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Coriolanus

ACT I

SCENE I. Rome. A street.

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

First Citizen

Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.
You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

All

Resolved. resolved.

First Citizen

First, you know Caius Marcius is chief enemy to the people.
Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price.
Is't a verdict?

All

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

First Citizen

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

Second Citizen

Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

All

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

Second Citizen

Consider you what services he has done for his country?

First Citizen

Very well; and could be content to give him good report for, but that he pays himself with being proud. I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother and to be partly proud; which he is, even till the altitude of his virtue.

Second Citizen

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

First Citizen

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

Shouts within

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

Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA

Second Citizen

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

MENENIUS

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

First Citizen

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

MENENIUS

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

First Citizen

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

MENENIUS

Either you must
Confess yourselves wondrous malicious,
Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you
A pretty tale: it may be you have heard it;
There was a time when all the body's members
Rebell'd against the belly, thus accused it:
That only like a gulf it did remain
I' the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,

Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
And, mutually participate, did minister
Unto the appetite and affection common
Of the whole body. The belly answer'd—
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly
As you malign our senators for that
They are not such as you.

First Citizen

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

MENENIUS

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

First Citizen

Should by the cormorant belly be restrain'd,
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.
'True is it, my incorporate friends,' quoth he,
'That I receive the general food at first,

Which you do live upon; and fit it is,
Because I am the store-house and the shop
Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,
I send it through the rivers of your blood,
Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o' the brain;
And, through the cranks and offices of man,
The strongest nerves and small inferior veins
From me receive that natural competency
Whereby they live: and though that all at once,
You, my good friends,'-this says the belly, mark me,-

First Citizen

Ay, sir; well, well.

MENENIUS

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

First Citizen

It was an answer: how apply you this?

MENENIUS

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

First Citizen

I the great toe! why the great toe?

MENENIUS

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

Enter CAIUS MARCIUS

Hail, noble Marcius!

MARCIUS

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

First Citizen

We have ever your good word.

MARCIUS

He that will give good words to thee will flatter
Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor war? the one affrights you,
The other makes you proud. You are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him
And curse that justice did it.
Who deserves greatness

Deserves your hate; and your affections are
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
Which would increase his evil. What's the matter,
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another? What's their seeking?

MENENIUS

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

MARCIUS

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

MENENIUS

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

MARCIUS

They said they were an-hungry; sigh'd forth proverbs,

That meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent not
Corn for the rich men only: with these shreds
They vented their complainings; which being answer'd,
And a petition granted them, a strange one—they threw their caps
As they would hang them on the horns o' the moon,
Shouting their emulation.

MENENIUS

What is granted them?

MARCIUS

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

MENENIUS

This is strange.

MARCIUS

Go, get you home, you fragments!

Enter a Messenger, hastily

Messenger

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

MARCIUS

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

Enter COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and Roman Senator; JUNIUS BRUTUS and SICINIA VELUTUS

Roman Senator

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

MARCIUS

They have a leader,
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to 't.
I sin in envying his nobility,
And were I anything but what I am,
I would wish me only he. He is a lion
That I am proud to hunt.

Roman Senator

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

COMINIUS

It is your former promise.

MARCIUS

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

TITUS

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

Roman Senator

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

To the Citizens

Hence to your homes; be gone!

MARCIUS

Nay, let them follow:
The Volscies have much corn; take these rats thither
To gnaw their garners.

Citizens steal away. Exeunt all but SICINIA and BRUTUS

SICINIA

Was ever man so proud as is this Marcius?

BRUTUS

He has no equal.

SICINIA

When we were chosen tribunes for the people,–

BRUTUS

Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

SICINIA

Nay. But his taunts.

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

Such a nature,
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow

Which he treads on at noon: but I do wonder
His insolence can brook to be commanded Under Cominius.

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

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

Exeunt

SCENE II. Corioli. The Senate-house.

Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS and First Volscian Senator

First Volscian Senator

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

AUFIDIUS

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

Reads

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

Volscian Senator

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

AUFIDIUS

Nor did you think it folly
To keep your great pretences veil'd till when
They needs must show themselves; which in the hatching,
It seem'd, appear'd to Rome. By the discovery.
We shall be shorten'd in our aim, which was
To take in many towns ere almost Rome
Should know we were afoot.

Volscian Senator

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

AUFIDIUS

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

Volscian Senator

The gods assist you!

