

Act 1 Scene 1

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

5 First, you know Caius Martius 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?

A street in Rome.

A mob of angry Citizens enters. They are carrying staves, clubs, and other weapons.

FIRST CITIZEN

Before we go any further, listen to me.

ALL

Speak, speak.

FIRST CITIZEN

Are you all certain that you'd rather die fighting than starve to death?

ALL

Yes, we're certain.

FIRST CITIZEN

As you know, Caius Martius is our chief enemy.

ALL

Yes, we know.

FIRST CITIZEN

Let's kill him, so we can sell our corn at the price we choose.

Are we agreed?

ALL

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

FIRST CITIZEN

10 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;
15 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
20 speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

FIRST CITIZEN

Would you proceed especially against Caius Martius?

ALL

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

FIRST CITIZEN

Consider you what services he has done for his country?

FIRST CITIZEN

ALL

No need to talk about this anymore—let's do it. Let's go.

FIRST CITIZEN

May I speak, good citizens?

FIRST CITIZEN

We're poor. The nobles are rich. The nobles have so much to eat that they overindulge and get sick, but if they'd only give us their excess food, we wouldn't be starving any longer. We'd think they were compassionate if they helped us, but they think we're too expensive to feed and don't deserve to eat. They look at our thin, starving bodies and see them as a measure of their own abundance. Our suffering shows them how much they have. Let's seek revenge with our pitchforks before we become as thin as rakes. The gods know I only say this because I'm hungry for bread, not thirsty for revenge.

FIRST CITIZEN

Would you attack Caius Martius in particular?

ALL

We should attack him first. He's like a cruel dog to the people.

FIRST CITIZEN

Have you considered the ways he has served our country?

FIRST CITIZEN

Very well; and could be content to give him good
25 report fort, but that he pays himself with being proud.

FIRST 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
30 please his mother and to be partly proud; which he is, even till the altitude of his virtue.

FIRST 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;
35 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!

I've considered them very well, and I'd be happy to honor him for his service, except he already honors himself by being proud.

FIRST CITIZEN

Don't speak so harshly.

FIRST CITIZEN

Listen, all that he's famous for doing, he did simply to become famous. Slow-witted men can be content to say he acted on behalf of his country, but the truth is that he fought to please his mother and also, in part, out of pride. He has just as much pride as courage.

FIRST CITIZEN

You call it a vice, but being proud is his nature. And you can't accuse him of being interested in the spoils of war.

FIRST CITIZEN

Even if I stop accusing him of pride, I'll still have plenty of other complaints against him. He has so many faults, I grow tired of repeating them to you.

Shouts come from offstage.

Who's shouting? The other side of the city is taking action. Why are we standing around talking? Let's go to the capitol!

ALL

Come, come.

FIRST CITIZEN

Soft! who comes here?

Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA

FIRST CITIZEN

40 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

45 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

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

ALL

Let's go.

FIRST CITIZEN

Wait, who's coming?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA enters.

FIRST CITIZEN

It's worthy Menenius Agrippa, one who has always loved the
people.

FIRST CITIZEN

He's decent enough. I wish that all the other nobles were!

MENENIUS

What are you working on, my countrymen? Where are you
going with bats and clubs? What's the matter? Please tell me.

FIRST CITIZEN

The Senate knows what we're upset about. They've known for
two weeks what we intend to do, and now we're going to show
them. They say poor workers have bad breath. They're about to
find out that we have strong arms too.

MENENIUS

Masters, my good friends, my honest neighbors, why will you
harm 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,
55 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
60 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
65 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
70 support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act
established against the rich, and provide more
piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain

FIRST CITIZEN

We're already hurt.

MENENIUS

I tell you, friends, the nobles take very good care of you. For
the relief you want from your suffering, you'd do just as well to
rise up against the heavens as against the Roman state. The
Senate isn't going to change its course. However strong a
chain you form, the Senate will break you because it's ten
thousand times stronger. The gods, not the nobles, are
responsible for whatever you lack, therefore you should fall to
your knees and pray, not raise your arms and fight. You're
getting carried away by your calamity, and you're only inviting
more trouble. You're slandering the senators, cursing them as
your enemies, without realizing that they care for you like
fathers care for their children.

FIRST CITIZEN

Care for us? As if! They've never cared for us. They force us to
starve while their storehouses are full of grain. They make laws
about loaning money that protect the loan sharks. Every day
they repeal the laws that interfere with the interests of the
wealthy and instead make strict laws 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

75 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
80 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
85 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
90 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—

the poor. If the wars we fight in don't kill us, these laws will. That's how well they care for us.

MENENIUS

You must either admit that you're being extremely malicious or you'll be accused of foolishness. I'll tell you a relevant story. You may have heard it, but since it illustrates my point, I'll venture to tell it again.

FIRST CITIZEN

Well, I'll listen sir, but don't think you can trick us out of our suffering with a story. But if it pleases you, tell it.

MENENIUS

There was a time when all the body's parts rebelled against the belly. They accused the belly of being an idle, inactive pool in the middle the body, always hoarding the food, never working as much as the rest of the parts. The other body parts did see and hear, think, instruct, walk, feel, and together worked for the needs and desires of the whole body. The belly answered—

FIRST CITIZEN

Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MENENIUS

95 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
100 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,
105 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?
110 '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,—

FIRST CITIZEN

Well, sir, what did the belly answer?

MENENIUS

Sir, I'll tell you. With a disdainful smile—look, I can make the belly smile as well as speak—the belly tauntingly replied to the aggravated, mutinous parts that envied the food it received—much like you who rightly accuse our senators for not starving as you do.

FIRST CITIZEN

What did the belly say? That the regal head, the watchful eye, the wise heart, the fighting arms, the mobile legs, the expressive tongue, with some small help from the other parts, if they—

MENENIUS

What then? My word, you're quite a speaker! What then? What then?

FIRST CITIZEN

The greedy belly, the sink of the body, should be restrained—

MENENIUS

Well, what then?

FIRST CITIZEN

The former agents, if they did complain,

115 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

120 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,

125 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;

130 And, through the cranks and offices of man,

MENENIUS

And then what?

FIRST CITIZEN

If the parts complained, what could the belly answer?

MENENIUS

I'll tell you. If you'll exercise a little bit of what little patience you have, you'll hear the belly's answer.

FIRST CITIZEN

You're taking a long time to tell it.

MENENIUS

Pay attention, good friend. The belly was serious and deliberate, not rash like his accusers, and so he answered, "It's true, my fellow parts," he said, "That I am first to receive the food supply that you live on. This is as it should be, because I am the storehouse and the shop of the whole body. But if you'll remember, I send it through the rivers of your blood, even to the court of the heart, to the throne of the brain, and through the ducts and chambers of the body, the strongest nerves and small inferior veins receive from me all that they need to survive. And despite all that, you, my good friends," says the belly—

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

135 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,
140 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
145 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

Yes, sir, go on.

MENENIUS

"Even though all the parts can't see at once what I deliver out to each, I can account that all parts receive from me all the flour I get, and that all I'm left with is the bran." What do you say that?

FIRST CITIZEN

It's an answer. How does it apply to us?

MENENIUS

The senators of Rome are this good belly, and you are the unhappy parts. Examine their decisions and their responsibilities, see how they relate to the common good, and you'll find that there is no public benefit that you receive that doesn't come from them to you. Nothing is being taken from you. What do you think, you, the great toe of this assembly?

FIRST CITIZEN

150 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.

155 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 MARTIUS

Hail, noble Martius!

MARTIUS

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

FIRST CITIZEN

We have ever your good word.

MARTIUS

He that will give good words to thee will flatter
Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
165 That like nor peace nor war? the one affrights you,

FIRST CITIZEN

I am the great toe? Why the great toe?

MENENIUS

For the fact that you're the leader of these ignorant rebels who are the lowest, basest, poorest of men. You're like a stray dog that runs after whatever it can catch first. But prepare your sturdy bats and clubs: Rome and you, her rats, are at the point of battle. One side is going to lose.

CAIUS MARTIUS enters.

Hail, noble Martius!

MARTIUS

Thanks. What's the matter, you dissenting rebels? Are you make yourselves miserable by rubbing the minor itch of your opinion?

FIRST CITIZEN

You always speak kindly to us.

MARTIUS

Whoever speaks kindly to you flatters you undeservingly. What do you want, you dogs, who are satisfied by neither peace nor war? The one frightens you, and the other makes you self-

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,
170 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
175 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,
180 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
185 Would feed on one another? What's their seeking?

MENENIUS

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

MARTIUS

Hang 'em! They say!

righteous. Whoever trusts you sees you as lions, though he should see you as hares, and sees you as foxes, though he should see you as geese. You're as unstable as a burning coal on ice or a hailstone in the sun. Your nature is to honor those who should be punished for their crimes and then to curse the justice that punishes him. He who deserves greatness deserves your scorn. Your instincts are perverted: you most desire the things that will make you sicker. He who depends on your approval swims with fins of lead and cuts down oaks with blades of grass. You should be hanged! Trust you? You change your mind every minute. You call the man you hated a moment ago "noble," and you call the one you used to praise "vile." Why do you cry against the noble Senate all around the city? Second only to the gods, they take care of you, you who would otherwise eat each other. What do the people want?

MENENIUS

They want to sell corn at their own rates. They say the city has plenty.

MARTIUS

They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know
190 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
195 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
200 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?

MARTIUS

205 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
210 They vented their complainings; which being answer'd,
And a petition granted them, a strange one—

Hang them if that's what they say! They'll sit by the fire and
presume to know what goes on in the capitol: who's likely to
rise, who thrives, and who declines. They'll take sides with
factions and make hasty alliances, making some groups strong
and squashing those that they don't like beneath their cheap
shoes. They say there's enough grain? If the nobility would
stop taking pity on the poor and let me use my sword, I'd
slaughter these thousands of slaves into a pile of pieces as
high as I could throw my lance.

MENENIUS

No, they've almost all calmed down. Even though they make a
scene, they're actually very cowardly. But tell me, what
happened with the other group of rebels?

MARTIUS

They've disbanded. Hang them! They said they were hungry,
they quoted proverbs: That hunger broke stone walls, that
dogs must eat, that meat was made for mouths, that the gods
didn't send corn only for the rich. With these small statements
they vented their complaints, and when the nobles answered
by granting them a petition—which is unusual because it
breaks the solidarity of the nobles and makes them look weak

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,
215 Shouting their emulation.

MENENIUS

What is granted them?

MARTIUS

Five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms,
Of their own choice: one's Junius Brutus,
Sicinius Velutus, and I know not—'Sdeath!
220 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.

MARTIUS

225 (to the rebels) Go, get you home, you fragments!

Enter a Messenger, hastily

MESSENGER

Where's Caius Martius?

MARTIUS

—they threw their caps into the air with joy, shouting their delight.

MENENIUS

What was granted to them?

MARTIUS

Five representatives of their own choosing to defend their ignorant views. Junius Brutus, Sicinius Velutus, and I don't know who else. God's death! The rebels would have to tear the roofs off the city before they could ever prevail upon me to grant them that. They'll soon become more powerful and make more arguments for insurrection.

MENENIUS

This is strange.

MARTIUS

(to the rebels) Go home, you crumbs!

A Messenger enters quickly.

MESSENGER

Where's Caius Martius?

MARTIUS

Here: what's the matter?

MESSENGER

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

MARTIUS

I am glad on 't: then we shall ha' means to vent

230 Our musty superfluity. See, our best elders.

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

FIRST SENATOR

Martius, 'tis true that you have lately told us;

The Volsces are in arms.

MARTIUS

They have a leader,

Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to 't.

235 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.

MARTIUS

Were half to half the world by the ears and he.

240 Upon my party, I'd revolt to make

I'm here. What's going on?

MESSENGER

Sir, the news is that the Volsces are prepared to fight.

MARTIUS

I'm glad about this. This means we'll have a way to get rid of our excess population. Look, here come our best elders.

COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, other Senators, JUNIUS BRUTUS, and SICINIUS VELUTUS enter.

FIRST SENATOR

Martius, it's true what you've been telling us lately: the Volsces are ready to fight.

MARTIUS

They have a leader, Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to the test. It's a sin, but I envy his leadership. If I could be anyone other than who I am, I would only wish to be him.

COMINIUS

You've fought each other?

MARTIUS

If a quarter of the world were fighting and he were on my side, I'd revolt to fight only him. He's a lion that I am proud to hunt.

Only my wars with him: he is a lion
That I am proud to hunt.

FIRST SENATOR

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

COMINIUS

245 It is your former promise.

MARTIUS

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

250 No, Caius Martius;
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,
255 Our greatest friends attend us.

TITUS

FIRST SENATOR

Then, worthy Martius, help Cominius with these wars.

COMINIUS

As you promised earlier.

MARTIUS

Sir, I did, and I'll keep my word. Titus Lartius, you'll see me
strike at Tullus's face once more. Are you hesitating? Do you
not want to fight?

LARTIUS

No, Caius Martius, I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with the
other before I stay out of this business.

MENENIUS

Oh, you were raised to fight!

FIRST SENATOR

Let's go to the capitol. I know our greatest friends wait for us
there.

LARTIUS

[To COMINIUS] Lead you on.

To MARTIUS

Right worthy you priority.

COMINIUS

Noble Martius!

FIRST SENATOR

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

MARTIUS

260 Nay, let them follow:

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

Citizens steal away. Exeunt all but SICINIUS and BRUTUS

SICINIUS

Was ever man so proud as is this Martius?

BRUTUS

265 He has no equal.

SICINIUS

When we were chosen tribunes for the people,—

(to Cominius) Take the lead.

To Martius

Follow Cominius, and we'll follow you. You deserve to go before us.

COMINIUS

Noble Martius!

FIRST SENATOR

(to the citizens) Go now to your homes, be gone.

MARTIUS

No, let them follow us. The Volsces have a lot of corn. Take these rats to gnaw at their granaries. Worshipful rebels, your courage is impressive, please follow us.

Citizens sneak away. All but SICINIUS and BRUTUS exit.

SICINIUS

Was there ever a man as proud as Martius?

BRUTUS

He has no equal.

SICINIUS

When we were chosen as representatives for the people—

BRUTUS

Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS

Nay. [B]ut his taunts.

BRUTUS

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

SICINIUS

270 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
275 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
280 Better be held nor more attain'd than by
A place below the first: for what miscarries

BRUTUS

Did you notice his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS

No, only his taunts.

BRUTUS

When he's angry, he'll even taunt the gods.

SICINIUS

He'd mock the calmness of the moon.

BRUTUS

May this war destroy him! His courage has made him too
proud.

SICINIUS

A nature such as his, which has been amplified by all his
successes, disdains his own shadow, which he walks on at
noon. I wonder if his pride can handle being under Cominius's
command.

BRUTUS

The fame he aims for, and with which he has already been
graced, can't be maintained or increased in any position other
than the lead. Whatever goes wrong will be seen as the
general's fault, even though he'll do the best job a man could

Shall be the general's fault, though he perform
To the utmost of a man, and giddy censure
Will then cry out of Martius 'O if he
285 Had borne the business!'

SICINIUS

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

BRUTUS

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

SICINIUS

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

BRUTUS

Lets along.

Exeunt

do, and fickle public opinion will then say of Martius, "Oh, if only he had been in charge!"

SICINIUS

Besides, if things go well, public opinion that favors Martius will steal praise away from Cominius.

BRUTUS

Indeed, half of all Cominius's victories have been credited to Martius, though he didn't win them. And whatever faults Cominius has are seen as Martius's honors, though Martius really doesn't have any merit.

SICINIUS

Let's go and hear what's happening. Let's see how, our feelings about his personality aside, he prepares for this battle.

BRUTUS

Let's go.

They exit.

Act 1 Scene 2

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?
5 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

10 '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, Martius your old enemy,
Who is of Rome worse hated than you,
15 And Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman,
These three lead on this preparation

The Senate house in Corioles.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS and Senators of Corioles enter.

FIRST SENATOR

So Aufidius, your opinion is that the Romans have spied on our council meetings
and know how we proceed.

AUFIDIUS

Don't you agree? Haven't all the plans we've ever discussed here that could be put into action against Rome been thwarted? Not even four days have gone by since I heard from the field, these are the words—I think I have the letter here—yes, here it is.

He reads.

"They've raised an army, but it's not known whether they will march east or west. The famine is serious, the people are rebelling, and it's rumored that Cominius, your old enemy Martius—who the Romans hate worse than you—and Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman, these three lead the attack, wherever it's headed. Most likely toward you. Think about it."

Whither 'tis bent: most likely 'tis for you:
Consider of it.'

FIRST SENATOR

Our army's in the field
20 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
25 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

30 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
35 They've not prepared for us.

AUFIDIUS

O, doubt not that;

FIRST SENATOR

Our army's in the field. We've never doubted that the Romans
were ready to fight back.

AUFIDIUS

You thought it was wise to keep your plans secret until they
needed to be revealed, but it seems that the Romans knew
your plans as soon as they were hatched. Since they know our
intention, we can't proceed as we had planned: to capture as
many towns as possible before the Romans knew we were
moving toward them.

SECOND SENATOR

Noble Aufidius, do your duty. Go to your men. Leave us here to
guard Corioles ourselves. If they attack us, bring your army
back before they take the city, but I think you'll find they
haven't prepared for us.

AUFIDIUS

I speak from certainties. Nay, more,
Some parcels of their power are forth already,
And only hitherward. I leave your honours.
40 If we and Caius Martius 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

45 Farewell.

SECOND SENATOR

Farewell.

ALL

Farewell.

Exeunt

Rome. A room in Martius' house.

Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA they set them down on two low

Don't be so sure. I'm certain when I say that some part of their army is already moving toward us. I leave you now, noblemen. If we happen to meet Caius Martius, he and I have sworn that we'll always strike at each other until one of us can strike no more.

ALL

May the gods assist you!

AUFIDIUS

And keep you noblemen safe!

FIRST SENATOR

Farewell.

SECOND SENATOR

Farewell.

ALL

Farewell.

All exit. AUFIDIUS leaves through one door and the Senators leave through another.

Act 1 Scene 3

A room in Martius' house in Rome.

VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA enter. They sit down on two low stools

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
5 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
10 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
15 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?

and sew.

VOLUMNIA

Please, my daughter-in-law, sing or express yourself more cheerfully. If my son were my husband, I would be happier with him away winning honors than lovingly embracing me in bed. Before he was full grown, when he was still my only child, when he was boyishly handsome and attracting much attention, when even if the king begged me I shouldn't have let him out of my sight for an hour, I considered how honored he would become, and that unless he were inspired to make a name for himself, he would be no better than a picture hanging on the wall, so I happily let him face danger, because that's how he was likely to find fame. I sent him to a cruel war from which he returned crowned with garlands of oak. I tell you, daughter-in-law, I jumped for joy more to see that he had proven himself as a man than I did when I first heard he was a boy child.

VIRGILIA

But if had he died in the war, madam, how would you feel then?

VOLUMNIA

VOLUMNIA

20 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
Martius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their
25 country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

Enter a Gentlewoman

GENTLEWOMAN

(to Volumnia) 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,

30 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

35 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

Then his noble deeds would have been my son—in them I
would have found my legacy. Listen to me seriously: if I had a
dozen sons and loved them equally, as much as I love our
Martius, I would rather that eleven of them die nobly for their
country than one choose the pleasures of making love over
doing his duty.

A Gentlewoman enters.

GENTLEWOMAN

(to Volumnia) Madam, the Lady Valeria has come to see you.

VIRGILIA

May I please be excused to have some time alone?

VOLUMNIA

No, you may not. I think I hear your husband's drum coming
toward us. He must have plucked out all Aufidius's hairs so the
Volsces will avoid him the way children run from a bear. I think I
see him stamping like this, and calling like this: "Come on, you
cowards! You were born in fear even though you were born in
Rome." He's wiping his bloody forehead with his armored hand.
He's unrelenting like a laborer who must harvest a whole field
or not be paid at all.

VIRGILIA

His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOLUMNIA

Away, you fool! it more becomes a man
40 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

45 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

50 I am glad to see your ladyship.

His bloody forehead! Oh, Jupiter, king of the gods, not blood!

VOLUMNIA

Don't be foolish! Blood belongs on a man more than gold
belongs on his trophy. When Hecuba suckled Hector, her
breasts were no lovelier than Hector's forehead when a
Grecian sword struck it and it gushed furiously with blood. Tell
Valeria that we welcome her in.

The Gentlewoman exits.

VIRGILIA

Heavens protect my husband from the deadly Aufidius!

VOLUMNIA

He'll beat Aufidius's head down below his knees and then
stand on his neck.

VALERIA enters with an usher and a gentlewoman.

VALERIA

My ladies, good day to you both.

VOLUMNIA

Sweet madam.

VIRGILIA

I'm glad to see you, your ladyship.

VALERIA

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

VIRGILIA

I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

VOLUMNIA

55 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 60 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; catched it again; or whether his fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his 65 teeth and tear it; O, I warrant it, how he mammocked it!

VOLUMNIA

One on 's father's moods.

VALERIA

How are you both? You are remarkable house-keepers.
(to Volumnia) What are you sewing here? It looks like fine embroidery.
(to Virgilia) How is your little son?

VIRGILIA

Thank you, your ladyship. He's fine, good madam.

VOLUMNIA

He'd rather see the soldiers and hear a drum than do his schoolwork.

VALERIA

It's true, he's his father's son. He's a very good-looking boy. I spent half an hour with him on Wednesday. He is so determined. I saw him run after a golden butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go and then went after it again. He fell down and got back up and again he caught the butterfly. I don't know whether his fall enraged him or what, but he clenched his teeth and tore it. I tell you, he ripped it apart!

VOLUMNIA

He has his father's moods.

VALERIA

Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

VIRGILIA

A crack, madam.

VALERIA

70 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

75 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

VALERIA

Indeed, dear, he's a noble child.

VIRGILIA

He's devilish, madam.

VALERIA

Set aside your stitching. Pretend to be an idle housewife with
me this afternoon.

VIRGILIA

No, good madam. I can't go out today.

VALERIA

Can't go out?

VOLUMNIA

She will, she will.

VIRGILIA

No. Please let me stay in. I won't cross the threshold until my
husband returns from the war.

VALERIA

You're being unreasonable to confine yourself. Come, you
must go visit our neighbor, who's expecting a baby.

VIRGILIA

80 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
85 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
90 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.

I wish her an easy birth and send her my prayers, but I can't go see her.

VOLUMNIA

Why not?

VIRGILIA

It's not because I'm lazy or don't care for her.

VALERIA

You're like another Penelope, except they say that all the yarn
she spun in Ulysses' absence only filled Ithaca with moths. I
wish your embroidery cloth were as sensitive as your finger,
that way you might take pity on it and stop pricking it. Come
with us.

VIRGILIA

No, good madam, please excuse me. I won't go.

VALERIA

Truly, come with me, and I'll tell you excellent news about your
husband.

Oh, good madam, there can't be good news yet.

VALERIA

I'm not kidding you. News came from him last night.

VIRGILIA

Indeed, madam?

VALERIA

95 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
100 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

(to Valeria) Let her alone, lady: as she is now, she will but
105 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

VIRGILIA

Really, madam?

