

The Tragedy of Coriolanus

ACT I

SCENE I. Rome. A street.

Enter a company of mutinous Citizens, with staves, clubs, and other weapons

First Citizen

Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

All

Speak, speak.

First Citizen

You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

All

Resolved. resolved.

First Citizen

First, you know Caius Marcius is chief enemy to the people.

All

We know't, we know't.

First Citizen

Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price.
Is't a verdict?

All

No more talking on't; let it be done: away, away!

Second Citizen

One word, good citizens.

First Citizen

We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good.
What authority surfeits on would relieve us: if they
would yield us but the superfluity, while it were
wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely;
but they think we are too dear: the leanness that
afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an
inventory to particularise their abundance; our
sufferance is a gain to them Let us revenge this with
our pikes, ere we become rakes: for the gods know I
speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

Second Citizen

Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

All

Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty.

Second Citizen

Consider you what services he has done for his country?

First Citizen

Very well; and could be content to give him good report for't, but that he pays himself with being proud.

Second Citizen

Nay, but speak not maliciously.

First Citizen

I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country he did it to please his mother and to be partly proud; which he is, even till the altitude of his virtue.

Second Citizen

What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.

First Citizen

If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition.

Shouts within

What shouts are these? The other side o' the city is risen: why stay we prating here? to the Capitol!

All

Come, come.

First Citizen

Soft! who comes here?

Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA

Second Citizen

Worthy Menenius Agrippa; one that hath always loved the people.

First Citizen

He's one honest enough: would all the rest were so!

MENENIUS

What work's, my countrymen, in hand? where go you
With bats and clubs? The matter? speak, I pray you.

First Citizen

Our business is not unknown to the senate; they have
had inkling this fortnight what we intend to do,
which now we'll show 'em in deeds. They say poor
suitsors have strong breaths: they shall know we
have strong arms too.

MENENIUS

Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest neighbours,
Will you undo yourselves?

First Citizen

We cannot, sir, we are undone already.

MENENIUS

I tell you, friends, most charitable care
Have the patricians of you. For your wants,
Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well
Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them
Against the Roman state, whose course will on
The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs
Of more strong link asunder than can ever
Appear in your impediment. For the dearth,
The gods, not the patricians, make it, and
Your knees to them, not arms, must help. Alack,
You are transported by calamity
Thither where more attends you, and you slander
The helms o' the state, who care for you like fathers,
When you curse them as enemies.

First Citizen

Care for us! True, indeed! They ne'er cared for us
yet: suffer us to famish, and their store-houses
crammed with grain; make edicts for usury, to
support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act
established against the rich, and provide more
piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain
the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and
there's all the love they bear us.

MENENIUS

Either you must
Confess yourselves wondrous malicious,

Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you
A pretty tale: it may be you have heard it;
But, since it serves my purpose, I will venture
To stale 't a little more.

First Citizen

Well, I'll hear it, sir: yet you must not think to
fob off our disgrace with a tale: but, an 't please
you, deliver.

MENENIUS

There was a time when all the body's members
Rebell'd against the belly, thus accused it:
That only like a gulf it did remain
I' the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
And, mutually participate, did minister
Unto the appetite and affection common
Of the whole body. The belly answer'd--

First Citizen

Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MENENIUS

Sir, I shall tell you. With a kind of smile,
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus--
For, look you, I may make the belly smile
As well as speak--it tauntingly replied
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly
As you malign our senators for that
They are not such as you.

First Citizen

Your belly's answer? What!
The kingly-crowned head, the vigilant eye,
The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,
Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter.
With other muniments and petty helps
In this our fabric, if that they--

MENENIUS

What then?
'Fore me, this fellow speaks! What then? what then?

First Citizen

Should by the cormorant belly be restrain'd,
Who is the sink o' the body,--

MENENIUS

Well, what then?

First Citizen

The former agents, if they did complain,
What could the belly answer?

MENENIUS

I will tell you
If you'll bestow a small--of what you have little--
Patience awhile, you'll hear the belly's answer.

First Citizen

Ye're long about it.

MENENIUS

Note me this, good friend;
Your most grave belly was deliberate,
Not rash like his accusers, and thus answer'd:
'True is it, my incorporate friends,' quoth he,
'That I receive the general food at first,
Which you do live upon; and fit it is,
Because I am the store-house and the shop
Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,
I send it through the rivers of your blood,
Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o' the brain;
And, through the cranks and offices of man,
The strongest nerves and small inferior veins
From me receive that natural competency
Whereby they live: and though that all at once,
You, my good friends,'--this says the belly, mark me,--

First Citizen

Ay, sir; well, well.

MENENIUS

'Though all at once cannot
See what I do deliver out to each,
Yet I can make my audit up, that all
From me do back receive the flour of all,
And leave me but the bran.' What say you to't?

First Citizen

It was an answer: how apply you this?

MENENIUS

The senators of Rome are this good belly,
And you the mutinous members; for examine
Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly
Touching the weal o' the common, you shall find
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you
And no way from yourselves. What do you think,
You, the great toe of this assembly?

First Citizen

I the great toe! why the great toe?

MENENIUS

For that, being one o' the lowest, basest, poorest,
Of this most wise rebellion, thou go'st foremost:
Thou rascal, that art worst in blood to run,
Lead'st first to win some vantage.
But make you ready your stiff bats and clubs:
Rome and her rats are at the point of battle;
The one side must have bale.

Enter CAIUS MARCIUS

Hail, noble Marcius!

MARCIUS

Thanks. What's the matter, you dissentious rogues,
That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
Make yourselves scabs?

First Citizen

We have ever your good word.

MARCIUS

He that will give good words to thee will flatter
Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor war? the one affrights you,
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him
And curse that justice did it.
Who deserves greatness
Deserves your hate; and your affections are
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
Which would increase his evil. He that depends
Upon your favours swims with fins of lead
And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! Trust Ye?

With every minute you do change a mind,
And call him noble that was now your hate,
Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter,
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another? What's their seeking?

MENENIUS

For corn at their own rates; whereof, they say,
The city is well stored.

MARCIUS

Hang 'em! They say!
They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know
What's done i' the Capitol; who's like to rise,
Who thrives and who declines; side factions
and give out
Conjectural marriages; making parties strong
And feebling such as stand not in their liking
Below their cobbled shoes. They say there's
grain enough!
Would the nobility lay aside their ruth,
And let me use my sword, I'll make a quarry
With thousands of these quarter'd slaves, as high
As I could pick my lance.

MENENIUS

Nay, these are almost thoroughly persuaded;
For though abundantly they lack discretion,
Yet are they passing cowardly. But, I beseech you,
What says the other troop?

MARCIUS

They are dissolved: hang 'em!
They said they were an-hungry; sigh'd forth proverbs,
That hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat,
That meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent not
Corn for the rich men only: with these shreds
They vented their complainings; which being answer'd,
And a petition granted them, a strange one--
To break the heart of generosity,
And make bold power look pale--they threw their caps
As they would hang them on the horns o' the moon,
Shouting their emulation.

MENENIUS

What is granted them?

MARCIUS

Five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms,
Of their own choice: one's Junius Brutus,
Sicinius Velutus, and I know not--'Sdeath!
The rabble should have first unroof'd the city,
Ere so prevail'd with me: it will in time
Win upon power and throw forth greater themes
For insurrection's arguing.

MENENIUS

This is strange.

MARCIUS

Go, get you home, you fragments!

Enter a Messenger, hastily

Messenger

Where's Caius Marcius?

MARCIUS

Here: what's the matter?

Messenger

The news is, sir, the Volsces are in arms.

MARCIUS

I am glad on 't: then we shall ha' means to vent
Our musty superfluity. See, our best elders.

Enter COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other Senators; JUNIUS BRUTUS and SICINIUS VELUTUS

First Senator

Marcius, 'tis true that you have lately told us;
The Volsces are in arms.

MARCIUS

They have a leader,
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to 't.
I sin in envying his nobility,
And were I any thing but what I am,
I would wish me only he.

COMINIUS

You have fought together.

MARCIUS

Were half to half the world by the ears and he.
Upon my party, I'd revolt to make
Only my wars with him: he is a lion
That I am proud to hunt.

First Senator

Then, worthy Marcius,
Attend upon Cominius to these wars.

COMINIUS

It is your former promise.

MARCIUS

Sir, it is;
And I am constant. Titus Lartius, thou
Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus' face.
What, art thou stiff? stand'st out?

TITUS

No, Caius Marcius;
I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with t'other,
Ere stay behind this business.

MENENIUS

O, true-bred!

First Senator

Your company to the Capitol; where, I know,
Our greatest friends attend us.

TITUS

[To COMINIUS] Lead you on.

To MARCIUS

Right worthy you priority.

COMINIUS

Noble Marcius!

First Senator

[To the Citizens] Hence to your homes; be gone!

MARCIUS

Nay, let them follow:
The Volsces have much corn; take these rats thither
To gnaw their garners. Worshipful mutiners,
Your valour puts well forth: pray, follow.

Citizens steal away. Exeunt all but SICINIUS and BRUTUS

SICINIUS

Was ever man so proud as is this Marcius?

BRUTUS

He has no equal.

SICINIUS

When we were chosen tribunes for the people,--

BRUTUS

Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS

Nay. but his taunts.

BRUTUS

Being moved, he will not spare to gird the gods.

SICINIUS

Be-mock the modest moon.

BRUTUS

The present wars devour him: he is grown
Too proud to be so valiant.

SICINIUS

Such a nature,
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow
Which he treads on at noon: but I do wonder
His insolence can brook to be commanded
Under Cominius.

BRUTUS

Fame, at the which he aims,
In whom already he's well graced, can not
Better be held nor more attain'd than by
A place below the first: for what miscarries
Shall be the general's fault, though he perform
To the utmost of a man, and giddy censure
Will then cry out of Marcius 'O if he
Had borne the business!'

SICINIUS

Besides, if things go well,
Opinion that so sticks on Marcius shall
Of his demerits rob Cominius.

BRUTUS

Come:
Half all Cominius' honours are to Marcius.
Though Marcius earned them not, and all his faults
To Marcius shall be honours, though indeed
In aught he merit not.

SICINIUS

Let's hence, and hear
How the dispatch is made, and in what fashion,
More than his singularity, he goes
Upon this present action.

BRUTUS

Lets along.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Corioli. The Senate-house.

Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS and certain Senators

First Senator

So, your opinion is, Aufidius,
That they of Rome are entered in our counsels
And know how we proceed.

AUFIDIUS

Is it not yours?
What ever have been thought on in this state,
That could be brought to bodily act ere Rome
Had circumvention? 'Tis not four days gone
Since I heard thence; these are the words: I think
I have the letter here; yes, here it is.

Reads

'They have press'd a power, but it is not known
Whether for east or west: the dearth is great;
The people mutinous; and it is rumour'd,
Cominius, Marcius your old enemy,
Who is of Rome worse hated than of you,
And Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman,
These three lead on this preparation
Whither 'tis bent: most likely 'tis for you:
Consider of it.'

First Senator

Our army's in the field
We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready
To answer us.

AUFIDIUS

Nor did you think it folly
To keep your great pretences veil'd till when
They needs must show themselves; which
in the hatching,
It seem'd, appear'd to Rome. By the discovery.

We shall be shorten'd in our aim, which was
To take in many towns ere almost Rome
Should know we were afoot.

Second Senator

Noble Aufidius,
Take your commission; hie you to your bands:
Let us alone to guard Corioli:
If they set down before 's, for the remove
Bring your army; but, I think, you'll find
They've not prepared for us.

AUFIDIUS

O, doubt not that;
I speak from certainties. Nay, more,
Some parcels of their power are forth already,
And only hitherward. I leave your honours.
If we and Caius Marcius chance to meet,
'Tis sworn between us we shall ever strike
Till one can do no more.

All

The gods assist you!

AUFIDIUS

And keep your honours safe!

First Senator

Farewell.

Second Senator

Farewell.

All

Farewell.

Exeunt

SCENE III. Rome. A room in Marcius' house.

Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA they set them down on two low stools, and sew

VOLUMNIA

I pray you, daughter, sing; or express yourself in a
more comfortable sort: if my son were my husband, I
should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he
won honour than in the embracements of his bed where
he would show most love. When yet he was but
tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, when
youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when

for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, I, considering how honour would become such a person. that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

VIRILIA

But had he died in the business, madam; how then?

VOLUMNIA

Then his good report should have been my son; I therein would have found issue. Hear me profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

Enter a Gentlewoman

Gentlewoman

Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIRILIA

Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA

Indeed, you shall not.
Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum,
See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair,
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:
'Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,
Though you were born in Rome:' his bloody brow
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,
Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow
Or all or lose his hire.

VIRILIA

His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOLUMNIA

Away, you fool! it more becomes a man
Than gilt his trophy: the breasts of Hecuba,
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier

Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
At Grecian sword, contemning. Tell Valeria,
We are fit to bid her welcome.

Exit Gentlewoman

VIRGILIA

Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

VOLUMNIA

He'll beat Aufidius 'head below his knee
And tread upon his neck.

Enter VALERIA, with an Usher and Gentlewoman

VALERIA

My ladies both, good day to you.

VOLUMNIA

Sweet madam.

VIRGILIA

I am glad to see your ladyship.

VALERIA

How do you both? you are manifest house-keepers.
What are you sewing here? A fine spot, in good
faith. How does your little son?

VIRGILIA

I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

VOLUMNIA

He had rather see the swords, and hear a drum, than
look upon his school-master.

VALERIA

O' my word, the father's son: I'll swear, 'tis a
very pretty boy. O' my troth, I looked upon him o'
Wednesday half an hour together: has such a
confirmed countenance. I saw him run after a gilded
butterfly: and when he caught it, he let it go
again; and after it again; and over and over he
comes, and again; caught it again; or whether his
fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his
teeth and tear it; O, I warrant it, how he mammocked
it!

VOLUMNIA

One on 's father's moods.

VALERIA

Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

VIRGILIA

A crack, madam.

VALERIA

Come, lay aside your stitchery; I must have you play the idle husewife with me this afternoon.

VIRGILIA

No, good madam; I will not out of doors.

VALERIA

Not out of doors!

VOLUMNIA

She shall, she shall.

VIRGILIA

Indeed, no, by your patience; I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars.

VALERIA

Fie, you confine yourself most unreasonably: come, you must go visit the good lady that lies in.

VIRGILIA

I will wish her speedy strength, and visit her with my prayers; but I cannot go thither.

VOLUMNIA

Why, I pray you?

VIRGILIA

'Tis not to save labour, nor that I want love.

VALERIA

You would be another Penelope: yet, they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths. Come; I would your cambric were sensible as your finger, that you might leave pricking it for pity. Come, you shall go with us.

VIRGILIA

No, good madam, pardon me; indeed, I will not forth.

VALERIA

In truth, la, go with me; and I'll tell you
excellent news of your husband.

VIRGILIA

O, good madam, there can be none yet.

VALERIA

Verily, I do not jest with you; there came news from
him last night.

VIRGILIA

Indeed, madam?

VALERIA

In earnest, it's true; I heard a senator speak it.
Thus it is: the Volsces have an army forth; against
whom Cominius the general is gone, with one part of
our Roman power: your lord and Titus Lartius are set
down before their city Corioli; they nothing doubt
prevailing and to make it brief wars. This is true,
on mine honour; and so, I pray, go with us.

VIRGILIA

Give me excuse, good madam; I will obey you in every
thing hereafter.

VOLUMNIA

Let her alone, lady: as she is now, she will but
disease our better mirth.

VALERIA

In troth, I think she would. Fare you well, then.
Come, good sweet lady. Prithee, Virgilia, turn thy
solemnness out o' door. and go along with us.

VIRGILIA

No, at a word, madam; indeed, I must not. I wish
you much mirth.

VALERIA

Well, then, farewell.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Before Corioli.

Enter, with drum and colours, MARCIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, Captains and Soldiers. To them a Messenger

MARCIUS

Yonder comes news. A wager they have met.

LARTIUS

My horse to yours, no.

MARCIUS

'Tis done.

LARTIUS

Agreed.

MARCIUS

Say, has our general met the enemy?

Messenger

They lie in view; but have not spoke as yet.

LARTIUS

So, the good horse is mine.

MARCIUS

I'll buy him of you.

LARTIUS

No, I'll nor sell nor give him: lend you him I will
For half a hundred years. Summon the town.

MARCIUS

How far off lie these armies?

Messenger

Within this mile and half.

MARCIUS

Then shall we hear their 'larum, and they ours.
Now, Mars, I prithee, make us quick in work,
That we with smoking swords may march from hence,
To help our fielded friends! Come, blow thy blast.

They sound a parley. Enter two Senators with others on the walls

Tutus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

First Senator

No, nor a man that fears you less than he,
That's lesser than a little.

Drums afar off

Hark! our drums
Are bringing forth our youth. We'll break our walls,
Rather than they shall pound us up: our gates,

Which yet seem shut, we, have but pinn'd with rushes;
They'll open of themselves.

Alarum afar off

Hark you. far off!
There is Aufidius; list, what work he makes
Amongst your cloven army.

MARCIUS

O, they are at it!

LARTIUS

Their noise be our instruction. Ladders, ho!

Enter the army of the Volsces

MARCIUS

They fear us not, but issue forth their city.
Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight
With hearts more proof than shields. Advance,
brave Titus:
They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,
Which makes me sweat with wrath. Come on, my fellows:
He that retires I'll take him for a Volsce,
And he shall feel mine edge.

Alarum. The Romans are beat back to their trenches. Re-enter MARCIUS cursing

MARCIUS

All the contagion of the south light on you,
You shames of Rome! you herd of--Boils and plagues
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd
Further than seen and one infect another
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!
All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale
With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home,
Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe
And make my wars on you: look to't: come on;
If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,
As they us to our trenches followed.

