what I most enjoy contented least;  
 Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,  
 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
 Like to the lark at break of day arising,  
 From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
     For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
     That then I scorn to change my state with kings.*

**F**or the first time, the speaker focuses on his own troubles with “the world,” characterizing himself as a lonely outcast. (The word *disgrace* indicates lack of favor in high places.) “The world” is epitomized in the phrase “men’s eyes” (l. 1), which are now established as both mean and fickle. Fortune is personified, in league with society to disgrace the speaker, who futilely calls on heaven for rescue. The word *deaf* applied to heaven suggests an anthropomorphic god, but this indifferent deity seems crueler than the pagan “fortune.” The speaker, who was at the height of love in Sonnet 26, has quickly descended into sorrow, now greater than that he experienced on his journey (Sonnets 27 and 28).

The octave lists the futile actions of the speaker, creating a litany of self-pity that escalates into self-hatred. What he has actually done we do not know, but his inner turmoil centers on envy (another of the Seven Deadly Sins). This, combined with his discontent even with what he enjoys most, gives evidence of serious depression.

The sestet brings a complete turnabout of emotions. The word *haply* suggests both happiness and chance (not divine intervention) and augurs positive change. The thought of his friend which magically occurs recalls

the “shadow” (vision) that presented itself like a jewel in the night in Sonnet 27 at a moment of despair. These lines imply an upward motion, one made graphic in the picture of the lark rising with the sun. In contrast to the “sullen earth” (l. 12) the lark sings hymns at heaven’s gate. (Is heaven likely to be deaf now? Such a question underscores the essentially secular nature of the poem.) What the speaker wants—and gets—is the remembrance of love, which in turn brings wealth and, finally, a superiority to kings, the highest ranking members of “the world.” The crucial thing for the speaker is not getting into heaven—or even gaining heaven’s ear—but recalling his friend’s sweet love.