VALERIA

Yes, it's true. I heard a senator talking. He said Cominius the general is leading one part of our Roman army against the oncoming Volsces. Your husband and Titus Lartius are attacking their city Corioles. They have no doubt that they'll win and that the battle won't last long. On my honor, this news is true. Please come out with us.

VIRGILIA

Forgive me, good madam. I'll do as you say from now on.

VOLUMNIA

(to Valeria) Let her stay home, lady. The way she is now, she'll only detract from our celebration.

VALERIA

I think you're right—she will. Cheer up then, good sweet lady. Please, Virgilia, shake off your sad mood and come out with us.

VIRGILIA

110 you much mirth.

VALERIA

Well, then, farewell.

Exeunt

Before Corioli.

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

MARTIUS

Yonder comes news. A wager they have met.

LARTIUS

My horse to yours, no.

MARTIUS

'Tis done.

LARTIUS

Agreed.

MARTIUS

5 Say, has our general met the enemy?

No. In a word, madam, I simply can't. I wish you much happiness.

VALERIA

Well then, goodbye.

They all exit.

Act 1 Scene 4

Outside the gates of Corioles.

MARTIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, captains and soldiers enter, with a drummer and trumpeter. A Messenger comes toward them.

MARTIUS

Here comes news. I bet there's been a battle.

LARTIUS

I bet you my horse for yours that there hasn't been a battle.

MARTIUS

It's a bet.

LARTIUS

Agreed.

MARTIUS

Tell us, has our general been in battle with the enemy?

MESSENGER

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

LARTIUS

So, the good horse is mine.

MARTIUS

I'll buy him of you.

LARTIUS

No, I'll nor sell nor give him: lend you him I will

10 For half a hundred years. Summon the town.

MARTIUS

How far off lie these armies?

MESSENGER

Within this mile and half.

MARTIUS

Then shall we hear their 'larum, and they ours.

Now, Mars, I prithee, make us quick in work,

15 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

MESSENGER

They can see each other, but they haven't fought yet.

LARTIUS

So, your good horse is mine.

MARTIUS

I'll buy him back from you.

LARTIUS

No, I'll won't sell or give him away. I'll lend him to you for fifty years. Alert the town.

MARTIUS

How far away are the armies?

MESSENGER

Within a mile and a half.

MARTIUS

Then we'll hear their call to arms, and they'll hear ours. Now, Mars, god of war, I pray to you, make our attack quick, so that with victorious swords we may march from here to help our friends on the battlefield!

(to the trumpeter) Come, blow your blast.

The trumpet sounds. Two Volscian Senators enter, with others, on the walls of Corioles.

(to the Senators) Tulus 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

20 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

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

MARTIUS

O, they are at it!

LARTIUS

Their noise be our instruction. Ladders, ho!

Enter the army of the Volsces

MARTIUS

(to the Senators) Is Tullus Aufidius inside these walls?

FIRST SENATOR

No. And there isn't a man here who fears you any less than he does, which is virtually not at all.

Drums are heard from far away.

(to the Volsces) Listen! Our drums are summoning our young soldiers. We'd rather break down our own walls than let them fence us in. Our gates, which look locked, are actually just gently shut. They'll open on their own.

A trumpet is heard from far away.

(to the Romans) Listen! In the distance, that's Aufidius. Listen to how he's beating your divided army.

MARTIUS

Oh, they're fighting each other!

LARTIUS

Their noise tells us what to do. Raise the ladders!

The Volscian army enters.

MARTIUS

30 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,

35 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

MARTIUS cursing

MARTIUS

All the contagion of the south light on you,

You shames of Rome! you herd of—Boils and plagues

40 Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhor'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!

45 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,

50 As they us to our trenches followed.

They're not afraid of us—instead they march out of their own city. Cover your hearts with your shields now and fight with hearts that are stronger than these shields. Go forward, brave Titus. They hate us more than we think, which makes me sweat with anger. Come on, my fellow soldiers. Whoever hangs back, I'll think you're a Volsce, and you'll feel the edge of my sword.

*Trumpets sound. The Romans all exit, as they are beaten back to their trenches. **MARTIUS** re-enters, cursing.*

MARTIUS

I curse you with the plague of the south, you shameful

Romans! You bunch of—may blisters and infection cover over you so that people will smell you before they see you, and

may your disease spread on the wind for a mile, even when the wind blows against you! You look like men, but you have the souls of geese. Why did you run from slaves that even apes could beat? Pluto, god of the dead and the underworld!

You ran away and didn't fight back; your backs are red with blood and your faces pale with fear! Pull yourselves together and charge again, or, by the fires of heaven, I'll stop fighting the Volsces and attack you instead. Listen, if you can hold steady, we'll beat them and take their wives. They're in our trenches.

Follow me!

*Another alarum. The Volsces fly, and **MARTIUS** 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

55 Nor I.

MARTIUS 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 Martius?

*Another trumpet sounds. The Volsces re-enter to attack, and **MARTIUS** follows them to the gates.*

So, the gates are open now. Support me well. Fortune opens the gates for those who follow me, not for those who run from battle. Listen to me, and do as I say.

The Roman soldiers enter the gates.

FIRST SOLDIER

That's crazy. I'm not going.

SECOND SOLDIER

Neither am I.

MARTIUS is locked inside the gates.

FIRST SOLDIER

Look, they've locked him in.

ALL

I'm sure he'll end up in their cooking pot.

The trumpet continues.

TITUS LARTIUS re-enters.

LARTIUS

What happened to Martius?

ALL

Slain, sir, doubtless.

FIRST SOLDIER

60 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!

65 Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,
And, when it bows, stands up. Thou art left, Martius:
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
70 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 MARTIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy

FIRST SOLDIER

Look, sir.

LARTIUS**ALL**

He has undoubtedly been killed, sir.

FIRST SOLDIER

He followed right behind the fleeing Volscians and entered the city with them. They closed the gates behind him, and he's in there all alone to fight the whole city.

LARTIUS

Oh, noble fellow! He's braver than his sword, which cannot feel pain, and he stands firm while even his sword bends. You are gone for, Martius. A flawless red gem, as large as you, wouldn't be as valuable a jewel as you are. You were the soldier {Cato - A military adviser in ancient Rome.} would have wished for, not just fierce and terrible on occasion, but with your serious looks and your thunderous voice, you terrified your enemies as if the whole world were shaking with a fever.

MARTIUS re-enters, bleeding, having been assaulted by the Volscians.

FIRST SOLDIER

Look, sir.

LARTIUS

75 O'tis Martius!

Let's fetch him off, or make remain alike.

They fight, and all enter the city

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 MARTIUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet

MARTIUS

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!

Oh, it's Martius! Let's rescue him or we'll be assaulted by the Volsces, too.

They fight, and all enter the city.

Act 1 Scene 5

A street in Corioles.

Some Romans enter with spoils of war.

FIRST ROMAN

I'll bring this back to Rome.

SECOND ROMAN

And I'll bring this.

THIRD ROMAN

Curse it! I thought this was silver.

Trumpets still continue far away.

MARTIUS (bleeding) and TITUS LARTIUS enter with a trumpeter.

MARTIUS

Look at these scavengers who spend their time gathering worthless coins! Cushions, lead spoons, cheap swords, clothes that hangmen would bury along with whoever died wearing them. These lowly slaves are packing up before the fight is even over. They're the worst! And listen to the noise Cominius

And hark, what noise the general makes! To him!

10 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

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

MARTIUS

Sir, praise me not;
My work hath yet not warm'd me: fare you well:
20 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
25 Misguide thy opposers' swords! Bold gentleman,
Prosperity be thy page!

MARTIUS

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

makes! Let's go help him! Aufidius, the one my soul hates, is driving our Roman army apart. Valiant Titus, take enough men with you to secure the city. I'll go now with those who have the spirit and help Cominius.

LARTIUS

Worthy sir, you're bleeding. Your efforts have been too violent for you to fight again now.

MARTIUS

Don't flatter me. I'm not even warmed up yet. Good luck to you. Bleeding is more helpful to me than it is dangerous. I'll find Aufidius and fight.

LARTIUS

May the fair goddess Fortune fall deeply in love with you, and may she cast a spell on your opponents so their swords don't strike you! Brave gentlemen, may you be successful!

MARTIUS

May Fortune be no less a friend to you than she is to those she loves most! Good luck.

LARTIUS

Thou worthiest Martius!

Exit MARTIUS

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

Exeunt

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,
5 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
10 fronts encountering,

LARTIUS

You're the bravest, Martius!

MARTIUS exits.

Go, sound your trumpet in the marketplace. Bring all the town officials here. We'll tell them what we're thinking. Go!

All exit, going in different directions.

Act 1 Scene 6

Near Cominius's camp.

COMINIUS enters with soldiers, appearing to retreat from battle.

COMINIUS

Catch your breath, my friends. You fought well. We've cleared the enemy like Romans, neither foolish in our attacks nor cowardly in our retreat. Believe me, sirs, we'll fight again. While we've been attacking, news has intermittently come to us, carried on the winds, about the battles fought by our friends. Oh, Roman gods! Grant them the success that we wish for as well, and may both our armies, with smiling faces, then gratefully offer you a sacrifice.

May give you thankful sacrifice.

Enter a Messenger

Thy news?

MESSENGER

The citizens of Corioli have issued,
And given to Lartius and to Martius battle:
15 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

20 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 Volscs
25 Held me in chase, that I was forced to wheel

A Messenger enters.

What news do you have?

MESSENGER

The citizens of Corioles have left the city and are fighting with Lartius and Martius. Our group was driven to their trenches, and then I got away.

COMINIUS

You're telling the truth, but you're leaving something out. How long ago did this happen?

MESSENGER

More than an hour ago, my lord.

COMINIUS

They're not even a mile away. A little while ago we heard their drums. How could you waste an hour traveling only one mile and bring your news so late?

MESSENGER

Volscian spies chased me and I was forced to go three or four miles out of my way. Otherwise I would have brought my

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
30 He has the stamp of Martius; and I have
Before-time seen him thus.

MARTIUS

[Within] Come I too late?

COMINIUS

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

Enter MARTIUS

MARTIUS

Come I too late?

COMINIUS

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

MARTIUS

O, let me clip ye
40 In arms as sound as when I woo'd, in heart

report half an hour earlier.

COMINIUS

Who's over there, looking like he's been skinned alive? Oh, gods, it looks like Martius, and I've seen him look like this before.

MARTIUS

(from offstage) Am I too late?

COMINIUS

I know the difference between the sound of Martius's tongue and every lesser man even more than the shepherd knows the difference between the sound of thunder and a drum.

MARTIUS enters, covered in blood.

MARTIUS

Am I too late?

COMINIUS

Yes, but only if you're drenched in your own blood, not the blood of others.

MARTIUS

Oh, let me hug you with arms as strong as when I wooed my wife, with a heart as happy as the day we married and the

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?

MARTIUS

45 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,
50 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.

MARTIUS

Let him alone;
55 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

candles burned down, telling us it was time for bed!

COMINIUS

Prized warrior, how is Titus Lartius?

MARTIUS

He's busy with decrees: condemning some to death and some to exile, releasing men for ransom or pity, and threatening others. He's holding Corioles in the name of Rome, as if the city were a greyhound on a leash, eager to please and ready to run.

COMINIUS

Where is that slave who told me they had beaten you back to your trenches? Where is he? Call him here.

MARTIUS

Leave him alone. He told the truth. But as for our men, the common soldiers, I curse them with a plague! May they be tried in court! Like stray dogs, they ran away from the Volscs, who are lower-bred than they are. They ran like a mouse runs from a cat.

COMINIUS

But how prevail'd you?

MARTIUS

60 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

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

MARTIUS

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

COMINIUS

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

MARTIUS

I do beseech you,
By all the battles wherein we have fought,
By the blood we have shed together, by the vows
75 We have made to endure friends, that you directly
Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates;

How did you triumph then?

MARTIUS

Do I have enough time to tell you? I don't think so. Where is the enemy? Have you captured this field? If not, why did you stop before you did?

COMINIUS

Martius, we've been fighting without enough soldiers or supplies, so we retreated temporarily to regroup, and then we'll win.

MARTIUS

What's their battle formation? Do you know what side their best men are on?

COMINIUS

My guess, Martius, is that the Antiates, who they trust highly, are in the front. Leading them is Aufidius, the very heart of their hope.

MARTIUS

By all the battles we've fought, by the blood we have shed together and by the vows we made to remain friends, I beg that you put me directly against Aufidius and his Antiates. And that you not hesitate but rather fill the air with raised swords and darts. Now is the time for us to prove ourselves.

And that you not delay the present, but,
Filling the air with swords advanced and darts,
We prove this very hour.

COMINIUS

80 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.

MARTIUS

85 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;
90 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 Martius.

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

95 O, me alone! make you a sword of me?

COMINIUS

I wish you were going now to a gentle bath and to have balms applied to you, but I never dare to deny what you ask. Take your choice of the men who can best help you.

MARTIUS

The men I choose are the ones most eager to fight. If there is any man here—and it would be a sin to doubt it—who loves seeing me smeared in blood, that fears more for his honor than for his personal safety, that thinks a brave death outweighs a bad life, and that his country is more important than himself, let him alone, or others if they feel the same, wave their arms now to tell me who they are. And then follow me.

They all shout and wave their swords, lift him up in their arms, and throw their caps in the air.

Choose me! Make me one of your swordsmen! If these aren't

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,
100 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,
105 Which men are best inclined.

COMINIUS

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

Exeunt

The gates of Corioli.

TITUS LARTIUS, having set a guard upon Corioli, going with drum and trumpet toward **COMINIUS** and **CAIUS MARTIUS**, 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

just superficial words, are there four among you who aren't traitors? All of you would be able to fight the great Aufidius—your shields are as hard as his. I will only select four men, but thank you, all of you. The rest of you will fight our enemy in some other battle when the time comes. Please march, and I'll quickly choose which men are best suited to this fight.

COMINIUS

March forward, men. Perform well, and we'll all share the honor.

All exit.

Act 1 Scene 7

The gates of Corioles.

TITUS LARTIUS, leaving someone to guard Corioles, goes toward **COMINIUS** and **CAIUS MARTIUS** with a drummer and trumpeter. A Lieutenant, other soldiers, and a scout also enter.

LARTIUS

Guard the gate. Do your job as I've explained it. If I send a message, send those hundreds of soldiers to help us. The

Those centuries to our aid: the rest will serve
For a short holding: if we lose the field,
5 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

A field of battle.

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

MARTIUS

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
5 More than thy fame and envy. Fix thy foot.

MARTIUS

remaining soldiers can hold the city on their own for a little while. After all, if we lose in the field, we can't keep the city anyway.

LIEUTENANT

Don't worry, sir, we'll guard the city.

LARTIUS

Good, and shut these gates once I'm gone. Here comes our scout to bring us to the Roman camp.

They exit.

Act 1 Scene 8

A battlefield.

A trumpet sounds from the battle. MARTIUS and AUFIDIUS enter from opposite sides.

MARTIUS

I'll fight only against you, because I hate you worse than a traitor.

AUFIDIUS

We feel the same hatred. There's not a snake in Africa that I hate more than your fame and envy. Prepare to fight.

MARTIUS

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

AUFIDIUS

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

MARTIUS

10 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

15 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.

MARTIUS fights till they be driven in breathless

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

Exeunt

Whoever runs away from this fight first must become the other's slave until death, and after that may the gods curse him!

AUFIDIUS

If I run, Martius, hunt me like a hare.

MARTIUS

Less than three hours ago, Tullus, I fought alone inside the walls of Corioles, and I killed whoever I wanted. It's not my own blood you see me covered in. For your revenge, fight me with your fullest force.

AUFIDIUS

If you're anything like Hector, the failed champion of your ancestors whom you're so proud of, you won't escape me here.

They fight, and some Volsces come to the aid of AUFIDIUS.

MARTIUS fights until they're out of breath.

You're intrusive, not brave. You've shamed me with your assistance, and I condemn you for it.

All exit.

Act 1 Scene 9

The Roman camp.

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

COMINIUS

If I should tell thee o'er this thy day's work,
Thou'ldest not believe thy deeds: but I'll report it
Where senators shall mingle tears with smiles,
Where great patricians shall attend and shrug,
5 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
10 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:
15 Hadst thou beheld—

The Roman camp.

*Trumpets blast to announce Roman victory. A retreat signal is also sounded. **COMINIUS** and the Romans enter from one side. **MARTIUS**, with his arm in a sling, enters from the other side.*

COMINIUS

If I told you about all you did today, you wouldn't believe it. But when I tell the senators, they'll both cry and smile. Great noblemen will pause, shrug their shoulders in bewilderment, and wonder. Ladies will be frightened, happily frightened, and ask to hear more. The somber tribunes, who along with the moldy peasants hate it when you triumph, will say under their breath: "We thank the gods that Rome has a soldier like you." But for you this victory was only like a small bite, since you had already had a feast of victory before.

***TITUS LARTIUS**, with his army, enters, returning from the pursuit.*

LARTIUS

Oh, general, Martius was like the horse, and we were only along for the ride. If you had seen—

MARTIUS

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
20 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
25 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
30 In sign of what you are, not to reward
What you have done—before our army hear me.

MARTIUS

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

COMINIUS

Should they not,
35 Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude,

MARTIUS

Please, say no more. My mother, who has a right to praise me since I am her son, irritates me when she does so. I've done what you've done: I've done the best I can. I was trained as you were: to serve my country. Whoever who has done what he intended to do has accomplished more than I have.

COMINIUS

Don't dismiss the praise you deserve. Rome must know your value as her soldier. To conceal your achievements would be worse than stealing, and not less than slander, because for what you have done, no matter how highly we praise you, it will never be sufficient. So I ask you—in recognition of your importance to Rome, not to boast of your achievements—let me address you in front of our army.

MARTIUS

I'm wounded, and my wounds hurt when they hear how I got them.

COMINIUS

If your wounds don't hear, they might think we're ungrateful, become infected, and cause your death. Of all the many good

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,

40 Before the common distribution, at

Your only choice.

MARTIUS

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

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

MARTIUS

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
50 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.—

horses we've taken from the enemy and of all the treasures we've won in the battlefield and in the city, we'll give you one tenth to take now, before the rest is divided among us. Take whatever you choose.

MARTIUS

Thank you, general, but my heart won't to take a bribe to pay my sword. I refuse to stand there and listen to my deeds be told to those who saw me do them.

A long trumpet blast is heard. They all cry "Martius! Martius!" and throw their caps and lances into the air. COMINIUS and LARTIUS stand respectfully without their hats.

MARTIUS

May these instruments, which you play in the wrong moment, never make a sound again! If drums and trumpets could flatter the enemy into submission in battle, then we should build our courts and cities on their false praise! When steel grows soft as the diplomat's silk, let us make an army of diplomats! Stop all this flattery! Because I haven't washed my bloody nose or because I triumphed over some weakling—which, you fail to note, many others have done, too—you praise me in

55 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

60 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,
65 Then reason safely with you. Therefore, be it known,
As to us, to all the world, that Caius Martius
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,
70 For what he did before Corioli, call him,
With all the applause and clamour of the host,
CAIUS MARTIUS CORIOLANUS! Bear
The addition nobly ever!

Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums

ALL

Caius Martius Coriolanus!

overstated terms, as if I enjoyed having my small achievements puffed up with exaggerations.

COMINIUS

You're too modest. You express more resentment about the praise we offer than you express gratitude for our true account of your service. Allow me to suggest that if you're going to get upset, we'll tie you up as we would someone suicidal and then reason with you. It must be known, not only to us but to all the world, that Caius Martius is the hero of this war. So I give you my magnificent horse, whose value is known to our men, and all his equipment. And from this time on, in honor of what you did in Corioles, you will be called, with all the applause and clamor you deserve, Caius Martius Coriolanus! Use this additional title nobly, always!

Trumpets sound and drums pound.

ALL

Caius Martius Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS

75 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
80 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
85 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
90 Of my lord general.

COMINIUS

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

CORIOLANUS**CORIOLANUS**

I'll go wash and when my face is clean, you'll see whether or not I'm blushing. Thank you for this honor. I'll ride your horse and try always to live up to this noble title you have given me.

COMINIUS

Let's go to our tent. Before we rest, we'll write to Rome of our success. You, Titus Lartius, must go back to Corioles. Send us the best citizen of Corioles with whom we may negotiate a treaty, one that is fair to them and to us.

LARTIUS

I will, my lord.

CORIOLANUS

The gods begin to mock me. I, who just refused amazing gifts, must now beg something of you, my lord general.

COMINIUS

Whatever you want is yours. What is it?

CORIOLANUS

I sometime lay here in Coriolei
At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;
95 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
100 Be free as is the wind. Deliver him, Titus.

LARTIUS

Martius, his name?

CORIOLANUS

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

COMINIUS

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

Exeunt

When I was in Corioles, I stayed for some time in a poor man's house. He treated me kindly, and now he's a prisoner. He cried out for my help, but I was focused on Aufidius, and anger overwhelmed my pity. I request that you free my poor host.

COMINIUS

You're persuasive! Even if he were the butcher of my son, he'd be as free as the wind. Release him, Titus.

LARTIUS

Martius, his name?

CORIOLANUS

By Jupiter! I've forgotten. I'm worn out and my memory is tired.
Do we have any wine here?

COMINIUS

Let's go our tent. The blood on your face is drying. It's time you were looked at. Come.

All exit.

Act 1 Scene 10

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,

5 Being a Volsce, be that I am. Condition!

What good condition can a treaty find

I' the part that is at mercy? Five times, Martius,

I have fought with thee: so often hast thou beat me,

And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter

10 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,

15 True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way

Or wrath or craft may get him.

FIRST SOLDIER

The Volscian camp.

Trumpets sound. **TULLUS AUFIDIUS** enters, bloody, with two or three Volscian Soldiers.

AUFIDIUS

The town is taken!

FIRST SOLDIER

It'll be given back with fair conditions.

AUFIDIUS

Conditions! I wish I were a Roman, but I can't be other than what I am: a Volsce. Conditions! Under what conditions can a treaty be fair to the side that has lost? I've fought Martius five times, and every time he has beaten me. And I think he would beat me again in the future if we met in battle as often as we eat. By the elements, if I ever see him face to face again, I'll kill him or he'll kill me. My desire to beat him isn't as honorable as it once was, for while I once wanted to crush him with our forces being equal, fighting fairly sword to sword, but now I'll stab him however I can and let either my anger or my trickery bring him down.

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
20 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
25 My hate to Martius: 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
30 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
35 I may spur on my journey.

FIRST SOLDIER

I shall, sir.

He's the devil.

AUFIDIUS

Bolder, but not as subtle. He's the only one who has
compromised my honor, and for that I will seek vengeance.
Neither sleep nor sanctuary, nor being unarmed, nor sick, nor
the constraints of the temple or the capitol, the prayers of
priests or times of sacrifice, none of these obstacles to my fury
will stop me from hating Martius. Wherever I find him, even at
home in my brother's protection, despite the law of hospitality,
I'll wash my fierce hand in his heart. Go to Corioles, find out
how it's being occupied and who's been taken hostage by the
Romans.

FIRST SOLDIER

You're not going?

AUFIDIUS

They're waiting for me at the cypress grove, south of the city
mills. Please bring word to me there about how things are
going so I can plan my journey accordingly.

FIRST SOLDIER

I will, sir.

Exeunt

All exit.