Another alarum. The Volsces fly, and MARCIUS follows them to the gates

So, now the gates are ope: now prove good seconds:
'Tis for the followers fortune widens them,
Not for the fliers: mark me, and do the like.

Enters the gates

First Soldier

Fool-hardiness; not I.

Second Soldier

Nor I.

MARCIUS is shut in

First Soldier

See, they have shut him in.

All

To the pot, I warrant him.

Alarum continues

Re-enter TITUS LARTIUS

LARTIUS

What is become of Marcius?

All

Slain, sir, doubtless.

First Soldier

Following the fliers at the very heels,
With them he enters; who, upon the sudden,
Clapp'd to their gates: he is himself alone,
To answer all the city.

LARTIUS

O noble fellow!
Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,
And, when it bows, stands up. Thou art left, Marcius:
A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,
Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier
Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
Only in strokes; but, with thy grim looks and
The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds,
Thou madst thine enemies shake, as if the world
Were feverous and did tremble.

Re-enter MARCIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy

First Soldier

Look, sir.

LARTIUS

O, 'tis Marcius!
Let's fetch him off, or make remain alike.

They fight, and all enter the city

SCENE V. Corioli. A street.

Enter certain Romans, with spoils

First Roman

This will I carry to Rome.

Second Roman

And I this.

Third Roman

A murrain on't! I took this for silver.

Alarum continues still afar off

Enter MARCIUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet

MARCIUS

See here these movers that do prize their hours
At a crack'd drachm! Cushions, leaden spoons,
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would
Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up: down with them!
And hark, what noise the general makes! To him!
There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius,
Piercing our Romans: then, valiant Titus, take
Convenient numbers to make good the city;
Whilst I, with those that have the spirit, will haste
To help Cominius.

LARTIUS

Worthy sir, thou bleed'st;
Thy exercise hath been too violent for
A second course of fight.

MARCIUS

Sir, praise me not;
My work hath yet not warm'd me: fare you well:
The blood I drop is rather physical
Than dangerous to me: to Aufidius thus
I will appear, and fight.

LARTIUS

Now the fair goddess, Fortune,
Fall deep in love with thee; and her great charms
Misguide thy opposers' swords! Bold gentleman,
Prosperity be thy page!

MARCIUS

Thy friend no less
Than those she placeth highest! So, farewell.

LARTIUS

Thou worthiest Marcius!

Exit MARCIUS

Go, sound thy trumpet in the market-place;
Call thither all the officers o' the town,
Where they shall know our mind: away!

Exeunt

SCENE VI. Near the camp of Cominius.

Enter COMINIUS, as it were in retire, with soldiers

COMINIUS

Breathe you, my friends: well fought;
we are come off
Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,
Nor cowardly in retire: believe me, sirs,
We shall be charged again. Whiles we have struck,
By interims and conveying gusts we have heard
The charges of our friends. Ye Roman gods!
Lead their successes as we wish our own,
That both our powers, with smiling
fronts encountering,
May give you thankful sacrifice.

Enter a Messenger

Thy news?

Messenger

The citizens of Corioli have issued,
And given to Lartius and to Marcius battle:
I saw our party to their trenches driven,
And then I came away.

COMINIUS

Though thou speak'st truth,
Methinks thou speak'st not well.
How long is't since?

Messenger

Above an hour, my lord.

COMINIUS

'Tis not a mile; briefly we heard their drums:
How couldst thou in a mile confound an hour,
And bring thy news so late?

Messenger

Spies of the Volsces
Held me in chase, that I was forced to wheel
Three or four miles about, else had I, sir,
Half an hour since brought my report.

COMINIUS

Who's yonder,
That does appear as he were flay'd? O gods
He has the stamp of Marcius; and I have
Before-time seen him thus.

MARCIUS

[Within] Come I too late?

COMINIUS

The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabour
More than I know the sound of Marcius' tongue
From every meaner man.

Enter MARCIUS

MARCIUS

Come I too late?

COMINIUS

Ay, if you come not in the blood of others,
But mantled in your own.

MARCIUS

O, let me clip ye
In arms as sound as when I woo'd, in heart
As merry as when our nuptial day was done,
And tapers burn'd to bedward!

COMINIUS

Flower of warriors,
How is it with Titus Lartius?

MARCIUS

As with a man busied about decrees:
Condemning some to death, and some to exile;
Ransoming him, or pitying, threatening the other;
Holding Corioli in the name of Rome,

Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,
To let him slip at will.

COMINIUS

Where is that slave
Which told me they had beat you to your trenches?
Where is he? call him hither.

MARCIUS

Let him alone;
He did inform the truth: but for our gentlemen,
The common file--a plague! tribunes for them!--
The mouse ne'er shunn'd the cat as they did budge
From rascals worse than they.

COMINIUS

But how prevail'd you?

MARCIUS

Will the time serve to tell? I do not think.
Where is the enemy? are you lords o' the field?
If not, why cease you till you are so?

COMINIUS

Marcus,
We have at disadvantage fought and did
Retire to win our purpose.

MARCIUS

How lies their battle? know you on which side
They have placed their men of trust?

COMINIUS

As I guess, Marcus,
Their bands i' the vaward are the Antiates,
Of their best trust; o'er them Aufidius,
Their very heart of hope.

MARCIUS

I do beseech you,
By all the battles wherein we have fought,
By the blood we have shed together, by the vows
We have made to endure friends, that you directly
Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates;
And that you not delay the present, but,
Filling the air with swords advanced and darts,
We prove this very hour.

COMINIUS

Though I could wish
You were conducted to a gentle bath
And balms applied to, you, yet dare I never
Deny your asking: take your choice of those
That best can aid your action.

MARCIUS

Those are they
That most are willing. If any such be here--
As it were sin to doubt--that love this painting
Wherein you see me smear'd; if any fear
Lesser his person than an ill report;
If any think brave death outweighs bad life
And that his country's dearer than himself;
Let him alone, or so many so minded,
Wave thus, to express his disposition,
And follow Marcius.

They all shout and wave their swords, take him up in their arms, and cast up their caps

O, me alone! make you a sword of me?
If these shows be not outward, which of you
But is four Volsces? none of you but is
Able to bear against the great Aufidius
A shield as hard as his. A certain number,
Though thanks to all, must I select
from all: the rest
Shall bear the business in some other fight,
As cause will be obey'd. Please you to march;
And four shall quickly draw out my command,
Which men are best inclined.

COMINIUS

March on, my fellows:
Make good this ostentation, and you shall
Divide in all with us.

Exeunt

SCENE VII. The gates of Corioli.

TITUS LARTIUS, having set a guard upon Corioli, going with drum and trumpet toward COMINIUS and CAIUS MARCIUS, enters with Lieutenant, other Soldiers, and a Scout

LARTIUS

So, let the ports be guarded: keep your duties,
As I have set them down. If I do send, dispatch
Those centuries to our aid: the rest will serve
For a short holding: if we lose the field,
We cannot keep the town.

Lieutenant

Fear not our care, sir.

LARTIUS

Hence, and shut your gates upon's.
Our guider, come; to the Roman camp conduct us.

Exeunt

SCENE VIII. A field of battle.

Alarum as in battle. Enter, from opposite sides, MARCIUS and AUFIDIUS

MARCIUS

I'll fight with none but thee; for I do hate thee
Worse than a promise-breaker.

AUFIDIUS

We hate alike:
Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor
More than thy fame and envy. Fix thy foot.

MARCIUS

Let the first budger die the other's slave,
And the gods doom him after!

AUFIDIUS

If I fly, Marcius,
Holloa me like a hare.

MARCIUS

Within these three hours, Tullus,
Alone I fought in your Corioli walls,
And made what work I pleased: 'tis not my blood
Wherein thou seest me mask'd; for thy revenge
Wrench up thy power to the highest.

AUFIDIUS

Wert thou the Hector
That was the whip of your bragg'd progeny,
Thou shouldst not scape me here.

They fight, and certain Volsces come to the aid of AUFIDIUS. MARCIUS fights till they be driven in breathless

Officious, and not valiant, you have shamed me
In your condemned seconds.

Exeunt

SCENE IX. The Roman camp.

Flourish. Alarum. A retreat is sounded. Flourish. Enter, from one side, COMINIUS with the Romans; from the other side, MARCIUS, with his arm in a scarf

COMINIUS

If I should tell thee o'er this thy day's work,
Thou'dst not believe thy deeds: but I'll report it
Where senators shall mingle tears with smiles,
Where great patricians shall attend and shrug,
I' the end admire, where ladies shall be frightened,
And, gladly quaked, hear more; where the
dull tribunes,
That, with the fusty plebeians, hate thine honours,
Shall say against their hearts 'We thank the gods
Our Rome hath such a soldier.'
Yet camest thou to a morsel of this feast,
Having fully dined before.

Enter TITUS LARTIUS, with his power, from the pursuit

LARTIUS

O general,
Here is the steed, we the caparison:
Hadst thou beheld--

MARCIUS

Pray now, no more: my mother,
Who has a charter to extol her blood,
When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
As you have done; that's what I can; induced
As you have been; that's for my country:
He that has but effected his good will
Hath overta'en mine act.

COMINIUS

You shall not be
The grave of your deserving; Rome must know
The value of her own: 'twere a concealment
Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement,
To hide your doings; and to silence that,
Which, to the spire and top of praises vouch'd,
Would seem but modest: therefore, I beseech you
In sign of what you are, not to reward
What you have done--before our army hear me.

MARCIUS

I have some wounds upon me, and they smart
To hear themselves remember'd.

COMINIUS

Should they not,
Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude,
And tent themselves with death. Of all the horses,

Whereof we have ta'en good and good store, of all
The treasure in this field achieved and city,
We render you the tenth, to be ta'en forth,
Before the common distribution, at
Your only choice.

MARCIUS

I thank you, general;
But cannot make my heart consent to take
A bribe to pay my sword: I do refuse it;
And stand upon my common part with those
That have beheld the doing.

A long flourish. They all cry 'Marcius! Marcius!' cast up their caps and lances: COMINIUS and LARTIUS stand bare

MARCIUS

May these same instruments, which you profane,
Never sound more! when drums and trumpets shall
I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be
Made all of false-faced soothing!
When steel grows soft as the parasite's silk,
Let him be made a coverture for the wars!
No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd
My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch.--
Which, without note, here's many else have done,--
You shout me forth
In acclamations hyperbolical;
As if I loved my little should be dieted
In praises sauced with lies.

COMINIUS

Too modest are you;
More cruel to your good report than grateful
To us that give you truly: by your patience,
If 'gainst yourself you be incensed, we'll put you,
Like one that means his proper harm, in manacles,
Then reason safely with you. Therefore, be it known,
As to us, to all the world, that Caius Marcius
Wears this war's garland: in token of the which,
My noble steed, known to the camp, I give him,
With all his trim belonging; and from this time,
For what he did before Corioli, call him,
With all the applause and clamour of the host,
CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS! Bear
The addition nobly ever!

Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums

All

Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

CORIO LANUS

I will go wash;
And when my face is fair, you shall perceive
Whether I blush or no: howbeit, I thank you.
I mean to stride your steed, and at all times
To undercrest your good addition
To the fairness of my power.

COMINIUS

So, to our tent;
Where, ere we do repose us, we will write
To Rome of our success. You, Titus Lartius,
Must to Corioli back: send us to Rome
The best, with whom we may articulate,
For their own good and ours.

LARTIUS

I shall, my lord.

CORIO LANUS

The gods begin to mock me. I, that now
Refused most princely gifts, am bound to beg
Of my lord general.

COMINIUS

Take't; 'tis yours. What is't?

CORIO LANUS

I sometime lay here in Corioli
At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;
But then Aufidius was with in my view,
And wrath o'erwhelm'd my pity: I request you
To give my poor host freedom.

COMINIUS

O, well begg'd!
Were he the butcher of my son, he should
Be free as is the wind. Deliver him, Titus.

LARTIUS

Marcus, his name?

CORIO LANUS

By Jupiter! forgot.
I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.
Have we no wine here?

COMINIUS

Go we to our tent:
The blood upon your visage dries; 'tis time
It should be look'd to: come.

Exeunt

SCENE X. The camp of the Volsces.

A flourish. Cornets. Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, bloody, with two or three Soldiers

AUFIDIUS

The town is ta'en!

First Soldier

'Twill be deliver'd back on good condition.

AUFIDIUS

Condition!
I would I were a Roman; for I cannot,
Being a Volsce, be that I am. Condition!
What good condition can a treaty find
I' the part that is at mercy? Five times, Marcius,
I have fought with thee: so often hast thou beat me,
And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter
As often as we eat. By the elements,
If e'er again I meet him beard to beard,
He's mine, or I am his: mine emulation
Hath not that honour in't it had; for where
I thought to crush him in an equal force,
True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way
Or wrath or craft may get him.

First Soldier

He's the devil.

AUFIDIUS

Bolder, though not so subtle. My valour's poison'd
With only suffering stain by him; for him
Shall fly out of itself: nor sleep nor sanctuary,
Being naked, sick, nor fane nor Capitol,
The prayers of priests nor times of sacrifice,
Embarquements all of fury, shall lift up
Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst
My hate to Marcius: where I find him, were it
At home, upon my brother's guard, even there,
Against the hospitable canon, would I
Wash my fierce hand in's heart. Go you to the city;
Learn how 'tis held; and what they are that must
Be hostages for Rome.

First Soldier

Will not you go?

AUFIDIUS

I am attended at the cypress grove: I pray you--
'Tis south the city mills--bring me word thither
How the world goes, that to the pace of it
I may spur on my journey.

First Soldier

I shall, sir.

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS with the two Tribunes of the people, SICINIUS and BRUTUS.

MENENIUS

The augurer tells me we shall have news to-night.

BRUTUS

Good or bad?

MENENIUS

Not according to the prayer of the people, for they
love not Marcus.

SICINIUS

Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

MENENIUS

Pray you, who does the wolf love?

SICINIUS

The lamb.

MENENIUS

Ay, to devour him; as the hungry plebeians would the
noble Marcus.

BRUTUS

He's a lamb indeed, that baes like a bear.

MENENIUS

He's a bear indeed, that lives like a lamb. You two
are old men: tell me one thing that I shall ask you.

Both

Well, sir.

MENENIUS

In what enormity is Marcius poor in, that you two have not in abundance?

BRUTUS

He's poor in no one fault, but stored with all.

SICINIUS

Especially in pride.

BRUTUS

And topping all others in boasting.

MENENIUS

This is strange now: do you two know how you are censured here in the city, I mean of us o' the right-hand file? do you?

Both

Why, how are we censured?

MENENIUS

Because you talk of pride now,--will you not be angry?

Both

Well, well, sir, well.

MENENIUS

Why, 'tis no great matter; for a very little thief of occasion will rob you of a great deal of patience: give your dispositions the reins, and be angry at your pleasures; at the least if you take it as a pleasure to you in being so. You blame Marcius for being proud?

BRUTUS

We do it not alone, sir.

MENENIUS

I know you can do very little alone; for your helps are many, or else your actions would grow wondrous single: your abilities are too infant-like for doing much alone. You talk of pride: O that you could turn your eyes toward the napes of your necks,

and make but an interior survey of your good selves!
O that you could!

BRUTUS

What then, sir?

MENENIUS

Why, then you should discover a brace of unmeriting,
proud, violent, testy magistrates, alias fools, as
any in Rome.

SICINIUS

Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MENENIUS

I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that
loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying
Tiber in't; said to be something imperfect in
favouring the first complaint; hasty and tinder-like
upon too trivial motion; one that converses more
with the buttock of the night than with the forehead
of the morning: what I think I utter, and spend my
malice in my breath. Meeting two such wealsmen as
you are--I cannot call you Lycurguses--if the drink
you give me touch my palate adversely, I make a
crooked face at it. I can't say your worships have
delivered the matter well, when I find the ass in
compound with the major part of your syllables: and
though I must be content to bear with those that say
you are reverend grave men, yet they lie deadly that
tell you you have good faces. If you see this in
the map of my microcosm, follows it that I am known
well enough too? what barm can your bisson
conspectuities glean out of this character, if I be
known well enough too?

BRUTUS

Come, sir, come, we know you well enough.

MENENIUS

You know neither me, yourselves nor any thing. You
are ambitious for poor knaves' caps and legs: you
wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a
cause between an orange wife and a fosset-seller;
and then rejoin the controversy of three pence to a
second day of audience. When you are hearing a
matter between party and party, if you chance to be
pinched with the colic, you make faces like
mummers; set up the bloody flag against all

patience; and, in roaring for a chamber-pot,
dismiss the controversy bleeding the more entangled
by your hearing: all the peace you make in their
cause is, calling both the parties knaves. You are
a pair of strange ones.

BRUTUS

Come, come, you are well understood to be a
perfecter giber for the table than a necessary
bencher in the Capitol.

MENENIUS

Our very priests must become mockers, if they shall
encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When
you speak best unto the purpose, it is not worth the
wagging of your beards; and your beards deserve not
so honourable a grave as to stuff a botcher's
cushion, or to be entombed in an ass's pack-
saddle. Yet you must be saying, Marcius is proud;
who in a cheap estimation, is worth predecessors
since Deucalion, though peradventure some of the
best of 'em were hereditary hangmen. God-den to
your worships: more of your conversation would
infect my brain, being the herdsmen of the beastly
plebeians: I will be bold to take my leave of you.

BRUTUS and SICINIUS go aside

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and VALERIA

How now, my as fair as noble ladies,--and the moon,
were she earthly, no nobler,--whither do you follow
your eyes so fast?