AUFIDIUS

And keep your honours safe!

Exeunt

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

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

VOLUMNIA

I pray you, daughter, sing; or express yourself in a more comfortable sort: if my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love. When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, I, considering how honour would become such a person. that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

VIRGILIA

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

VOLUMNIA

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

Enter a Gentlewoman

Gentlewoman

Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIRILIA

Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA

Indeed, you shall not.

Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum,
See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair,
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:
'Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,
Though you were born in Rome:' his bloody brow
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,
Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow
Or all or lose his hire.

VIRILIA

His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOLUMNIA

Away, you fool! it more becomes a man
Than gilt his trophy: the breasts of Hecuba,
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
At Grecian sword, contemning. Tell Valeria,
We are fit to bid her welcome.

Exit Gentlewoman

VIRILIA

Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

VOLUMNIA

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

Enter VALERIA

VALERIA

My ladies both, good day to you.

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

VIRGILIA

I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

VOLUMNIA

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

VALERIA

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

VOLUMNIA

One on 's father's moods.

VALERIA

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

VALERIA

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

VIRGILIA

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

VOLUMNIA

Why, I pray you?

VALERIA

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

VIRGILIA

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

VALERIA

In truth, la, go with me; and I'll tell you excellent news of your husband. Verily, I do not jest with you; there came news from him last night. In earnest, it's true; I heard a senator speak it. Thus it is: the Volsces have an army forth; against whom Cominius the general is gone, with one part of our Roman power: your lord and Titus Lartius are set down before their city Corioli; they nothing doubt prevailing and to make it brief wars. This is true, on mine honour; and so, I pray, go with us.

VIRGILIA

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

VOLUMNIA

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

VALERIA

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

VIRGILIA

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

VALERIA

Well, then, farewell.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Before Corioli.

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

MARCIUS

Say, has our general met the enemy?

Messenger

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

MARCIUS

How far off lie these armies?

Messenger

Within this mile and half.

MARCIUS

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

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

That we with smoking swords may march from hence,

To help our fielded friends! Come, blow thy blast.

They sound a parley. Enter Volscian Senator on the walls

Tutus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

Volscian Senator

No, nor a man that fears you less than he,

That's lesser than a little.

Alarum afar off

Hark you. far off!

There is Aufidius; list, what work he makes

Amongst your cloven army.

Enter the army of the Volsces

MARCIUS

They fear us not, but issue forth their city.

Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight

With hearts more proof than shields.

Advance, brave Titus:

They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,

Which makes me sweat with wrath. Come on, my fellows:

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

All the contagion of the south light on you,

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

Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd

Further than seen and one infect another

Against the wind a mile! Pluto and hell!

All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale

With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home,

If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,

As they us to our trenches followed.

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

Enters the gates

Roman Captain

See, they have shut him in.

All

To the pot, I warrant him.

Alarum continues

Re-enter TITUS LARTIUS

LARTIUS

What is become of Marcius?

Roman Captain

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

Thou art left, Marcius:
A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,
Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier
Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
Only in strokes; but, with thy grim looks and
Thou madst thine enemies shake, as if the world Were feverous and did tremble.

Re-enter MARCIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy

Roman Captain

Look, sir.

LARTIUS

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

They fight, and all enter the city

SCENE V. Near the camp of Cominius.

Enter COMINIUS, as it were in retire, with soldiers

COMINIUS

Breathe you, my friends: well fought;
We shall be charged again. Whiles we have struck,
By interims and conveying gusts we have heard
The charges of our friends. Ye Roman gods!
Lead their successes as we wish our own,
That both our powers, with smiling fronts encountering,
May give you thankful sacrifice.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

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

COMINIUS

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

MARCIUS

Within

Come I too late?

Enter MARCIUS

COMINIUS

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

MARCIUS

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

COMINIUS

How is it with Titus Lartius?

MARCIUS

As with a man busied about decrees:
Condemning some to death, and some to exile;
Holding Corioli in the name of Rome,
Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,
To let him slip at will.

COMINIUS

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

MARCIUS

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

COMINIUS

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

MARCIUS

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

COMINIUS

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

MARCIUS

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

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

A certain number,
Though thanks to all, must I select from all: the rest
Shall bear the business in some other fight,
As cause will be obey'd. Please you to march;

And four shall quickly draw out my command,
Which men are best inclined.