Act 2 Scene 1

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 Martius.

SICINIUS

5 Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

MENENIUS

Pray you, who does the wolf love?

SICINIUS

The lamb.

MENENIUS

A public place in Rome.

MENENIUS enters with **SICINIUS** and **BRUTUS**, the two tribunes of the people.

MENENIUS

The fortuneteller tells me we'll receive news tonight.

BRUTUS

Good news or bad?

MENENIUS

Not the news people prayed for—they have no love for Martius.

SICINIUS

In nature, animals learn who their friends are.

MENENIUS

Tell me, who does the wolf love?

SICINIUS

The lamb.

MENENIUS

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

BRUTUS

10 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 Martius poor in, that you two
15 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
20 censured here in the city, I mean of us o' the

Yes, to devour him, as the hungry citizens would love to devour the noble Martius.

BRUTUS

Martius is like a lamb, a lamb that roars like a bear.

MENENIUS

Martius is like a bear, a bear that lives like a lamb. You two have been around a long time, answer one question for me.

BOTH

What do you want to know, sir?

MENENIUS

Tell me a quality that Martius lacks but that you two have in abundance.

BRUTUS

He doesn't have just one fault—he has every fault.

SICINIUS

Especially pride.

BRUTUS

And boasting, above all.

MENENIUS

One thing is strange though. Do you two know how you are regarded by the nobles of the city? Do you?

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

25 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 Martius for
30 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
35 doing much alone. You talk of pride: O that you could turn your eyes toward the napes of your necks,

BOTH

How are we seen?

MENENIUS

Because you talk of pride now, won't you get angry if I tell you?

BOTH

No, not at all, sir.

MENENIUS

Well, it doesn't take much. Even the slightest incident will cause you to lose your patience and let your disposition take over. You become angry at what you should have enjoyed, and your only enjoyment comes from being angry. And yet you blame Martius for being proud?

BRUTUS

We're not alone in our opinion, sir.

MENENIUS

I know you can do very little alone. Without all the help you get, your actions would be totally insignificant. Your abilities aren't strong enough for you to do much on your own. You talk of pride. If only you could see yourselves as you really are! I wish you could!

and make but an interior survey of your good selves!

O that you could!

BRUTUS

What then, sir?

MENENIUS

40 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
45 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
50 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
55 delivered the matter well, when I find the ass in
compound with the major part of your syllables: and

BRUTUS

And what if we could, sir?

MENENIUS

You'd see that you are equal to all the other unqualified, proud, violent, testy government officials—in other words, fools—in Rome.

SICINIUS

Menenius, you have a bad reputation, too.

MENENIUS

I'm known as a moody aristocrat, and one that loves a cup of hot wine not diluted by even a drop of water from the Tiber River. I'm said to be somewhat flawed as a judge because I'm hastily swayed by the first argument I hear. I'm quick to anger at the slightest disturbance. I stay up late at night and don't rise early in the morning. I say whatever I think and express my anger when I speak. Meeting two statesmen such as yourselves—I cannot call you lawmakers—if I don't like the drink you give me, I make a crooked face at it. I don't think you deserve the respectful titles of your profession, when I find most of what you say to be asinine. And though I can tolerate those that say you are respectable, serious men, the ones who

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
60 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

65 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 rejourn the controversy of three pence to a
70 second day of audience. When you are hearing a
matter between party and party, if you chance to be
pinched with the colic, you make faces like
mummers; set up the bloody flag against all
patience; and, in roaring for a chamber-pot,
75 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.

say you are honest are deadly liars. If you see these same
qualities in me, doesn't it make sense that I'm known for my
bad qualities? What harm can your misperceptions do to my
character, if I already have a bad reputation?

BRUTUS

That's enough, sir. We know your reputation well.

MENENIUS

You don't know anything about me, or about yourselves. Your
ambition is to have poor citizens take off their hats and bow
down to you. You'll waste a whole morning listening to a
dispute over three pence between an orange vendor and a
wine tap seller and then postpone settling the issue until the
next day. When you're hearing a matter between two parties, if
you're feeling the tiniest bit sick, you become very dramatic:
you violently refuse to be patient and, demanding a chamber
pot, dismiss the controversy, leaving it even more entangled as
a result of your hearing it. The only justice you show is in
calling both parties scoundrels. You're a pair of strange men.

BRUTUS

Come, come, you are well understood to be a
80 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
85 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, Martius is proud;
who in a cheap estimation, is worth predecessors
90 since Deucalion, though peradventure some of the
best of 'em were hereditary hangmen. God-den to
your worshipes: 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**

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

BRUTUS

Come, come. You're well known to be a better dinner-table
conversationalist than a serious judge.

MENENIUS

Even our priests would become mockers if they encountered
anyone as ridiculous as you. When you stay on topic, what you
say isn't worth the wagging of your beards. And your beards
don't even deserve the honorable burial of being stuffed in a
seamstress's cushion or being entombed in the pack saddle of
a donkey. You say Martius is proud, but even guessing
conservatively, he's worth all your predecessors since
Deucalion, who survived the flood, even though some of them
may have been hangmen. Good evening to you both. To keep
talking with you would infect my brain, since you are the
herdsmen of the beastly common people. I must go.

BRUTUS and **SICINIUS** go aside.

VOLUMNIA, **VIRGILIA**, and **VALERIA** enter.

How are you, my dear noble ladies? You are like the moon on
earth—what are you looking at?

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

100 Ha! Martius coming home!

VOLUMNIA

Ay, worthy Menenius; and with most prosperous approbation.

MENENIUS

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

VOLUMNIA AND VIRGILIA

Nay, 'tis true.

VOLUMNIA

105 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

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

VOLUMNIA

Honorable Menenius, my son Martius approaches. For the love of Juno, let's go.

MENENIUS

What? Martius is coming home?

VOLUMNIA

Yes, worthy Menenius, and he's proudly victorious.

MENENIUS

I take my hat off in thanks to you, Jupiter, king of the gods. Hoo!
Martius is coming home!

VOLUMNIA AND VIRGILIA

Yes, it's true.

VOLUMNIA

Look, here's a letter from him. He sent another to the Senate and another to his wife. I think there's one at home for you.

MENENIUS

My household will be thrilled tonight. A letter for me!

VIRGILIA

Yes, I'm certain there's a letter for you. I saw it.

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 empiricotic, and, to this preservative, 115 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' 120 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 125 Aufidius got off.

MENENIUS

A letter for me! It makes me live seven years longer, and all the while I'll laugh at my doctor. The most well-established prescription according to the great doctor Galen is nothing but an experimental cure, and compared to this news, it's worth no more than horse medicine. Is he wounded? He was likely to come home wounded.

VIRGILIA

Oh, no, no, no.

VOLUMNIA

Oh, yes, he's wounded, and I thank the gods for it.

MENENIUS

As do I, if he's not wounded too much. If he brings home victory, the wounds are appropriate.

VOLUMNIA

He's wounded on his forehead. Menenius, this is the third time he's come home with the garland of oak.

MENENIUS

Has he thoroughly beaten Aufidius?

VOLUMNIA

Titus Lartius writes that they fought each other, but Aufidius got away.

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

130 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

135 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.

140 Where is he wounded?

MENENIUS

It was Aufidius's time to die. For all the chests in Corioles and
the gold that's in them, I bet that if Martius had captured him,
he would've gotten the beating he deserved. Does the Senate
know about this?

VOLUMNIA

Good ladies, let's go. Yes, yes, yes! Cominius has written to the
Senate and named my son responsible for the victory. His
accomplishments in this war are double all his past deeds.

VALERIA

It's true, there are wonderful things said about him.

MENENIUS

Wonderful! Yes, it's true, and none that he didn't earn.

VIRGILIA

Oh, gods, may these words be true!

VOLUMNIA

True? Pooh-whoo!

MENENIUS

True? I promise they're true.

Where is he wounded?

To the Tribunes

God save your good worships! Martius 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 145 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 150 wounds upon him.

MENENIUS

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

A shout and flourish

Hark! the trumpets.

VOLUMNIA

To the Tribunes

May you be well, good sirs! Martius is coming home. He has new reasons to be proud. (to Volumnia) Where is he wounded?

VOLUMNIA

In the shoulder and in the left arm. There will be large scars to show the people, when he stands to receive his place as consul. When he defeated the king Tarquin, he was wounded seven times.

MENENIUS

Once in the neck and twice in the thigh. There are nine wounds that I know of.

VOLUMNIA

Before this last expedition, he had twenty-five wounds in total.

MENENIUS

Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash represents an enemy who has died.

Trumpets sound, and a shout comes from offstage.

Hark! The trumpets.

VOLUMNIA

These are the ushers of Martius: before him he carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears:
155 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 Martius did fight
Within Corioles's gates: where he hath won,
With fame, a name to Caius Martius; these
160 In honour follows Coriolanus.

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

Flourish

ALL

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS

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

COMINIUS

165 Look, sir, your mother!

These men walk ahead of Martius to introduce him. Many cheers welcome him, and he leaves behind many tears. Death, that dark spirit, lies within his strong arm. When he raises his arm, it comes down upon his enemies and they die.

*Trumpets sound in a different melody. **COMINIUS**, the general, and **TITUS LARTIUS** enter. Between them stands **CORIOLANUS** crowned with a garland of oak, with captains and soldiers and a Herald*

HERALD

Romans, let it be known that Martius fought all alone within Corioles's gates. There he won, along with honor, a new name. The name "Coriolanus" now respectfully follows "Caius Martius." Welcome to Rome, the renowned Coriolanus!

Trumpets sound.

ALL

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS

No more praise. I don't like it. Please now, no more.

COMINIUS

Look, sir, your mother!

CORIOLANUS

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

Kneels

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIOLANUS

My gracious silence, hail!
175 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!

CORIOLANUS

180 And live you yet?
(To VALERIA) O my sweet lady, pardon.

CORIOLANUS

You have, I know, begged all the gods to grant me victory!

He kneels.

VOLUMNIA

No, my good soldier, get up. My gentle Martius, worthy Caius, and through your honor achieved by your actions, newly named—what is it?—Coriolanus must I call thee? (Coriolanus rises) But oh, your wife!

CORIOLANUS

There you are, my lovely silent wife! Would you have laughed if I had come home in a coffin, since you are crying to see me come home in victory? Ah, my dear, your eyes look like the widows and the mothers who have lost sons in Corioles.

MENENIUS

Now, the gods crown you!

CORIOLANUS

Are you still alive?
(to Valeria) I'm sorry, my sweet lady.

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
185 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
190 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

195 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,

VOLUMNIA

I don't know where to turn. Oh, welcome home! And welcome,
general! Welcome all!

MENENIUS

A hundred thousand welcomes. I could weep and I could
laugh. I'm happy and sad. Welcome. May a curse reach to the
very root of anyone's heart who isn't happy to see you! Rome
should honor you as it would three men. However, we have
some bitter old men here who refuse to applaud you. But
welcome, warriors! Some things just are what they are, and
fools don't understand.

COMINIUS

You're right.

CORIOLANUS

You're always right, Menenius.

HERALD

Make way. Keep walking.

CORIOLANUS

(to Volumnia and Virgilia) Give me your hands. Before I can go
home and rest, I must visit the nobles because they haven't

The good patricians must be visited;
200 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
205 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

210 On, to the Capitol!

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

BRUTUS

All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights
Are spectacled to see him: your prattling nurse
Into a rapture lets her baby cry
While she chats him: the kitchen malkin pins
215 Her richest lockram 'bout her reechy neck,

only welcomed me back but have also honored me with this new name.

VOLUMNIA

I've lived to see all my wishes come true and to possess all the things I wanted. Now there's only one thing left, which I'm sure that Rome will give you.

CORIOLANUS

Mother, you know I'd prefer to serve the senators as a soldier than to be a public servant myself.

COMINIUS

Let's go the capitol!

Trumpets sounds. All exit except BRUTUS and SICINIUS.

BRUTUS

Everyone is talking about him. People who are nearly blind wear glasses just to see him. Babbling nurses let babies cry in a tantrum while they talk about him. The kitchen maid pins her best linen around her dirty neck and climbs up the wall to see him. Storefronts are boarded up, leaden roofs covered over

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
220 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
225 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

230 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

235 In that there's comfort.

and all different types of people are riding their horses on top of the roofs, all trying to see him. Priests who rarely come out in public are mixed in with the common people and struggle to find a place in the crowd. Women who usually wear veils are letting their pale cheeks get sunburned. There is such mayhem that it seems like whichever god is guiding Martius has taken over his very body and given him a godly way of being.

SICINIUS

It seems like he may become a member of the consul.

BRUTUS

We'd lose power if he were admitted to the consul.

SICINIUS

He won't be able to translate his fame in battle into some other kind of victory. If he tries, he'll lose the honor he has won.

BRUTUS

That's comforting.

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
240 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
245 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
250 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

SICINIUS

Don't doubt the common people we represent. Their longstanding hatred for him will cause them to overlook his new honors with only the slightest provocation. And given his pride, he'll undoubtedly provoke them.

BRUTUS

I heard him declare that if he were to seek nomination to the consul, he would never appear in the marketplace wearing the traditional poor man's gown to show his humility. Nor would he show off his wounds to the people to win their approval.

SICINIUS

Is that so?

BRUTUS

He said he'd rather not be in the consul if he couldn't be admitted simply by the wishes of the middle class and the nobles.

SICINIUS

I hope he stays with that plan.

In execution.

BRUTUS

255 '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,
260 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,
265 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
270 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

BRUTUS

Most likely, he will.

SICINIUS

What will happen to him then will be as we wish: he'll surely
lose.

BRUTUS

He must lose, or else our power will be over. We must remind
the people of how much he still hates them, that if he were in
charge, he'd make them work like mules, he would never listen
to their requests and he'd take away their freedoms. He
wouldn't recognize their humanity or their souls. He'd hold
them captive like the camels who only get fed so that they can
carry heavy loads in service of the war and develop sores in
the process.

SICINIUS

We need to suggest this possibility to the people at a time
when they're already irritated by his arrogance. There will be
many occasions for this. It's as easy to get him to show off his

To kindle their dry stubble; and their blaze
275 Shall darken him for ever.

Enter a Messenger

BRUTUS

What's the matter?

MESSENGER

You are sent for to the Capitol. 'Tis thought
That Martius shall be consul:

I have seen the dumb men throng to see him and
280 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:

285 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

pride as it is to get dogs to chase sheep. His pride will be like fire to their kindling wood, and their blaze will ruin him forever.

A Messenger enters.

BRUTUS

What's going on?

MESSENGER

The capitol sends for you. It's thought that Martius will be admitted to the consul. I saw mute people form crowds to see him and blind people to hear him speak. Married women threw their gloves to him and ladies and maids their scarfs and handkerchiefs. As he passed by, the nobles bowed to him as they would to Jupiter's statue. The common people made a shower with their caps and thunder with their shouts. I've never seen anything like it.

BRUTUS

Let's go to the Capitol and keep our eyes and ears open for the time being, while our heart remains set on our plan.

SICINIUS

I'm with you.

All exit.

Act 2 Scene 2

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

5 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
10 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
15 them plainly see't.

The capitol.

Two Officers enter to set up seats.

FIRST OFFICER

Hurry up. They're almost here. How many are being considered
for the consul?

SECOND OFFICER

Three, they say. But everyone thinks Coriolanus will get it.

FIRST OFFICER

He's a brave man, but he's too proud, and he doesn't care
about the common people.

SECOND OFFICER

There have been many great men who have flattered the
people but whom the people never liked, and there have been
many that the people liked for unknown reasons. Since they
can like someone without knowing why, at least when they
dislike someone, it's for an equally vague reason. So for
Coriolanus not to care whether they like him or not shows that
he actually knows them quite well, and out of his own
indifference to public opinion, he lets them know that he
doesn't care.

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
20 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
25 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
all into their estimation and report: but he hath so
planted his honours in their eyes, and his actions
30 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

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

FIRST OFFICER

If he didn't care whether or not he had their support, he would be indifferent to either doing them good or harm. But he provokes their hatred with more intensity than they can they can hate him with in return. He has done everything possible for them to see him as their enemy. However, to pretend to desire the ill will of the people is as bad as flattering them for their approval—something he would never do.

SECOND OFFICER

He has served his country honorably and his route to prominence has not been nearly as easy as those who, having been lenient and kind to the people, only tipped their hats to get ahead. But he has boasted in their faces so much about his fame and his actions, that if they don't pay attention to this, they would be harming themselves. If they lie about his prideful behavior, no one would believe them. Everyone would say otherwise.

FIRST OFFICER

Stop talking about him. He's a worthy man. Make way. They're 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,
40 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
45 In our well-found successes, to report
A little of that worthy work perform'd
By Caius Martius Coriolanus, whom
We met here both to thank and to remember
With honours like himself. (Coriolanus sits)

FIRST SENATOR

50 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)

*Trumpets sound. **COMINIUS** the consul, **MENENIUS**, **CORIOLANUS**, Senators, **SICINIUS**, and **BRUTUS** enter, with attendants going in before them. The Senators take their places. **SICINIUS** and **BRUTUS** take their places by themselves. **CORIOLANUS** stands.*

MENENIUS

Once we decide what to do about the Volsces and send for Titus Lartius, the main point of this meeting is still to reward his noble service in defending his country. Therefore, most respected and honorable elders, the present consul and the general in our victorious battles desires to report a little of the worthy work performed by Caius Martius Coriolanus, whom we have invited here both to thank and to honor.
(Coriolanus sits)

FIRST SENATOR

Speak as long as you need, good Cominius. Leave nothing out. Better that he think we don't have the resources to reward to him than that we don't have the patience to listen to the full report. (to the tribunes) Representatives of the people, we

55 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
60 Upon a pleasing treaty, and have hearts
Inclinalbe to honour and advance
The theme of our assembly.

BRUTUS

Which the rather
We shall be blest to do, if he remember
65 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

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

MENENIUS

request you to listen kindly, and afterward to convince the people to agree to what we suggest.

SICINIUS

We've come here to consider this question, and we're inclined to honor and advance the cause of our constituents.

BRUTUS

Which we'll happily do, and soon, if he can remember to value the people more highly than he has previously.

MENENIUS

That's not the point. I wish you had been silent. Please, will you let Cominius speak?

BRUTUS

Most willingly. But my caution was more important than you realize.

MENENIUS

He loves your people
But tie him not to be their bedfellow.
75 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:
80 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,
85 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.

He cares about the common people. Just don't expect him to be closely involved with them. Worthy Cominius, speak.

CORIOLANUS tries to get up and leave.

No, stay where you are.

FIRST SENATOR

Sit, Coriolanus. Never be embarrassed to hear of your noble deeds.

CORIOLANUS

I'm sorry, your honor. I'd rather let my wounds heal than hear how I got them.

BRUTUS

Sir, I hope my words didn't cause you to get up.

CORIOLANUS

No, sir. While I don't run from fights, I do often run from praise. But you didn't flatter me, so I wasn't offended. But the people you represent are worth so little, so I care so little about them.

MENENIUS

Pray now, sit down.

CORIOLANUS

90 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—
95 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
100 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
105 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

MENENIUS

Please, sit down.

CORIOLANUS

I'd rather let someone scratch my head in the sun when the trumpet summons me to battle than sit here and listen to my small deeds be over-embellished.

He exits.

MENENIUS

Representatives of the people, your constituents reproduce all the time, and there's only one good man among every thousand of them—how can he flatter them? You see now he'd rather risk his whole life for honor than risk one of his ears to hear about it. Go on, Cominius.

COMINIUS

I won't say much. The deeds of Coriolanus shouldn't be spoken of lightly. It's well known that courage is the highest virtue and brings the highest dignity to whoever has it. And if that's true, there's no one in the world who is more dignified than the man I speak of. At age sixteen, when Tarquin attacked Rome, his fighting exceeded everyone else's. Our former leader, whom I reference with all praise, saw him fight victoriously against adults when he was still young and had a beardless chin. He protected the overwhelmed Romans and as the consul

The bristled lips before him: be bestrid
An o'er-press'd Roman and i' the consul's view
110 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
115 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;
120 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
125 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
130 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,

watched, he defeated three enemies. He fought Tarquin himself and brought him to his knees. In that day of fighting, when he was young enough to play a woman on stage, he proved to be the best man in the field, and he was rewarded with a garland of oak. He entered into manhood, though he was still a boy, with the force of a rising tide. He has led the attack in seventeen battles since then, and he has won the garland over his fellow soldiers every time. As for this last battle, outside of and within Corioles, I have no words to describe what he did. He stopped the Roman deserters and by his rare example made these cowards overcome their fear and become warriors. The men obeyed and fell beneath his prow like waves beneath a sailboat. Wherever he swung his sword, he marked the sign of death. From head to toe he was covered in blood, and his every motion was followed by dying cries. He entered the deadly gate of the city alone, and he painted it with the blood of their inevitable destiny. Without help, he retreated, but with a sudden burst of energy he attacked Corioles with the force of a planet. Then the city was all his. After a while, as the noise of war began to wear him down, his spirit reinvigorated his tired body, and he came back to the battle and ran furiously at the enemy, as if it were an endless slaughter. He never stopped to catch his breath until both the field and city were ours.

And to the battle came he; where he did

135 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

140 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

145 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.

MENENIUS

Worthy man!

FIRST SENATOR

He definitely measures up to the honors we have for him.

COMINIUS

He rejected our spoils and looked at precious things as if they
were the common muck of the world. He doesn't desire
anything. To him, doing his deeds is its own reward, and he's
happy to spend the time to do the job well.

MENENIUS

He's very noble. Let's call him here.

FIRST SENATOR

Call Coriolanus.

OFFICER

150 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

155 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,
160 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.

OFFICER

Here he is.

CORIOLANUS re-enters.

MENENIUS

Coriolanus, the Senate is very happy to admit you to the
consul.

CORIOLANUS

I'll always owe them my life and services.

MENENIUS

All that remains is for you to speak to the people.

CORIOLANUS

I beg you, let me skip that custom. I can't put on the gown,
stand without an undershirt, and show off my wounds just so
they'll vote for me. Please let me pass on doing this.

SICINIUS

Sir, the people must have their say, and they won't leave out
one bit of the ceremony.

MENENIUS

165 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

170 That I shall blush in acting, and might well

Be taken from the people.

BRUTUS

(to Sicinius) Mark you that?

CORIOLANUS

To brag unto them, thus I did, and thus;

Show them the unaching scars which I should hide,

175 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

180 Wish we all joy and honour.

SENATORS

To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

MENENIUS

Don't fight them on this. Go through with this custom and stand honorably as your predecessors have.

CORIOLANUS

I'll blush as I play this part. The people will be deceived.

BRUTUS

(to Sicinius) Did you hear that?

CORIOLANUS

To brag of the things I've done and show them my old scars,
which I should hide—as if I'd received them only for the people
to gasp at!

MENENIUS

Don't insist on this. Tribunes of the people, we ask that you
recommend our proposal to the people. And to our noble
consul wish we all joy and honor.

SENATORS

May all joy and honor come to Coriolanus!

*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
185 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

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.

*Sound of trumpets. Everyone exits except **SICINIUS** and **BRUTUS***

BRUTUS

You see how he intends to use the people.

SICINIUS

May they know his intentions! He'll ask for their support even though he hates that it's in their power to give it.