VOLUMNIA

Honourable Menenius, my boy Marcius approaches; for
the love of Juno, let's go.

MENENIUS

Ha! Marcius coming home!

VOLUMNIA

Ay, worthy Menenius; and with most prosperous
approbation.

MENENIUS

Take my cap, Jupiter, and I thank thee. Hoo!
Marcius coming home!

VOLUMNIA VIRGILIA

Nay, 'tis true.

VOLUMNIA

Look, here's a letter from him: the state hath another, his wife another; and, I think, there's one at home for you.

MENENIUS

I will make my very house reel tonight: a letter for me!

VIRILIA

Yes, certain, there's a letter for you; I saw't.

MENENIUS

A letter for me! it gives me an estate of seven years' health; in which time I will make a lip at the physician: the most sovereign prescription in Galen is but empiricitic, and, to this preservative, of no better report than a horse-drench. Is he not wounded? he was wont to come home wounded.

VIRILIA

O, no, no, no.

VOLUMNIA

O, he is wounded; I thank the gods for't.

MENENIUS

So do I too, if it be not too much: brings a' victory in his pocket? the wounds become him.

VOLUMNIA

On's brows: Menenius, he comes the third time home with the oaken garland.

MENENIUS

Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

VOLUMNIA

Titus Lartius writes, they fought together, but Aufidius got off.

MENENIUS

And 'twas time for him too, I'll warrant him that: an he had stayed by him, I would not have been so fidiused for all the chests in Corioli, and the gold that's in them. Is the senate possessed of this?

VOLUMNIA

Good ladies, let's go. Yes, yes, yes; the senate has letters from the general, wherein he gives my son the whole name of the war: he hath in this action outdone his former deeds doubly

VALERIA

In troth, there's wondrous things spoke of him.

MENENIUS

Wondrous! ay, I warrant you, and not without his true purchasing.

VIRGILIA

The gods grant them true!

VOLUMNIA

True! pow, wow.

MENENIUS

True! I'll be sworn they are true.
Where is he wounded?

To the Tribunes

God save your good worships! Marcius is coming home: he has more cause to be proud. Where is he wounded?

VOLUMNIA

I' the shoulder and i' the left arm there will be large cicatrices to show the people, when he shall stand for his place. He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts i' the body.

MENENIUS

One i' the neck, and two i' the thigh,--there's nine that I know.

VOLUMNIA

He had, before this last expedition, twenty-five wounds upon him.

MENENIUS

Now it's twenty-seven: every gash was an enemy's grave.

A shout and flourish

Hark! the trumpets.

VOLUMNIA

These are the ushers of Marcius: before him he carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears: Death, that dark spirit, in 's nery arm doth lie; Which, being advanced, declines, and then men die.

A sennet. Trumpets sound. Enter COMINIUS the general, and TITUS LARTIUS; between them, CORIOLANUS, crowned with an oaken garland; with Captains and Soldiers, and a Herald

Herald

Know, Rome, that all alone Marcius did fight
Within Corioli gates: where he hath won,
With fame, a name to Caius Marcius; these
In honour follows Coriolanus.
Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

Flourish

All

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS

No more of this; it does offend my heart:
Pray now, no more.

COMINIUS

Look, sir, your mother!

CORIOLANUS

O,
You have, I know, petition'd all the gods
For my prosperity!

Kneels

VOLUMNIA

Nay, my good soldier, up;
My gentle Marcius, worthy Caius, and
By deed-achieving honour newly named,--
What is it?--Coriolanus must I call thee?--
But O, thy wife!

CORIOLANUS

My gracious silence, hail!
Wouldst thou have laugh'd had I come coffin'd home,
That weep'st to see me triumph? Ay, my dear,
Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,
And mothers that lack sons.

MENENIUS

Now, the gods crown thee!

CORIO LANUS

And live you yet?

To VALERIA

O my sweet lady, pardon.

VOLUMNIA

I know not where to turn: O, welcome home:
And welcome, general: and ye're welcome all.

MENENIUS

A hundred thousand welcomes. I could weep
And I could laugh, I am light and heavy. Welcome.
A curse begin at very root on's heart,
That is not glad to see thee! You are three
That Rome should dote on: yet, by the faith of men,
We have some old crab-trees here
at home that will not
Be grafted to your relish. Yet welcome, warriors:
We call a nettle but a nettle and
The faults of fools but folly.

COMINIUS

Ever right.

CORIO LANUS

Menenius ever, ever.

Herald

Give way there, and go on!

CORIO LANUS

[To VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA] Your hand, and yours:
Ere in our own house I do shade my head,
The good patricians must be visited;
From whom I have received not only greetings,
But with them change of honours.

VOLUMNIA

I have lived
To see inherited my very wishes
And the buildings of my fancy: only
There's one thing wanting, which I doubt not but
Our Rome will cast upon thee.

CORIO LANUS

Know, good mother,
I had rather be their servant in my way,
Than sway with them in theirs.

COMINIUS

On, to the Capitol!

Flourish. Cornets. Exeunt in state, as before. BRUTUS and SICINIUS come forward

BRUTUS

All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights
Are spectacled to see him: your prattling nurse
Into a rapture lets her baby cry
While she chats him: the kitchen malkin pins
Her richest lockram 'bout her reechy neck,
Clambering the walls to eye him: stalls, bulks, windows,
Are smother'd up, leads fill'd, and ridges horsed
With variable complexions, all agreeing
In earnestness to see him: seld-shown flamens
Do press among the popular throngs and puff
To win a vulgar station: or veil'd dames
Commit the war of white and damask in
Their nicely-gawded cheeks to the wanton spoil
Of Phoebus' burning kisses: such a pother
As if that whatsoever god who leads him
Were sliily crept into his human powers
And gave him graceful posture.

SICINIUS

On the sudden,
I warrant him consul.

BRUTUS

Then our office may,
During his power, go sleep.

SICINIUS

He cannot temperately transport his honours
From where he should begin and end, but will
Lose those he hath won.

BRUTUS

In that there's comfort.

SICINIUS

Doubt not
The commoners, for whom we stand, but they
Upon their ancient malice will forget
With the least cause these his new honours, which

That he will give them make I as little question
As he is proud to do't.

BRUTUS

I heard him swear,
Were he to stand for consul, never would he
Appear i' the market-place nor on him put
The napless vesture of humility;
Nor showing, as the manner is, his wounds
To the people, beg their stinking breaths.

SICINIUS

'Tis right.

BRUTUS

It was his word: O, he would miss it rather
Than carry it but by the suit of the gentry to him,
And the desire of the nobles.

SICINIUS

I wish no better
Than have him hold that purpose and to put it
In execution.

BRUTUS

'Tis most like he will.

SICINIUS

It shall be to him then as our good wills,
A sure destruction.

BRUTUS

So it must fall out
To him or our authorities. For an end,
We must suggest the people in what hatred
He still hath held them; that to's power he would
Have made them mules, silenced their pleaders and
Dispropertied their freedoms, holding them,
In human action and capacity,
Of no more soul nor fitness for the world
Than camels in the war, who have their provand
Only for bearing burdens, and sore blows
For sinking under them.

SICINIUS

This, as you say, suggested
At some time when his soaring insolence
Shall touch the people--which time shall not want,
If he be put upon 't; and that's as easy

As to set dogs on sheep--will be his fire
To kindle their dry stubble; and their blaze
Shall darken him for ever.

Enter a Messenger

BRUTUS

What's the matter?

Messenger

You are sent for to the Capitol. 'Tis thought
That Marcius shall be consul:
I have seen the dumb men throng to see him and
The blind to bear him speak: matrons flung gloves,
Ladies and maids their scarfs and handkerchers,
Upon him as he pass'd: the nobles bended,
As to Jove's statue, and the commons made
A shower and thunder with their caps and shouts:
I never saw the like.

BRUTUS

Let's to the Capitol;
And carry with us ears and eyes for the time,
But hearts for the event.

SICINIUS

Have with you.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same. The Capitol.

Enter two Officers, to lay cushions

First Officer

Come, come, they are almost here. How many stand
for consulships?

Second Officer

Three, they say: but 'tis thought of every one
Coriolanus will carry it.

First Officer

That's a brave fellow; but he's vengeance proud, and
loves not the common people.

Second Officer

Faith, there had been many great men that have
flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there
be many that they have loved, they know not
wherefore: so that, if they love they know not why,

they hate upon no better a ground: therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition; and out of his noble carelessness lets them plainly see't.

First Officer

If he did not care whether he had their love or no, he waved indifferently 'twixt doing them neither good nor harm: but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than can render it him; and leaves nothing undone that may fully discover him their opposite. Now, to seem to affect the malice and displeasure of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes, to flatter them for their love.

Second Officer

He hath deserved worthily of his country: and his ascent is not by such easy degrees as those who, having been supple and courteous to the people, bonneted, without any further deed to have them at an into their estimation and report: but he hath so planted his honours in their eyes, and his actions in their hearts, that for their tongues to be silent, and not confess so much, were a kind of ingrateful injury; to report otherwise, were a malice, that, giving itself the lie, would pluck reproof and rebuke from every ear that heard it.

First Officer

No more of him; he is a worthy man: make way, they are coming.

A sennet. Enter, with actors before them, COMINIUS the consul, MENENIUS, CORIOLANUS, Senators, SICINIUS and BRUTUS. The Senators take their places; the Tribunes take their Places by themselves. CORIOLANUS stands

MENENIUS

Having determined of the Volsces and
To send for Titus Lartius, it remains,
As the main point of this our after-meeting,
To gratify his noble service that
Hath thus stood for his country: therefore,
please you,
Most reverend and grave elders, to desire
The present consul, and last general
In our well-found successes, to report
A little of that worthy work perform'd
By Caius Marcius Coriolanus, whom

We met here both to thank and to remember
With honours like himself.

First Senator

Speak, good Cominius:
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think
Rather our state's defective for requital
Than we to stretch it out.

To the Tribunes

Masters o' the people,
We do request your kindest ears, and after,
Your loving motion toward the common body,
To yield what passes here.

SICINIUS

We are convented
Upon a pleasing treaty, and have hearts
Inclinable to honour and advance
The theme of our assembly.

BRUTUS

Which the rather
We shall be blest to do, if he remember
A kinder value of the people than
He hath hereto prized them at.

MENENIUS

That's off, that's off;
I would you rather had been silent. Please you
To hear Cominius speak?

BRUTUS

Most willingly;
But yet my caution was more pertinent
Than the rebuke you give it.

MENENIUS

He loves your people
But tie him not to be their bedfellow.
Worthy Cominius, speak.

CORIOLANUS offers to go away

Nay, keep your place.

First Senator

Sit, Coriolanus; never shame to hear
What you have nobly done.

CORIOLANUS

Your horror's pardon:
I had rather have my wounds to heal again
Than hear say how I got them.

BRUTUS

Sir, I hope
My words disbench'd you not.

CORIOLANUS

No, sir: yet oft,
When blows have made me stay, I fled from words.
You soothed not, therefore hurt not: but
your people,
I love them as they weigh.

MENENIUS

Pray now, sit down.

CORIOLANUS

I had rather have one scratch my head i' the sun
When the alarum were struck than idly sit
To hear my nothings monster'd.

Exit

MENENIUS

Masters of the people,
Your multiplying spawn how can he flatter--
That's thousand to one good one--when you now see
He had rather venture all his limbs for honour
Than one on's ears to hear it? Proceed, Cominius.

COMINIUS

I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus
Should not be utter'd feebly. It is held
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
Most dignifies the haver: if it be,
The man I speak of cannot in the world
Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,
When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought
Beyond the mark of others: our then dictator,
Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight,
When with his Amazonian chin he drove
The bristled lips before him: he bestrid
An o'er-press'd Roman and i' the consul's view
Slew three opposers: Tarquin's self he met,
And struck him on his knee: in that day's feats,
When he might act the woman in the scene,

He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed
Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
Man-enter'd thus, he waxed like a sea,
And in the brunt of seventeen battles since
He lurch'd all swords of the garland. For this last,
Before and in Corioli, let me say,
I cannot speak him home: he stopp'd the fliers;
And by his rare example made the coward
Turn terror into sport: as weeds before
A vessel under sail, so men obey'd
And fell below his stem: his sword, death's stamp,
Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
Was timed with dying cries: alone he enter'd
The mortal gate of the city, which he painted
With shunless destiny; aidless came off,
And with a sudden reinforcement struck
Corioli like a planet: now all's his:
When, by and by, the din of war gan pierce
His ready sense; then straight his doubled spirit
Re-quicken'd what in flesh was fatigate,
And to the battle came he; where he did
Run reeking o'er the lives of men, as if
'Twere a perpetual spoil: and till we call'd
Both field and city ours, he never stood
To ease his breast with panting.

MENENIUS

Worthy man!

First Senator

He cannot but with measure fit the honours
Which we devise him.

COMINIUS

Our spoils he kick'd at,
And look'd upon things precious as they were
The common muck of the world: he covets less
Than misery itself would give; rewards
His deeds with doing them, and is content
To spend the time to end it.

MENENIUS

He's right noble:
Let him be call'd for.

First Senator

Call Coriolanus.

Officer

He doth appear.

Re-enter CORIOLANUS

MENENIUS

The senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased
To make thee consul.

CORIOLANUS

I do owe them still
My life and services.

MENENIUS

It then remains
That you do speak to the people.

CORIOLANUS

I do beseech you,
Let me o'erleap that custom, for I cannot
Put on the gown, stand naked and entreat them,
For my wounds' sake, to give their suffrage: please you
That I may pass this doing.

SICINIUS

Sir, the people
Must have their voices; neither will they bate
One jot of ceremony.

MENENIUS

Put them not to't:
Pray you, go fit you to the custom and
Take to you, as your predecessors have,
Your honour with your form.

CORIOLANUS

It is apart
That I shall blush in acting, and might well
Be taken from the people.

BRUTUS

Mark you that?

CORIOLANUS

To brag unto them, thus I did, and thus;
Show them the unaching scars which I should hide,
As if I had received them for the hire
Of their breath only!

MENENIUS

Do not stand upon't.
We recommend to you, tribunes of the people,
Our purpose to them: and to our noble consul
Wish we all joy and honour.

Senators

To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

Flourish of cornets. Exeunt all but SICINIUS and BRUTUS

BRUTUS

You see how he intends to use the people.

SICINIUS

May they perceive's intent! He will require them,
As if he did contemn what he requested
Should be in them to give.

BRUTUS

Come, we'll inform them
Of our proceedings here: on the marketplace,
I know, they do attend us.

Exeunt

SCENE III. The same. The Forum.

Enter seven or eight Citizens

First Citizen

Once, if he do require our voices, we ought not to deny him.

Second Citizen

We may, sir, if we will.

Third Citizen

We have power in ourselves to do it, but it is a
power that we have no power to do; for if he show us
his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put our
tongues into those wounds and speak for them; so, if
he tell us his noble deeds, we must also tell him
our noble acceptance of them. Ingratitude is
monstrous, and for the multitude to be ingrateful,
were to make a monster of the multitude: of the
which we being members, should bring ourselves to be
monstrous members.

First Citizen

And to make us no better thought of, a little help
will serve; for once we stood up about the corn, he
himself stuck not to call us the many-headed multitude.

Third Citizen

We have been called so of many; not that our heads are some brown, some black, some auburn, some bald, but that our wits are so diversely coloured: and truly I think if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their consent of one direct way should be at once to all the points o' the compass.

Second Citizen

Think you so? Which way do you judge my wit would fly?

Third Citizen

Nay, your wit will not so soon out as another man's will; 'tis strongly wedged up in a block-head, but if it were at liberty, 'twould, sure, southward.

Second Citizen

Why that way?

Third Citizen

To lose itself in a fog, where being three parts melted away with rotten dews, the fourth would return for conscience sake, to help to get thee a wife.

Second Citizen

You are never without your tricks: you may, you may.

Third Citizen

Are you all resolved to give your voices? But that's no matter, the greater part carries it. I say, if he would incline to the people, there was never a worthier man.

Enter CORIOLANUS in a gown of humility, with MENENIUS

Here he comes, and in the gown of humility: mark his behavior. We are not to stay all together, but to come by him where he stands, by ones, by twos, and by threes. He's to make his requests by particulars; wherein every one of us has a single honour, in giving him our own voices with our own tongues: therefore follow me, and I direct you how you shall go by him.

All

Content, content.

Exeunt Citizens

MENENIUS

O sir, you are not right: have you not known
The worthiest men have done't?

CORIOLANUS

What must I say?
'I Pray, sir'--Plague upon't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace:--'Look, sir, my wounds!
I got them in my country's service, when
Some certain of your brethren roar'd and ran
From the noise of our own drums.'

MENENIUS

O me, the gods!
You must not speak of that: you must desire them
To think upon you.

CORIOLANUS

Think upon me! hang 'em!
I would they would forget me, like the virtues
Which our divines lose by 'em.

MENENIUS

You'll mar all:
I'll leave you: pray you, speak to 'em, I pray you,
In wholesome manner.

Exit

CORIOLANUS

Bid them wash their faces
And keep their teeth clean.

Re-enter two of the Citizens

So, here comes a brace.

Re-enter a third Citizen

You know the cause, air, of my standing here.

Third Citizen

We do, sir; tell us what hath brought you to't.

CORIOLANUS

Mine own desert.

Second Citizen

Your own desert!

CORIOLANUS

Ay, but not mine own desire.

Third Citizen

How not your own desire?

CORIOLANUS

No, sir, 'twas never my desire yet to trouble the poor with begging.

Third Citizen

You must think, if we give you any thing, we hope to gain by you.

