

*Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
 And make me travel forth without my cloak,
 To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
 Hiding thy brav'ry in their rotten smoke?
 'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break
 To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
 For no man well of such a salve can speak,
 That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace:
 Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
 Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.
 Th' offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
 To him that bears the strong offense's cross.
 Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy loves sheds,
 And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.*

The beginning of Sonnet 34 is based on a proverb: "Although the sun shines, leave not your cloak at home." It continues with the subject of Sonnet 33 and uses the same cloud and sun imagery, adding a traveler without his cloak—the speaker himself. He chides the sun (his friend) for promising a beautiful day but letting the "base clouds" (storms, representing bad companions) spoil his journey. These "rotten" (noxious) vapors hide the friend's "bravery" (l. 4), that is, his finery and his courageous acts, and separate him from the speaker.

The speaker chastises his friend even more severely in the second quatrain, pointing out that it is not enough to dry the rain from the traveler's face. No one will speak well of anyone who will only salve a wound but not cure the disease; the friend must remove the stigma of disgrace. Obviously, the speaker feels that his friend's disgrace has become his. The connection is underscored by Shakespeare's placing the word *disgrace* at the end of the octave as it was in Sonnet 33.

The third quatrain is even stronger. Even though you repent your shameful acts (which are never specified), that will not cure my grief—so says the speaker. Even though the friend is sorry, it is no relief from the cross that the speaker must bear because the offense is so strong.

Despite his grievances, the speaker takes a surprising turn in the couplet. The tears, he says, which his friend sheds in love for him are pearls; they are also rich and “ransom all ill deeds.” (l. 14) The emotion echoes those of the couplets in Sonnets 29 and 30, but the emphasis on wealth is unusual and difficult to explain. The repetition of forgiveness carries weight, however, in swaying the reader’s opinion of the speaker. To forgive so easily and so often must attest to his love, however misguided that might be.