BRUTUS

Let's go inform them of what's happened here. I know they're waiting for us in the marketplace.

All exit.

Act 2 Scene 3

The Roman marketplace.

Seven or eight Citizens enter.

FIRST CITIZEN

If and when he asks for our votes, we shouldn't deny him.

SECOND CITIZEN

We can deny him, sir, if we want to.

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,
10 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
15 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
20 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

THIRD CITIZEN

We have the right to deny him, but it wouldn't be the right thing to do. If he shows us his wounds and tells us of his deeds, we must honor those wounds with our votes. And if he tells us of his noble deeds, we must then tell him of our gratitude. Ingratitude is monstrous, and for the people to be seen as ungrateful would make us into monsters.

FIRST CITIZEN

And it wouldn't take much to make us worse thought of. When we complained about the corn, he didn't hesitate to call us an unstable mass of people.

THIRD CITIZEN

Many people have called us that. Not because some of us have brown hair, some black, some blond and some bald, but because our opinions are so diverse. I truly think that if all our opinions were to come from one mind, they would go east, west, north, and south. All they could agree on would be to go in different directions.

SECOND CITIZEN

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

THIRD CITIZEN

25 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
30 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
35 say, if he would incline to the people, there was
never a worthier man.

Enter **CORIOLANUS** in a gown of humility, with **MENENIUS**

Do you think so? Which way do you think my opinion would go?

THIRD CITIZEN

You're stubborn, so your opinion will stay stuck inside you until another man's will expresses itself first. If yours could come out, though, it would surely go south.

SECOND CITIZEN

Why that way?

THIRD CITIZEN

To lose itself in the plague-ridden air. Three-quarters of it would melt away in the contagious dew, and the remaining quarter would have a conscience and return to help you get a wife.

SECOND CITIZEN

You're never without your jokes. It's okay—you can laugh at me.

THIRD CITIZEN

Are you all ready to vote? It doesn't actually matter, since the majority vote wins. If only he cared about the people, he would be the most deserving man there ever was.

CORIOLANUS, in a gown of humility, and **MENENIUS** enter.

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 40 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.

45 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?
50 '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

55 O me, the gods!

Here he comes, wearing the gown of humility. Watch his behavior. We're not supposed to all stay together but rather go up to him where he's standing, either alone or in groups of two or three. He's supposed to make his request to us individually, and each of us has the separate honor of giving him our own vote in our voice. Follow me. I'll show you how to go up to him.
ALL

Okay, okay.

The Citizens exit.

MENENIUS

Oh, sir, you don't understand. Don't you know that the most honorable men have done this?

CORIOLANUS

What am I supposed to say? "Please, sir"—Curse that! I can't force myself to say such a thing. "Look at my wounds, sir. I got them while serving my country, while men who were undoubtedly your brothers cried and ran away from the battle."

MENENIUS

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
60 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
65 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.

Oh, gods! You can't talk about that. You need to get them to think well of you.

CORIOLANUS

Think well of me! Hang them! I wish they would forget me, like they have forgotten the virtues that the gods didn't sufficiently instill in them.

MENENIUS

You'll ruin everything. I'm leaving now. Please, keep it clean with them.

He exits.

CORIOLANUS

I'll ask them to wash their faces and brush their teeth.

Two Citizens re-enter.

So, here comes a pair.

A third Citizen re-enters.

You know why I'm standing here.

THIRD CITIZEN

We do, sir. Tell us what brought you here.

CORIOLANUS

Mine own desert.

SECOND CITIZEN

70 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

75 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

CORIOLANUS

It's what I deserve.

SECOND CITIZEN

It's what you deserve!

CORIOLANUS

Yes, but it's not what I desire.

THIRD CITIZEN

You don't desire it?

CORIOLANUS

No, sir, I never desired to trouble the poor with begging.

THIRD CITIZEN

You must think that if we give you something, we hope to get something from you.

CORIOLANUS

Well then, tell me: what will it cost for you to give me the consulship?

FIRST CITIZEN

The price is to ask for it kindly.

CORIOLANUS

80 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

85 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

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

Please, sir, kindly let me have it. I have wounds to show you, which I'll show you in private. Your vote, sir, what do you say?

SECOND CITIZEN

You'll get my vote, worthy sir.

CORIOLANUS

It's a deal, sir. That's two deserving votes I've secured. Thank you your charity. Goodbye.

THIRD CITIZEN

(to the other Citizens) This is strange.

SECOND CITIZEN

If I could vote again, but never mind.

The three Citizens exit.

Two other Citizens re-enter.

CORIOLANUS

I ask if you would please vote for me, since I am wearing the customary gown.

FOURTH CITIZEN

You've served your country nobly, but you aren't deserving.

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
95 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
100 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
105 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

What do you mean?

FOURTH CITIZEN

You've defeated her enemies and you've protected her friends, but you haven't loved the common people.

CORIOLANUS

You should consider me virtuous because I don't give my love away easily. Sir, I'll flatter my sworn brothers, the people, so they'll think well of me. It's a custom they consider noble. And since they'd rather decide based on what hat I'm wearing than on who I am, I'll practice taking off my hat and bowing insincerely. That is to say, sir, I'll pretend to be enchanted by them, as some popular men do, and give my false admiration plentifully to those who desire it. So I ask you, may I be consul?

FIFTH CITIZEN

We hope you'll be our ally, so we happily vote for you.

FOURTH CITIZEN

You've been wounded many times serving your country.

CORIOLANUS

110 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,
115 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,
120 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;
125 The one part suffer'd, the other will I do.

Enter three Citizens more

Here come more voices.
Your voices: for your voices I have fought;

CORIOLANUS

I won't confirm what you already know by showing my wounds to you. I'll just take your votes and not trouble you further.

BOTH CITIZENS

May the gods give you much joy, sir!

The Citizens exit.

CORIOLANUS

Most sweet voters! It's better to die, better to starve, than to beg to be chosen for a position you already deserve. Why must I stand here in this hypocritical toga and beg the commoners for their meaningless approval, which I shouldn't need? Custom forces me to do it, and what custom requires, we must do. It's an ancient tradition that has gone on for so long that no one can see that it's a huge mistake. I wish I didn't have to play the fool, but the honor of the consulship goes to he who will. I'm halfway done. I'll do the other half.

Three more Citizens enter.

Here come more votes. Your votes: I have fought for your votes and stayed out on watch for your votes. For your votes I have

Watch'd for your voices; for your voices bear
Of wounds two dozen odd; battles thrice six
130 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

135 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
140 Endue you with the people's voice: remains
That, in the official marks invested, you

been wounded more than two dozen times and been in thirty-six battles. For your votes, I have seen and heard many things and done some things less and some things more—all for your votes, so I can be in the consul.

SIXTH CITIZEN

He has served nobly and must win any honest man's vote.

SEVENTH CITIZEN

Therefore let him be the consul. May the gods give him joy and make him be good to the people!

ALL CITIZENS

Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul

Citizens all exit.

CORIOLANUS

Worthy voters!

MENENIUS re-enters, with BRUTUS and SICINIUS.

MENENIUS

You've stood here for the time required, and the tribunes approve you with the people's endorsement. All that remains is to make it official. We must go now to the senators.

Anon do meet the senate.

CORIOLANUS

Is this done?

SICINIUS

The custom of request you have discharged:

145 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

150 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?

CORIOLANUS

It's over?

SICINIUS

You've done the required custom, and the people admit you to
the consul. Go meet the senators so they can approve your
election.

CORIOLANUS

Where? At the Senate house?

SICINIUS

Yes, Coriolanus.

CORIOLANUS

May I change out of these clothes?

SICINIUS

You may, sir.

CORIOLANUS

I'll do that first, and once I feel like myself again, I'll go to the
Senate house.

MENENIUS

I'll keep you company. Will you come, too?

BRUTUS

We stay here for the people.

SICINIUS

¹⁵⁵ 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

¹⁶⁰ 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.

BRUTUS

We'll stay here with the people.

SICINIUS

Good luck.

CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS exit.

He has the consulship now, and he looks happy about it.

BRUTUS

He wore the gown of humility, but his heart was still proud. Will
you let the people's vote stand?

Citizens reenter.

SICINIUS

How are you, good people? Have you chosen this man?

FIRST CITIZEN

He has our votes, sir.

BRUTUS

We pray to the gods that he deserves your favor.

SECOND CITIZEN

Amen, sir. I'm not certain, but I think he mocked us while asking
for our votes.

THIRD CITIZEN

165 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

170 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;

175 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:

180 Your most sweet voices: now you have left
your voices,

THIRD CITIZEN

He expressed his contempt for us in no uncertain terms.

FIRST CITIZEN

No, that's just the way he speaks. He didn't mock us.

SECOND CITIZEN

All of us, except you, say he used us scornfully. He should have showed us his marks of merit, the wounds he received for his country.

SICINIUS

I'm sure he showed you.

CITIZENS

No, no. No one saw them.

THIRD CITIZEN

He said he had wounds he could show in private. He waved his hat scornfully and said, "I should be the consul but because of this ancient custom, I can't be without your votes, so give me your votes." When we gave them to him, he said, "I thank you for your votes. Thank you. Your most sweet votes, now that you've given me your votes, I have no further use for you." Isn't that mockery?

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

185 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
190 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
195 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,
200 Standing your friendly lord.

SICINIUS

Thus to have said,
As you were fore-advised, had touch'd his spirit

SICINIUS

You were either too ignorant to see it, or if you did see it, you were too childish and accommodating to deny him your vote.

BRUTUS

Couldn't you have told him as you were instructed? When he had no power and was only a petty servant of the state, he was your enemy. He has always spoken against your freedom and the legal privileges you have. Now that he's arriving in a position of power and influence on the state, if he remains such an evil enemy to the people, you might have cause to curse yourself for giving him your votes. You should have said that while his acts of bravery do entitle him to the consulship, he should also be gracious and think well of you for giving him your approval. He should transform his hatred toward you into love and become your political advocate.

SICINIUS

If you'd said that, as you were advised ahead of time, it would have touched his spirit and changed his inclination. You might

And tried his inclination; from him pluck'd
Either his gracious promise, which you might,
205 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
210 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,
215 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
220 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

have gotten a gracious promise from him, which you could have held him to when you needed it. Or else it would have provoked his angry nature, which is easily done, and he would have gone into a rage. You could have used his anger as reason not to vote for him.

BRUTUS

Didn't you notice that he asked for your vote in blatant contempt even when he needed your approval? So don't you think that his contempt will harm you when he has power to exercise? Didn't you have any courage? Couldn't you cry out against the status quo?

SICINIUS

Haven't you ever refused to vote for someone? And now you give your vote to someone who didn't even ask for it but mocked you instead?

THIRD CITIZEN

He's not confirmed. He can still deny him.

SECOND CITIZEN

And will deny him:

I'll have five hundred voices of that sound.

FIRST CITIZEN

225 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

230 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
235 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

240 After the inveterate hate he bears you.

BRUTUS

Lay

A fault on us, your tribunes; that we laboured,

And we will deny him. I'll get five hundred people to vote against him.

FIRST CITIZEN

I'll get a thousand people and their friends, too.

BRUTUS

Go do it immediately, and tell those friends that they've chosen someone for the consul who will take away their freedoms and give them no more voice than dogs have that are repeatedly beaten for barking even though their job is to bark.

SICINIUS

Let them come together and make a wiser judgment to revoke your ignorant election. Emphasize his pride and his longstanding hatred of you. And don't forget the contempt with which he wore the gown of humility and how in his quest for your votes, he scorned you. Your admiration of his past service kept you from noticing of his present way of being, which was insulting and inappropriate and reflective of the hatred he feels for you.

BRUTUS

No impediment between, but that you must
Cast your election on him.

SICINIUS

245 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
250 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
255 That Ancus Martius, 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,
260 Twice being [by the people chosen] censor,
Was his great ancestor.

SICINIUS

One thus descended,
That hath beside well in his person wrought

Blame us, your tribunes. Say that we pushed you not to let these obstacles stop you from voting for him, but that you must repeal your election of him.

SICINIUS

Say that you chose him based more on our instructions than on your own true feelings, and that because you were preoccupied with what you thought was expected of you, you went against your own interest by voting him consul. Lay the fault on us.

BRUTUS

Indeed, don't spare us. Say we told you all about him, about how young he was when he began to serve his country and how long he has done so, about the noble family he comes from—the same family as Ancus Martius, Numa's daughter's son, who was king after great Hostilius. He's from the same family as Publius and Quintus, the ones who built our best water conduits. And his great ancestor, suitably named Censorinus, was chosen twice as censor by the people.

SICINIUS

We asked you to remember that he's a man descended from a famous family, who also has earned his own high praise. But

To be set high in place, we did command
265 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—
270 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
275 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
280 With their refusal, both observe and answer
The vantage of his anger.

SICINIUS

To the Capitol, come:

you have found, weighing his present behavior against his past, that he's definitely your enemy, and you repeal your hasty approval.

BRUTUS

Say that you never would have done it—emphasize that—if we hadn't put you up to it. And then, when you have enough people on your side, go to the capitol.

ALL

We will. Almost everyone regrets the vote they gave.

The Citizens exit.

BRUTUS

Let them go on their own. Better to risk this mutiny than wait for the undoubtedly bigger one that would come later. If, his nature being what it is, he goes into a rage over their refusal, both watch for and take advantage of his anger.

SICINIUS

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

Exeunt

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 Volscs stand but as at first,
5 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.

Let's go to the capitol. We'll be there before the uprising of the people. And it will appear to be their own initiative, which it partially is, although we urged them into action.

All exit.

Act 3 Scene 1

A street in Rome.

Trumpets sound. CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, all the noblemen, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other Senators enter.

CORIOLANUS

Tullus Aufidius had assembled a new army?

LARTIUS

He had, my lord, and that was why we needed to reach an agreement sooner than expected.

CORIOLANUS

So then, the Volscs will be able to attack us again when the time is right.

COMINIUS

They're worn out, lord consul, so we won't likely see their banners wave again in our lifetime.

CORIOLANUS

10 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

15 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
20 To hopeless restitution, so he might
Be call'd your vanquisher.

CORIOLANUS

At Antium lives he?

LARTIUS

At Antium.

CORIOLANUS

Did you see Aufidius?

LARTIUS

He came to me, under high security, and cursed the Volsces
because they had failed so miserably by letting the town be
captured. He has retreated to Antium.

CORIOLANUS

Did he talk about me?

LARTIUS

He did, my lord.

CORIOLANUS

What did he say?

LARTIUS

He spoke of how often you and he had met in battle. He said
that of all things on earth, he hated you the most and that he
would pawn his fortunes until he was hopelessly broke in order
to defeat you.

CORIOLANUS

He's living in Antium?

LARTIUS

In Antium.

CORIOLANUS

I wish I had a cause to seek him there,
25 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

30 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

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

CORIOLANUS

I wish I had a reason to go there and show him how much I hate him, too. Welcome home.

SICINIUS and BRUTUS enter.

Look, here are the tribunes. I hate them because their authority is an insult to the power of the nobility.

SICINIUS

Go no further.

CORIOLANUS

Ha! What did you say?

BRUTUS

It will be dangerous for you to go any further.

CORIOLANUS

What's changed?

MENENIUS

What's the matter?

COMINIUS

Hasn't he been approved by the nobility and the common people?

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

40 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

45 your offices?

You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?

Have you not set them on?

MENENIUS

Be calm, be calm.

CORIOLANUS**BRUTUS**

No, Cominius.

CORIOLANUS

Have they broken their promise like children?

FIRST SENATOR

Tribunes, let us through. He's going to the marketplace.

BRUTUS

The people are furious with him.

SICINIUS

Stop, or a riot will break out.

CORIOLANUS

Is this your herd? Why do these people have the right to vote, if they can vote one way and then immediately change their mind? What's your job? If you control what they think and say, can't you control what they do? Have you incited them against us?

MENENIUS

Be calm, be calm.

CORIOLANUS

It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot,
50 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,
55 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

60 Have you inform'd them sithence?

BRUTUS

How! I inform them!

CORIOLANUS

You are like to do such business.

BRUTUS

Not unlike,

It's a deliberate plot to undercut the authority of the nobility. If we succumb to it, we'll have to live alongside these uncontrollable people who themselves are incapable of governing.

BRUTUS

Don't call it a plot. The people say you mocked them, and recently when corn was given to them for free, you complained and slandered us, the representatives of the people, calling us opportunists, flatterers, and enemies to nobility.

CORIOLANUS

You were already known as such.

BRUTUS

Not all of them thought so.

CORIOLANUS

Have you informed them since?

BRUTUS

How would I inform them?

CORIOLANUS

By the way you do business.

BRUTUS

Each way, to better yours.

CORIOLANUS

65 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
70 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

75 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!
80 This was my speech, and I will speak't again—

Possibly, but whatever I do, I do it better than you would do as consul.

CORIOLANUS

Why then should I be consul? If I am as bad as you, make me your fellow tribune.

SICINIUS

You cause too much disturbance among the people. If you want to get where you want to go, you must ask kindly to get there. You're a long way off from doing that. And without doing so, you'll never be noble enough to be consul or even be his equal as a tribune.

MENENIUS

Let's stay calm.

COMINIUS

The people have been deceived and now incited. Trickery like this is not how Romans behave. Coriolanus shouldn't be dishonored by these false accusations because his bravery makes him so clearly deserving.

CORIOLANUS

Talk to me about corn! This was my speech, and I will speak it 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:
85 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,
90 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

95 Well, no more.

FIRST SENATOR

No more words, we beseech you.

CORIOLANUS

How! no more!

MENENIUS

Not now, not now.

FIRST SENATOR

Not when the people are so agitated, sir, not now.

CORIOLANUS

As sure as I'm alive, I will speak now. My nobler friends, I beg your pardon.
As for the two-faced, stinking masses, let them see themselves clearly because I will not flatter them. I say again, by flattering them, we encourage the seeds of rebellion, disobedience, treason against our Senate—seeds that we ourselves have plowed for, sowed, and scattered by mingling them with us, the honorable ones. The only virtue or power that we lack is that which we have given to these beggars.

MENENIUS

That's enough, no more.

FIRST SENATOR

No more words, we beg you.

CORIOLANUS

As for my country I have shed my blood,
Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs
100 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
105 A man of their infirmity.

SICINIUS

'Twere well
We let the people know't.

MENENIUS

What, what? his choler?

CORIOLANUS

Choler!
110 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.

What? No more? I have shed my blood for my country without fearing opposing forces, so my lungs will speak until the hated measles—that we caught by trying to help the people—cause us to become infected and die.

BRUTUS

You speak of the people as if you were a god to punish them, not a mortal man just like them.

SICINIUS

It would be a good idea for us to let the people know this.

MENENIUS

Know what? About his anger?

CORIOLANUS

Anger! If I were as calm as in midnight sleep, by Jove, this would still be my opinion!

SICINIUS

It's a poisonous opinion that shall remain where it is and not poison any further.

CORIOLANUS

115 Shall remain!

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

COMINIUS

'Twas from the canon.

CORIOLANUS

'Shall'!

120 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
125 To say he'll turn your current in a ditch,
And make your channel his? If he have power
Then vail your ignorance; if none, awake
Your dangerous lenity. If you are learn'd,
Be not as common fools; if you are not,
130 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,'
135 His popular 'shall' against a graver bench
Than ever frown in Greece. By Jove himself!

CORIOLANUS

"Shall remain"? Do you hear this, Triton of the minnows? Do you hear his absolute "shall"?

COMINIUS

It was inappropriate.

CORIOLANUS

"Shall"? Oh, good but most unwise nobleman! You dignified but reckless senators, why have you permitted this many-headed monster to choose a representative whose arrogant "shall" is just the monster's noisy horn and who has the nerve to say he'll take advantage of your power and use your resources for his own purposes? If he's in power, then it's your mistake that has you bowing to him. If not, then wake up from your dangerous tolerance of him. If you're good leaders, don't be common fools. If you're not, let them have seats with you in the Senate. If they were senators, that would make you into commoners. And if you had equal say, the interests of the common people would outweigh yours. The people chose as their representative someone who addresses his "shall," his common man's command of "shall" to the most dignified legislature since the Greeks. By Jove himself! It lowers the position of the consuls and my soul aches to know, when there are two authorities and neither is supreme, how quickly chaos

It makes the consuls base: and my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion
140 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
145 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

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

CORIOLANUS

I'll give my reasons,

will arise in the space between them and use one to overthrow the other.

COMINIUS

Let's go on to the marketplace.

CORIOLANUS

Whoever gave the advice to give out corn from the storehouse for free, as they used to do in Greece—

MENENIUS

That's enough. No more talk of that.

CORIOLANUS

Even though the people had more absolute power in Greece, I think whoever gave that advice invited disobedience and caused the ruin of the state.

BRUTUS

Should the people give up someone who speaks for them?

CORIOLANUS

More worthier than their voices. They know the corn
Was not our recompense, resting well assured
155 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
160 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
165 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
170 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.

I'll give my reasons, which are worthier than their wishes. They know they didn't earn the corn, as they certainly never did any service for it. Even when they were drafted to fight the war when the center of the state was threatened, they wouldn't leave the city gates. This kind of service doesn't deserve free corn. When they were in the war, their mutinies and revolts, which were the only times they showed any courage, didn't speak well for them. Their frequent accusation that the Senate was hoarding corn had no basis, so it could never be the reason for our generous gift. Well, what then? How will this many-headed monster repay the Senate's kindness? Let their actions express what their words should be: "We asked for it, we are the majority of the population, and out of fear they gave in to our demands." In doing this we degrade the nature of our position and make the rabble think that our sympathy is fear. In time this will break open the locks of the Senate, and the scavengers will devour us.

MENENIUS

Okay, that's enough.

BRUTUS

Enough overstatement.

CORIOLANUS

175 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,

180 Cannot conclude but by the yea and no

Of general ignorance,—it must omit
Real necessities, and give way the while
To unstable slightne purpose so barr'd,
it follows,

185 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

190 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

195 Of that integrity which should become't,

Not having the power to do the good it would,
For the in which doth control't.

CORIOLANUS

No, there's more! I swear there's both divine and human confirmation of what I have to say. A divided government—in which one part rightfully despises the other and the other part makes insulting accusations without any reason, and in which people of class, title, and wisdom are reduced to deciding things just by voting yes or no—will be unable to focus on important matters and so instead will deal only with trivial concerns. When governing becomes so difficult, it makes sense that nothing will get done well. So I beg you, you who won't be afraid to take action because you care more about preserving our government than you fear the consequences of doing so, you who prefer a noble life over a long one and are willing to use a dangerous medicine to help someone who would otherwise surely die, you must immediately remove the representatives of the common people. Don't let the tribunes use their poisonous flattery. When they dishonor you, it's an impediment to justice. It robs the state of your much-needed integrity and leaves the state without the power to do the good it would because evil forces are controlling it.

BRUTUS

BRUTUS

Has said enough.

SICINIUS

Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer

200 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,

205 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

210 This a consul? no.

BRUTUS

The aediles, ho!

Enter an Aedile

Let him be apprehended.

He has said enough.

SICINIUS

He has spoken like a traitor and must be punished as a traitor.