CORIOLANUS

Well then, I pray, your price o' the consulship?

First Citizen

The price is to ask it kindly.

CORIOLANUS

Kindly! Sir, I pray, let me ha't: I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private. Your good voice, sir; what say you?

Second Citizen

You shall ha' it, worthy sir.

CORIOLANUS

A match, sir. There's in all two worthy voices begged. I have your alms: adieu.

Third Citizen

But this is something odd.

Second Citizen

An 'twere to give again,--but 'tis no matter.

Exeunt the three Citizens

Re-enter two other Citizens

CORIOLANUS

Pray you now, if it may stand with the tune of your voices that I may be consul, I have here the customary gown.

Fourth Citizen

You have deserved nobly of your country, and you have not deserved nobly.

CORIOLANUS

Your enigma?

Fourth Citizen

You have been a scourge to her enemies, you have been a rod to her friends; you have not indeed loved the common people.

CORIOLANUS

You should account me the more virtuous that I have not been common in my love. I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother, the people, to earn a dearer estimation of them; 'tis a condition they account gentle: and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practise the insinuating nod and be off to them most counterfeitly; that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment of some popular man and give it bountiful to the desirers. Therefore, beseech you, I may be consul.

Fifth Citizen

We hope to find you our friend; and therefore give you our voices heartily.

Fourth Citizen

You have received many wounds for your country.

CORIOLANUS

I will not seal your knowledge with showing them. I will make much of your voices, and so trouble you no further.

Both Citizens

The gods give you joy, sir, heartily!

Exeunt

CORIOLANUS

Most sweet voices!
Better it is to die, better to starve,
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.
Why in this woolvish toge should I stand here,
To beg of Hob and Dick, that do appear,
Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to't:
What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
And mountainous error be too highly heapt
For truth to o'er-peer. Rather than fool it so,
Let the high office and the honour go

To one that would do thus. I am half through;
The one part suffer'd, the other will I do.

Re-enter three Citizens more

Here come more voices.
Your voices: for your voices I have fought;
Watch'd for your voices; for Your voices bear
Of wounds two dozen odd; battles thrice six
I have seen and heard of; for your voices have
Done many things, some less, some more your voices:
Indeed I would be consul.

Sixth Citizen

He has done nobly, and cannot go without any honest
man's voice.

Seventh Citizen

Therefore let him be consul: the gods give him joy,
and make him good friend to the people!

All Citizens

Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul!

Exeunt

CORIOLANUS

Worthy voices!

Re-enter MENENIUS, with BRUTUS and SICINIUS

MENENIUS

You have stood your limitation; and the tribunes
Endue you with the people's voice: remains
That, in the official marks invested, you
Anon do meet the senate.

CORIOLANUS

Is this done?

SICINIUS

The custom of request you have discharged:
The people do admit you, and are summon'd
To meet anon, upon your approbation.

CORIOLANUS

Where? at the senate-house?

SICINIUS

There, Coriolanus.

CORIOLANUS

May I change these garments?

SICINIUS

You may, sir.

CORIOLANUS

That I'll straight do; and, knowing myself again,
Repair to the senate-house.

MENENIUS

I'll keep you company. Will you along?

BRUTUS

We stay here for the people.

SICINIUS

Fare you well.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS

He has it now, and by his looks methink
'Tis warm at 's heart.

BRUTUS

With a proud heart he wore his humble weeds.
will you dismiss the people?

Re-enter Citizens

SICINIUS

How now, my masters! have you chose this man?

First Citizen

He has our voices, sir.

BRUTUS

We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

Second Citizen

Amen, sir: to my poor unworthy notice,
He mock'd us when he begg'd our voices.

Third Citizen

Certainly
He flouted us downright.

First Citizen

No, 'tis his kind of speech: he did not mock us.

Second Citizen

Not one amongst us, save yourself, but says
He used us scornfully: he should have show'd us
His marks of merit, wounds received for's country.

SICINIUS

Why, so he did, I am sure.

Citizens

No, no; no man saw 'em.

Third Citizen

He said he had wounds, which he could show
in private;
And with his hat, thus waving it in scorn,
'I would be consul,' says he: 'aged custom,
But by your voices, will not so permit me;
Your voices therefore.' When we granted that,
Here was 'I thank you for your voices: thank you:
Your most sweet voices: now you have left
your voices,
I have no further with you.' Was not this mockery?

SICINIUS

Why either were you ignorant to see't,
Or, seeing it, of such childish friendliness
To yield your voices?

BRUTUS

Could you not have told him
As you were lesson'd, when he had no power,
But was a petty servant to the state,
He was your enemy, ever spake against
Your liberties and the charters that you bear
'I the body of the weal; and now, arriving
A place of potency and sway o' the state,
If he should still malignantly remain
Fast foe to the plebeii, your voices might
Be curses to yourselves? You should have said
That as his worthy deeds did claim no less
Than what he stood for, so his gracious nature
Would think upon you for your voices and
Translate his malice towards you into love,
Standing your friendly lord.

SICINIUS

Thus to have said,
As you were fore-advised, had touch'd his spirit
And tried his inclination; from him pluck'd

Either his gracious promise, which you might,
As cause had call'd you up, have held him to
Or else it would have gall'd his surly nature,
Which easily endures not article
Tying him to aught; so putting him to rage,
You should have ta'en the advantage of his choler
And pass'd him unelected.

BRUTUS

Did you perceive
He did solicit you in free contempt
When he did need your loves, and do you think
That his contempt shall not be bruising to you,
When he hath power to crush? Why, had your bodies
No heart among you? or had you tongues to cry
Against the rectorship of judgment?

SICINIUS

Have you
Ere now denied the asker? and now again
Of him that did not ask, but mock, bestow
Your sued-for tongues?

Third Citizen

He's not confirm'd; we may deny him yet.

Second Citizen

And will deny him:
I'll have five hundred voices of that sound.

First Citizen

I twice five hundred and their friends to piece 'em.

BRUTUS

Get you hence instantly, and tell those friends,
They have chose a consul that will from them take
Their liberties; make them of no more voice
Than dogs that are as often beat for barking
As therefore kept to do so.

SICINIUS

Let them assemble,
And on a safer judgment all revoke
Your ignorant election; enforce his pride,
And his old hate unto you; besides, forget not
With what contempt he wore the humble weed,
How in his suit he scorn'd you; but your loves,
Thinking upon his services, took from you
The apprehension of his present portance,

Which most gibingly, ungravely, he did fashion
After the inveterate hate he bears you.

BRUTUS

Lay
A fault on us, your tribunes; that we laboured,
No impediment between, but that you must
Cast your election on him.

SICINIUS

Say, you chose him
More after our commandment than as guided
By your own true affections, and that your minds,
Preoccupied with what you rather must do
Than what you should, made you against the grain
To voice him consul: lay the fault on us.

BRUTUS

Ay, spare us not. Say we read lectures to you.
How youngly he began to serve his country,
How long continued, and what stock he springs of,
The noble house o' the Marcians, from whence came
That Ancus Marcius, Numa's daughter's son,
Who, after great Hostilius, here was king;
Of the same house Publius and Quintus were,
That our beat water brought by conduits hither;
And [Censorinus,] nobly named so,
Twice being [by the people chosen] censor,
Was his great ancestor.

SICINIUS

One thus descended,
That hath beside well in his person wrought
To be set high in place, we did commend
To your remembrances: but you have found,
Scaling his present bearing with his past,
That he's your fixed enemy, and revoke
Your sudden approbation.

BRUTUS

Say, you ne'er had done't--
Harp on that still--but by our putting on;
And presently, when you have drawn your number,
Repair to the Capitol.

All

We will so: almost all
Repent in their election.

Exeunt Citizens

BRUTUS

Let them go on;
This mutiny were better put in hazard,
Than stay, past doubt, for greater:
If, as his nature is, he fall in rage
With their refusal, both observe and answer
The vantage of his anger.

SICINIUS

To the Capitol, come:
We will be there before the stream o' the people;
And this shall seem, as partly 'tis, their own,
Which we have goaded onward.

Exeunt

ACT III**SCENE I. Rome. A street.**

Cornets. Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, all the Gentry, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other Senators

CORIOLANUS

Tullus Aufidius then had made new head?

LARTIUS

He had, my lord; and that it was which caused
Our swifter composition.

CORIOLANUS

So then the Volsces stand but as at first,
Ready, when time shall prompt them, to make road.
Upon's again.

COMINIUS

They are worn, lord consul, so,
That we shall hardly in our ages see
Their banners wave again.

CORIOLANUS

Saw you Aufidius?

LARTIUS

On safe-guard he came to me; and did curse
Against the Volsces, for they had so vilely
Yielded the town: he is retired to Antium.

CORIOLANUS

Spoke he of me?

LARTIUS

He did, my lord.

CORIOLANUS

How? what?

LARTIUS

How often he had met you, sword to sword;
That of all things upon the earth he hated
Your person most, that he would pawn his fortunes
To hopeless restitution, so he might
Be call'd your vanquisher.

CORIOLANUS

At Antium lives he?

LARTIUS

At Antium.

CORIOLANUS

I wish I had a cause to seek him there,
To oppose his hatred fully. Welcome home.

Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS

Behold, these are the tribunes of the people,
The tongues o' the common mouth: I do despise them;
For they do prank them in authority,
Against all noble sufferance.

SICINIUS

Pass no further.

CORIOLANUS

Ha! what is that?

BRUTUS

It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

CORIOLANUS

What makes this change?

MENENIUS

The matter?

COMINIUS

Hath he not pass'd the noble and the common?

BRUTUS

Cominius, no.

CORIOLANUS

Have I had children's voices?

First Senator

Tribunes, give way; he shall to the market-place.

BRUTUS

The people are incensed against him.

SICINIUS

Stop,
Or all will fall in broil.

CORIOLANUS

Are these your herd?
Must these have voices, that can yield them now
And straight disclaim their tongues? What are
your offices?
You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?
Have you not set them on?

MENENIUS

Be calm, be calm.

CORIOLANUS

It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot,
To curb the will of the nobility:
Suffer't, and live with such as cannot rule
Nor ever will be ruled.

BRUTUS

Call't not a plot:
The people cry you mock'd them, and of late,
When corn was given them gratis, you repined;
Scandal'd the suppliants for the people, call'd them
Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

CORIOLANUS

Why, this was known before.

BRUTUS

Not to them all.

CORIOLANUS

Have you inform'd them sithence?

BRUTUS

How! I inform them!

CORIOLANUS

You are like to do such business.

BRUTUS

Not unlike,
Each way, to better yours.

CORIOLANUS

Why then should I be consul? By yond clouds,
Let me deserve so ill as you, and make me
Your fellow tribune.

SICINIUS

You show too much of that
For which the people stir: if you will pass
To where you are bound, you must inquire your way,
Which you are out of, with a gentler spirit,
Or never be so noble as a consul,
Nor yoke with him for tribune.

MENENIUS

Let's be calm.

COMINIUS

The people are abused; set on. This paltering
Becomes not Rome, nor has Coriolanus
Deserved this so dishonour'd rub, laid falsely
I' the plain way of his merit.

CORIOLANUS

Tell me of corn!
This was my speech, and I will speak't again--

MENENIUS

Not now, not now.

First Senator

Not in this heat, sir, now.

CORIOLANUS

Now, as I live, I will. My nobler friends,
I crave their pardons:
For the mutable, rank-scented many, let them
Regard me as I do not flatter, and
Therein behold themselves: I say again,
In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd,

and scatter'd,
By mingling them with us, the honour'd number,
Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that
Which they have given to beggars.

MENENIUS

Well, no more.

First Senator

No more words, we beseech you.

CORIOLANUS

How! no more!
As for my country I have shed my blood,
Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs
Coin words till their decay against those measles,
Which we disdain should tatter us, yet sought
The very way to catch them.

BRUTUS

You speak o' the people,
As if you were a god to punish, not
A man of their infirmity.

SICINIUS

'Twere well
We let the people know't.

MENENIUS

What, what? his cholera?

CORIOLANUS

Cholera!
Were I as patient as the midnight sleep,
By Jove, 'twould be my mind!

SICINIUS

It is a mind
That shall remain a poison where it is,
Not poison any further.

CORIOLANUS

Shall remain!
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? mark you
His absolute 'shall'?

COMINIUS

'Twas from the canon.

CORIOLANUS

'Shall'!
O good but most unwise patricians! why,
You grave but reckless senators, have you thus
Given Hydra here to choose an officer,
That with his peremptory 'shall,' being but
The horn and noise o' the monster's, wants not spirit
To say he'll turn your current in a ditch,
And make your channel his? If he have power
Then vail your ignorance; if none, awake
Your dangerous lenity. If you are learn'd,
Be not as common fools; if you are not,
Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,
If they be senators: and they are no less,
When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste
Most palates theirs. They choose their magistrate,
And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'
His popular 'shall' against a graver bench
Than ever frown in Greece. By Jove himself!
It makes the consuls base: and my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by the other.

COMINIUS

Well, on to the market-place.

CORIOLANUS

Whoever gave that counsel, to give forth
The corn o' the storehouse gratis, as 'twas used
Sometime in Greece,--

MENENIUS

Well, well, no more of that.

CORIOLANUS

Though there the people had more absolute power,
I say, they nourish'd disobedience, fed
The ruin of the state.

BRUTUS

Why, shall the people give
One that speaks thus their voice?

CORIOLANUS

I'll give my reasons,
More worthier than their voices. They know the corn
Was not our recompense, resting well assured

That ne'er did service for't: being press'd to the war,
Even when the navel of the state was touch'd,
They would not thread the gates. This kind of service
Did not deserve corn gratis. Being i' the war
Their mutinies and revolts, wherein they show'd
Most valour, spoke not for them: the accusation
Which they have often made against the senate,
All cause unborn, could never be the motive
Of our so frank donation. Well, what then?
How shall this bisson multitude digest
The senate's courtesy? Let deeds express
What's like to be their words: 'we did request it;
We are the greater poll, and in true fear
They gave us our demands.' Thus we debase
The nature of our seats and make the rabble
Call our cares fears; which will in time
Break ope the locks o' the senate and bring in
The crows to peck the eagles.

MENENIUS

Come, enough.

BRUTUS

Enough, with over-measure.

CORIOLANUS

No, take more:
What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal what I end withal! This double worship,
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
Insult without all reason, where gentry, title, wisdom,
Cannot conclude but by the yea and no
Of general ignorance,--it must omit
Real necessities, and give way the while
To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd,
it follows,
Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you,--
You that will be less fearful than discreet,
That love the fundamental part of state
More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer
A noble life before a long, and wish
To jump a body with a dangerous physic
That's sure of death without it, at once pluck out
The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick
The sweet which is their poison: your dishonour
Mangles true judgment and bereaves the state
Of that integrity which should become't,
Not having the power to do the good it would,
For the in which doth control't.

BRUTUS

Has said enough.

SICINIUS

Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do.

CORIOLANUS

Thou wretch, despite o'erwhelm thee!
What should the people do with these bald tribunes?
On whom depending, their obedience fails
To the greater bench: in a rebellion,
When what's not meet, but what must be, was law,
Then were they chosen: in a better hour,
Let what is meet be said it must be meet,
And throw their power i' the dust.

BRUTUS

Manifest treason!

SICINIUS

This a consul? no.

BRUTUS

The aediles, ho!

Enter an AEdile

Let him be apprehended.

SICINIUS

Go, call the people:

Exit AEdile

in whose name myself
Attach thee as a traitorous innovator,
A foe to the public weal: obey, I charge thee,
And follow to thine answer.

CORIOLANUS

Hence, old goat!
Senators, & C We'll surety him.

COMINIUS

Aged sir, hands off.

CORIOLANUS

Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy bones
Out of thy garments.

SICINIUS

Help, ye citizens!

Enter a rabble of Citizens (Plebeians), with the AEdiles

MENENIUS

On both sides more respect.

SICINIUS

Here's he that would take from you all your power.

BRUTUS

Seize him, AEdiles!

Citizens

Down with him! down with him!
Senators, & C Weapons, weapons, weapons!

They all bustle about CORIOLANUS, crying

'Tribunes!' 'Patricians!' 'Citizens!' 'What, ho!'
'Sicinius!' 'Brutus!' 'Coriolanus!' 'Citizens!'
'Peace, peace, peace!' 'Stay, hold, peace!'

MENENIUS

What is about to be? I am out of breath;
Confusion's near; I cannot speak. You, tribunes
To the people! Coriolanus, patience!
Speak, good Sicinius.

SICINIUS

Hear me, people; peace!

Citizens

Let's hear our tribune: peace Speak, speak, speak.

SICINIUS

You are at point to lose your liberties:
Marcius would have all from you; Marcius,
Whom late you have named for consul.

MENENIUS

Fie, fie, fie!
This is the way to kindle, not to quench.

First Senator

To unbuild the city and to lay all flat.

SICINIUS

What is the city but the people?

Citizens

True,
The people are the city.

BRUTUS

By the consent of all, we were establish'd
The people's magistrates.

Citizens

You so remain.

MENENIUS

And so are like to do.

COMINIUS

That is the way to lay the city flat;
To bring the roof to the foundation,
And bury all, which yet distinctly ranges,
In heaps and piles of ruin.

SICINIUS

This deserves death.

BRUTUS

Or let us stand to our authority,
Or let us lose it. We do here pronounce,
Upon the part o' the people, in whose power
We were elected theirs, Marcius is worthy
Of present death.

SICINIUS

Therefore lay hold of him;
Bear him to the rock Tarpeian, and from thence
Into destruction cast him.

BRUTUS

AEdiles, seize him!

Citizens

Yield, Marcius, yield!