COMINIUS

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

Exeunt

SCENE VI. A field of battle.

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

MARCIUS

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

AUFIDIUS

We hate alike.

MARCIUS

Let the first budger die the other's slave,
And the gods doom him after!
Within these three hours, Tullus,
Alone I fought in your Corioli walls,
And made what work I pleased: 'tis not my blood
Wherein thou seest me mask'd; for thy revenge
Wrench up thy power to the highest.

AUFIDIUS

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

They fight, and certain Volscres come to the aid of AUFIDIUS.

MARCIUS fights till they be driven in breathless

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

Exeunt

SCENE VII. The Roman camp.

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

COMINIUS

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

Enter TITUS LARTIUS, with the Roman Captain, from the pursuit

LARTIUS

O general,
Here is the steed, we the caparison:

MARCIUS

Pray now, no more: my mother,
Who has a charter to extol her blood,
When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
As you have done; that's what I can; induced
As you have been; that's for my country:

COMINIUS

You shall not be

The grave of your deserving; Rome must know
The value of her own: 'twere a concealment
Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement,
To hide your doings; therefore, I beseech you
In sign of what you are, not to reward
What you have done—before our army hear me.

MARCIUS

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

COMINIUS

Should they not,
Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude,
And tent themselves with death. Of all the horses,
We render you the tenth, to be ta'en forth,
Before the common distribution, at
Your only choice.

MARCIUS

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

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

May these same instruments, which you profane,
Never sound more! No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd
My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch.—
You shout me forth in acclamations hyperbolical;

As if I loved my little should be dieted
In praises sauced with lies.

COMINIUS

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

Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums

All

Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS

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

COMINIUS

So, to our tent;

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

Exeunt

SCENE VIII. The camp of the Volsces.

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

AUFIDIUS

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

Aufidius' Aid

He's the devil.

AUFIDIUS

My hate to Marcius: where I find him, were it
At home, upon my brother's guard, even there,
Against the hospitable canon, would I
Wash my fierce hand in's heart. Go you to the city;
Learn how 'tis held; and what they are that must
Be hostages for Rome.
I am attended at the cypress grove: I pray you—
'Tis south the city mills—bring me word thither
How the world goes, that to the pace of it I may spur on my journey.

Aufidius' Aid

I shall, sir.

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. Rome. A public place.

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

MENENIUS

The augurer tells me we shall have news tonight.

BRUTUS

Good or bad?

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

MENENIUS

Pray you, who does the wolf love?

SICINIA

The lamb.

MENENIUS

Ay, to devour him; as the hungry
Plebeians would the noble Marcius.
In what enormity is Marcius poor in,
That you two have not in abundance?

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

Especially in pride.

MENENIUS

This is strange now: do you two know how you are censured here in the city, I
mean of us o' the right-hand file? do you? Why, 'tis no great matter; for a

very little thief of occasion will rob you of a great deal of patience: give your dispositions the reins, and be angry at your pleasures; at the least if you take it as a pleasure to you in being so. You blame Marcius for being proud?

BRUTUS

We do it not alone, sir.

MENENIUS

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

BRUTUS

What then, sir?

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MENENIUS

I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tiber in't; one that converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning: what I think I utter, and spend my malice in my breath. I can't say your worships have delivered the matter well, when I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables: and though I must be content to bear with those that say you are reverend grave souls, yet they lie deadly that tell you you have good faces. If you see this in the map of my microcosm, follows it that I am known well enough too?

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

You know neither me, yourselves nor any thing. You are ambitious for poor knaves' caps and legs: When you are hearing a matter between party and party, if you chance to be pinched with the colic, you make faces like mummers; all the peace you make in their cause is, calling both the parties knaves. You are a pair of strange ones.

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

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

BRUTUS and SICINIA go aside

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and VALERIA

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

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

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

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

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

VIRGILIA

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

MENENIUS

A letter for me! it gives me an estate of seven years' health; in which time I will make a lip at the physician: 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

Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

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

VOLUMNIA

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

VALERIA

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

MENENIUS

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

To the Tribunes

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

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

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

VOLUMNIA

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

A shout and flourish

These are the ushers of Marcius: before him he carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears:

Death, that dark spirit, in 's nerry 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.

TITUS LARTIUS

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

Flourish

CORIO LANUS

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

Kneels

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIO LANUS

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

MENENIUS

Now, the gods crown thee!