CORIOLANUS

You wretch. I feel overwhelming contempt for you! Why should the people have these stupid tribunes? By depending on you, they fail to obey the Senate's higher authority. In a rebellion, actions that are wrong but unavoidable are sanctioned because of the circumstances under which they are chosen. But when times are better, it must be said that what is right must be done. So throw the tribunes' power in the garbage.

BRUTUS

That's blatantly treason!

SICINIUS

This man is consul? No.

BRUTUS

Aediles, come here!

An aedile enters.

Seize him.

SICINIUS

Go, call the people:

Exit Aedile

in whose name myself

215 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 surely him.

COMINIUS

220 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**SICINIUS**

Go, call the people.

The aedile exits.

(to Coriolanus) In the people's name I call you a traitorous rebel, an enemy to the people. Obey, I command you, and follow me to your interrogation. [SICINIUS tries to seize CORIOLANUS]

CORIOLANUS

Get off me, old goat!

ALL NOBLES

We stand behind him.

COMINIUS

Old man, take your hands off him.

CORIOLANUS

Get off me, you rotten thing! Or I'll shake your bones out of your clothes.

SICINIUS

Help, you citizens!

A rowdy gang of Citizens enter, with the aediles.

MENENIUS

On both sides more respect.

SICINIUS

225 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!

230 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!
235 Speak, good Sicinius.

SICINIUS

Hear me, people; peace!

Both of you, show more respect.

SICINIUS

Here's the man who would take all your power away from you.

BRUTUS

Seize him, aediles!

CITIZENS

Down with him! Down with him!

ALL NOBLES

Weapons, weapons, weapons!

They all crowd around Coriolanus, shouting.

Tribunes! Noblemen! Citizens! What's happening! Sicinius!
Brutus! Coriolanus! Citizens! Peace, peace, peace! Stay, wait,
peace!

MENENIUS

What's going to happen? I'm out of breath. Chaos is near. I can't
speak. You tribunes, talk to the people! Coriolanus, be patient!
Speak, good Sicinius.

SICINIUS

Hear me, people. Be calm!

CITIZENS

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

SICINIUS

You are at point to lose your liberties:
Martius would have all from you; Martius,
²⁴⁰ 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

²⁴⁵ True,
The people are the city.

BRUTUS

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

CITIZENS

You so remain.

CITIZENS

Let's hear our tribune. Please speak, speak, speak.

SICINIUS

You're about to lose your freedom. Martius will take everything
from you. Martius, who you have just selected for consul.

MENENIUS

No, no, no! That's the way to incite them further, not calm them
down.

FIRST SENATOR

To destroy the city and tear all the buildings down.

SICINIUS

What is the city if not the people?

CITIZENS

True, the people make the city.

BRUTUS

By everyone's agreement, we were selected to speak for the
people.

CITIZENS

You still do.

MENENIUS

250 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

255 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, Martius is worthy

260 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**MENENIUS**

And most likely, you're about to speak.

COMINIUS

That's the way to destroy the city, to bring the roof to the foundation and bury it all, and yet the heaps and piles of ruin have a distinct hierarchy.

SICINIUS

This deserves death.

BRUTUS

Either let us exercise our authority, or let us lose it. On behalf of the people who we were elected to represent, we declare that Martius deserves to die immediately.

SICINIUS

So grab him, take him to the Tarpeian rock, and throw him off the edge.

BRUTUS

Aediles, seize him!

CITIZENS

265 Yield, Martius, 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
270 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
275 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.

Surrender, Martius, surrender!

MENENIUS

Let me say one thing. Please, tribunes, let me say just one
thing.

AEDILE

Peace, peace!

MENENIUS

(to Brutus) Act as you should if you're a true servant of your
country. Proceed moderately, not with the violent solution you
have in mind.

BRUTUS

Sir, those moderate ways that seem prudent are actually
poisonous when the problem is serious. Grab him and take him
to the rock.

CORIOLANUS

No, I'll die here.

He draws his sword.

There's some among you who have seen me fight. Come, try
for yourselves to do what you've seen me do in battle.

MENENIUS

280 Down with that sword! Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

BRUTUS

Lay hands upon him.

COMINIUS

Help Martius, 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

285 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

290 Sham it be put to that?

MENENIUS

Put that sword down! Tribunes, go away for a while.

BRUTUS

Grab him.

COMINIUS

Help Martius, help him, you who are noble. Help him, whether
you're young or old!

CITIZENS

Down with him, down with him!

*In this mutiny, the tribunes, the Aediles and the people, are
forced off-stage.*

MENENIUS

(to Coriolanus) Go home, be gone, go away! All will be lost
otherwise.

SECOND SENATOR

(to Coriolanus) Get out of here.

COMINIUS

Stay where you are. We have as many allies as enemies.

MENENIUS

Will it come 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,
295 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

300 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

305 I could myself

FIRST SENATOR

(to Coriolanus) The gods forbid! I beg you, noble friend, go home. Leave us to handle this situation.

MENENIUS

It's dangerous for all of us now, and you can't fix it yourself. Go now, I beg you.

COMINIUS

Please, sir, come with us.

CORIOLANUS

I wish they were barbarians—which they are, even though they were born in Rome—and not Romans—which they aren't even though they born on the steps of the capitol—

MENENIUS

Go away. You're understandably angry, but stop speaking your anger. There will be time for that in the future.

CORIOLANUS

I could easily beat a large number of them.

COMINIUS

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
310 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:
315 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

320 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;

I myself could fight a pair of the best of them—indeed, the two tribunes! But now the odds are beyond calculation, and courage becomes foolishness when it stands beneath a falling building. (to Coriolanus) Will you go now, before the mob returns? Their rage is like dammed up water that will overflow its banks.

MENENIUS

(to Coriolanus) Please, go now. I'll try to reason with them, even though they're unreasonable. We must try every possible solution to fix this problem.

COMINIUS

Let's go.

CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others exit.

A NOBLEMAN

He has ruined himself.

MENENIUS

His nature is too noble for the world. He wouldn't flatter Neptune for his trident or Jove for his power to make thunder. He speaks his mind, and whatever he feels, he must express. And when he gets angry, he forgets that he can also be killed.

And, being angry, does forget that ever

325 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!

330 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

335 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

A noise comes from offstage.

That was fast!

SECOND NOBLEMAN

I wish they'd gotten away!

MENENIUS

I wish they were in Tiber! What the hell! Couldn't he talk them out of it?

BRUTUS and SICINIUS reenter, with the rabble.

SICINIUS

Where is this traitor that would drive the people from the city and considers himself to be every man?

MENENIUS

You worthy tribunes—

SICINIUS

He'll be thrown without mercy from the Tarpeian rock. He has resisted justice, so justice will deny him any trial other than the strength of public opinion, which to him is worthless.

Which he so sets at nought.

FIRST CITIZEN

340 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

345 Peace!

MENENIUS

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

SICINIUS

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

MENENIUS

350 Hear me speak:

As I do know the consul's worthiness,
So can I name his faults,—

FIRST CITIZEN

He'll soon know that the noble tribunes speak for the people,
and we, in turn, put their wishes into action.

CITIZENS

He will, I'm sure of it.

MENENIUS

Sir, sir—

SICINIUS

Peace!

MENENIUS

Don't call for his murder. Seek a lesser punishment instead.

SICINIUS

Sir, didn't you help him escape?

MENENIUS

Listen to me. Because I know this consul's strengths, I can also
tell you his weaknesses—

SICINIUS

Consul! what consul?

MENENIUS

The consul Coriolanus.

BRUTUS

355 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
360 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
365 Our certain death: therefore it is decreed
He dies to-night.

MENENIUS

Now the good gods forbid

SICINIUS

Consul! What consul?

MENENIUS

The consul Coriolanus.

BRUTUS

He's not consul!

CITIZENS

No, no, no, no, no.

MENENIUS

Good people, if the you and the tribunes will permit me to be heard, I want to say a word or two that will cost you nothing other than the time it takes to listen.

SICINIUS

Speak quickly then, for we've agreed to do away with this monstrous traitor. To banish him would still leave us in danger, and to keep him here would mean our certain death, so he must die tonight.

MENENIUS

That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd
370 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.
375 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,
380 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

385 The service of the foot

The good gods forbid that our renowned Rome, whose
gratitude toward her deserving children is Jove's law, should
behave like an unnatural mother and eat her own child!

SICINIUS

He's a disease that must be cut out.

MENENIUS

No, he's just a limb that has a disease. It would be fatal to cut
off the limb but easy to cure the disease. What has he done to
Rome that's worth killing him for?
He's killed our enemies and lost more ounces of his own blood
than his body still has. He shed it for his country. For his
country to take from him the blood he has left would bring
eternal shame to all of us who permit it.

SICINIUS

That's totally wrong.

BRUTUS

That's missing the point. When he served his country, it
rewarded him.

MENENIUS

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:
390 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
395 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?
400 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

When a foot becomes infected with gangrene, is it no longer respected for the service it had done previously?

BRUTUS

We'll hear no more. Go take him from his house, before his contagious infection spreads any further.

MENENIUS

One word more, one word. When this fast-moving rage realizes the consequences of acting quickly without thinking, it will be too late to slow it down. Let the legal system solve this dispute, otherwise factions will form, as there are those who support him, and Rome will be destroyed by Romans.

BRUTUS

If that were true—

SICINIUS

What are you talking about? Haven't we experienced his obedience? Haven't our aediles been struck by him? Haven't our own efforts been resisted? Come.

MENENIUS

Consider that he's been brought up in wars since he was old enough to draw a sword. He doesn't know how to use refined

In bolted language; meal and bran together
405 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,
410 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.
415 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 Martius, we'll proceed
In our first way.

MENENIUS

420 I'll bring him to you.

language. He can't tell the difference between meal and bran.
Let me go to him and try to convince him to answer your
questions peacefully in court. Legal judgment may still cost
him his life.

FIRST SENATOR

Noble tribunes, this is the humane way. The other course of
action will prove too bloody, and we have no idea what we're
getting ourselves into.

SICINIUS

Noble Menenius, you may act on behalf of the people. Good
people, lay your weapons down.

BRUTUS

Don't go home.

SICINIUS

Meet us in the marketplace. We'll wait for you there. If you
don't bring Martius, we'll continue with our original plans.

MENENIUS

I'll bring him to you.

(to the Senators) Come with me. We must bring him, or something worse will happen.

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

A room in Coriolanus' 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
5 Below the beam of sight, yet will I still
Be thus to them.

A PATRICIAN

You do the nobler.

FIRST SENATOR

Yes, let's go to him.

All exit.

Act 3 Scene 2

A room in Coriolanus's house.

CORIOLANUS enters with Noblemen.

CORIOLANUS

Let them shout their fury. They can put me to death on the wheel, let wild horses drag me, or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock, making the fall so far that you can't see the bottom. It won't change who I am compared to them.

A NOBLEMAN

You are nobler than they are.

CORIOLANUS

I muse my mother
Does not approve me further, who was wont
10 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

15 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,
20 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
25 The thwartings of your dispositions, if

CORIOLANUS

I wonder if my mother still sides with me. She used to call
them slaves in rough wool clothes, traders of cheap items who
were always taking their hats off to those of higher rank and
whose jaws dropped in silent amazement when someone like
me made speeches about peace or war.

VOLUMNIA enters.

I'm talking about you. Why did you want me to be more
subdued? Would you have me be untrue to my nature? Would
you rather I pretend to be someone else?

VOLUMNIA

Oh, sir, sir, sir, I wanted your power to be made official before
you used it up.

CORIOLANUS

Stop it.

VOLUMNIA

You would've been enough of a man without fighting so hard
to prove yourself. The people wouldn't have condemned you 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

30 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
35 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

40 Well said, noble woman!

you hadn't shown them your true disposition before they lost
the power to stop you.

CORIOLANUS

Let them hang.

A NOBLEMAN

Yes, and burn, too.

MENENIUS and Senators enter.

MENENIUS

Come, come, you've been a bit too rough. You must go back
and fix things with the people.

FIRST SENATOR

There's no remedy. Unless you go, our good city will break in
two and be ruined.

VOLUMNIA

Please, listen to this advice. I'm as stubborn as you are, but I'm
smart enough to use my anger to my advantage.

MENENIUS

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

45 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;

50 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,
55 I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,
In peace what each of them by the other lose,

Well said, noble woman. Before he returns to the masses, given the current violent climate in the state, which demands a solution to this problem, I'd like to put my armor on, even though I am barely strong enough to wear it.

CORIOLANUS

What should I do?

MENENIUS

Return to the tribunes.

CORIOLANUS

And then what?

MENENIUS

Take back what you said.

CORIOLANUS

For them! I can't take back what I've said to the gods, but I must I take back what I've said to the people?

VOLUMNIA

You're too rigid. You can never be too noble, except in extreme circumstances. I've heard you say that in war, honor and strategy go together. If that's the case, tell me, why wouldn't they also go together in times of peace?

That they combine not there.

CORIOLANUS

Tush, tush!

MENENIUS

A good demand.

VOLUMNIA

60 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
65 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,
70 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,

CORIOLANUS

Hush, hush!

MENENIUS

That's a good question.

VOLUMNIA

If it's honorable in war to pretend to be other than how you are, if it serves your end goal, why is it less honorable to do so in times of peace?

CORIOLANUS

Why do you ask?

VOLUMNIA

Because you have to speak to the people now—and not to give them instructions or to talk from your heart. What you say can't reflect the truth of what you really feel. However, this doesn't dishonor you any more than it would to capture a town with flattering words, a town that would otherwise take your fortune and spill your blood. I would feel it honorable to hide my real nature if my fortune and my friends were at risk. I speak for your wife, your son, these senators, and the nobles

75 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,

80 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

85 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,
90 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,
95 Which often, thus, correcting thy stout heart,
Now humble as the ripest mulberry
That will not hold the handling: or say to them,

about this: you'd prefer to show the miserable commoners how you frown than flatter them in any way, even for the sake of their approval and to protect what might be ruined without it.

MENENIUS

Noble lady! Come with us. Your honest words may heal not only present dangers but also past losses.

VOLUMNIA

I beg you now, my son, go to them, with your hat in your hand.
And once you've extended your hat to them—do what they ask—get on your knees and kiss the ground, bow your head and humble your proud heart like the ripest mulberry that falls from the branch the moment it's touched—for in this situation actions speak louder than words. Or tell them that you are their soldier and admit that because you were raised on the battlefield, you never learned a gentle way with words, but you realize you should have spoken more kindly when asking for

Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils
Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,
100 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,
105 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
110 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

115 Only fair speech.

their votes. Tell them that you'll work for their benefit from here on out, to the extent of your political power and physical ability.

MENENIUS

(To Coriolanus) Do as she says, and their hearts will belong to you. If you ask, they'll pardon you as easily as they speak their nonsense.

VOLUMNIA

Please, go now. Submit to them, although I know you'd rather pursue your enemy through the fires of hell than flatter him in a boudoir. Here's Cominius.

COMINIUS enters.

COMINIUS

Sir, I've been in the marketplace. You'll need to argue your case strongly or defend yourself with calmness—or don't come at all. Everyone is angry.

MENENIUS

Just speak kindly.

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

120 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 Martius, they to dust should grind it
125 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
130 My praises made thee first a soldier, so,
To have my praise for this, perform a part
Thou hast not done before.

CORIOLANUS**COMINIUS**

I think that'll work, if he can control his temper.

VOLUMNIA

He must, and I beg you, say you will and then go do it.

CORIOLANUS

Do I have to show them my head without a helmet? Do I have to betray my heart and speak words that are lies? Well, I'll do it. But if I lose, they'll grind me into dust and throw it against the wind. To the marketplace! You're asking me to play a part that I will never play convincingly.

COMINIUS

Come, come, we'll tell you what to say.

VOLUMNIA

I beg you now, sweet son. You've said that my encouragement is what made you into a soldier, so I encourage you now to play this new role.

CORIOLANUS

Well, I must do't:

Away, my disposition, and possess me

135 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

140 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

145 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

150 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

155 Pray, be content:

Well, I must do it. I'll hide my true nature and become like a whore! My voice, which ordinarily calls for war, will harmonize with my drum and become the voice of a eunuch or a virgin that sings babies to sleep! I'll smile like a servant, cry like a schoolboy, and speak like a beggar! My armored knees, which ordinarily only bend in my saddle, will bend like a man receiving alms! I won't do it because it will dishonor my true nature, and what I do with my body will degrade my mind.

VOLUMNIA

This is your choice then. It is more dishonorable for me to have to beg you than for you to have to beg them. Everything will be ruined. I'd rather endure the consequences of challenging your pride rather than be afraid of it, for I fear death as little as you do. Do as you please. Your courage comes from me—you sucked it from me as a nursing baby—but your pride is all your own.

CORIOLANUS

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:
160 Command 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
165 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
170 Will answer in mine honour.

MENENIUS

Ay, but mildly.

CORIOLANUS

That's enough, mother. I'm going to the marketplace. Don't scold me any further. I'll deceive them into liking me, steal their hearts, and come home beloved by all the tradesmen in Rome. Look, I'm going. Give my regards to my wife. I'll come back as consul. Never again doubt how well my tongue can flatter.

VOLUMNIA

Do what you need to do.

VOLUMNIA exits.

COMINIUS

Go! The tribunes are waiting for you. Be prepared to answer questions mildly. I've heard that they have even stronger accusations than the ones they've made so far.

CORIOLANUS

The key word is "mild." Please, let's go. Let them invent accusations against me, and I'll answer honorably.

MENENIUS

Yes, but mildly.

CORIOLANUS

Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

Exeunt

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
5 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
10 That always favour'd him.

Well, mildly it will be then. Mildly!

All exit.

Act 3 Scene 3

The Forum.

***SICINIUS** and **BRUTUS** enter.*

BRUTUS

Drive this point home: his aim is to be a tyrant. If he dodges this accusation, confront him with his ill-will toward the people, and that the spoils won from the Antiates were never distributed.

An aedile enters.

Is he coming?

AEDILE

He's coming.

BRUTUS

Who's he with?

AEDILE

With old Menenius and those senators that have always favored 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

15 Have you collected them by tribes?

AEDILE

I have.

SICINIUS

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

AEDILE

I shall inform them.

BRUTUS

25 And when such time they have begun to cry,

SICINIUS

Do you have a list of all the individual votes taken in our poll?

AEDILE

I do. It's ready.

SICINIUS

Have you counted them by district?

AEDILE

I have.

SICINIUS

Bring the people here now, and when I say, "The decision of the people is," whether it's death, fine, or banishment, if I say, "fine," have them cry, "Fine," if "death," cry, "Death." They must insist on their legal right to decide this and the power that comes from the truth of their cause.

AEDILE

I'll tell them.

BRUTUS

Let them not cease, but with a din confused
Enforce the present execution
Of what we chance to sentence.

AEDILE

Very well.

SICINIUS

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

BRUTUS

Go about it.

Exit Aedile

Put him to choler straight: he hath been used
Ever to conquer, and to have his worth
35 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*

And when they begin to cry out, don't let them stop. The chaotic noise will force their decision to be carried out on the spot.

AEDILE

Very well.

SICINIUS

Prepare them for this. They have to be able to get the signal when we give it to them.

BRUTUS

Do it.

The Aedile exits.

Get him angry right away. He's accustomed to always winning and being as controversial as he pleases. Once he's provoked, he won't be able to rein in his temper. Then he'll say how he really feels, and most likely we can use that as reason to break his neck.

SICINIUS

Well, here he comes.

*CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS enter, with Senators
and Noblemen.*

MENENIUS

40 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!
45 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

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

CORIOLANUS

First, hear me speak.

BOTH TRIBUNES**MENENIUS**

Stay calm, I beg you.

CORIOLANUS

Yes, like a stable boy that for the smallest amount of money
will tolerate being called a slave over and over again. May the
honored gods protect Rome and supply the chairs of justice
with worthy men! Let there be love among us!
Fill our large temples with demonstrations of peace and not
our streets with war!

FIRST SENATOR

Amen, amen.

MENENIUS

A noble wish.

The Aedile reenters, with Citizens.

SICINIUS

Come close, you people.

AEDILE

Listen to your tribunes. Be quiet!

CORIOLANUS

Let me speak first.

BOTH TRIBUNES

Well, say. Peace, ho!

CORIOLANUS

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

SICINIUS

55 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

60 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

65 Scratches with briers,
Scars to move laughter only.

MENENIUS

Consider further,

Well then, talk! Stay calm.

CORIOLANUS

Are there any further charges against me besides these? Will everything be settled here?

SICINIUS

Will you agree to listen to the people, respect their representatives, and undergo lawful punishment for the offenses we'll prove you committed?

CORIOLANUS

Yes, I agree.

MENENIUS

All right citizens, he says he agrees. Think of the wars he has served in.
Think about the wounds on his body—each of them is like an enemy's gravestone.

CORIOLANUS

They're no more serious than scratches from a prickly plant.
They're scars that you'd only laugh at.

MENENIUS

That when he speaks not like a citizen,
You find him like a soldier: do not take
70 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
75 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

80 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

Consider also that because he doesn't speak like you, you think he's attacking you. Don't mistake his coarse way of speaking for hateful words. He's just talking the way soldiers talk. He's not speaking ill of you.

COMINIUS

Okay, that's enough.

CORIOLANUS

How did it happen that I was approved for consul with a unanimous vote and in the next moment I'm disgraced by a change of opinion?

SICINIUS

Answer our questions.

CORIOLANUS

Well it's true then. I thought so.

SICINIUS

We accuse you of trying to do away with the established legal system in Rome and to put yourself in a position of tyrannical power. For this you are a traitor to the people.

CORIOLANUS

How! traitor!

MENENIUS

85 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
90 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

95 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
100 Those whose great power must try him; even this,
So criminal and in such capital kind,

How am I a traitor?

MENENIUS

No, stay calm. You promised.

CORIOLANUS

May the people fall into the fires of the lowest hell! You're calling me a traitor? You slanderous tribune! If your eyes had killed twenty thousand people, your hands had killed a million, and your lying tongue had killed those numbers together, I would still say to you, "You lie" with a voice as honest as the one I pray to the gods with.

SICINIUS

Do you hear this, people?

CITIZENS

Throw him from the rock!

SICINIUS

Peace! We don't need to aggravate him further. What you've seen him do and heard him say—beating your officers, speaking ill of you, opposing our laws with force, and now defying those who have the great power to put him on trial—even this, which is criminal and punishable by death, deserves the most severe penalty.

Deserves the extrekest death.

BRUTUS

But since he hath
Served well for Rome,—

CORIOLANUS

105 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

110 I know no further:

Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, raying, pent to linger
But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word;

115 Nor cheque my courage for what they can give,

To have't with saying 'Good Morrow.'

BRUTUS

But since he has served Rome so well—

CORIOLANUS

Why do you talk about service?

BRUTUS

I talk about what I know.

CORIOLANUS

What do you know about service?

MENENIUS

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

COMINIUS

Listen, I beg you—

CORIOLANUS

I'll listen no more. Let them throw me from the steep Tarpeian rock, make me a wandering exile, skin me alive, or condemn me to live on just a grain a day. I wouldn't buy their mercy at the cost of the truth, nor would I hold back my beliefs for the freedom they can give me, if I had to say to them, "Good day."

SICINIUS

For that he has,
As much as in him lies, from time to time
Envied against the people, seeking means
120 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,
125 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

130 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:

SICINIUS

As much as he could, he has continually conspired against the people, looking for ways to take away their power, and now he's finally taken violent measures, and not only in front of justice itself but also those who attempt to carry it out.