MENENIUS

Hear me one word;
Beseech you, tribunes, hear me but a word.

AEdile

Peace, peace!

MENENIUS

[To BRUTUS] Be that you seem, truly your
country's friend,
And temperately proceed to what you would
Thus violently redress.

BRUTUS

Sir, those cold ways,
That seem like prudent helps, are very poisonous
Where the disease is violent. Lay hands upon him,
And bear him to the rock.

CORIOLANUS

No, I'll die here.

Drawing his sword

There's some among you have beheld me fighting:
Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.

MENENIUS

Down with that sword! Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

BRUTUS

Lay hands upon him.

COMINIUS

Help Marcius, help,
You that be noble; help him, young and old!

Citizens

Down with him, down with him!

In this mutiny, the Tribunes, the AEdiles, and the People, are beat in

MENENIUS

Go, get you to your house; be gone, away!
All will be naught else.

Second Senator

Get you gone.

COMINIUS

Stand fast;
We have as many friends as enemies.

MENENIUS

Sham it be put to that?

First Senator

The gods forbid!
I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house;
Leave us to cure this cause.

MENENIUS

For 'tis a sore upon us,
You cannot tent yourself: be gone, beseech you.

COMINIUS

Come, sir, along with us.

CORIOLANUS

I would they were barbarians--as they are,
Though in Rome litter'd--not Romans--as they are not,
Though calved i' the porch o' the Capitol--

MENENIUS

Be gone;
Put not your worthy rage into your tongue;
One time will owe another.

CORIOLANUS

On fair ground
I could beat forty of them.

COMINIUS

I could myself
Take up a brace o' the best of them; yea, the
two tribunes:
But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic;
And manhood is call'd foolery, when it stands
Against a falling fabric. Will you hence,
Before the tag return? whose rage doth rend
Like interrupted waters and o'erbear
What they are used to bear.

MENENIUS

Pray you, be gone:
I'll try whether my old wit be in request
With those that have but little: this must be patch'd
With cloth of any colour.

COMINIUS

Nay, come away.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others

A Patrician

This man has marr'd his fortune.

MENENIUS

His nature is too noble for the world:
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
Or Jove for's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;
And, being angry, does forget that ever
He heard the name of death.

A noise within

Here's goodly work!

Second Patrician

I would they were abed!

MENENIUS

I would they were in Tiber! What the vengeance!
Could he not speak 'em fair?

Re-enter BRUTUS and SICINIUS, with the rabble

SICINIUS

Where is this viper
That would depopulate the city and
Be every man himself?

MENENIUS

You worthy tribunes,--

SICINIUS

He shall be thrown down the Tarpeian rock
With rigorous hands: he hath resisted law,
And therefore law shall scorn him further trial
Than the severity of the public power
Which he so sets at nought.

First Citizen

He shall well know
The noble tribunes are the people's mouths,
And we their hands.

Citizens

He shall, sure on't.

MENENIUS

Sir, sir,--

SICINIUS

Peace!

MENENIUS

Do not cry havoc, where you should but hunt
With modest warrant.

SICINIUS

Sir, how comes't that you
Have help to make this rescue?

MENENIUS

Hear me speak:
As I do know the consul's worthiness,
So can I name his faults,--

SICINIUS

Consul! what consul?

MENENIUS

The consul Coriolanus.

BRUTUS

He consul!

Citizens

No, no, no, no, no.

MENENIUS

If, by the tribunes' leave, and yours, good people,
I may be heard, I would crave a word or two;
The which shall turn you to no further harm
Than so much loss of time.

SICINIUS

Speak briefly then;
For we are peremptory to dispatch
This viperous traitor: to eject him hence
Were but one danger, and to keep him here
Our certain death: therefore it is decreed
He dies to-night.

MENENIUS

Now the good gods forbid
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam
Should now eat up her own!

SICINIUS

He's a disease that must be cut away.

MENENIUS

O, he's a limb that has but a disease;
Mortal, to cut it off; to cure it, easy.
What has he done to Rome that's worthy death?
Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost--
Which, I dare vouch, is more than that he hath,
By many an ounce--he dropp'd it for his country;
And what is left, to lose it by his country,
Were to us all, that do't and suffer it,
A brand to the end o' the world.

SICINIUS

This is clean kam.

BRUTUS

Merely awry: when he did love his country,
It honour'd him.

MENENIUS

The service of the foot
Being once gangrened, is not then respected
For what before it was.

BRUTUS

We'll hear no more.
Pursue him to his house, and pluck him thence:
Lest his infection, being of catching nature,
Spread further.

MENENIUS

One word more, one word.
This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find
The harm of unscann'd swiftness, will too late
Tie leaden pounds to's heels. Proceed by process;
Lest parties, as he is beloved, break out,
And sack great Rome with Romans.

BRUTUS

If it were so,--

SICINIUS

What do ye talk?
Have we not had a taste of his obedience?
Our aediles smote? ourselves resisted? Come.

MENENIUS

Consider this: he has been bred i' the wars
Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd

In bolted language; meal and bran together
He throws without distinction. Give me leave,
I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him
Where he shall answer, by a lawful form,
In peace, to his utmost peril.

First Senator

Noble tribunes,
It is the humane way: the other course
Will prove too bloody, and the end of it
Unknown to the beginning.

SICINIUS

Noble Menenius,
Be you then as the people's officer.
Masters, lay down your weapons.

BRUTUS

Go not home.

SICINIUS

Meet on the market-place. We'll attend you there:
Where, if you bring not Marcius, we'll proceed
In our first way.

MENENIUS

I'll bring him to you.

To the Senators

Let me desire your company: he must come,
Or what is worst will follow.

First Senator

Pray you, let's to him.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A room in CORIOLANUS'S house.

Enter CORIOLANUS with Patricians

CORIOLANUS

Let them puff all about mine ears, present me
Death on the wheel or at wild horses' heels,
Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock,
That the precipitation might down stretch
Below the beam of sight, yet will I still
Be thus to them.

A Patrician

You do the nobler.

CORIOLANUS

I muse my mother
Does not approve me further, who was wont
To call them woollen vassals, things created
To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads
In congregations, to yawn, be still and wonder,
When one but of my ordinance stood up
To speak of peace or war.

Enter VOLUMNIA

I talk of you:
Why did you wish me milder? would you have me
False to my nature? Rather say I play
The man I am.

VOLUMNIA

O, sir, sir, sir,
I would have had you put your power well on,
Before you had worn it out.

CORIOLANUS

Let go.

VOLUMNIA

You might have been enough the man you are,
With striving less to be so; lesser had been
The thwartings of your dispositions, if
You had not show'd them how ye were disposed
Ere they lack'd power to cross you.

CORIOLANUS

Let them hang.

A Patrician

Ay, and burn too.

Enter MENENIUS and Senators

MENENIUS

Come, come, you have been too rough, something
too rough;
You must return and mend it.

First Senator

There's no remedy;
Unless, by not so doing, our good city
Cleave in the midst, and perish.

VOLUMNIA

Pray, be counsell'd:
I have a heart as little apt as yours,
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
To better vantage.

MENENIUS

Well said, noble woman?
Before he should thus stoop to the herd, but that
The violent fit o' the time craves it as physic
For the whole state, I would put mine armour on,
Which I can scarcely bear.

CORIOLANUS

What must I do?

MENENIUS

Return to the tribunes.

CORIOLANUS

Well, what then? what then?

MENENIUS

Repent what you have spoke.

CORIOLANUS

For them! I cannot do it to the gods;
Must I then do't to them?

VOLUMNIA

You are too absolute;
Though therein you can never be too noble,
But when extremities speak. I have heard you say,
Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,
I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,
In peace what each of them by the other lose,
That they combine not there.

CORIOLANUS

Tush, tush!

MENENIUS

A good demand.

VOLUMNIA

If it be honour in your wars to seem
The same you are not, which, for your best ends,
You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse,

That it shall hold companionship in peace
With honour, as in war, since that to both
It stands in like request?

CORIOLANUS

Why force you this?

VOLUMNIA

Because that now it lies you on to speak
To the people; not by your own instruction,
Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
But with such words that are but rooted in
Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables
Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.
Now, this no more dishonours you at all
Than to take in a town with gentle words,
Which else would put you to your fortune and
The hazard of much blood.
I would dissemble with my nature where
My fortunes and my friends at stake required
I should do so in honour: I am in this,
Your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles;
And you will rather show our general louts
How you can frown than spend a fawn upon 'em,
For the inheritance of their loves and safeguard
Of what that want might ruin.

MENENIUS

Noble lady!
Come, go with us; speak fair: you may salve so,
Not what is dangerous present, but the loss
Of what is past.

VOLUMNIA

I prithee now, my son,
Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand;
And thus far having stretch'd it--here be with them--
Thy knee bussing the stones--for in such business
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
More learned than the ears--waving thy head,
Which often, thus, correcting thy stout heart,
Now humble as the ripest mulberry
That will not hold the handling: or say to them,
Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils
Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,
Were fit for thee to use as they to claim,
In asking their good loves, but thou wilt frame
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far
As thou hast power and person.

MENENIUS

This but done,
Even as she speaks, why, their hearts were yours;
For they have pardons, being ask'd, as free
As words to little purpose.

VOLUMNIA

Prithee now,
Go, and be ruled: although I know thou hadst rather
Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf
Than flatter him in a bower. Here is Cominius.

Enter COMINIUS

COMINIUS

I have been i' the market-place; and, sir, 'tis fit
You make strong party, or defend yourself
By calmness or by absence: all's in anger.

MENENIUS

Only fair speech.

COMINIUS

I think 'twill serve, if he
Can thereto frame his spirit.

VOLUMNIA

He must, and will
Prithee now, say you will, and go about it.

CORIOLANUS

Must I go show them my unbarbed sconce?
Must I with base tongue give my noble heart
A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't:
Yet, were there but this single plot to lose,
This mould of Marcius, they to dust should grind it
And throw't against the wind. To the market-place!
You have put me now to such a part which never
I shall discharge to the life.

COMINIUS

Come, come, we'll prompt you.

VOLUMNIA

I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hast said
My praises made thee first a soldier, so,
To have my praise for this, perform a part
Thou hast not done before.

CORIOLANUS

Well, I must do't:

Away, my disposition, and possess me
Some harlot's spirit! my throat of war be turn'd,
Which quired with my drum, into a pipe
Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice
That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves
Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up
The glasses of my sight! a beggar's tongue
Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,
Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his
That hath received an alms! I will not do't,
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth
And by my body's action teach my mind
A most inherent baseness.

VOLUMNIA

At thy choice, then:

To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin; let
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list
Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
But owe thy pride thyself.

CORIOLANUS

Pray, be content:

Mother, I am going to the market-place;
Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,
Cog their hearts from them, and come home beloved
Of all the trades in Rome. Look, I am going:
Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul;
Or never trust to what my tongue can do
I' the way of flattery further.

VOLUMNIA

Do your will.

Exit

COMINIUS

Away! the tribunes do attend you: arm yourself
To answer mildly; for they are prepared
With accusations, as I hear, more strong
Than are upon you yet.

CORIOLANUS

The word is 'mildly.' Pray you, let us go:
Let them accuse me by invention, I
Will answer in mine honour.

MENENIUS

Ay, but mildly.

CORIOLANUS

Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

Exeunt

SCENE III. The same. The Forum.

Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS

BRUTUS

In this point charge him home, that he affects
Tyrannical power: if he evade us there,
Enforce him with his envy to the people,
And that the spoil got on the Antiates
Was ne'er distributed.

Enter an AEdile

What, will he come?

AEdile

He's coming.

BRUTUS

How accompanied?

AEdile

With old Menenius, and those senators
That always favour'd him.

SICINIUS

Have you a catalogue
Of all the voices that we have procured
Set down by the poll?

AEdile

I have; 'tis ready.

SICINIUS

Have you collected them by tribes?

AEdile

I have.

SICINIUS

Assemble presently the people hither;
And when they bear me say 'It shall be so
I' the right and strength o' the commons,' be it either
For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them
If I say fine, cry 'Fine;' if death, cry 'Death.'
Insisting on the old prerogative
And power i' the truth o' the cause.

AEdile

I shall inform them.

BRUTUS

And when such time they have begun to cry,
Let them not cease, but with a din confused
Enforce the present execution
Of what we chance to sentence.

AEdile

Very well.

SICINIUS

Make them be strong and ready for this hint,
When we shall hap to give 't them.

BRUTUS

Go about it.

Exit AEdile

Put him to choler straight: he hath been used
Ever to conquer, and to have his worth
Of contradiction: being once chafed, he cannot
Be rein'd again to temperance; then he speaks
What's in his heart; and that is there which looks
With us to break his neck.

SICINIUS

Well, here he comes.

Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS, with Senators and Patricians

MENENIUS

Calmly, I do beseech you.

CORIOLANUS

Ay, as an ostler, that for the poorest piece
Will bear the knave by the volume. The honour'd gods
Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men! plant love among 's!

Throng our large temples with the shows of peace,
And not our streets with war!

First Senator

Amen, amen.

MENENIUS

A noble wish.

Re-enter AEdile, with Citizens

SICINIUS

Draw near, ye people.

AEdile

List to your tribunes. Audience: peace, I say!

CORIOLANUS

First, hear me speak.

Both Tribunes

Well, say. Peace, ho!

CORIOLANUS

Shall I be charged no further than this present?
Must all determine here?

SICINIUS

I do demand,
If you submit you to the people's voices,
Allow their officers and are content
To suffer lawful censure for such faults
As shall be proved upon you?

CORIOLANUS

I am content.

MENENIUS

Lo, citizens, he says he is content:
The warlike service he has done, consider; think
Upon the wounds his body bears, which show
Like graves i' the holy churchyard.

CORIOLANUS

Scratches with briers,
Scars to move laughter only.

MENENIUS

Consider further,
That when he speaks not like a citizen,
You find him like a soldier: do not take
His rougher accents for malicious sounds,
But, as I say, such as become a soldier,
Rather than envy you.

COMINIUS

Well, well, no more.

CORIOLANUS

What is the matter
That being pass'd for consul with full voice,
I am so dishonour'd that the very hour
You take it off again?

SICINIUS

Answer to us.

CORIOLANUS

Say, then: 'tis true, I ought so.

SICINIUS

We charge you, that you have contrived to take
From Rome all season'd office and to wind
Yourself into a power tyrannical;
For which you are a traitor to the people.

CORIOLANUS

How! traitor!

MENENIUS

Nay, temperately; your promise.

CORIOLANUS

The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!
Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
In thy hand clutch'd as many millions, in
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say
'Thou liest' unto thee with a voice as free
As I do pray the gods.

SICINIUS

Mark you this, people?

Citizens

To the rock, to the rock with him!

SICINIUS

Peace!

We need not put new matter to his charge:
What you have seen him do and heard him speak,
Beating your officers, cursing yourselves,
Opposing laws with strokes and here defying
Those whose great power must try him; even this,
So criminal and in such capital kind,
Deserves the extremest death.

BRUTUS

But since he hath
Served well for Rome,--

CORIOLANUS

What do you prate of service?

BRUTUS

I talk of that, that know it.

CORIOLANUS

You?

MENENIUS

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

COMINIUS

Know, I pray you,--

CORIOLANUS

I know no further:
Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, raving, pent to linger
But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word;
Nor cheque my courage for what they can give,
To have't with saying 'Good morrow.'

SICINIUS

For that he has,
As much as in him lies, from time to time
Envied against the people, seeking means
To pluck away their power, as now at last
Given hostile strokes, and that not in the presence
Of dreaded justice, but on the ministers
That do distribute it; in the name o' the people
And in the power of us the tribunes, we,
Even from this instant, banish him our city,

In peril of precipitation
From off the rock Tarpeian never more
To enter our Rome gates: i' the people's name,
I say it shall be so.

Citizens

It shall be so, it shall be so; let him away:
He's banish'd, and it shall be so.

COMINIUS

Hear me, my masters, and my common friends,--

SICINIUS

He's sentenced; no more hearing.

COMINIUS

Let me speak:

I have been consul, and can show for Rome
Her enemies' marks upon me. I do love
My country's good with a respect more tender,
More holy and profound, than mine own life,
My dear wife's estimate, her womb's increase,
And treasure of my loins; then if I would
Speak that,--

SICINIUS

We know your drift: speak what?

BRUTUS

There's no more to be said, but he is banish'd,
As enemy to the people and his country:
It shall be so.

Citizens

It shall be so, it shall be so.

CORIOLANUS

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air, I banish you;
And here remain with your uncertainty!
Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
Fan you into despair! Have the power still
To banish your defenders; till at length
Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,
Making not reservation of yourselves,
Still your own foes, deliver you as most

Abated captives to some nation
That won you without blows! Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
There is a world elsewhere.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, Senators, and Patricians

AEdile

The people's enemy is gone, is gone!

Citizens

Our enemy is banish'd! he is gone! Hoo! hoo!

Shouting, and throwing up their caps

SICINIUS

Go, see him out at gates, and follow him,
As he hath followed you, with all despite;
Give him deserved vexation. Let a guard
Attend us through the city.

Citizens

Come, come; let's see him out at gates; come.
The gods preserve our noble tribunes! Come.

Exeunt

ACT IV

SCENE I. Rome. Before a gate of the city.

Enter CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, COMINIUS, with the young Nobility of Rome

CORIOLANUS

Come, leave your tears: a brief farewell: the beast
With many heads butts me away. Nay, mother,
Where is your ancient courage? you were used
To say extremity was the trier of spirits;
That common chances common men could bear;
That when the sea was calm all boats alike
Show'd mastership in floating; fortune's blows,
When most struck home, being gentle wounded, craves
A noble cunning: you were used to load me
With precepts that would make invincible
The heart that conn'd them.