CORIO LANUS

And live you yet?

To VALERIA

O my sweet lady, pardon.

VOLUMNIA

I know not where to turn: O, welcome home:

And welcome, general: and ye're welcome all.

MENENIUS

A hundred thousand welcomes. I could weep

And I could laugh, I am light and heavy. Welcome.

A curse begin at very root on's heart,

That is not glad to see thee! You are three

That Rome should dote on: yet, by the faith of men,

We have some old crab-trees here at home that will not

Be grafted to your relish. Yet welcome, warriors:

CORIOLANUS

To VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA

Your hand, and yours:

Ere in our own house I do shade my head,

The good patricians must be visited;

From whom I have received not only greetings,

But with them change of honours.

VOLUMNIA

I have lived

To see inherited my very wishes

And the buildings of my fancy: only

There's one thing wanting, which I doubt not but

Our Rome will cast upon thee.

CORIOLANUS

Know, good mother,

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

COMINIUS

On, to the Capitol!

Flourish. Cornets. Exeunt in state, as before. BRUTUS and SICINIA 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: such a pother
As if that whatsoever god who leads him
Were slily crept into his human powers
And gave him graceful posture.

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

In that there's comfort.

SICINIA

Doubt not
The commoners, for whom we stand, but they
Upon their ancient malice will forget
With the least cause these his new honours, which
That he will give them make I as little question
As he is proud to do't.

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

'Tis most like he will.

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

So it must fall out
To him or our authorities. For an end,
We must suggest the people in what hatred
He still hath held them; that to's power he would
Have made them mules, holding them,
In human action and capacity,
Of no more soul nor fitness for the world
Than camels in the war.

SICINIA

This, as you say, suggested
At some time when his soaring insolence

Shall touch the people—which time shall not want,
If he be put upon 't; and that's as easy
As to set dogs on sheep—will be his fire
To kindle their dry stubble; and their blaze
Shall darken him for ever.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

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

BRUTUS

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

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same. The Capitol.

A sennet. Enter COMINIUS the consul, MENENIUS, CORIOLANUS, First Roman Senator, SICINIA and BRUTUS.

The Senator takes his places; the Tribunes take their Places by themselves. CORIOLANUS stands

MENENIUS

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

Roman Senator

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

To the Tribunes

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

SICINIA

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

CORIOLANUS offers to go away

Nay, keep your place.

Roman Senator

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

BRUTUS

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

CORIOLANUS

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

COMINIUS

I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus
Should not be utter'd feebly. It is held
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
Most dignifies the haver: if it be,
The man I speak of cannot in the world

Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,
He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed
Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
Man-enter'd thus, he waxed like a sea,
And in the brunt of seventeen battles since
He lurch'd all swords of the garland. For this last,
I cannot speak him home: he stopp'd the fliers;
And by his rare example made the coward
Turn terror into sport: as weeds before
A vessel under sail, so men obey'd
And fell below his stem: his sword, death's stamp,
Where it did mark, it took; alone he enter'd
The mortal gate of the city, aidless came off,
And with a sudden reinforcement struck
Corioli like a planet: till we call'd
Both field and city ours, he never stood
To ease his breast with panting.

MENENIUS

Worthy man!

Roman Senator

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

MENENIUS

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

Re-enter CORIOLANUS

MENENIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

I do owe them still
My life and services.

MENENIUS

It then remains
That you do speak to the people.

CORIOLANUS

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

SICINIA

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

MENENIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

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

BRUTUS

Mark you that?

CORIOLANUS

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

MENENIUS

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

All

To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

Flourish of cornets. Exeunt all but SICINIA and BRUTUS

BRUTUS

You see how he intends to use the people.

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. The same. The Forum.

Enter Five Citizens

First Citizen

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

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. Are you all resolved to give your voices?

Enter CORIOLANUS in a gown of humility, with MENENIUS

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

All

Content, content.

Exeunt Citizens

MENENIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

What must I say?

'I Pray, sir'—Plague upon't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace:—'Look, sir, my wounds!
I got them in my country's service, when

Some certain of your brethren roar'd and ran
From the noise of our own drums.'

MENENIUS

You must not speak of that: you must desire them
To think upon you.

CORIOLANUS

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

MENENIUS

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

Exit

CORIOLANUS

Bid them wash their faces
And keep their teeth clean.