In the name of the people and by our power as tribunes, from this moment forward we banish him from our city. If he ever enters the gates of Rome again, he will be thrown off the Tarpeian rock. I declare this on behalf of the people.

CITIZENS

It shall be so, it shall be so. Take him away. He's banished, and it shall be so.

Listen to me, good people, my friends—

SICINIUS

He's been sentenced. There's nothing more to say.

COMINIUS

135 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,
140 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:
145 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
150 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

Let me speak. I have been consul, and I can show you the wounds I've received fighting for Rome. My feelings about the welfare of my country are more tender, more holy, and more profound than how I feel about my own life, my dear wife's reputation, her ability to bear my precious children. So I would like to say—

SICINIUS

We know your loyalty. What do you want to say?

BRUTUS

There's no more to be said: he is banished as enemy to the people and his country. It shall be so.

CITIZENS

It shall be so, it shall be so.

CORIOLANUS

You pack of common dogs! Your breath reeks like the rotting swamps. I value your opinion of me as much as the dead carcasses of unburied men that stink up my air. I banish you! Stay here with your indecisiveness and let every feeble rumor change your minds. When you see your enemies plumed helmets approaching, may you fall into despair! May you retain the power to banish the ones who would protect you, until at

155 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

160 That won you without blows! Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
There is a world elsewhere.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, Senators, and Patricians

AEDILE

The people's enemy is gone, is gone!

CITIZENS

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

Shouting, and throwing up their caps

SICINIUS

165 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.

last your ignorance—which makes you unable to foresee anything before it happens and leaves you alone in the city as your own worst enemy—leads you to be captured by some nation that defeated you without a fight! With hatred, I turn my back on you and the city. I will seek a new life elsewhere.

CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, Senators, and the Noblemen exit.

AEDILE

The people's enemy is gone. He is gone!

CITIZENS

Our enemy is banished! He is gone! Hoo, hoo!

They shout and throw up their caps.

SICINIUS

Go, see him go out the gates, and look at him with contempt, as he looked at you.
Torment him—he deserves it. Let a parade follow us through the city.

CITIZENS

170 The gods preserve our noble tribunes! Come.

Exeunt

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
Where is your ancient courage? you were used
To say extremity was the trier of spirits;
That common chances common men could bear;
5 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
10 The heart that conn'd them.

VIRGILIA

O heavens! O heavens!

CORIOLANUS

Nay! prithee, woman,—

Come, come. Let's see him go out the gates. Come. May the gods protect our noble tribunes! Come.

All exit.

Act 4 Scene 1

A city gate in Rome.

*CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, and
COMINIUS enter, with the young nobles.*

CORIOLANUS

Stop crying now. A brief farewell! The people, like a many-headed beast, push me out. Stop it, mother. What happened to your courage? You used to say that adversity was a test of character. That even common people can handle the chance circumstances of their lives. That when the sea is calm all boats float equally well. That when fate strikes you hardest, you must have the skill of a nobleman to endure your wounds with dignity. You used to repeat these sayings to me, sayings that would make anyone who heard them enough invincible.

VIRGILIA

Oh, heavens! Oh, heavens!

CORIOLANUS

Stop it! Please, woman—

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIOLANUS

15 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
20 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,
25 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
30 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 cautious baits and practise.

VOLUMNIA

Now the typhoid fever strikes all the tradesmen in Rome and
the economy is crumbling!

CORIOLANUS

Enough, enough, enough! You'll love me when I'm gone. Stop
it, mother. Bring back your old spirit, when you used to say that
if you had been the wife of Hercules, you would have done six
of his twelve required tasks and saved him that much effort.
Cominius, don't despair. Goodbye. Farewell, my wife, my
mother—I'll be fine. My old and true friend Menenius, you cry
more than a young man, and the salt is bad for your eyes. My
former general, I have seen you be brave, and you have seen
many heart-hardening spectacles. Tell these sad women that
it's as foolish to cry over inevitabilities as it is to laugh at them.
Mother, you've always taken comfort in the risks that I take.
Know this for a fact: even though I go alone, like a lonely
dragon whose swamp is more feared and talked about than it
is seen, I will either exceed common expectations or be caught
by crafty traps and trickery.

VOLUMNIA

35 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

40 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
45 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
50 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.
55 While I remain above the ground, you shall

VOLUMNIA

My firstborn son, where will you go? Take good Cominius with
you for a while. Figure out a plan other than just dealing with
things as they come up.

CORIOLANUS

Oh, the gods!

COMINIUS

I'll go with you for a month and help you find a place to stay
and a way to communicate with us. That way, if they overturn
your sentence, we won't have to look all over the whole world
to find you and lose momentum on your return.

CORIOLANUS

No, I must go alone. You're too old, and you've been in too
many wars to go roaming around with someone like me, who's
still fresh. Just take me to the gate. Come, my sweet wife, my
dearest mother, and my noble friends. When I go, wish me
safe travels and smile. I promise that so long as I'm still alive
you'll hear from me, and the news will be the same as it's
always been about me.

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.

60 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

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,
5 Let us seem humbler after it is done

MENENIUS

That's the best news an ear can hear. Let's not cry now. If my arms and legs were just seven years younger, by the good gods, I'd go with you all the way.

CORIOLANUS

Give me your hand. Come.

All exit.

Act 4 Scene 2

The same street, near the gate.

SICINIUS, **BRUTUS**, and an aedile enter.

SICINIUS

Tell them all to go home. He's gone, and we won't go any further. The nobles who sided with him are angry.

BRUTUS

Now that we've exerted our power, let's at least pretend to be humble, like before.

Than when it was a-doing.

SICINIUS

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

BRUTUS

10 Dismiss them home.

Exit Aedile

Here comes his mother.

SICINIUS

Let's not meet her.

BRUTUS

Why?

SICINIUS

They say she's mad.

BRUTUS

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

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS

VOLUMNIA

SICINIUS

Tell them to go home. Explain that their great enemy is gone and that their freedoms have been restored.

BRUTUS

Send them home.

The aedile exits.

Here comes his mother.

SICINIUS

Let's not talk to her.

BRUTUS

Why?

SICINIUS

They say she's crazy.

BRUTUS

They've seen us. Keep walking.

VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS enter.

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,—
20 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

25 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!

Some coincidence, running into you. May the gods repay you
for this with the plague!

MENENIUS

Calm down. Don't be so loud.

VOLUMNIA

If I could cry quietly I would. You should hear me cry—
No, you will hear me.

To Brutus

Where are you going?

VIRGILIA

(to Sicinius) You stay, too. I wish I had the power to say that to
my husband.

SICINIUS

Are you a woman?

VOLUMNIA

You fool, are you trying to insult me? Listen, fool. Wasn't my
father a man? Are you so ungrateful that you'd banish the man
who swung his sword for Rome more times than you've even
opened your mouth to speak?

SICINIUS

Oh, blessed heavens!

VOLUMNIA

30 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

35 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

40 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

He fought nobly for Rome more times than you've ever spoken wise words. I'll tell you what: go! No, stay actually. I wish my son were in the lawless deserts of Arabia, with his sword in hand, and your people stood before him.

SICINIUS

What would happen then?

VIRGILIA

What would happen? He'd kill you, and your family line would end.

VOLUMNIA

Your bastard children's, too. He's a good man, and he was wounded fighting for Rome!

MENENIUS

Now, now, stay calm.

SICINIUS

I wish he had continued to honor his country the way he always did, rather than renounce his loyalty.

BRUTUS

I wish he had.

VOLUMNIA

45 '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

50 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—
55 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

VOLUMNIA

"I wish he had"! It was you who incensed the commoners.
Those people are like cats and no more able to judge his
character than I am able to know the unknowable mysteries of
heaven.

BRUTUS

Please, let's go.

VOLUMNIA

Yes. Please, sir, do go away now. You've done enough. But
before you go, hear this: as much as the capitol building stands
taller than the lowest house in Rome, that's how much my son,
her husband, the man you banished, exceeds all of you.

BRUTUS

That's enough. We're leaving now.

SICINIUS

Why would we stay to be harassed by someone who is so out
of her mind?

VOLUMNIA

Take my prayers with you.

The tribunes exit.

60 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;
65 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

70 Fie, fie, fie!

Exeunt

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.

I wish the gods had nothing else to do but carry out my curses!
If I could just meet with them once a day, it would unclog the
heavy weight from my heart.

MENENIUS

You've driven them away, and rightly so, I believe. Will you eat
with me?

VOLUMNIA

I'll eat alone. Anger is my meat, but indulging my anger will
also be the death of me. Come, let's go. Do as I do: stop
whining and being sad. Despite being angry, let's behave like
Juno. Come, come, come.

MENENIUS

No, no, no!

All exit.

Act 4 Scene 3

A highway between Rome and Antium.

A Roman and a Volsce enter and meet.

ROMAN

I know who you are, sir, and you know me. I think your name is
Adrian.

VOLSCE

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

ROMAN

I am a Roman; and my services are,
5 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
10 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

15 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.

VOLSCE

That is my name, sir. I'm sorry, but I've forgotten yours.

ROMAN

I'm a Roman, but like you, I work against the Romans. Do you
remember me yet?

VOLSCE

Nicanor? No.

ROMAN

That's it, sir.

VOLSCE

You had a fuller beard the last time I saw you, but your speech
gives you away. What's happening in Rome? I have instructions
from the Volscian state to look for you there. You've saved me
a day's journey.

ROMAN

There's been an unusual uprising in Rome: the people against
the senators, patricians, and nobles.

VOLSCE

Has been? You mean it's over? Our state doesn't think so.
They're preparing to attack and hope to surprise them in the
middle of the chaos.

ROMAN

The main blaze of it is past, but a small thing
would make it flame again: for the nobles receive
20 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
25 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
30 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**ROMAN**

Most of it's over, but one small thing would make it erupt again:
if the nobles take the news of Coriolanus's banishment so
personally that they themselves decide to take all power from
the people and do away with their tribunes forever. This could
easily happen, and it would definitely lead to violence.

VOLSCE

Coriolanus has been banished!

ROMAN

Banished, sir.

VOLSCE

You'll be welcome with this news, Nicanor.

ROMAN

Things are looking good for the Volsces now. As they say, the
best time to seduce another man's wife is when she's in a fight
with her husband. Your noble Tullus Aufidius will do well in this
attack, since his main enemy, Coriolanus, is no longer fighting
for his own country.

VOLSCE

35 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
40 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
45 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

His victory is inevitable. I'm so glad to run into you. You've told me what I needed to know, and I'll happily accompany you home.

ROMAN

Between now and dinner, I'll tell you all the strange things that are happening in Rome, all of which is good news to her enemies. You said you had an army ready?

VOLSCE

A most royal army. Each officer commands a hundred men, and they are all accounted for and deployable on an hour's notice.

ROMAN

I'm overjoyed to hear that they're ready. I think my report will be what sends them into battle. So glad we met, sir.

VOLSCE

Me, too, sir. I have even more reason to be glad to have met you.

ROMAN

Well, let's go together.

They exit.

Act 4 Scene 4

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,
5 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,
10 Where great Aufidius lies: is he in Antium?

CITIZEN

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

CORIOLANUS

In front of Aufidius's house in Antium.

CORIOLANUS enters in plain clothes, disguised and speaking softly.

CORIOLANUS

Antium is a good city. I made its women into widows. Its sons have died at my hands in battle. May I go unrecognized, so that the women won't spit at me and the men won't throw stones.

A Citizen enters.

May the gods protect you, sir.

CITIZEN

And you.

CORIOLANUS

Could you please tell me where to find the great Aufidius? Is he in Antium?

CITIZEN

He is. The nobles of the state are having a feast at his house tonight.

CORIOLANUS

Which is his house, beseech you?

CITIZEN

This, here before you.

CORIOLANUS

15 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
20 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,
25 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,
30 I'll do his country service.

Exit

Where is his house, do you mind telling me?

CITIZEN

This one, right here.

CORIOLANUS

Thank you, sir. Farewell.

The Citizen exits.

The world has many twists and turns! Friends who at this moment are loyal to each other, who seem to share one heart, live in the same house, sleep in the same bed, eat the same food, and work together—who love each other like inseparable twins—will, within an hour, become bitter enemies because of a minor disagreement. And mortal enemies, who spend sleepless nights furiously plotting to capture each other's keep, will by some random chance become dear friends and join their interests together. This is how it is with me: I hate the place I come from and I love my enemy's town. It would be fair for him to kill me, but if he lets me live, I'll fight for his country.

He exits.

Act 4 Scene 5

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 Crotus? my master calls
for him. Crotus!

Exit

Enter CORIOLANUS

CORIOLANUS

5 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?

A hall in Aufidius's house.

Music plays offstage. A Servant enters.

FIRST SERVANT

Wine, wine, wine! What kind of service is this? I think the other
servants are asleep.

He exits.

A Second Servant enters.

SECOND SERVANT

Where's Crotus? My master calls for him. Crotus!

He exits.

CORIOLANUS enters.

CORIOLANUS

This is a good house. The feast smells good, but I don't look
like a guest.

The First Servant reenters.

FIRST SERVANT

Here's no place for you: pray, go to the door.

Exit

CORIOLANUS

I have deserved no better entertainment,

10 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

15 Away! get you away.

CORIOLANUS

Now thou'rt troublesome.

SECOND SERVINGMAN

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

What are you doing here, friend? Where are you from? This is no place for you. Please leave.

He exits.

CORIOLANUS

I wouldn't be welcomed any better if they knew I were Coriolanus.

The Second Servant reenters.

SECOND SERVANT

Where are you from, sir? Is the porter blind to let someone like you in? Please, get out.

CORIOLANUS

Go away!

SECOND SERVANT

You go away!

CORIOLANUS

You're causing trouble.

SECOND SERVANT

Are you really this arrogant? Someone's going to come reprimand you right away.

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
20 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

25 A gentleman.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

A marvellous poor one.

CORIOLANUS

True, so I am.

A Third Servant enters. The First meets him.

THIRD SERVANT

Who's this?

FIRST SERVANT

The strangest man I've ever seen. I can't get him out of the
house. Please ask my master to come here.

He exits.

THIRD SERVANT

Why are you here, fellow? Please, leave this house.

CORIOLANUS

Let me stay. I won't cause any harm.

THIRD SERVANT

Who are you?

CORIOLANUS

A gentleman.

THIRD SERVANT

A remarkably poor one.

CORIOLANUS

That's true. I am poor.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

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

CORIOLANUS

30 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

35 Under the canopy.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

Under the canopy!

CORIOLANUS**THIRD SERVANT**

Please, poor gentleman, go to some other house. This is not the place for you. Please, get out now.

CORIOLANUS

Be like every other servant: go gorge yourself on cold scraps of food.

He pushes the Third Servant away.

THIRD SERVANT

What won't you do? Please, go tell my master what a strange guest he has here.

SECOND SERVANT

I will.

He exits.

THIRD SERVANT

Where do you live?

CORIOLANUS

Beneath the stars.

THIRD SERVANT

Beneath the stars!

CORIOLANUS

Ay.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

Where's that?

CORIOLANUS

I' the city of kites and crows.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

40 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 honester service than to meddle with thy
45 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?

Yes.

THIRD SERVANT

Where's that?

CORIOLANUS

In the city of kites and crows.

THIRD SERVANT

In the city of kites and crows! What a joke this is! Then do you
live with the simpletons too?

CORIOLANUS

No, I don't serve your master.

THIRD SERVANT

Oh, sir! Are you trying to mess with my master?

CORIOLANUS

Yes. It's more honest than messing around with your mistress.
You babble on and on. Pass the serving platter. Go!

He beats him away. The Third Servant exits.

AUFIDIUS enters with the Second Servant.

AUFIDIUS

Where is this man?

SECOND SERVINGMAN

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

Retires

AUFIDIUS

50 Whence comest thou? what wouldest 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
55 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?

SECOND SERVANT

Here, sir. I would've beaten him like a dog, but that would've disturbed your guests.

He exits.

AUFIDIUS

Where are you from? What do you want? Your name? Why aren't you speaking? Speak, man. What's your name?

CORIOLANUS

If, Tullus (umuffling his voice), you don't recognize my voice and you don't recognize me by sight, I must tell you my name.

AUFIDIUS

What is your name?

CORIOLANUS

A name the Volscians don't like to hear, unlike yours.

AUFIDIUS

60 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

65 I know thee not: thy name?

CORIOLANUS

My name is Caius Martius, who hath done
To thee particularly and to all the Volsces
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,
70 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;
75 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
80 Hath brought me to thy hearth; not out of hope—

Tell me, what's your name? Your appearance is harsh and your face looks like a commander's. Even though your clothes are torn, your body looks distinguished. What is your name?

CORIOLANUS

Prepare to frown. Do you know me yet?

AUFIDIUS

I don't know your name. What is it?

CORIOLANUS

My name is Caius Martius. I've done great hurt and mischief to you particularly and to all the Volsces, proof of which is my surname: Coriolanus. I worked very hard, faced extreme dangers, and shed drops of blood for my ungrateful country. My only compensation is that name. It's a reminder and signifier of the hatred you should feel for me. That name is all that is left. With envious cruelty, the Roman people, enabled by the cowardly nobles, have turned on me and taken away all that I had. These slaves have voted me out of Rome. These extreme circumstances are what have brought me to your home. Make no mistake: I have no wish to save my life. If I feared death, I would have avoided you more than any other man in the world. Instead I stand here before you with only my hatred and desire for revenge against my banishers. If you're inclined to seek vengeance of your own and end the shame

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,

85 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,

90 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

95 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.

100 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.

that's seen throughout your country, see now how you can use
my suffering to serve your purpose. Helping me get revenge
will be beneficial to you. I'll fight my own cursed country with
the fury of all the hell beings. But if you choose not to do this, if
you're too tired to take this chance, then since I am also too
tired to keep living, I present my throat to you and your
longstanding hatred. You'd be a fool not to cut it. I've always
pursued you with hatred, I've spilled barrels of your country's
blood, so to let me live would only bring you shame unless I
can work on your behalf.

AUFIDIUS

O Martius, Martius!

AUFIDIUS

105 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 Martius. Let me twine
110 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
115 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
120 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
125 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 Martius,
130 Had we no quarrel else to Rome, but that

Oh, Martius, Martius! Each word that you've spoken has
weeded from my heart a root of longstanding hatred. If from
that far cloud Jupiter should speak divine things and say, "It's
true," I would believe him no less than I believe you, noble
Martius. Let me wrap my arms around this body of yours,
which my wooden lance has beaten and been splintered
against a hundred times. You are the anvil that my sword used
to strike, and now I embrace you. Now I strive to gain your
comradeship with as much ferocity and honor as I used to fight
you. You should know: I loved the woman I married, that's the
truth, but seeing you here, you noble thing, makes my heart
more enraptured than when I first saw my new bride walk
across my threshold. You are the god of war! I tell you, our
army is ready to deploy, and now I have reason again to force
your shield off of your strong arm, or lose my own arm instead.
You've defeated me twelve different times, and every night
since I have dreamed of encounters between us. We'd fight
down on the ground, taking off our helmets, forcing our fists
into each other's throats. Then I wake up, half dead, and it was
all a dream. Worthy Martius, even if we had no reason to attack
Rome other than the fact that you've been banished, we would
assemble every man from ages twelve to seventy and flood
ungrateful Rome with our fury. Come inside now and shake
hands with our senators. They are just now saying goodbye to
me, as I was about to attack Roman territories, though not
Rome itself.

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,

135 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

140 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;
145 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!
150 And more a friend than e'er an enemy;
Yet, Martius, that was much. Your hand: most welcome!

CORIOLANUS

You bless me, gods!

AUFIDIUS

Incomparable sir, if you'd like to take the lead with your own
revenge, take over half of my command. Because you have the
most experience and you know Rome's strengths and
weaknesses, decide for yourself whether to attack the city
directly at the gates or to sneak up on them in the faraway
territories and frighten them before destroying them. Either
way, come in. Let me introduce you to those who will approve
of your desires. A thousand welcomes! You're more of a friend
now than you were ever an enemy—and you were a great
enemy. Give me your hand—you are most welcome!

Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS. The two Servingmen

CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS exit. The two Servants come

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
155 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,—
160 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

forward.

FIRST SERVANT

That was an unexpected turn of events!

SECOND SERVANT

I swear, I had thought about striking him with a club, but I knew
his clothes were a disguise.

FIRST SERVANT

What an arm he has! He turned me around with just his finger
and his thumb, the way you'd spin a top.

SECOND SERVANT

No, I knew by his face that there was something about him. He
had, sir, a kind of face, I thought—I don't know how to describe
it.

FIRST SERVANT

He had a kind of face that looked like it was—I can't find the
words for the life of me, but I knew there was more to him than
I could see.

SECOND SERVANT

So did I. I swear, he is simply the most unique man in the world.

FIRST SERVANT

165 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
170 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 AND SECOND SERVINGMAN

175 What, what, what? let's partake.

I agree, but you already know a better soldier.

SECOND SERVANT

Who, my master?

FIRST SERVANT

It's no contest.

SECOND SERVANT

He's worth six of him.

FIRST SERVANT

That's not true. I think he's the better soldier.

SECOND SERVANT

How could anyone ever say who's actually better? For
defending towns, our general is excellent.

FIRST SERVANT

Yes, and for attacking them, too.

The Third Servant reenters.

THIRD SERVANT

Oh, slaves, I have news for you—news, you rascals!

FIRST SERVANT AND SECOND SERVANT

What, what, what? Tell us.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN AND SECOND SERVINGMAN

Wherfore? wherfore?

THIRD SERVINGMAN

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

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
185 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

THIRD SERVANT

I'd rather be from anywhere than Rome. I'd gladly prefer to be condemned to die.

FIRST SERVANT AND SECOND SERVANT

Why? Why?

THIRD SERVANT

Because Caius Martius, the man who was inclined to thwack our general, is here.

FIRST SERVANT

What do you mean, "thwack our general"?

THIRD SERVANT

I don't mean "thwack our general," but he could have.

SECOND SERVANT

Come, we're fellows and friends. Caius Martius was always too much for him—I've heard him say so himself.

FIRST SERVANT

He was too much for him directly, to tell the truth. At Corioles he carved him up like a piece of meat.

SECOND SERVANT

190 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
195 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
200 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

205 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.

If he'd been a cannibal, he might have broiled and eaten him, too.

FIRST SERVANT

But what other news do you have?

THIRD SERVANT

The guests here can't stop talking about him. It's as if he were the son and heir to Mars. He's sitting at the head of the table and none of the senators are asking him any questions—they've all taken their hats off to him. Our general himself treats him like a mistress, touching his hand like a sacred relic, listening with wide-eyed wonder to his every word. But the bottom line is that our general is now half the man he was yesterday. He's given half his power away to Caius Martius and the whole table supports him. He says that he'll go and catch the keeper of Rome's gates by the ears, that he'll mow down whoever stands in his way, leaving a trail behind him.

SECOND SERVANT

And he's as likely to do it as any man I can imagine.

THIRD SERVANT

Do it! He'll do it. Look, sir, he has as many friends as enemies—and his friends can't actually be friends to him while he's in dejectitude.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

Directitude! what's that?

