

Andrea Del Sarto Summary

Writer: Robert Browning | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Andrea Wants Peace And Company from Lucrezia: At the beginning of the poem, Andrea del Sarto speaks softly to his wife, Lucrezia. He no longer wants to quarrel. He asks her to sit beside him peacefully and hold his hand. He agrees to her wish to sell his painting to her friend's friend, though it hurts his pride. He promises to paint as she wants and give her the money. In return, he only asks for some quiet time with her, just to sit by the window and look out at Fiesole (a town and comune of the Metropolitan City of Florence in the Italian region of Tuscany).

He feels very tired this evening. He hopes that if she sits with him lovingly, he will feel better and work happily again the next day. Andrea says her soft hand gives him comfort, and she can even serve as a model for the paintings they need to finish. He admires her beauty deeply and calls her his "serpentine beauty." He feels happy and proud just by looking at her. He says her one smile gives him full inspiration to paint.

He Feels Deep Sadness And Artistic Failure: Andrea slowly reveals his sadness. He says that everything in his life now looks grey, like a faded evening. He remembers the time when Lucrezia had pride in him, and he had hope and energy in his art. But now those days are gone. He feels all his dreams and talent have been toned down like the dull city of Fiesole in the distance.

He feels that he and Lucrezia are like a "twilight-piece," a faded painting. He accepts that they are in God's hands. Life seems free, but they are still trapped. He says God has given them a life that looks beautiful on the outside, but it lacks true meaning. He shows Lucrezia a cartoon (a sketch) and says it is good work. But he feels that no one, not even she, really understands or values his art deeply.

Andrea Explains His Technical Skill But Admits a Lack of Soul: Andrea proudly states that he can paint very easily and perfectly. He does not need to sketch or study before creating his paintings. He says other painters try hard all their lives to paint as he does, but they fail. Many people admire his technical perfection. However, he feels something important is missing in his art—the soul.

He admits that painters like Rafael and Michelangelo may make mistakes in form, but their works have a heavenly spirit. He calls himself only a “craftsman,” not a true artist. His art is closer to perfection, but it lacks feeling and imagination. He says he paints “from himself and to himself” and remains unaffected by praise or blame. His hand is steady, but his heart is slow. His work is smooth, but it cannot reach heaven.

He Compares Himself to Rafael and Blames Lucrezia Partly: Andrea looks at a copied painting by Rafael sent by Vasari. He notices mistakes in the arm, but he also sees the soul in the painting. He says he could fix the technical flaws, but he cannot give the painting that divine soul. He wonders why he himself lacks that inner spirit. Then, he quietly blames Lucrezia. He says if she had given him a deeper love, a higher purpose, or a mind to match her beauty, he might have reached the level of Rafael.

He imagines what she could have said to inspire him, words like “Live for fame” or “Don’t care for gain.” He wishes she had encouraged him to aim higher. Then he quickly changes his tone and forgives her. He says maybe it was not her fault, maybe it was God’s plan. He even wonders if his downfall came from having a wife, since Rafael and Michelangelo did not have wives.

Andrea Reflects on His Time in France with Sadness: Andrea recalls the days when he worked at the court of King Francis I in France. He says those were his “kingly days.” The king admired him, supported him, and made him feel proud. He painted with joy and felt respected. His art flourished there. However, Lucrezia soon grew restless, and they returned to Italy. There, Andrea lost his spirit and ambition. He admits that it was perhaps his fate. He calls himself a “weak-eyed bat” who cannot live in sunlight anymore.

Still, he tells Lucrezia that he chose her and is proud of that choice. He holds her face and says she is his golden reward. He tries to feel satisfied that he won her love, even if he lost artistic greatness.

He imagines admiration from great artists and seeks Lucrezia’s pride: Andrea imagines a moment where Michelangelo praises him to Rafael. He dreams that Michelangelo once said that Andrea, if given the same royal support as Rafael, would make Rafael sweat with fear. He becomes excited thinking about this lost chance. However, he remains unsure whether it really happened. He says he wants to believe it and hopes that Lucrezia would have been proud of him.

He tries to draw a line on Rafael’s painting to fix it, but quickly stops, saying Rafael’s painting has a soul. Andrea again wishes that Lucrezia had inspired him more. Still, he asks her to smile

again. That smile, to him, gives strength and hope.

He Asks Lucrezia to Stay, but She Prepares to Leave: Andrea pleads with Lucrezia to stay with him every night. He says if she stays, he will work better, earn more, and give her more. He describes the evening as it turns to night. He asks her to come inside their sad little house and stay with him.

But soon, he finds out that Lucrezia's "cousin" is waiting outside. The cousin, who is likely her lover, needs money for gambling debts again. Andrea asks if Lucrezia is leaving him for that man again. He says, bitterly, that maybe her smiles tonight were only to get money for him.

He Agrees to Give Money and Dreams of One Last Great Painting: Andrea accepts that he still has his eyes, hands, and "something of a heart" left. He agrees to pay the money. He says he wants to sit quietly for the rest of the night and think. He dreams that if he were back in France, he could paint one more great picture: this time, not of Lucrezia, but of the Virgin Mary. He wants Lucrezia beside him, not as a model, but as someone to hear the praise he might get from Michelangelo.

He tells her to satisfy her friend the next day. He will do the painting her friend asked for and add another one as a bonus. He will get the money for her cousin's ruff. But he sadly asks, what does the cousin give her that pleases her more than he can?

In The End, Andrea Accepts His Failure But Cannot Blame Lucrezia: In the final part of the poem, Andrea becomes calm. He says he has grown "peaceful as old age." He claims he regrets little and would change even less. He acknowledges that he took money from King Francis in error. But he says he had no choice—his parents were poor, and he had no wealth. He worked hard but was never paid well. He painted many pictures, and no one could deny his efforts.

He says Lucrezia loved him enough, at least tonight. He says that must be enough. He dreams that maybe in heaven, he will get a second chance. He imagines four great painters: Leonardo, Rafael, Michelangelo, and himself, painting the walls of the New Jerusalem. He notes that the other three had no wives, but he had Lucrezia. In the end, he says it was his choice. As Lucrezia's cousin whistles again, he lets her go.