Re-enter the first two Citizens

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

First Citizen

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

CORIOLANUS

Mine own desert.

CORIOLANUS

Ay, but not mine own desire.

First Citizen

How not your own desire?

CORIOLANUS

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

First Citizen

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

CORIOLANUS

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

First Citizen

The price is to ask it kindly.

CORIOLANUS

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

Second Citizen

You shall ha' it, worthy sir.

CORIOLANUS

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

Exeunt the two Citizens

Re-enter Fourth Citizen

CORIOLANUS

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

Fourth Citizen

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

CORIO LANUS

Your enigma?

Fourth Citizen

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

CORIO LANUS

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

Fourth Citizen

We hope to find you our friend; and therefore give you our voices heartily.
You have received many wounds for your country.

Exeunt

CORIO LANUS

Most sweet voices!
Better it is to die, better to starve,
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.
Why in this woolvish toge should I stand here,
To beg of Hob and Dick, that do appear,
Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to't:
What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
Let the high office and the honour go
To one that would do thus. I am half through;
The one part suffer'd, the other will I do.

Re-enter two Citizens more

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

Third Citizen

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

Fifth Citizen

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

All Citizens

Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul!

Exeunt

CORIOLANUS

Worthy voices!

Re-enter MENENIUS, with BRUTUS and SICINIA

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

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

MENENIUS

I'll keep you company. Will you along?

BRUTUS

We stay here for the people.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS

Re-enter Citizens

SICINIA

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

First Citizen

He has our voices, friend.

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.

First Citizen

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

Second Citizen

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

SICINIA

Why, so he did, I am sure.

Third Citizen

He said he had wounds, which he could show in private;
'I would be consul,' says he: 'aged custom,

But by your voices, will not so permit me;
Your voices therefore.' Was not this mockery?

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

Thus to have said,
As you were fore-advised, had touch'd his spirit
And tried his inclination; from him pluck'd
As cause had call'd you up, have held him to
Or else it would have gall'd his surly nature,
Which easily endures not article
Tying him to aught; so putting him to rage,
You should have ta'en the advantage of his choler
And pass'd him unelected. Have you
Ere now denied the asker? and now again

Of him that did not ask, but mock, bestow
Your sued-for tongues?

Third Citizen

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

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

Say, you chose him

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

BRUTUS

Ay, spare us not. Say we read lectures to you.
How youngly he began to serve his country,
How long continued, and what stock he springs of,
Say, you ne'er had done't-
Harp on that still-but by our putting on;
And presently, when you have drawn your number,
Repair to the Capitol.

All

We will so: almost all repent in their election.

Exeunt Citizens

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

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

Exeunt

ACT III

SCENE I. Rome. A street.

Cornets. Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and the Roman Senator

CORIOLANUS

Tullus Aufidius then had made new head?

LARTIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

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

LARTIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

Spoke he of me?

LARTIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

At Antium lives he?

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

Enter SICINIA 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.

SICINIA

Pass no further.

CORIOLANUS

Ha! what is that?

BRUTUS

It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

MENENIUS

The matter?

COMINIUS

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

BRUTUS

Cominius, no.

CORIOLANUS

Have I had children's voices?

Roman Senator

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

BRUTUS

The people are incensed against him.

SICINIA

Stop,

Or all will fall in broil.

CORIO LANUS

Must these have voices, that can yield them now

And straight disclaim their tongues? You being their mouths,

Why rule you not their teeth? Have you not set them on?

It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot,

To curb the will of the nobility:

Suffer't, and live with such as cannot rule

Nor ever will be ruled.

BRUTUS

The people cry you mock'd them, and of late,

When corn was given them gratis, you repined;

Scandal'd the suppliants for the people, call'd them

Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

CORIO LANUS

Why, this was known before.

BRUTUS

Not to them all.

CORIO LANUS

Why then should I be consul? By yond clouds,

Let me deserve so ill as you, and make me

Your fellow tribune.

COMINIUS

The people are abused; set on. This paltering

Becomes not Rome, nor has Coriolanus

Deserved this so dishonour'd rub, laid falsely
I' the plain way of his merit.

CORIOLANUS

Tell me of corn!

This was my speech, and I will speak't again–

MENENIUS

Not now, not now.