THIRD SERVINGMAN

210 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

215 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.
220 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;

FIRST SERVANT

Dejectitude! What's that?

THIRD SERVANT

But when they see that his spirits have lifted and that he's a
man in full vitality again, they'll come out of hiding, like rabbits
after a rain, and celebrate with him.

FIRST SERVANT

When will this happen?

THIRD SERVANT

Tomorrow, today, soon. You'll hear the battle drum by this
afternoon. It's like part of their feast and will be underway
before they've wiped their lips.

SECOND SERVANT

Then things will come back to life again here. This peace does
nothing but rust iron and make people become tailors and
singers.

FIRST SERVANT

I say: give me war. It's better than peace the way night is better
than day. It's spritely, waking, loud, and spirited. Peace is the
definition of stagnation, of lethargy. It's dull, deaf, sleepy, and

225 mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more
bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

SECOND SERVINGMAN

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN

230 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

235 In, in, in, in!

Exeunt

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

unfeeling. It creates more bastard children than wars destroy
men.

SECOND SERVANT

It's true. And while war can be said to be seductive in a sense,
it cannot be denied that in times of peace, wives cheat on their
husbands.

FIRST SERVANT

Yes, and it makes men hate one another.

THIRD SERVANT

Because they need one another less. I'd give my money to
have war! I hope the Romans are as cheap as the Volscians. (A
noise comes from offstage) They're getting up from the table.

ALL

In, in, in, in!

All exit.

Act 4 Scene 6

A public place in Rome.

***SICINIUS** and **BRUTUS** enter.*

SICINIUS

We haven't heard about him, so we don't need to fear him. It
would be easy to deal with him now, given the peace and

And quietness of the people, which before
Were in wild hurry. Here do we make his friends
5 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

10 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

15 Your Coriolanus
Is not much miss'd, but with his friends:
The commonwealth doth stand, and so would do,

quietness of the people, who were in such chaos before. Now we're making his friends blush because things are going so smoothly. His friends are the ones who would've chosen—to their own detriment—to see people arguing in the streets rather than have our tradesmen back in their shops and happily doing their jobs.

BRUTUS

We turned things around quickly.

MENENIUS enters.

Is this Menenius?

SICINIUS

It's him, it's him. He has become very kind lately.

BOTH TRIBUNES

Greetings, sir!

MENENIUS

Greetings to you both!

SICINIUS

Coriolanus is not missed much by anyone but his friends now. The people would rise up against him if he were still angry at them.

Were he more angry at it.

MENENIUS

All's well; and might have been much better, if

20 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

25 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

MENENIUS

That's good. But things would have gone much better if he

could have compromised.

SICINIUS

Where is he? Have you heard?

MENENIUS

No, I hear nothing. His mother and his wife hear nothing from

him.

Three or four Citizens enter.

CITIZENS

The gods preserve you both!

SICINIUS

Good evening, neighbors.

BRUTUS

Good evening to you all, good evening to you all.

FIRST CITIZEN

Ourselves, our wives, and children, on our knees, keep you

both in our prayers.

SICINIUS

Live, and thrive!

BRUTUS

30 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
35 Than when these fellows ran about the streets,
Crying confusion.

BRUTUS

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

SICINIUS

And affecting one sole throne,
Without assistance.

Live and thrive!

BRUTUS

Farewell, kind neighbors. We wished Coriolanus had cared for
you as much as we do.

CITIZENS

Now the gods keep you!

BOTH TRIBUNES

Farewell, farewell.

The Citizens exit.

SICINIUS

This is a happier and more pleasant time than when the people
ran in the streets, shouting their wild demands.

BRUTUS

Caius Martius was a brave officer in the war, but he was
stubborn, overcome with pride, unreasonably ambitious,
narcissistic . . .

SICINIUS

And he thought there should be only one governing body
without any counterbalancing powers.

MENENIUS

I think not so.

SICINIUS

We should by this, to all our lamentation,

45 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,

50 Reports, the Volscs 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,

55 Who, hearing of our Martius' banishment,

Thrusts forth his horns again into the world;

Which were inshell'd when Martius stood for Rome,

And durst not once peep out.

MENENIUS

I don't think that's so.

SICINIUS

If despite our protests he had become consul, we would know this to be true by now.

BRUTUS

The gods have skillfully prevented it, and Rome sits safe and sound without him.

An Aedile enters.

AEDILE

Worthy tribunes, we've just put a slave in prison who says that the Volscs, in two separate armies, have entered Roman territories and are furiously destroying everything in sight.

MENENIUS

It's Aufidius. Hearing of Martius's banishment, he's thrusting his horns into the world again. When Martius defended Rome, Aufidius was contained and didn't once dare to strike out.

SICINIUS

Come, what talk you

60 Of Martius?

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,

65 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

70 Of what is to be dreaded.

SICINIUS

Tell not me:

I know this cannot be.

BRUTUS

Not possible.

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER**SICINIUS**

Why are you talking about Martius now?

BRUTUS

Go stop this rumor. The Volsces can't have dared to break our peace treaty.

MENENIUS

They can't? We've seen many times that they very well can, three times within my own lifetime in fact. Talk with the prisoner before you beat him. Find out where he heard this.

Don't run the risk of punishing the informant who warns you of dreaded news.

SICINIUS

Don't tell me what to do. I know this can't be true.

BRUTUS

It's not possible.

A Messenger enters.

MESSENGER

The nobles in great earnestness are going
75 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

80 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—
85 How probable I do not know—that Martius,
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

The nobles are all hurrying to the Senate house. Some news has come that's making them scowl.

SICINIUS

It's this slave. Go whip him in public view. He's incited everyone with just his report.

MESSENGER

Worthy sir, the slave's report has been confirmed, and the news is worse than we feared.

SICINIUS

What could be worse?

MESSENGER

Many people, though I don't know how much they actually know, are openly declaring that Martius has joined with Aufidius and is leading an army against Rome and that he vows revenge on everyone alive.

SICINIUS

This is highly likely!

BRUTUS

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

SICINIUS

The very trick on't.

MENENIUS

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

Enter a second Messenger

SECOND MESSENGER

You are sent for to the senate:
A fearful army, led by Caius Martius
Associated with Aufidius, rages
Upon our territories; and have already
100 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?

The weak common people have only been incited in order to welcome Martius home again.

SICINIUS

It's a trick.

MENENIUS

That's unlikely. He and Aufidius can't agree on anything other than to fight each other.

A second Messenger enters.

SECOND MESSENGER

You've been called to the Senate. A frightening army, led by Caius Martius and in conjunction with Aufidius, rages in our territories. They've already overcome everything in their way, burned it, and took whatever was left.

COMINIUS enters.

COMINIUS

(to the tribunes) Oh, this is all your fault!

MENENIUS

What news do you have? What news?

COMINIUS

You have holp to ravish your own daughters and
105 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
110 Into an auger's bore.

MENENIUS

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

COMINIUS

If!
115 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,
120 Or butchers killing flies.

MENENIUS**COMINIUS**

You've helped to rape your own daughters and melt the city's
lead roofs on your own heads, to see your wives dishonored
before your own eyes—

MENENIUS

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

COMINIUS

Your temples have been burned down to their foundations,
and your political power reduced to the size of a pinhole.

MENENIUS

Please, give us your news now. You've made your point, What's
your news?
If Martius has joined with Volscians—

COMINIUS

If? Then he is their god. He leads them as if he were a thing
made by some other deity than nature, one that makes
stronger men. And they follow him, against us children, with
the confidence of 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

125 He will shake
Your Rome about your ears.

MENENIUS

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

BRUTUS

130 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,
135 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.

(to the tribunes) This is all your doing, you and the tradesmen you represent. You that built your power on the workmen's votes and the wishes of the lower class!

COMINIUS

He'll bring Rome to its knees.

MENENIUS

The city is ready to fall like the ripe fruits Hercules had to shake down from the trees. You are responsible for all of this!

BRUTUS

But is this true, sir?

COMINIUS

Yes, and you'll be dead before it's otherwise. All the regions are revolting. Whoever resists is mocked for their ignorant courage and then killed as a loyal fool. Who can blame Martius? Your enemies and his find something in him.

MENENIUS

We're all doomed unless he has mercy on us.

COMINIUS

Who shall ask it?

140 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,
145 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,
150 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

155 How! Was it we? we loved him but, like beasts
And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters,

COMINIUS

Who will ask him for mercy? The tribunes are too ashamed,
the people deserve his pity like the wolf deserves the
shepherds', and as for his best friends, if they
were to ask him to "be good to Rome," they would be asking of
him what his enemies ought to ask, and that would make them
appear to be his enemies.

MENENIUS

It's true. If he were about to burn my house, I wouldn't be bold
enough to say, "I beg you, stop." You and your crafty ways!
You've crafted a real mess here!

COMINIUS

You've brought to Rome a panic without remedy like never
before.

BOTH TRIBUNES

We didn't bring it.

MENENIUS

What? How is it our fault? We supported him but, like beasts
and cowardly nobles, we gave way into your crowds of people

Who did hoot him out o' the city.

COMINIUS

But I fear
They'll roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius,
160 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.
165 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
170 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

175 Faith, we hear fearful news.

who drove him out of the city.

COMINIUS

But I fear the crowds will roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius, the second most famous warrior, obeys Martius's orders as if he were his officer. Desperation is the only defense that Rome can make against them.

A troop of Citizens enter.

MENENIUS

Here come the crowds. Is Aufidius with him? You're the ones that made the air unwholesome when you tossed up your stinking greasy caps, hooting at Coriolanus's exile. Now he's coming, and there's not a hair on a soldier's head that won't become a whip. He'll cut off every fool's head that had tossed up a hat to repay you for your votes. If he could burn us all into one coal, we would deserve it.

CITIZENS

Wait, we hear frightening 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
180 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 are goodly things, you voices!

MENENIUS

You have made
185 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,

FIRST CITIZEN

At least for me, when I said banish him, I said it out of pity.

SECOND CITIZEN

And so did I.

THIRD CITIZEN

And so did I. In truth, so did most of us. What we did, we did for
the best. And
though we agreed to his banishment, it wasn't what we
wanted.

COMINIUS

You're making excuses for yourselves!

MENENIUS

You've made a mess, you and your pack! Should we go to the
capitol?

COMINIUS

Yes, where else?

COMINIUS and MENENIUS exit.

SICINIUS

Go, masters, get yourselves home. Don't be dismayed. These
people are a faction that would happily have these fears come
true. Go home, and show no sign of fear.

190 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

195 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

A camp, at a small distance from Rome.

FIRST CITIZEN

May the gods be good to us! Come, masters, let's go home. I
always said we were wrong to banish him.

SECOND CITIZEN

We all did. But come, let's go home.

The Citizens exit.

BRUTUS

I don't like this news.

SICINIUS

Nor do I.

BRUTUS

Let's go to the capitol. I'd give half my wealth for this to be a lie!

SICINIUS

Let's go.

All exit.

Act 4 Scene 7

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;
5 And you are darken'd in this action, sir,
Even by your own.

AUFIDIUS

I cannot help it now,
Unless, by using means, I lame the foot
Of our design. He bears himself more prouder,
10 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,—
15 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 and his Lieutenant enter.

AUFIDIUS

Do they still obey the Roman?

LIEUTENANT

I don't know what spell he has them under, but your soldiers
pray to him before eating, talk about him throughout their
meal, and thank him at the end. And you are being overlooked,
sir, by your own men.

AUFIDIUS

I can't help that now, not without risking our plan. He carries
himself more proudly, even in front of me, than I thought he
would when I decided to join with him. But that's always been
his nature, and I have to excuse what can't be changed.

LIEUTENANT

Yet I wish, sir—I mean for you personally—that you hadn't
shared your command with him. I wish either that you had
been the commander yourself, or else that you had given him
the sole command.

AUFIDIUS

I understand thee well; and be thou sure,
20 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,
25 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

30 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
35 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,
40 Which out of daily fortune ever taints

AUFIDIUS

I understand. Rest assured that he must answer for what he's done, and he doesn't know what I can accuse him of. While to the naked eye it seems, and he thinks, that he's behaving fairly and that he's taking good care of the Volscian state by fighting like a dragon and achieving victory as soon as he draws his sword, there's something he has failed to do that will break his neck or risk mine, whenever we come to our reconciliation.

LIEUTENANT

Sir, I beg you, do you think he'll conquer Rome?

AUFIDIUS

Wherever he goes, they yield to him before he begins to attack. The young nobles of Rome, the senators, and the patricians all support him. The tribunes aren't soldiers, and their people will be as quick to reverse their judgment of him as they were to throw him out. I think he'll be to Rome like the fish hawk is to the fish: the fish will submit by its nature. At first he was a noble servant to them, but he couldn't handle the honors bestowed upon him. Whether it was pride—winning in battle all the time always makes men prideful—or whether it was a failure of judgment that he was unable to take advantage of the opportunities he had, or whether it was just

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
45 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,
50 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
55 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

Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and others

his nature not to evolve from wearing the helmet of a soldier to the sitting on the cushion of a senator, to command peace in the same austere way that he commanded the wars. One of these—he has some of each but none in their entirety—caused him to be feared and so despised that he was banished. But all his merits should stop us from listing his faults. Time will tell whether one is judged as virtuous. Powerful men think their power is praiseworthy, but nothing destroys power faster than publicly proclaiming it. One fire burns out another, one nail hammers out another nail, and righteousness and strength crumble under their own weight. Come, let's go. Caius, when Rome is yours, you will be the poorest of them all. And then you'll be mine.

All exit.

Act 5 Scene 1

A public place in Rome.

MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and others enter.

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;
5 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

10 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,
15 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!

MENENIUS

No, I won't go. You heard what his former general said, the one
who loved him most dearly. He called me father. But so what?
Go, you that banished him, and fall down on your knees a mile
before his tent and crawl to him, begging for mercy. No, if he
refused to listen to Cominius, I'll stay at home.

COMINIUS

He acted as if he didn't know me.

MENENIUS

Do you hear?

COMINIUS

He called me by my name only once, and I reminded him of
our relationship and the blood we've shed together. He
wouldn't answer to "Coriolanus" or any other name. He was a
kind of nothing, titleless, until he had forged himself a name
out of the fire of burning Rome.

MENENIUS

Well now, this is all your doing! A pair of tribunes that have
brought down the price of coal by letting Rome be burned—
what a noble way to be remembered!

COMINIUS

20 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:
25 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,
30 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:
35 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

COMINIUS

I reminded him how noble it was to grant pardons when they are least expected. He replied that it was an insufficient plea from the state that exiled him.

MENENIUS

That's fair for him to say.

COMINIUS

I tried to make him think of his personal friends. His answer to me was that he couldn't stop to pick them out from a pile of offensive, musty chaff. He said it was foolish to spare one or two poor grains from being burned and still smell the stink.

MENENIUS

For one poor grain or two! I am one of those. His mother, his wife, his child, and this brave fellow, too—we are the grains. You are the musty chaff. Your stink can be smelled above the moon, and we must be burnt for you.

SICINIUS

In this so never-needed help, yet do not
Upbraid's with our distress. But, sure, if you
40 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

45 What should I do?

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

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

SICINIUS

Yet your good will

No, please, be patient. If you refuse to help when it's most needed, don't lecture us while we're in distress. If you'd plead on your country's behalf, surely your good words would do more to stop our countryman than any army we could raise.

MENENIUS

No, I won't get involved.

SICINIUS

Please, go to him.

MENENIUS

What would I do?

BRUTUS

See what your kindness toward Martius can do for Rome.

MENENIUS

All right, but what if Martius sends me back without listening to me, as he did with Cominius? What then? I'll come back simply as a disappointed friend, grief-stricken with his unkindness? What if that happens?

SICINIUS

must have that thanks from Rome, after the measure

55 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:
60 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
65 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

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

Exit

No, Rome will thank you for your efforts because you intended well.

MENENIUS

I'll try. I think he'll listen to me. But it discourages me that he bit his lip and hummed at good Cominius. Martius wasn't approached skillfully—he hadn't eaten. When the veins are empty, our blood is cold, and then our outlook on the day is sour. We are unlikely to give or to forgive. But when we have stuffed ourselves with food and wine, we become more flexible than when we're stiff with hunger. So before I ask him, I'll be sure that he has eaten and is therefore likely to grant my request.

BRUTUS

You know exactly how to access his kindness. You can't fail.

MENENIUS

Have faith. Whatever happens, I'll try to convince him. I'll know soon enough whether I have succeeded.

He exits.

COMINIUS

He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS

Not?

COMINIUS

75 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,
80 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
85 For mercy to his country. Therefore, let's hence,
And with our fair entreaties haste them on.

Exeunt

COMINIUS

Martius will never listen to him.

SICINIUS

No?

COMINIUS

I tell you, he's sitting on a golden throne, and his eyes are red enough to burn Rome, and his feeling of having been wronged overwhelms his pity. I knelt before him, and he very quietly said, "Rise," and without a word, he waved for me to leave. He sent me a letter saying what he will do, and he has sworn not to yield on his conditions. There is no hope unless, as I hear, his noble mother and his wife are able to convince him to have mercy on his country. So let's go then and urge them to hurry.

All exit.

Act 5 Scene 2

Entrance of the Volscian camp before Rome. Two Sentinels on guard.

Enter to them, MENENIUS

An advanced post of the Volscian camp, outside Rome. Two guards at their station.

MENENIUS enters.

FIRST SENTINEL

Stay: whence are you?

SECOND SENTINEL

Stand, and go back.

MENENIUS

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

FIRST SENTINEL

From whence?

MENENIUS

From Rome.

FIRST SENTINEL

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

SECOND SENTINEL

10 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,

FIRST GUARD

Stop there. Who are you?

SECOND GUARD

Stop and go back.

MENENIUS

You're good guards, but I assure you that I'm an officer of the state, and I've come to speak with Coriolanus.

FIRST GUARD

Where are you from?

MENENIUS

From Rome.

FIRST GUARD

You may not pass. You must return. Our general won't listen to Romans anymore.

SECOND GUARD

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

MENENIUS

Good men, if you've heard your general talk of Rome and of his friends there, you've undoubtedly heard my name: Menenius.

15 My name hath touch'd your ears. It is Menenius.

FIRST SENTINEL

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
20 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,
25 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 SENTINEL

Faith, sir, if you had told as many lies in his
30 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.

FIRST GUARD

Even if that's true, go back. You can't get in here by virtue of
your name.

MENENIUS

I tell you, fellow, the general is my close friend. I've recorded
his brave acts and proclaimed, perhaps exaggeratedly, his
greatness as unparalleled. I've always supported my friends, of
whom he's the closest, with the highest possible praise I could
give without slipping into lies. Although it's true that
sometimes, like bowling on an uneven surface, I've thrown the
ball too far and nearly praised him beyond his actual
accomplishments. So you see, fellow, you must let me pass.

FIRST GUARD

Sir, if you've told as many lies on his behalf as you've spoken
words that benefit yourself, you should not pass here. You act
as if it were as virtuous to lie as it is to live honestly. Go back.

MENENIUS

Please, fellow, remember my name is Menenius, and I've
always been on your general's side.

SECOND SENTINEL

35 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 SENTINEL

40 You are a Roman, are you?

MENENIUS

I am, as thy general is.

FIRST SENTINEL

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

SECOND GUARD

Even if you've lied for him, as you say you have, I must follow his orders truthfully and say that you cannot pass. So go back.

MENENIUS

Has he eaten yet, could you tell me? Because I wouldn't want to speak with him until after dinner.

FIRST GUARD

You're a Roman, are you?

MENENIUS

I am, just as your general is.

FIRST GUARD

Then you should hate Rome the way he does. You've banished your greatest hero from your gates and, in a violent popular ignorance, given your best defender to your enemy. So how can you think to counteract his plan for revenge with the meaningless groans of old women, the prayers of your virgin daughters, or the crippled pleas of a decayed, senile old man such as yourself? You think you can blow out the fire that is about to engulf your city in flames with such weak breath as this? If so, you're mistaken. Go back to Rome and prepare for your execution. You're condemned, and our general has sworn to grant you no reprieve or pardon.

execution: you are condemned, our general has sworn
you out of reprieve and pardon.

MENENIUS

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

SECOND SENTINEL

Come, my captain knows you not.

MENENIUS

I mean, thy general.

FIRST SENTINEL

My general cares not for you. Back, I say, go; lest
60 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:
65 You shall know now that I am in estimation; you shall

MENENIUS

Sirs, if your captain knew that I were here, he would treat me
with respect.

SECOND GUARD

Come, my captain doesn't know you.

MENENIUS

I mean, your general.

FIRST GUARD

My general doesn't care about you. Go back, I say, before I spill
a half pint of your blood. Back, this is as far you get. Back!

MENENIUS

No, but, fellow, fellow—

CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS enter.

CORIOLANUS

What's going on?

MENENIUS

Now, you fellow, I'll give my version of what just happened
here. You'll know now that I'm well regarded by your general

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
70 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!
75 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
80 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

85 How! away!

and that a lowly guard such as yourself can't keep me from
Coriolanus, he who is like a son to me. I wonder if after I talk
with him, whether you'll be hanged or killed more cruelly in
some prolonged and public way. Watch now and worry for
what's going to happen to you.

To CORIOLANUS

The glorious gods sit in hourly discussions about your personal
prosperity, and they love you no less than your old father
Menenius does! Oh, my son, my son! You're preparing fire for
us. Look, here's water to quench it. I was grudgingly persuaded
to come to you, but because they assured me that no one
other than myself could convince you, I've been sent here from
the gates with sighs and beg you to pardon Rome and your
pleading countrymen. May the good gods calm your anger
and turn the remains of it upon this villain here, who, like a
block, has kept me from seeing you.

CORIOLANUS

Away!

MENENIUS

What do you mean, 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,
90 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

95 And would have sent 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 SENTINEL

Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

SECOND SENTINEL

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

CORIOLANUS

I have neither wife, nor mother, nor child. My personal life is now eclipsed by other matters. Though I seek my own revenge, the power to pardon belongs to the Volscians. We had a friendship, but your ungrateful failure to defend me has poisoned it.

Pity will not remind me of what great friends we used to be. So go away. My ears rebuff your pleas with greater force than your gates will have against my army. But because I did care for you, take this. I wrote it for your sake.

He gives Menenius a letter.

And would have sent it. I won't hear you speak another word, Menenius. This man was my dearest friend in Rome, Aufidius. But look at him!

AUFIDIUS

You never change.

CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS exit.

FIRST GUARD

Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

SECOND GUARD

You see, it's like a spell with great power. You know the way home again.

FIRST SENTINEL

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

SECOND SENTINEL

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

MENENIUS

105 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
110 your misery increase with your age! I say to you, as I was said to, Away!

Exit

FIRST SENTINEL

A noble fellow, I warrant him.

SECOND SENTINEL

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

Exeunt

FIRST GUARD

Did you hear how they scolded us for keeping your greatness back?

SECOND GUARD

Why, do you think, I swoon?

MENENIUS

I don't care about the world or about your general. I can barely think of things such as yourselves, you're so insignificant. A suicidal man doesn't fear being killed by someone else. Let your general do his worst. May you live long and may your misery increase with age! I say to you what was said to me: Away!

Exit

FIRST GUARD

He's a noble fellow, I say.

SECOND GUARD

The worthy fellow is our general. He's like a rock or an oak that the wind can't shake.