VIRGILIA

O heavens! O heavens!

CORIOLANUS

Nay! prithee, woman,--

VOLUMNIA

Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,
And occupations perish!

CORIOLANUS

What, what, what!
I shall be loved when I am lack'd. Nay, mother.
Resume that spirit, when you were wont to say,
If you had been the wife of Hercules,
Six of his labours you'd have done, and saved
Your husband so much sweat. Cominius,
Droop not; adieu. Farewell, my wife, my mother:
I'll do well yet. Thou old and true Menenius,
Thy tears are salter than a younger man's,
And venomous to thine eyes. My sometime general,
I have seen thee stem, and thou hast oft beheld
Heart-hardening spectacles; tell these sad women
'Tis fond to wail inevitable strokes,
As 'tis to laugh at 'em. My mother, you wot well
My hazards still have been your solace: and
Believe't not lightly--though I go alone,
Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen
Makes fear'd and talk'd of more than seen--your son
Will or exceed the common or be caught
With cautelous baits and practise.

VOLUMNIA

My first son.
Whither wilt thou go? Take good Cominius
With thee awhile: determine on some course,
More than a wild exposture to each chance
That starts i' the way before thee.

CORIOLANUS

O the gods!

COMINIUS

I'll follow thee a month, devise with thee
Where thou shalt rest, that thou mayst hear of us
And we of thee: so if the time thrust forth
A cause for thy repeal, we shall not send
O'er the vast world to seek a single man,
And lose advantage, which doth ever cool
I' the absence of the needer.

CORIOLANUS

Fare ye well:
Thou hast years upon thee; and thou art too full
Of the wars' surfeits, to go rove with one

That's yet unbruised: bring me but out at gate.
Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and
My friends of noble touch, when I am forth,
Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come.
While I remain above the ground, you shall
Hear from me still, and never of me aught
But what is like me formerly.

MENENIUS

That's worthily
As any ear can hear. Come, let's not weep.
If I could shake off but one seven years
From these old arms and legs, by the good gods,
I'd with thee every foot.

CORIOLANUS

Give me thy hand: Come.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same. A street near the gate.

Enter SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and an AEdile

SICINIUS

Bid them all home; he's gone, and we'll no further.
The nobility are vex'd, whom we see have sided
In his behalf.

BRUTUS

Now we have shown our power,
Let us seem humbler after it is done
Than when it was a-doing.

SICINIUS

Bid them home:
Say their great enemy is gone, and they
Stand in their ancient strength.

BRUTUS

Dismiss them home.

Exit AEdile

Here comes his mother.

SICINIUS

Let's not meet her.

BRUTUS

Why?

SICINIUS

They say she's mad.

BRUTUS

They have ta'en note of us: keep on your way.

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS

VOLUMNIA

O, ye're well met: the hoarded plague o' the gods
Requite your love!

MENENIUS

Peace, peace; be not so loud.

VOLUMNIA

If that I could for weeping, you should hear,--
Nay, and you shall hear some.

To BRUTUS

Will you be gone?

VIRGILIA

[To SICINIUS] You shall stay too: I would I had the power
To say so to my husband.

SICINIUS

Are you mankind?

VOLUMNIA

Ay, fool; is that a shame? Note but this fool.
Was not a man my father? Hadst thou foxship
To banish him that struck more blows for Rome
Than thou hast spoken words?

SICINIUS

O blessed heavens!

VOLUMNIA

More noble blows than ever thou wise words;
And for Rome's good. I'll tell thee what; yet go:
Nay, but thou shalt stay too: I would my son
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,
His good sword in his hand.

SICINIUS

What then?

VIRGILIA

What then!
He'd make an end of thy posterity.

VOLUMNIA

Bastards and all.
Good man, the wounds that he does bear for Rome!

MENENIUS

Come, come, peace.

SICINIUS

I would he had continued to his country
As he began, and not unknit himself
The noble knot he made.

BRUTUS

I would he had.

VOLUMNIA

'I would he had!' 'Twas you incensed the rabble:
Cats, that can judge as fitly of his worth
As I can of those mysteries which heaven
Will not have earth to know.

BRUTUS

Pray, let us go.

VOLUMNIA

Now, pray, sir, get you gone:
You have done a brave deed. Ere you go, hear this:--
As far as doth the Capitol exceed
The meanest house in Rome, so far my son--
This lady's husband here, this, do you see--
Whom you have banish'd, does exceed you all.

BRUTUS

Well, well, we'll leave you.

SICINIUS

Why stay we to be baited
With one that wants her wits?

VOLUMNIA

Take my prayers with you.

Exeunt Tribunes

I would the gods had nothing else to do
But to confirm my curses! Could I meet 'em

But once a-day, it would unclog my heart
Of what lies heavy to't.

MENENIUS

You have told them home;
And, by my troth, you have cause. You'll sup with me?

VOLUMNIA

Anger's my meat; I sup upon myself,
And so shall starve with feeding. Come, let's go:
Leave this faint puling and lament as I do,
In anger, Juno-like. Come, come, come.

MENENIUS

Fie, fie, fie!

Exeunt

SCENE III. A highway between Rome and Antium.

Enter a Roman and a Volsce, meeting

Roman

I know you well, sir, and you know
me: your name, I think, is Adrian.

Volsce

It is so, sir: truly, I have forgot you.

Roman

I am a Roman; and my services are,
as you are, against 'em: know you me yet?

Volsce

Nicanor? no.

Roman

The same, sir.

Volsce

You had more beard when I last saw you; but your
favour is well approved by your tongue. What's the
news in Rome? I have a note from the Volscian state,
to find you out there: you have well saved me a
day's journey.

Roman

There hath been in Rome strange insurrections; the
people against the senators, patricians, and nobles.

Volsce

Hath been! is it ended, then? Our state thinks not so: they are in a most warlike preparation, and hope to come upon them in the heat of their division.

Roman

The main blaze of it is past, but a small thing would make it flame again: for the nobles receive so to heart the banishment of that worthy Coriolanus, that they are in a ripe aptness to take all power from the people and to pluck from them their tribunes for ever. This lies glowing, I can tell you, and is almost mature for the violent breaking out.

Volsce

Coriolanus banished!

Roman

Banished, sir.

Volsce

You will be welcome with this intelligence, Nicanor.

Roman

The day serves well for them now. I have heard it said, the fittest time to corrupt a man's wife is when she's fallen out with her husband. Your noble Tullus Aufidius will appear well in these wars, his great opposer, Coriolanus, being now in no request of his country.

Volsce

He cannot choose. I am most fortunate, thus accidentally to encounter you: you have ended my business, and I will merrily accompany you home.

Roman

I shall, between this and supper, tell you most strange things from Rome; all tending to the good of their adversaries. Have you an army ready, say you?

Volsce

A most royal one; the centurions and their charges, distinctly billeted, already in the entertainment, and to be on foot at an hour's warning.

Roman

I am joyful to hear of their readiness, and am the man, I think, that shall set them in present action. So, sir, heartily well met, and most glad of your company.

Volsc

You take my part from me, sir; I have the most cause to be glad of yours.

Roman

Well, let us go together.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Antium. Before Aufidius's house.

Enter CORIOLANUS in mean apparel, disguised and muffled

CORIOLANUS

A goodly city is this Antium. City,
'Tis I that made thy widows: many an heir
Of these fair edifices 'fore my wars
Have I heard groan and drop: then know me not,
Lest that thy wives with spits and boys with stones
In puny battle slay me.

Enter a Citizen

Save you, sir.

Citizen

And you.

CORIOLANUS

Direct me, if it be your will,
Where great Aufidius lies: is he in Antium?

Citizen

He is, and feasts the nobles of the state
At his house this night.

CORIOLANUS

Which is his house, beseech you?

Citizen

This, here before you.

CORIOLANUS

Thank you, sir: farewell.

Exit Citizen

O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,
Whose double bosoms seem to wear one heart,
Whose house, whose bed, whose meal, and exercise,
Are still together, who twin, as 'twere, in love
Unseparable, shall within this hour,
On a dissension of a doit, break out
To bitterest enmity: so, fellest foes,
Whose passions and whose plots have broke their sleep,
To take the one the other, by some chance,
Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends
And interjoin their issues. So with me:
My birth-place hate I, and my love's upon
This enemy town. I'll enter: if he slay me,
He does fair justice; if he give me way,
I'll do his country service.

Exit

SCENE V. The same. A hall in Aufidius's house.

Music within. Enter a Servingman

First Servingman

Wine, wine, wine! What service
is here! I think our fellows are asleep.

Exit

Enter a second Servingman

Second Servingman

Where's Cotus? my master calls
for him. Cotus!

Exit

Enter CORIOLANUS

CORIOLANUS

A goodly house: the feast smells well; but I
Appear not like a guest.

Re-enter the first Servingman

First Servingman

What would you have, friend? whence are you?
Here's no place for you: pray, go to the door.

Exit

CORIOLANUS

I have deserved no better entertainment,
In being Coriolanus.

Re-enter second Servingman

Second Servingman

Whence are you, sir? Has the porter his eyes in his head; that he gives entrance to such companions? Pray, get you out.

CORIOLANUS

Away!

Second Servingman

Away! get you away.

CORIOLANUS

Now thou'rt troublesome.

Second Servingman

Are you so brave? I'll have you talked with anon.

Enter a third Servingman. The first meets him

Third Servingman

What fellow's this?

First Servingman

A strange one as ever I looked on: I cannot get him out of the house: prithee, call my master to him.

Retires

Third Servingman

What have you to do here, fellow? Pray you, avoid the house.

CORIOLANUS

Let me but stand; I will not hurt your hearth.

Third Servingman

What are you?

CORIOLANUS

A gentleman.

Third Servingman

A marvellous poor one.

CORIOLANUS

True, so I am.

Third Servingman

Pray you, poor gentleman, take up some other station; here's no place for you; pray you, avoid: come.

CORIOLANUS

Follow your function, go, and batten on cold bits.

Pushes him away

Third Servingman

What, you will not? Prithee, tell my master what a strange guest he has here.

Second Servingman

And I shall.

Exit

Third Servingman

Where dwellest thou?

CORIOLANUS

Under the canopy.

Third Servingman

Under the canopy!

CORIOLANUS

Ay.

Third Servingman

Where's that?

CORIOLANUS

I' the city of kites and crows.

Third Servingman

I' the city of kites and crows! What an ass it is!

Then thou dwellest with daws too?

CORIOLANUS

No, I serve not thy master.

Third Servingman

How, sir! do you meddle with my master?

CORIOLANUS

Ay; 'tis an honest service than to meddle with thy mistress. Thou pratest, and pratest; serve with thy trencher, hence!

Beats him away. Exit third Servingman

Enter AUFIDIUS with the second Servingman

AUFIDIUS

Where is this fellow?

Second Servingman

Here, sir: I'd have beaten him like a dog, but for disturbing the lords within.

Retires

AUFIDIUS

Whence comest thou? what wouldst thou? thy name?
Why speak'st not? speak, man: what's thy name?

CORIOLANUS

If, Tullus,

Unmuffling

Not yet thou knowest me, and, seeing me, dost not
Think me for the man I am, necessity
Commands me name myself.

AUFIDIUS

What is thy name?

CORIOLANUS

A name unmusical to the Volscians' ears,
And harsh in sound to thine.

AUFIDIUS

Say, what's thy name?
Thou hast a grim appearance, and thy face
Bears a command in't; though thy tackle's torn.
Thou show'st a noble vessel: what's thy name?

CORIOLANUS

Prepare thy brow to frown: know'st
thou me yet?

AUFIDIUS

I know thee not: thy name?

CORIOLANUS

My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done
To thee particularly and to all the Volscies
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,

The extreme dangers and the drops of blood
Shed for my thankless country are requited
But with that surname; a good memory,
And witness of the malice and displeasure
Which thou shouldst bear me: only that name remains;
The cruelty and envy of the people,
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who
Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest;
And suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be
Whoop'd out of Rome. Now this extremity
Hath brought me to thy hearth; not out of hope--
Mistake me not--to save my life, for if
I had fear'd death, of all the men i' the world
I would have 'voided thee, but in mere spite,
To be full quit of those my banishers,
Stand I before thee here. Then if thou hast
A heart of wreak in thee, that wilt revenge
Thine own particular wrongs and stop those maims
Of shame seen through thy country, speed
thee straight,
And make my misery serve thy turn: so use it
That my revengeful services may prove
As benefits to thee, for I will fight
Against my canker'd country with the spleen
Of all the under fiends. But if so be
Thou darest not this and that to prove more fortunes
Thou'rt tired, then, in a word, I also am
Longer to live most weary, and present
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;
Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,
Since I have ever follow'd thee with hate,
Drawn tuns of blood out of thy country's breast,
And cannot live but to thy shame, unless
It be to do thee service.

AUFIDIUS

O Marcius, Marcius!
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart
A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter
Should from yond cloud speak divine things,
And say 'Tis true,' I'd not believe them more
Than thee, all noble Marcius. Let me twine
Mine arms about that body, where against
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke
And scarr'd the moon with splinters: here I clip
The anvil of my sword, and do contest
As hotly and as nobly with thy love
As ever in ambitious strength I did
Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,
I loved the maid I married; never man

Sigh'd truer breath; but that I see thee here,
Thou noble thing! more dances my rapt heart
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars! I tell thee,
We have a power on foot; and I had purpose
Once more to hew thy target from thy brawn,
Or lose mine arm fort: thou hast beat me out
Twelve several times, and I have nightly since
Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;
We have been down together in my sleep,
Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat,
And waked half dead with nothing. Worthy Marcius,
Had we no quarrel else to Rome, but that
Thou art thence banish'd, we would muster all
From twelve to seventy, and pouring war
Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome,
Like a bold flood o'er-bear. O, come, go in,
And take our friendly senators by the hands;
Who now are here, taking their leaves of me,
Who am prepared against your territories,
Though not for Rome itself.

CORIOLANUS

You bless me, gods!

AUFIDIUS

Therefore, most absolute sir, if thou wilt have
The leading of thine own revenges, take
The one half of my commission; and set down--
As best thou art experienced, since thou know'st
Thy country's strength and weakness,--thine own ways;
Whether to knock against the gates of Rome,
Or rudely visit them in parts remote,
To fright them, ere destroy. But come in:
Let me commend thee first to those that shall
Say yea to thy desires. A thousand welcomes!
And more a friend than e'er an enemy;
Yet, Marcius, that was much. Your hand: most welcome!

Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS. The two Servingmen come forward

First Servingman

Here's a strange alteration!

Second Servingman

By my hand, I had thought to have stricken him with
a cudgel; and yet my mind gave me his clothes made a
false report of him.

First Servingman

What an arm he has! he turned me about with his
finger and his thumb, as one would set up a top.

Second Servingman

Nay, I knew by his face that there was something in
him: he had, sir, a kind of face, methought,--I
cannot tell how to term it.

First Servingman

He had so; looking as it were--would I were hanged,
but I thought there was more in him than I could think.

Second Servingman

So did I, I'll be sworn: he is simply the rarest
man i' the world.

First Servingman

I think he is: but a greater soldier than he you wot on.

Second Servingman

Who, my master?

First Servingman

Nay, it's no matter for that.

Second Servingman

Worth six on him.

First Servingman

Nay, not so neither: but I take him to be the
greater soldier.

Second Servingman

Faith, look you, one cannot tell how to say that:
for the defence of a town, our general is excellent.

First Servingman

Ay, and for an assault too.

Re-enter third Servingman

Third Servingman

O slaves, I can tell you news,-- news, you rascals!

First Servingman Second Servingman

What, what, what? let's partake.

Third Servingman

I would not be a Roman, of all nations; I had as lieve be a condemned man.

First Servingman Second Servingman

Wherefore? wherefore?

Third Servingman

Why, here's he that was wont to thwack our general, Caius Marcius.

First Servingman

Why do you say 'thwack our general '?

Third Servingman

I do not say 'thwack our general;' but he was always good enough for him.

Second Servingman

Come, we are fellows and friends: he was ever too hard for him; I have heard him say so himself.

First Servingman

He was too hard for him directly, to say the troth on't: before Corioli he scotched him and notched him like a carbon ado.

Second Servingman

An he had been cannibally given, he might have broiled and eaten him too.

First Servingman

But, more of thy news?

Third Servingman

Why, he is so made on here within, as if he were son and heir to Mars; set at upper end o' the table; no question asked him by any of the senators, but they stand bald before him: our general himself makes a mistress of him: sanctifies himself with's hand and turns up the white o' the eye to his discourse. But the bottom of the news is that our general is cut i' the middle and but one half of what he was yesterday; for the other has half, by the entreaty and grant of the whole table. He'll go, he says, and sowl the porter of Rome gates by the ears: he will mow all down before him, and leave his passage polled.

Second Servingman

And he's as like to do't as any man I can imagine.

Third Servingman

Do't! he will do't; for, look you, sir, he has as many friends as enemies; which friends, sir, as it were, durst not, look you, sir, show themselves, as we term it, his friends whilst he's in directitude.

First Servingman

Directitude! what's that?

Third Servingman

But when they shall see, sir, his crest up again, and the man in blood, they will out of their burrows, like conies after rain, and revel all with him.

First Servingman

But when goes this forward?

Third Servingman

To-morrow; to-day; presently; you shall have the drum struck up this afternoon: 'tis, as it were, a parcel of their feast, and to be executed ere they wipe their lips.

Second Servingman

Why, then we shall have a stirring world again. This peace is nothing, but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad-makers.

First Servingman

Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night; it's spritely, waking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

Second Servingman

'Tis so: and as war, in some sort, may be said to be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a great maker of cuckolds.

