

# **The Tragedy of Coriolanus**

**A Play By**

**William Shakespeare**

## **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 forth, 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 suitors 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**

Marcus, '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 Marcus,  
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 garner. 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.

**VIRGILIA**

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.

**VIRGILIA**

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.

**VIRGILIA**

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'ldst 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 frighted,  
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!

**CORIOLANUS**

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.

**CORIOLANUS**

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?

**CORIOLANUS**

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?

**CORIOLANUS**

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, Marcus,  
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 Marcius.

**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 Marcius.

**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 Marcus 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 mummings; 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!

**VIRGILIA**

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.

**VIRGILIA**

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 nervy 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!

**CORIO LANUS**

No more of this; it does offend my heart:

Pray now, no more.

**COMINIUS**

Look, sir, your mother!

**CORIO LANUS**

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!

**CORIO LANUS**

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.

**CORIOLANUS**

Menenius ever, ever.

**Herald**

Give way there, and go on!

**CORIOLANUS**

[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.

**CORIOLANUS**

Know, good mother,

I had rather be their servant in my way,

Than sway with them in theirs.

**COMINIUS**

On, to the Capitoll!

*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 slily 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 choler?

**CORIOLANUS**

Choler!  
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 veil 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?

**AE dile**

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.

**AE dile**

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.

**AE dile**

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 AE dile*

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*

**AE dile**

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.

**Volsce**

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 Volsces  
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; mull'd, 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 help 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 proudlier,  
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 Volscies, 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**

Marcius!

**AUFIDIUS**

Ay, Marcius, Caius Marcius: 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.

**CORIO LANUS**

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.

**CORIO LANUS**

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.

**CORIO LANUS**

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 CORIO LANUS: 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*

The End