They exit.

Act 5 Scene 3

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

5 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

10 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,
15 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

Coriolanus's tent.

CORIOLANUS, **AUFIDIUS** and others enter.

CORIOLANUS

Tomorrow we'll lead our army to the walls of Rome. As my partner in this attack, you must report to the Volscian lords on how straightforwardly I've carried this out.

AUFIDIUS

You have respected their aims entirely and blocked your ears against the general plea of Rome. You've never had even a private whisper with your old friends who thought they might persuade you.

CORIOLANUS

This last old man, whom with a broken heart I've sent back to Rome, loved me better than a father. Indeed, he treated me like a god. Their last resort was to send him. Though I turned him away, out of love for him I again offered the same terms they had previously refused and now cannot accept. That is all I have yielded to he who thought that he could do more. I'll no longer listen to any more pleas, made either by the state or by my private friends. Ha! What shout is this?

I have yielded to: fresh embassies and suits,
20 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 MARTIUS, VALERIA, and Attendants

My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mould
25 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,
30 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
35 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

A shout comes from offstage

Shall I be tempted to break my vow in the same moment that I
made it? I will not.

VIRGILIA, VOLUMNIA, leading young MARTIUS, VALERIA, and attendants, enter, in mourning clothes.

Here comes my wife. Then my mother, the honorable mold
from which I was cast. And in her hand, the grandchild of her
blood. But affection be gone! And break all natural ties and
obligations! Let it be virtuous to be unmovable. What is that
curtsy worth? Or those doe eyes, which can make the gods
break their vows? I melt, and I'm no stronger than anyone else.
For my mother to bow to me is as if Mt. Olympus would plead
before a molehill. And my young boy has an imploring look,
which by nature I don't want to deny. But let the Volsces
destroy Rome and lay siege on Italy—I'll never be so weak as
to obey instinct. Instead I will stand firm, as if a man were his
own creator and had no family.

And knew no other kin.

VIRGILIA

40 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,
45 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!
50 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

55 Of thy deep duty more impression show

VIRGILIA

My lord and husband!

CORIOLANUS

Everything looks different to me since I left Rome.

VIRGILIA

If we look different to you, it's because our suffering has changed us.

CORIOLANUS

Like a bad actor, I have forgotten my lines. To my complete disgrace, I don't know what to say. My dear family, forgive my cruelty but don't ask me to "Forgive our Romans." (Virgilia kisses him) Oh, a kiss as long as my exile, and as sweet as my revenge! By the jealous queen of heaven, I kiss only you, my dear; my lips have always been faithful. You gods! Forgive me for not saluting the most noble mother of the world. Sink, my knee, to the earth.

He kneels

I must demonstrate a more profound sign of my duty than that

Than that of common sons.

VOLUMNIA

O, stand up blest!
Whilst, with no softer cushion than the flint,
I kneel before thee; and unproperly
60 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
65 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;
70 I holp 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

of common sons.

VOLUMNIA

Oh, stand up, blessed one! And let me, with no softer cushion than the stone floor, kneel before you. Though it's inappropriate for me to pay respect to you—it is the child that should bow to the parent.

She kneels.

CORIOLANUS

What's this? You're kneeling before me, your chastised son?
Then let the pebbles on the beach rise up the stars and let the mutinous winds blow the proud cedars into the fiery sun.
Impossible things are now easily possible.
(He helps her up.)

VOLUMNIA

You're my warrior; I helped make you what you are. Do you recognize this woman?

CORIOLANUS

The noble sister of the consul Publicola, the moon of Rome, pure as the icicle that forms from the frost of purest snow and hangs on Diana's temple: dear Valeria!

And hangs on Dian's temple: dear Valeria!

VOLUMNIA

75 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
80 Thy thoughts with nobleness; that thou mayst prove
To shame unvulnerable, and stick i' the wars
Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw,
And saving those that eye thee!

VOLUMNIA

Your knee, sirrah.

CORIOLANUS

85 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:

VOLUMNIA

(showing young Martius) Here is your miniature replica, who in time may grow to be exactly like you.

CORIOLANUS

May the god of soldiers, with the consent of supreme Jove, make your thoughts be noble. And may you be invulnerable to shame, stand firm in the wars like a great beacon for sailors, enduring every sudden blast of wind and helping those that look to you for guidance!

VOLUMNIA

On your knee, sir. (young Martius kneels)

CORIOLANUS

That's my brave boy!

VOLUMNIA

Even he, your wife, this lady, and myself—plead before you.

CORIOLANUS

Please, stop. Or, if you must ask, remember this first: Don't think that I deny you personally, but I cannot grant your pleas

90 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
95 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
100 Which you deny already: yet we will ask;
That, if you fail in our request, the blame
May hang upon your hardne therefore hear us.

CORIOLANUS

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

VOLUMNIA

105 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,
110 which should

because I have sworn not to. Don't ask me to dismiss my soldiers or to yield to the common people of Rome. Don't tell me the ways in which I seem unnatural. Don't try to mitigate my rage and need for vengeance with your colder reasons.

VOLUMNIA

Oh, no more, no more! You've said you won't grant us anything. We have nothing else to ask other than what you've already refused. But we'll ask that if you fail to grant our request, blame will be laid on your stubbornness. Therefore listen to us.

CORIOLANUS

Aufidius, and you Volsces, come here. We won't listen to anything from Rome in private. What is your request?

VOLUMNIA

Even if we were silent and didn't speak, our clothing and the condition of our bodies would betray the lives we've led since your exile. Think how we three are worse off than all living women, because seeing you—a sight that should make our eyes flow with tears of joy and our hearts dance with relief—constrains our eyes from weeping and shakes our hearts with

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
115 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,
120 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
125 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,
130 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
135 Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread—

fear and sorrow to make the mother, wife, and child see the
son, the husband, and the father tearing his country's bowels
out. Your hatred will kill us poor people. You deny our prayers
to the gods, which is the only comfort we have, and if we can't
pray—and pray for our country—where will we go if you
succeed, where will we go? Alas, either we must lose the
country, our dear mother, or else we must lose you, our
comfort in the country. We will inevitably face tragedy, but we
do have a wish for one side to win. Either you must, as a traitor,
be led with handcuffs thorough our streets, or else
triumphantly march on your ruined country and wear the
medal for having bravely shed your wife and children's blood.
For myself, son, I don't intend to rely on fortune until these
wars end. If I can't persuade you to reach a noble compromise
with both sides rather than seek total destruction, when you
march to assault your country you'll be treading—and believe
me about this—on your mother's womb, which brought you
into this world.

Trust to't, thou shalt not—on thy mother's womb,
That brought thee to this world.

VIRGILIA

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

YOUNG MARTIUS

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,
145 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
150 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

VIRGILIA

Yes, and mine that gave you this boy, to keep your name alive.

YOUNG MARTIUS

You won't tread on me. I'll run away until I'm bigger, but then I'll fight.

CORIOLANUS

I'll become tender like a woman if I look at your faces. I've sat too long.

He rises.

VOLUMNIA

No, don't leave us now. If it were the case that our request was to save the Romans and thereby destroy the Volsces, whom you serve, you might condemn us for poisoning your honor. But no, our appeal is for you to reconcile with them so that the Volsces may say, "We have shown mercy," and the Romans may say, "We received mercy," and both sides will salute you and cry, "May you be blessed for making this peace!" You know, great son, that the outcome of war is uncertain. But it's

155 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,
160 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:
165 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?
170 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
175 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,
180 Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,

certain that if you conquer Rome, the benefit you'll reap in so doing is a name whose repetition will be plagued with curses. You'll be remembered with these words: "The man was noble, but with his last attack he gave up his nobility, destroyed his country, and his name remains forever hated." Speak to me, son. You've aspired to great honor, to behave like a god, to tear apart the sky with thunder and yet throw your lightning bolt so that it would only split an oak. Why don't you speak? Do you think it's honorable for a noble man to always remember how he has been wronged? Daughter, speak—he doesn't like your weeping. Speak, boy—perhaps your childishness will move him more than our reasons can. There's no man in the world more tied to his mother, and yet here he lets me prattle on like a common criminal. Never in your life have you done your dear mother any favors, while she, poor woman, who didn't want to have another child, has cared for you while you were at war and safely home, heaped with honors. If you think my request is unfair, then turn me down. But if it's not, then you're a liar and the gods will punish you for failing to give me what you owe me as a son. He turns away. Down, ladies. Let's shame him by getting on our knees. His surname, Coriolanus, has more pride than pity for our prayers. Down! This is the end. (The women and young Martius kneel) We'll go home to Rome and die among our neighbors. Wait, look. This boy, who doesn't know what's going to happen to him but kneels and holds up his hands for fellowship, lends more strength to our petition than

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:

185 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:

190 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;

195 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!

200 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;

you have strength to deny. Come, let's go. This fellow has a Volscian mother, his wife is in Corioles, and his child looks just like him by chance. Send us away. I'll be silent until our city is on fire, and then I'll speak a little.

Coriolanus holds her by the hand, silent.

CORIOLANUS

(crying) Oh, mother, mother! What have you done? Look, the heavens are opening, the gods are looking down and laughing at this unnatural scene. Oh, my mother, mother! Oh! You have won a happy victory for Rome. But for your son—believe it, oh, believe it—because you have convinced him, he's now in

But, for your son,—believe it, O, believe it,
205 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
210 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,
215 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
220 At difference in thee: out of that I'll work
Myself a former fortune.

The Ladies make signs to CORIOLANUS

CORIOLANUS

mortal danger. But let it come. Aufidius, though I cannot fight this war for you, I'll make arrange a peaceful settlement, fair to both sides. Now, good Aufidius, if you were in my place, wouldn't you have listened to your mother and done as I did, Aufidius?

AUFIDIUS

I was moved by what she said.

CORIOLANUS

I know you were! And, sir, it is no small achievement to make me cry tears of compassion. But, good sir, tell me that you'll make peace. For my part, I won't go to Rome—I'll go back with you. And please, support me in this effort. Oh, mother! Wife!

AUFIDIUS

(aside) I'm glad you've distinguished between your mercy and your honor. I'll be able to rebuild my former fortune because of that distinction.

The ladies make signs to CORIOLANUS.

CORIOLANUS

Ay, by and by;

Yes, so it will go.

To Volumnia and Virgilia

To VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, &c

But we will drink together; and you shall bear
A better witness back than words, which we,
225 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

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

But we'll drink together, and you'll bring back a signed peace
treaty, not just our word. Come with us. Ladies, you deserve to
have a temple built for you. All the swords of Italy and her
allies couldn't have made this peace.

All exit.

Act 5 Scene 4

A public place in Rome.

MENENIUS and SICINIUS enter.

MENENIUS

Do you see, beyond the corner of the capitol, beyond the
cornerstone?

SICINIUS

What is that?

MENENIUS

If it be possible for you to displace it with your
5 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
10 condition of a man!

MENENIUS

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

SICINIUS

15 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
20 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

If you can block it with your little finger, there is some hope
that the ladies of Rome, especially his mother, might prevail
with him. But I don't think there is any hope. Our fate is sealed.
Our throats wait to be slit.

SICINIUS

Is it possible that a man can change so much in so short a
time?

MENENIUS

There's a difference between a caterpillar and a butterfly, but
butterflies were once caterpillars. This Martius has grown from
man to dragon: he has wings—he's more than a creeping thing.

SICINIUS

He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS

He also loved me. He won't remember his mother any more
than an eight-year-old horse would. The tartness of his face
makes ripe grapes go sour. When he walks, he moves like a
war machine, and the ground sinks beneath his feet. He's able
to pierce armor with his eye, he talks like a death knell, and his
voice itself is an assault. He sits on his throne, looking like a
statue of Alexander the Great. His orders are carried out as

his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity
25 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
30 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;
35 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,

soon as he gives them. All that he lacks to be a god is
immortality and a heaven to rule.

SICINIUS

He lacks the mercy of a god, if you're telling the truth.

MENENIUS

I'm giving a sketch of his character. Let's see how much mercy
his mother gets out of him. There's no more mercy in him than
there is milk in a male tiger. Our poor city will soon find this out,
and it's all because of you.

SICINIUS

May the gods be good to us!

MENENIUS

No, in this case the gods won't be good to us. When we
banished him, we dishonored them. And now he's returning to
break our necks, which shows that they don't respect us.

A Messenger enters.

MESSENGER

Sir, if you want to save your life, go home immediately. The
people have taken custody of your fellow tribune and are
hauling him up and down the street, all swearing that if the

40 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 Martius gone:

A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,

45 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?

50 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,

Roman ladies don't return with a peaceful resolution, they'll torture him to death.

A second Messenger enters.

SICINIUS

What's the news?

SECOND MESSENGER

Good news, good news! The ladies have prevailed, the Volscians have retreated, and Martius is gone! Rome has never had a happier day. Not even the expulsion of the Tarquins tops this.

SICINIUS

Friend, are you certain this is true? Is it absolutely certain?

SECOND MESSENGER

As certain as I know the sun is fire. Where have you been that you doubt it?

The tide has never blown more quickly through an arch as this reassuring news has blown through the gates. Why, look here!

Trumpets and pipes sound, drums beat, all together.

The trumpets, trombones, strings and pipes, drums and cymbals, and the shouting Romans sparkle in the sun. Listen!

Make the sun dance. Hark you!

A shout within

MENENIUS

55 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:

60 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

65 Great cause to give great thanks.

SICINIUS

They are near the city?

SECOND MESSENGER

Almost at point to enter.

A shout comes from offstage.

MENENIUS

This is good news. I'll go meet the ladies. This Volumnia is
worth of a city full of consuls, senators, and patricians, and
she's worth a sea and land full of tribunes. You have prayed
well today. This morning I thought the chance that you'd live
was one in ten thousand. Look how happy they are!

Music still plays, with shouts.

SICINIUS

First, may the gods bless you for your good news, and then
accept my thanks.

SECOND MESSENGER

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

SICINIUS

Are they near the city?

SECOND MESSENGER

They're just about to enter.

SICINIUS

We will meet them,
And help the joy.

Exeunt

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 Martius,
5 Repeal him with the welcome of his mother;
Cry 'Welcome, ladies, welcome!'

ALL

Welcome, ladies,
Welcome!

A flourish with drums and trumpets. Exeunt

SICINIUS

We'll meet them and join the celebration.

All exit.

Act 5 Scene 5

The same street near the gate.

Two Senators enter with **VOLUMNIA**, **VIRGILIA**, **VALERIA**, and
company passing over the stage, followed by patricians and
others.

FIRST SENATOR

Behold our savior, the life of Rome! Call all your tribes together,
praise the gods, and make triumphant fires. Throw flowers
before them. Take back the cries that banished Martius and
bring him back by welcoming his mother. Cry, "Welcome,
ladies, welcome!"

ALL

Welcome, ladies, welcome!

Drums and trumpets sound. All exit.

Act 5 Scene 6

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,
5 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

10 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

A public place in Antium.

***TULLUS AUFIDIUS** enters, with attendants.*

AUFIDIUS

Go tell the lords of the city that I'm here. Give them this paper.
Once they've read it, ask them to go to the marketplace. I'll be
there to confirm its truthfulness for them and for the common
people. He whom I accuse has entered through the city's gates
and intends to appear before the people, hoping to explain
himself with words. Hurry.

The attendants exit.

*Three or four Conspirators of **AUFIDIUS'S** faction enter.*

Most welcome!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR

How are you, general?

AUFIDIUS

Like a man destroyed by his own kindness and killed by his
compassion.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR

Most noble sir,

15 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

20 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
25 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
30 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,—

Most noble sir, if you still want to work together, we'll rid you of
your great threat.

AUFIDIUS

Sir, I don't know yet. We must see how the people react.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR

The people won't know how to react if there's no rivalry
between you two, but whoever loses leaves the other man
with power over everything.

AUFIDIUS

I know, and my reason for attacking him is well founded. I put
him in this position of power, and I sacrificed my honor for his
loyalty. He became so highly esteemed that he watered his
new plants with the dew of flattery. He seduced my friends by
changing his nature—he was never known before as anything
other than rough, unswayable, and unrestrained.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR

Sir, his stubbornness when he was being considered for consul
is why he lost. He wouldn't humble himself.

AUFIDIUS

That I would have spoke of:

35 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,
40 My best and freshest men; served his designments
In mine own person; holp 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
45 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
50 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

AUFIDIUS

That's what I was about to say: being banished for his stubbornness, he came to my house and put my knife to his throat. I took him in, made him joint commander of my army, let him do whatever he wanted. I even let him choose men from among my soldiers to carry out his agenda—my best and freshest men. I served his vision myself, helped him do the deeds that he took all the credit for. He wronged me in becoming so prideful. In the end, I looked like his follower, not his partner, and he treated me like I was just a soldier-for-hire.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR

That's what he did, my lord. The army was astonished by it. And finally, when he was able to conquer Rome and we could have had the spoils and glory—

AUFIDIUS

That's why I'll use all my strength against him. He sold us out, forfeiting the blood and labor of our great plan because of a few drops of women's tears, which are as worthless as lies.

55 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

60 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
65 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:
70 Here come the lords.

Enter the Lords of the city

Therefore he must die, and I'll reassert my power by taking him down. But look!

Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the people.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR

You returned home like a messenger—you weren't properly welcomed. But he comes back to a loud celebration.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR

And ignorant fools, whose children he has killed, tear their stupid throats as they sing his praises.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR

Seize your opportunity now, before he speaks and convinces the people with whatever he plans to say. Let him feel your sword—we support you. When he lies dead, you can tell the people what he did from your perspective. His version of the story will be buried along with his body.

AUFIDIUS

Say no more. Here come the lords.

The Lords of the city enter.

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

75 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
80 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

ALL THE LORDS

This celebration welcomes you home.

AUFIDIUS

I don't deserve it. But, worthy lords, have you carefully read the letter I wrote you?

LORDS

We have.

FIRST LORD

And we're sad to hear it. Whatever mistakes he made before this last one, I think we could have forgiven with light punishment. But stopping the attack when it was about to begin, squandering the advantage of our army' position, leaving us to pay the cost of raising that army, and making a peace treaty when the enemy was weak and could have been conquered—there's no excuse for this.

AUFIDIUS

Here he comes. You'll hear how he tells it.

*CORIOLANUS enters, marching with drum and colors;
commoners enter with him.*

CORIOLANUS

Hail, lords! I am return'd your soldier,
85 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
90 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,
95 Subscribed by the consuls and patricians,
Together with the seal o' the senate, what
We have compounded on.

Hail, lords! I have returned as your soldier, no more loyal to my country than when I left here. I remain under your great command. You should know that I have successfully won the bloody battles that brought your army to the gates of Rome. The spoils we've brought home outweigh the bodies of those we killed by more than a third. We've made peace, which brings honor to the people of Antium as much as it shames the people of Rome. And we here present, signed by the Roman consuls and patricians, and with the seal of the Senate, the treaty we've agreed to.

AUFIDIUS

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

AUFIDIUS

Don't read it, noble lords. Instead, tell the traitor that he has abused your powers to the highest degree.

CORIOLANUS

Traitor! how now!

CORIOLANUS

Traitor! How's that?

AUFIDIUS

Ay, traitor, Martius!

AUFIDIUS

Yes, traitor, Martius!

CORIOLANUS

Martius!

CORIOLANUS

"Martius"!

AUFIDIUS

Ay, Martius, Caius Martius: dost thou think
105 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,
110 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,
115 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

120 No more.

AUFIDIUS

Yes, "Martius." Caius Martius. Do you think I'll honor you with
that stolen name,
Coriolanus, that you took in Corioles? You lords and heads of
state, he has treacherously betrayed your mission and given
up your city of Rome—and I mean "your city"—because of a
few tears from his wife and mother. He has broken his sworn
oath like a rotten braid of silk, never following the advice of his
fellow officers, but at his mother's tears he cried and gave
away your victory. The young attendants blushed and the
courageous men looked at each other and wondered what to
think.

CORIOLANUS

Do you hear this, Mars?

AUFIDIUS

Don't invoke the god of war, you boy of tears!

CORIOLANUS

Ha!

AUFIDIUS

No more.

CORIOLANUS

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

FIRST LORD

Peace, both, and hear me speak.

CORIOLANUS

130 Cut me to pieces, Volscs; 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:
135 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

CORIOLANUS

Incalculable liar, you make my heart swell beyond the bounds of my chest. "Boy"! Oh, slave! Forgive me, lords, this is the first time that I've ever been forced to scold. My grave lords, you must judge this lowlife to be the liar. Even his own version of events—he who has scars from my sword on his body and must carry the mark of my victory to his grave—will confirm that he's the liar.

FIRST LORD

That's enough, both of you. Hear me speak.

CORIOLANUS

Cut me to pieces, Volscs. Men and lads, stain your swords with my blood. "Boy"! Miserable liar! If you've written your histories accurately, it's recorded there that like a wolf in a hen house, I destroyed your Volscians in Corioli. I did it alone. "Boy"!

AUFIDIUS

Noble lords, remember that it was simply good luck that allowed this prideful sinner to cause you this shame, he who now stands before your own eyes and ears.

ALL CONSPIRATORS

140 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!
145 The man is noble and his fame folds-in
This orb o' the earth. His last offences to us
Shall have judicious hearing. Stand, Aufidius,
And trouble not the peace.

CORIOLANUS

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

AUFIDIUS

Insolent villain!

ALL CONSPIRATORS

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

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

Let him die for it.

ALL THE PEOPLE

Tear him to pieces! Do it now! He killed my son! My daughter!
He killed my cousin Marcus! He killed my father!

SECOND LORD

Peace! Stop! No outrage. Peace! The man is noble and his fame is known around the world. We will review his most recent offenses fairly in the court of law. Stop, Aufidius, don't disturb the peace.

CORIOLANUS

(drawing his sword) Oh, I wish I could lawfully kill him and his whole family with my sword.

AUFIDIUS

Contemptuous villain!

ALL CONSPIRATORS

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

*The Conspirators draw their swords and kill CORIOLANUS.
AUFIDIUS stands on his body.*

LORDS

Hold, hold, hold, hold!

AUFIDIUS

155 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

160 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
165 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

Wait, wait, wait, wait!

AUFIDIUS

My noble masters, hear me speak.

FIRST LORD

Oh, Tullus—

SECOND LORD

You've done a dishonorable deed.

THIRD LORD

Don't stand on him. Noble ones, be quiet. Put away your
swords.

AUFIDIUS

My lords, when you understand—because in this rage he
provoked, you cannot—the great danger this man intended to
put you in, you'll rejoice that he has been stopped. If your
honors will please call me to your Senate, I'll prove myself to
have been your loyal servant or endure your strictest
punishment.

FIRST LORD

Step away from his body and mourn for him. Let him be
considered as the most noble corpse that a procession has
ever followed to a grave.

170 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;
175 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,
180 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

SECOND LORD

His own fury frees Aufidius from most of the blame. Let's make the best of it.

AUFIDIUS

My rage is gone, and I'm full of sorrow. Lift him up. Help, three of the best soldiers. I'll be the fourth. Play the drum in a mournful beat. Lay down your steel spears. Even though he has killed the husbands and children of many people in this city and they're still mourning their loss, we'll give him a noble memorial. Help me.

All exit, carrying the body of CORIOLANUS. A death march sounds.