First Servingman

Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

Third Servingman

Reason; because they then less need one another. The wars for my money. I hope to see Romans as cheap as Volscians. They are rising, they are rising.

All

In, in, in, in!

Exeunt

SCENE VI. Rome. A public place.

Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS

SICINIUS

We hear not of him, neither need we fear him;
His remedies are tame i' the present peace
And quietness of the people, which before
Were in wild hurry. Here do we make his friends
Blush that the world goes well, who rather had,
Though they themselves did suffer by't, behold
Dissentious numbers pestering streets than see
Our tradesmen with in their shops and going
About their functions friendly.

BRUTUS

We stood to't in good time.

Enter MENENIUS

Is this Menenius?

SICINIUS

'Tis he, 'tis he: O, he is grown most kind of late.

Both Tribunes

Hail sir!

MENENIUS

Hail to you both!

SICINIUS

Your Coriolanus
Is not much miss'd, but with his friends:
The commonwealth doth stand, and so would do,
Were he more angry at it.

MENENIUS

All's well; and might have been much better, if
He could have temporized.

SICINIUS

Where is he, hear you?

MENENIUS

Nay, I hear nothing: his mother and his wife
Hear nothing from him.

Enter three or four Citizens

Citizens

The gods preserve you both!

SICINIUS

God-den, our neighbours.

BRUTUS

God-den to you all, god-den to you all.

First Citizen

Ourselves, our wives, and children, on our knees,
Are bound to pray for you both.

SICINIUS

Live, and thrive!

BRUTUS

Farewell, kind neighbours: we wish'd Coriolanus
Had loved you as we did.

Citizens

Now the gods keep you!

Both Tribunes

Farewell, farewell.

Exeunt Citizens

SICINIUS

This is a happier and more comely time
Than when these fellows ran about the streets,
Crying confusion.

BRUTUS

Caius Marcius was
A worthy officer i' the war; but insolent,
O'ercome with pride, ambitious past all thinking,
Self-loving,--

SICINIUS

And affecting one sole throne,
Without assistance.

MENENIUS

I think not so.

SICINIUS

We should by this, to all our lamentation,
If he had gone forth consul, found it so.

BRUTUS

The gods have well prevented it, and Rome
Sits safe and still without him.

Enter an AEdile

AEdile

Worthy tribunes,
There is a slave, whom we have put in prison,
Reports, the Volsces with two several powers
Are enter'd in the Roman territories,
And with the deepest malice of the war
Destroy what lies before 'em.

MENENIUS

'Tis Aufidius,
Who, hearing of our Marcius' banishment,
Thrusts forth his horns again into the world;
Which were inshell'd when Marcius stood for Rome,
And durst not once peep out.

SICINIUS

Come, what talk you
Of Marcius?

BRUTUS

Go see this rumourer whipp'd. It cannot be
The Volsces dare break with us.

MENENIUS

Cannot be!
We have record that very well it can,
And three examples of the like have been
Within my age. But reason with the fellow,
Before you punish him, where he heard this,
Lest you shall chance to whip your information
And beat the messenger who bids beware
Of what is to be dreaded.

SICINIUS

Tell not me:
I know this cannot be.

BRUTUS

Not possible.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

The nobles in great earnestness are going
All to the senate-house: some news is come
That turns their countenances.

SICINIUS

'Tis this slave;--
Go whip him, 'fore the people's eyes:--his raising;
Nothing but his report.

Messenger

Yes, worthy sir,
The slave's report is seconded; and more,
More fearful, is deliver'd.

SICINIUS

What more fearful?

Messenger

It is spoke freely out of many mouths--
How probable I do not know--that Marcius,
Join'd with Aufidius, leads a power 'gainst Rome,
And vows revenge as spacious as between
The young'st and oldest thing.

SICINIUS

This is most likely!

BRUTUS

Raised only, that the weaker sort may wish
Good Marcius home again.

SICINIUS

The very trick on't.

MENENIUS

This is unlikely:
He and Aufidius can no more atone
Than violentest contrariety.

Enter a second Messenger

Second Messenger

You are sent for to the senate:
A fearful army, led by Caius Marcius
Associated with Aufidius, rages

Upon our territories; and have already
O'erborne their way, consumed with fire, and took
What lay before them.

Enter COMINIUS

COMINIUS

O, you have made good work!

MENENIUS

What news? what news?

COMINIUS

You have holp to ravish your own daughters and
To melt the city leads upon your pates,
To see your wives dishonour'd to your noses,--

MENENIUS

What's the news? what's the news?

COMINIUS

Your temples burned in their cement, and
Your franchises, whereon you stood, confined
Into an auger's bore.

MENENIUS

Pray now, your news?
You have made fair work, I fear me.--Pray, your news?--
If Marcius should be join'd with Volscians,--

COMINIUS

If!
He is their god: he leads them like a thing
Made by some other deity than nature,
That shapes man better; and they follow him,
Against us brats, with no less confidence
Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,
Or butchers killing flies.

MENENIUS

You have made good work,
You and your apron-men; you that stood so up much
on the voice of occupation and
The breath of garlic-eaters!

COMINIUS

He will shake
Your Rome about your ears.

MENENIUS

As Hercules
Did shake down mellow fruit.
You have made fair work!

BRUTUS

But is this true, sir?

COMINIUS

Ay; and you'll look pale
Before you find it other. All the regions
Do smilingly revolt; and who resist
Are mock'd for valiant ignorance,
And perish constant fools. Who is't can blame him?
Your enemies and his find something in him.

MENENIUS

We are all undone, unless
The noble man have mercy.

COMINIUS

Who shall ask it?
The tribunes cannot do't for shame; the people
Deserve such pity of him as the wolf
Does of the shepherds: for his best friends, if they
Should say 'Be good to Rome,' they charged him even
As those should do that had deserved his hate,
And therein show'd like enemies.

MENENIUS

'Tis true:
If he were putting to my house the brand
That should consume it, I have not the face
To say 'Beseech you, cease.' You have made fair hands,
You and your crafts! you have crafted fair!

COMINIUS

You have brought
A trembling upon Rome, such as was never
So incapable of help.

Both Tribunes

Say not we brought it.

MENENIUS

How! Was it we? we loved him but, like beasts
And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters,
Who did hoot him out o' the city.

COMINIUS

But I fear
They'll roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius,
The second name of men, obeys his points
As if he were his officer: desperation
Is all the policy, strength and defence,
That Rome can make against them.

Enter a troop of Citizens

MENENIUS

Here come the clusters.
And is Aufidius with him? You are they
That made the air unwholesome, when you cast
Your stinking greasy caps in hooting at
Coriolanus' exile. Now he's coming;
And not a hair upon a soldier's head
Which will not prove a whip: as many coxcombs
As you threw caps up will he tumble down,
And pay you for your voices. 'Tis no matter;
if he could burn us all into one coal,
We have deserved it.

Citizens

Faith, we hear fearful news.

First Citizen

For mine own part,
When I said, banish him, I said 'twas pity.

Second Citizen

And so did I.

Third Citizen

And so did I; and, to say the truth, so did very
many of us: that we did, we did for the best; and
though we willingly consented to his banishment, yet
it was against our will.

COMINIUS

Ye re goodly things, you voices!

MENENIUS

You have made
Good work, you and your cry! Shall's to the Capitol?

COMINIUS

O, ay, what else?

Exeunt COMINIUS and MENENIUS

SICINIUS

Go, masters, get you home; be not dismay'd:
These are a side that would be glad to have
This true which they so seem to fear. Go home,
And show no sign of fear.

First Citizen

The gods be good to us! Come, masters, let's home.
I ever said we were i' the wrong when we banished
him.

Second Citizen

So did we all. But, come, let's home.

Exeunt Citizens

BRUTUS

I do not like this news.

SICINIUS

Nor I.

BRUTUS

Let's to the Capitol. Would half my wealth
Would buy this for a lie!

SICINIUS

Pray, let us go.

Exeunt

SCENE VII. A camp, at a small distance from Rome.

Enter AUFIDIUS and his Lieutenant

AUFIDIUS

Do they still fly to the Roman?

Lieutenant

I do not know what witchcraft's in him, but
Your soldiers use him as the grace 'fore meat,
Their talk at table, and their thanks at end;
And you are darken'd in this action, sir,
Even by your own.

AUFIDIUS

I cannot help it now,
Unless, by using means, I lame the foot
Of our design. He bears himself more prouder,
Even to my person, than I thought he would

When first I did embrace him: yet his nature
In that's no changeling; and I must excuse
What cannot be amended.

Lieutenant

Yet I wish, sir,--
I mean for your particular,--you had not
Join'd in commission with him; but either
Had borne the action of yourself, or else
To him had left it solely.

AUFIDIUS

I understand thee well; and be thou sure,
when he shall come to his account, he knows not
What I can urge against him. Although it seems,
And so he thinks, and is no less apparent
To the vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly.
And shows good husbandry for the Volscian state,
Fights dragon-like, and does achieve as soon
As draw his sword; yet he hath left undone
That which shall break his neck or hazard mine,
Whene'er we come to our account.

Lieutenant

Sir, I beseech you, think you he'll carry Rome?

AUFIDIUS

All places yield to him ere he sits down;
And the nobility of Rome are his:
The senators and patricians love him too:
The tribunes are no soldiers; and their people
Will be as rash in the repeal, as hasty
To expel him thence. I think he'll be to Rome
As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it
By sovereignty of nature. First he was
A noble servant to them; but he could not
Carry his honours even: whether 'twas pride,
Which out of daily fortune ever taints
The happy man; whether defect of judgment,
To fail in the disposing of those chances
Which he was lord of; or whether nature,
Not to be other than one thing, not moving
From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace
Even with the same austerity and garb
As he controll'd the war; but one of these--
As he hath spices of them all, not all,
For I dare so far free him--made him fear'd,
So hated, and so banish'd: but he has a merit,
To choke it in the utterance. So our virtues

Lie in the interpretation of the time:
And power, unto itself most commendable,
Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair
To extol what it hath done.
One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;
Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail.
Come, let's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,
Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.

Exeunt

ACT V

SCENE I. Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and others

MENENIUS

No, I'll not go: you hear what he hath said
Which was sometime his general; who loved him
In a most dear particular. He call'd me father:
But what o' that? Go, you that banish'd him;
A mile before his tent fall down, and knee
The way into his mercy: nay, if he coy'd
To hear Cominius speak, I'll keep at home.

COMINIUS

He would not seem to know me.

MENENIUS

Do you hear?

COMINIUS

Yet one time he did call me by my name:
I urged our old acquaintance, and the drops
That we have bled together. Coriolanus
He would not answer to: forbad all names;
He was a kind of nothing, titleless,
Till he had forged himself a name o' the fire
Of burning Rome.

MENENIUS

Why, so: you have made good work!
A pair of tribunes that have rack'd for Rome,
To make coals cheap,--a noble memory!

COMINIUS

I minded him how royal 'twas to pardon
When it was less expected: he replied,
It was a bare petition of a state
To one whom they had punish'd.

MENENIUS

Very well:
Could he say less?

COMINIUS

I offer'd to awaken his regard
For's private friends: his answer to me was,
He could not stay to pick them in a pile
Of noisome musty chaff: he said 'twas folly,
For one poor grain or two, to leave unburnt,
And still to nose the offence.

MENENIUS

For one poor grain or two!
I am one of those; his mother, wife, his child,
And this brave fellow too, we are the grains:
You are the musty chaff; and you are smelt
Above the moon: we must be burnt for you.

SICINIUS

Nay, pray, be patient: if you refuse your aid
In this so never-needed help, yet do not
Upbraid's with our distress. But, sure, if you
Would be your country's pleader, your good tongue,
More than the instant army we can make,
Might stop our countryman.

MENENIUS

No, I'll not meddle.

SICINIUS

Pray you, go to him.

MENENIUS

What should I do?

BRUTUS

Only make trial what your love can do
For Rome, towards Marcius.

MENENIUS

Well, and say that Marcius
Return me, as Cominius is return'd,
Unheard; what then?
But as a discontented friend, grief-shot
With his unkindness? say't be so?

SICINIUS

Yet your good will
must have that thanks from Rome, after the measure
As you intended well.

MENENIUS

I'll undertake 't:
I think he'll hear me. Yet, to bite his lip
And hum at good Cominius, much unhearts me.
He was not taken well; he had not dined:
The veins unfill'd, our blood is cold, and then
We pout upon the morning, are unapt
To give or to forgive; but when we have stuff'd
These and these conveyances of our blood
With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls
Than in our priest-like fasts: therefore I'll watch him
Till he be dieted to my request,
And then I'll set upon him.

BRUTUS

You know the very road into his kindness,
And cannot lose your way.

MENENIUS

Good faith, I'll prove him,
Speed how it will. I shall ere long have knowledge
Of my success.

Exit

COMINIUS

He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS

Not?

COMINIUS

I tell you, he does sit in gold, his eye
Red as 'twould burn Rome; and his injury
The gaoler to his pity. I kneel'd before him;
'Twas very faintly he said 'Rise;' dismiss'd me
Thus, with his speechless hand: what he would do,
He sent in writing after me; what he would not,
Bound with an oath to yield to his conditions:
So that all hope is vain.
Unless his noble mother, and his wife;
Who, as I hear, mean to solicit him
For mercy to his country. Therefore, let's hence,
And with our fair entreaties haste them on.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Entrance of the Volscian camp before Rome.

Two Sentinels on guard.

Enter to them, MENENIUS

First Senator

Stay: whence are you?

Second Senator

Stand, and go back.

MENENIUS

You guard like men; 'tis well: but, by your leave,
I am an officer of state, and come
To speak with Coriolanus.

First Senator

From whence?

MENENIUS

From Rome.

First Senator

You may not pass, you must return: our general
Will no more hear from thence.

Second Senator

You'll see your Rome embraced with fire before
You'll speak with Coriolanus.

MENENIUS

Good my friends,
If you have heard your general talk of Rome,
And of his friends there, it is lots to blanks,
My name hath touch'd your ears it is Menenius.

First Senator

Be it so; go back: the virtue of your name
Is not here passable.

MENENIUS

I tell thee, fellow,
The general is my lover: I have been
The book of his good acts, whence men have read
His name unparallel'd, haply amplified;
For I have ever verified my friends,
Of whom he's chief, with all the size that verity
Would without lapsing suffer: nay, sometimes,
Like to a bowl upon a subtle ground,

I have tumbled past the throw; and in his praise
Have almost stamp'd the leasing: therefore, fellow,
I must have leave to pass.

First Senator

Faith, sir, if you had told as many lies in his
behalf as you have uttered words in your own, you
should not pass here; no, though it were as virtuous
to lie as to live chastely. Therefore, go back.

MENENIUS

Prithee, fellow, remember my name is Menenius,
always factionary on the party of your general.

Second Senator

Howsoever you have been his liar, as you say you
have, I am one that, telling true under him, must
say, you cannot pass. Therefore, go back.

MENENIUS

Has he dined, canst thou tell? for I would not
speak with him till after dinner.

First Senator

You are a Roman, are you?

MENENIUS

I am, as thy general is.

First Senator

Then you should hate Rome, as he does. Can you,
when you have pushed out your gates the very
defender of them, and, in a violent popular
ignorance, given your enemy your shield, think to
front his revenges with the easy groans of old
women, the virginal palms of your daughters, or with
the palsied intercession of such a decayed dotant as
you seem to be? Can you think to blow out the
intended fire your city is ready to flame in, with
such weak breath as this? No, you are deceived;
therefore, back to Rome, and prepare for your
execution: you are condemned, our general has sworn
you out of reprieve and pardon.

MENENIUS

Sirrah, if thy captain knew I were here, he would
use me with estimation.

Second Senator

Come, my captain knows you not.

MENENIUS

I mean, thy general.

First Senator

My general cares not for you. Back, I say, go; lest
I let forth your half-pint of blood; back,--that's
the utmost of your having: back.

MENENIUS

Nay, but, fellow, fellow,--

Enter CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS

CORIOLANUS

What's the matter?

MENENIUS

Now, you companion, I'll say an errand for you:
You shall know now that I am in estimation; you shall
perceive that a Jack guardant cannot office me from
my son Coriolanus: guess, but by my entertainment
with him, if thou standest not i' the state of
hanging, or of some death more long in
spectatorship, and crueller in suffering; behold now
presently, and swoon for what's to come upon thee.

To CORIOLANUS

The glorious gods sit in hourly synod about thy
particular prosperity, and love thee no worse than
thy old father Menenius does! O my son, my son!
thou art preparing fire for us; look thee, here's
water to quench it. I was hardly moved to come to
thee; but being assured none but myself could move
thee, I have been blown out of your gates with
sighs; and conjure thee to pardon Rome, and thy
petitionary countrymen. The good gods assuage thy
wrath, and turn the dregs of it upon this varlet
here,--this, who, like a block, hath denied my
access to thee.

CORIOLANUS

Away!

MENENIUS

How! away!

CORIOLANUS

Wife, mother, child, I know not. My affairs
Are servanted to others: though I owe
My revenge properly, my remission lies
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,
Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison, rather
Than pity note how much. Therefore, be gone.
Mine ears against your suits are stronger than
Your gates against my force. Yet, for I loved thee,
Take this along; I writ it for thy sake

Gives a letter

And would have rent it. Another word, Menenius,
I will not hear thee speak. This man, Aufidius,
Was my beloved in Rome: yet thou behold'st!

AUFIDIUS

You keep a constant temper.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS

First Senator

Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

Second Senator

'Tis a spell, you see, of much power: you know the
way home again.

First Senator

Do you hear how we are shent for keeping your
greatness back?

Second Senator

What cause, do you think, I have to swoon?

MENENIUS

I neither care for the world nor your general: for
such things as you, I can scarce think there's any,
ye're so slight. He that hath a will to die by
himself fears it not from another: let your general
do his worst. For you, be that you are, long; and
your misery increase with your age! I say to you,
as I was said to, Away!

Exit

First Senator

A noble fellow, I warrant him.

Second Senator

The worthy fellow is our general: he's the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken.

Exeunt

SCENE III. The tent of Coriolanus.

Enter CORIOLANUS, AUFIDIUS, and others

CORIOLANUS

We will before the walls of Rome tomorrow
Set down our host. My partner in this action,
You must report to the Volscian lords, how plainly
I have borne this business.

AUFIDIUS

Only their ends
You have respected; stopp'd your ears against
The general suit of Rome; never admitted
A private whisper, no, not with such friends
That thought them sure of you.

CORIOLANUS

This last old man,
Whom with a crack'd heart I have sent to Rome,
Loved me above the measure of a father;
Nay, godded me, indeed. Their latest refuge
Was to send him; for whose old love I have,
Though I show'd sourly to him, once more offer'd
The first conditions, which they did refuse
And cannot now accept; to grace him only
That thought he could do more, a very little
I have yielded to: fresh embassies and suits,
Nor from the state nor private friends, hereafter
Will I lend ear to. Ha! what shout is this?

Shout within

Shall I be tempted to infringe my vow
In the same time 'tis made? I will not.

Enter in mourning habits, VIRGILIA, VOLUMNIA, leading young MARCIUS, VALERIA, and Attendants

My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mould
Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
The grandchild to her blood. But, out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature, break!
Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
What is that curt'sy worth? or those doves' eyes,
Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows;
As if Olympus to a molehill should
In supplication nod: and my young boy

Hath an aspect of intercession, which
Great nature cries 'Deny not.' let the Volsces
Plough Rome and harrow Italy: I'll never
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand,
As if a man were author of himself
And knew no other kin.

VIRGILIA

My lord and husband!

CORIOLANUS

These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

VIRGILIA

The sorrow that delivers us thus changed
Makes you think so.

CORIOLANUS

Like a dull actor now,
I have forgot my part, and I am out,
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,
Forgive my tyranny; but do not say
For that 'Forgive our Romans.' O, a kiss
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!
Now, by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss
I carried from thee, dear; and my true lip
Hath virgin'd it e'er since. You gods! I prate,
And the most noble mother of the world
Leave unsaluted: sink, my knee, i' the earth;

Kneels

Of thy deep duty more impression show
Than that of common sons.

VOLUMNIA

O, stand up blest!
Whilst, with no softer cushion than the flint,
I kneel before thee; and unproperly
Show duty, as mistaken all this while
Between the child and parent.

Kneels

CORIOLANUS

What is this?
Your knees to me? to your corrected son?
Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach
Fillip the stars; then let the mutinous winds
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun;

Murdering impossibility, to make
What cannot be, slight work.

VOLUMNIA

Thou art my warrior;
I help to frame thee. Do you know this lady?

CORIOLANUS

The noble sister of Publicola,
The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle
That's curdied by the frost from purest snow
And hangs on Dian's temple: dear Valeria!

VOLUMNIA

This is a poor epitome of yours,
Which by the interpretation of full time
May show like all yourself.

CORIOLANUS

The god of soldiers,
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform
Thy thoughts with nobleness; that thou mayst prove
To shame invulnerable, and stick i' the wars
Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw,
And saving those that eye thee!

VOLUMNIA

Your knee, sirrah.

CORIOLANUS

That's my brave boy!

VOLUMNIA

Even he, your wife, this lady, and myself,
Are suitors to you.

CORIOLANUS

I beseech you, peace:
Or, if you'd ask, remember this before:
The thing I have forsworn to grant may never
Be held by you denials. Do not bid me
Dismiss my soldiers, or capitulate
Again with Rome's mechanics: tell me not
Wherein I seem unnatural: desire not
To ally my rages and revenges with
Your colder reasons.

VOLUMNIA

O, no more, no more!
You have said you will not grant us any thing;
For we have nothing else to ask, but that
Which you deny already: yet we will ask;
That, if you fail in our request, the blame
May hang upon your hardness: therefore hear us.

CORIOLANUS

Aufidius, and you Volsces, mark; for we'll
Hear nought from Rome in private. Your request?

VOLUMNIA

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies would bewray what life
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself
How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither: since that thy sight,
which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance
with comforts,
Constrains them weep and shake with fear and sorrow;
Making the mother, wife and child to see
The son, the husband and the father tearing
His country's bowels out. And to poor we
Thine enmity's most capital: thou barr'st us
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
That all but we enjoy; for how can we,
Alas, how can we for our country pray.
Whereto we are bound, together with thy victory,
Whereto we are bound? alack, or we must lose
The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
Our comfort in the country. We must find
An evident calamity, though we had
Our wish, which side should win: for either thou
Must, as a foreign recreant, be led
With manacles thorough our streets, or else
triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,
And bear the palm for having bravely shed
Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,
I purpose not to wait on fortune till
These wars determine: if I cannot persuade thee
Rather to show a noble grace to both parts
Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread--
Trust to't, thou shalt not--on thy mother's womb,
That brought thee to this world.

VIRGILIA

Ay, and mine,
That brought you forth this boy, to keep your name
Living to time.

Young MARCIUS

A' shall not tread on me;
I'll run away till I am bigger, but then I'll fight.

CORIOLANUS

Not of a woman's tenderness to be,
Requires nor child nor woman's face to see.
I have sat too long.

Rising

VOLUMNIA

Nay, go not from us thus.
If it were so that our request did tend
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,
As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit
Is that you reconcile them: while the Volsces
May say 'This mercy we have show'd;' the Romans,
'This we received;' and each in either side
Give the all-hail to thee and cry 'Be blest
For making up this peace!' Thou know'st, great son,
The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,
Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;
Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble,
But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
Destroy'd his country, and his name remains
To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' Speak to me, son:
Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,
To imitate the graces of the gods;
To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' the air,
And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt
That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs? Daughter, speak you:
He cares not for your weeping. Speak thou, boy:
Perhaps thy childishness will move him more
Than can our reasons. There's no man in the world
More bound to 's mother; yet here he lets me prate
Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
Has cluck'd thee to the wars and safely home,
Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,

And spurn me back: but if it be not so,
Thou art not honest; and the gods will plague thee,
That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
To a mother's part belongs. He turns away:
Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;
This is the last: so we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold 's:
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have
But kneels and holds up bands for fellowship,
Does reason our petition with more strength
Than thou hast to deny 't. Come, let us go:
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
His wife is in Corioli and his child
Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch:
I am hush'd until our city be a-fire,
And then I'll speak a little.

He holds her by the hand, silent

CORIOLANUS

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome;
But, for your son,--believe it, O, believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
If not most mortal to him. But, let it come.
Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars,
I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius,
Were you in my stead, would you have heard
A mother less? or granted less, Aufidius?

AUFIDIUS

I was moved withal.

CORIOLANUS

I dare be sworn you were:
And, sir, it is no little thing to make
Mine eyes to sweat compassion. But, good sir,
What peace you'll make, advise me: for my part,
I'll not to Rome, I'll back with you; and pray you,
Stand to me in this cause. O mother! wife!

AUFIDIUS

[Aside] I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and
thy honour

At difference in thee: out of that I'll work
Myself a former fortune.

The Ladies make signs to CORIOLANUS

CORIOLANUS

Ay, by and by;

To VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, & c

But we will drink together; and you shall bear
A better witness back than words, which we,
On like conditions, will have counter-seal'd.
Come, enter with us. Ladies, you deserve
To have a temple built you: all the swords
In Italy, and her confederate arms,
Could not have made this peace.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS and SICINIUS

MENENIUS

See you yond coign o' the Capitol, yond
corner-stone?

SICINIUS

Why, what of that?

MENENIUS

If it be possible for you to displace it with your
little finger, there is some hope the ladies of
Rome, especially his mother, may prevail with him.
But I say there is no hope in't: our throats are
sentenced and stay upon execution.

SICINIUS

Is't possible that so short a time can alter the
condition of a man!

MENENIUS

There is differency between a grub and a butterfly;
yet your butterfly was a grub. This Marcius is grown
from man to dragon: he has wings; he's more than a
creeping thing.

SICINIUS

He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS

So did he me: and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year-old horse. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes: when he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading: he is able to pierce a corslet with his eye; talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery. He sits in his state, as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in.

SICINIUS

Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

MENENIUS

I paint him in the character. Mark what mercy his mother shall bring from him: there is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger; that shall our poor city find: and all this is long of you.

SICINIUS

The gods be good unto us!

MENENIUS

No, in such a case the gods will not be good unto us. When we banished him, we respected not them; and, he returning to break our necks, they respect not us.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

Sir, if you'd save your life, fly to your house: The plebeians have got your fellow-tribune And hale him up and down, all swearing, if The Roman ladies bring not comfort home, They'll give him death by inches.

Enter a second Messenger

SICINIUS

What's the news?

Second Messenger

Good news, good news; the ladies have prevail'd, The Volscians are dislodged, and Marcius gone: A merrier day did never yet greet Rome, No, not the expulsion of the Tarquins.

SICINIUS

Friend,
Art thou certain this is true? is it most certain?

Second Messenger

As certain as I know the sun is fire:
Where have you lurk'd, that you make doubt of it?
Ne'er through an arch so hurried the blown tide,
As the recomforted through the gates. Why, hark you!

Trumpets; hautboys; drums beat; all together

The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries and fifes,
Tabours and cymbals and the shouting Romans,
Make the sun dance. Hark you!

A shout within

MENENIUS

This is good news:
I will go meet the ladies. This Volumnia
Is worth of consuls, senators, patricians,
A city full; of tribunes, such as you,
A sea and land full. You have pray'd well to-day:
This morning for ten thousand of your throats
I'd not have given a doit. Hark, how they joy!

Music still, with shouts

SICINIUS

First, the gods bless you for your tidings; next,
Accept my thankfulness.

Second Messenger

Sir, we have all
Great cause to give great thanks.

SICINIUS

They are near the city?

Second Messenger

Almost at point to enter.

SICINIUS

We will meet them,
And help the joy.

Exeunt

SCENE V. The same. A street near the gate.

Enter two Senators with VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, VALERIA, & c. passing over the stage, followed by Patricians and others

First Senator

Behold our patroness, the life of Rome!
Call all your tribes together, praise the gods,
And make triumphant fires; strew flowers before them:
Unshout the noise that banish'd Marcius,
Repeal him with the welcome of his mother;
Cry 'Welcome, ladies, welcome!'

All

Welcome, ladies, Welcome!

A flourish with drums and trumpets. Exeunt

SCENE VI. Antium. A public place.

Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, with Attendants

AUFIDIUS

Go tell the lords o' the city I am here:
Deliver them this paper: having read it,
Bid them repair to the market place; where I,
Even in theirs and in the commons' ears,
Will vouch the truth of it. Him I accuse
The city ports by this hath enter'd and
Intends to appear before the people, hoping
To purge herself with words: dispatch.

Exeunt Attendants

Enter three or four Conspirators of AUFIDIUS' faction

Most welcome!

First Conspirator

How is it with our general?

AUFIDIUS

Even so
As with a man by his own alms empoison'd,
And with his charity slain.

Second Conspirator

Most noble sir,
If you do hold the same intent wherein
You wish'd us parties, we'll deliver you
Of your great danger.

AUFIDIUS

Sir, I cannot tell:
We must proceed as we do find the people.

Third Conspirator

The people will remain uncertain whilst
'Twixt you there's difference; but the fall of either
Makes the survivor heir of all.

AUFIDIUS

I know it;
And my pretext to strike at him admits
A good construction. I raised him, and I pawn'd
Mine honour for his truth: who being so heighten'd,
He water'd his new plants with dews of flattery,
Seducing so my friends; and, to this end,
He bow'd his nature, never known before
But to be rough, unswayable and free.

Third Conspirator

Sir, his stoutness
When he did stand for consul, which he lost
By lack of stooping,--

AUFIDIUS

That I would have spoke of:
Being banish'd for't, he came unto my hearth;
Presented to my knife his throat: I took him;
Made him joint-servant with me; gave him way
In all his own desires; nay, let him choose
Out of my files, his projects to accomplish,
My best and freshest men; served his designments
In mine own person; help to reap the fame
Which he did end all his; and took some pride
To do myself this wrong: till, at the last,
I seem'd his follower, not partner, and
He waged me with his countenance, as if
I had been mercenary.

First Conspirator

So he did, my lord:
The army marvell'd at it, and, in the last,
When he had carried Rome and that we look'd
For no less spoil than glory,--

AUFIDIUS

There was it:
For which my sinews shall be stretch'd upon him.
At a few drops of women's rheum, which are
As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labour
Of our great action: therefore shall he die,
And I'll renew me in his fall. But, hark!

Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the People

First Conspirator

Your native town you enter'd like a post,
And had no welcomes home: but he returns,
Splitting the air with noise.

Second Conspirator

And patient fools,
Whose children he hath slain, their base throats tear
With giving him glory.

Third Conspirator

Therefore, at your vantage,
Ere he express himself, or move the people
With what he would say, let him feel your sword,
Which we will second. When he lies along,
After your way his tale pronounced shall bury
His reasons with his body.

AUFIDIUS

Say no more:
Here come the lords.

Enter the Lords of the city

All The Lords

You are most welcome home.

AUFIDIUS

I have not deserved it.
But, worthy lords, have you with heed perused
What I have written to you?

Lords

We have.

First Lord

And grieve to hear't.
What faults he made before the last, I think
Might have found easy fines: but there to end
Where he was to begin and give away
The benefit of our levies, answering us
With our own charge, making a treaty where
There was a yielding,--this admits no excuse.

AUFIDIUS

He approaches: you shall hear him.

Enter CORIOLANUS, marching with drum and colours; commoners being with him

CORIOLANUS

Hail, lords! I am return'd your soldier,
No more infected with my country's love
Than when I parted hence, but still subsisting
Under your great command. You are to know
That prosperously I have attempted and
With bloody passage led your wars even to
The gates of Rome. Our spoils we have brought home
Do more than counterpoise a full third part
The charges of the action. We have made peace
With no less honour to the Antiates
Than shame to the Romans: and we here deliver,
Subscribed by the consuls and patricians,
Together with the seal o' the senate, what
We have compounded on.

AUFIDIUS

Read it not, noble lords;
But tell the traitor, in the high'st degree
He hath abused your powers.

CORIOLANUS

Traitor! how now!

AUFIDIUS

Ay, traitor, Marcius!

CORIOLANUS

Marcus!

AUFIDIUS

Ay, Marcus, Caius Marcus: dost thou think
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name
Coriolanus in Corioli?
You lords and heads o' the state, perfidiously
He has betray'd your business, and given up,
For certain drops of salt, your city Rome,
I say 'your city,' to his wife and mother;
Breaking his oath and resolution like
A twist of rotten silk, never admitting
Counsel o' the war, but at his nurse's tears
He whined and roar'd away your victory,
That pages blush'd at him and men of heart
Look'd wondering each at other.

CORIOLANUS

Hear'st thou, Mars?

AUFIDIUS

Name not the god, thou boy of tears!

CORIOLANUS

Ha!

AUFIDIUS

No more.

CORIOLANUS

Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart
Too great for what contains it. Boy! O slave!
Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time that ever
I was forced to scold. Your judgments, my grave lords,
Must give this cur the lie: and his own notion--
Who wears my stripes impress'd upon him; that
Must bear my beating to his grave--shall join
To thrust the lie unto him.

First Lord

Peace, both, and hear me speak.

CORIOLANUS

Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads,
Stain all your edges on me. Boy! false hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
Alone I did it. Boy!

AUFIDIUS

Why, noble lords,
Will you be put in mind of his blind fortune,
Which was your shame, by this unholy braggart,
'Fore your own eyes and ears?

All Conspirators

Let him die for't.

All The People

'Tear him to pieces.' 'Do it presently.' 'He kill'd
my son.' 'My daughter.' 'He killed my cousin
Marcus.' 'He killed my father.'

Second Lord

Peace, ho! no outrage: peace!
The man is noble and his fame folds-in
This orb o' the earth. His last offences to us
Shall have judicious hearing. Stand, Aufidius,
And trouble not the peace.

CORIOLANUS

O that I had him,
With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,
To use my lawful sword!

AUFIDIUS

Insolent villain!

All Conspirators

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

The Conspirators draw, and kill CORIOLANUS: AUFIDIUS stands on his body

Lords

Hold, hold, hold, hold!

AUFIDIUS

My noble masters, hear me speak.

First Lord

O Tullus,--

Second Lord

Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep.

Third Lord

Tread not upon him. Masters all, be quiet;
Put up your swords.

AUFIDIUS

My lords, when you shall know--as in this rage,
Provoked by him, you cannot--the great danger
Which this man's life did owe you, you'll rejoice
That he is thus cut off. Please it your honours
To call me to your senate, I'll deliver
Myself your loyal servant, or endure
Your heaviest censure.

First Lord

Bear from hence his body;
And mourn you for him: let him be regarded
As the most noble corse that ever herald
Did follow to his urn.

Second Lord

His own impatience
Takes from Aufidius a great part of blame.
Let's make the best of it.

AUFIDIUS

My rage is gone;
And I am struck with sorrow. Take him up.
Help, three o' the chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.
Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully:
Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he
Hath widow'd and unchilded many a one,
Which to this hour bewail the injury,
Yet he shall have a noble memory. Assist.

Exeunt, bearing the body of CORIOLANUS. A dead march sounded