CORIOLANUS

Now, as I live, I will. My nobler friends,

I crave their pardons:

For the mutable, rank-scented many, let them

Regard me as I do not flatter, and

Therein behold themselves: I say again,

In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate

The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,

Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd, and scatter'd,

By mingling them with us, the honour'd number,

Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that

Which they have given to beggars.

MENENIUS

Well, no more.

Roman Senator

No more words, we beseech you.

CORIOLANUS

As for my country I have shed my blood,

Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs

Coin words till their decay against those measles,

Which we disdain should tatter us, yet sought
The very way to catch them.

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

What, what? his choler?

CORIOLANUS

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

SICINIA

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

CORIOLANUS

Shall remain!
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? mark you
Her absolute 'shall'?
O good but most unwise patricians! why,
You grave and reckless senator, have you thus
Given Hydra here to choose an officer,
That with her peremptory 'shall,' being but
The horn and noise o' the monster's, wants not spirit
To say she'll turn your current in a ditch,
And make your channel his? If she have power
Then vail your ignorance; if none, awake

Your dangerous lenity. You are plebeian,
If they be senators: and they are no less,
When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste
Most palates theirs.
It makes the consuls base: and my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by the other.

COMINIUS

Well, on to the market-place.

CORIOLANUS

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

MENENIUS

Well, well, no more of that.

BRUTUS

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

CORIOLANUS

I'll give my reasons,
More worthier than their voices. They know the corn
Was not our recompense, resting well assured
That ne'er did service for't: being press'd to the war,
Even when the navel of the state was touch'd,
They would not thread the gates. This kind of service
Did not deserve corn gratis. Being i' the war

Their mutinies and revolts, wherein they show'd
Most valour, spoke not for them: the accusation
Which they have often made against the senate,
All cause unborn, could never be the motive
Of our so frank donation. Well, what then?

MENENIUS

Come, enough.

BRUTUS

Enough, with over-measure.

CORIOLANUS

No, take more:

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

Of that integrity which should become't,
Not having the power to do the good it would,
For the in which doth control't.

BRUTUS

Has said enough.

SICINIA

Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do. You there, ho!

Enter a Citizen

Go, call the people:

Exit Citizen

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

CORIOLANUS

Hence, old hag!

COMINIUS

Aged sir, hands off.

Enter a rabble of Citizens (Plebeians)

MENENIUS

On both sides more respect.

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

Seize him, citizens!

They all bustle about CORIOLANUS, crying

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

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

MENENIUS

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

Roman Senator

To unbuild the city and to lay all flat.

SICINIA

What is the city but the people?

Citizens

True,
The people are the city.

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.

BRUTUS

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

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

Citizens, seize him!

Citizens

Yield, Marcius, yield!

MENENIUS

To BRUTUS

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

BRUTUS

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

CORIOLANUS

No, I'll die here.

Drawing his sword

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

MENENIUS

Down with that sword! Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

Citizens

Down with him, down with him!

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

MENENIUS

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

Roman Senator

Get you gone.

COMINIUS

Stand fast;
We have as many friends as enemies.

MENENIUS

Shall it be put to that?

Roman Senator

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

MENENIUS

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

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

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

COMINIUS

Nay, come away.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others

MENENIUS

His nature is too noble for the world:

A noise within

Here's goodly work!

Re-enter BRUTUS and SICINIA, with the rabble

SICINIA

Where is this viper
That would depopulate the city and
Be every man himself?
He shall be thrown down the Tarpeian rock
With rigorous hands: he hath resisted law,
And therefore law shall scorn him further trial

Than the severity of the public power
Which he so sets at nought.

First Citizen

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

Citizens

He shall, sure on't.

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

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

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

Consul! what consul?

MENENIUS

The consul Coriolanus.

Citizens

No, no, no, no, no.

SICINIA

Speak briefly then;
For we are peremptory to dispatch

This viperous traitor: to eject him hence
Were but one danger, and to keep him here
Our certain death: therefore it is decreed
He dies tonight.
He's a disease that must be cut away.

MENENIUS

O, he's a limb that has but a disease;
Mortal, to cut it off; to cure it, easy.
What has he done to Rome that's worthy death?
Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost—
And what is left, to lose it by his country,
Were to us all, that do't and suffer it,
A brand to the end o' the world.

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

Consider this: he has been bred i' the wars
Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd
In bolted language; meal and bran together
He throws without distinction. Give me leave,
I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him
Where he shall answer, by a lawful form,
In peace, to his utmost peril.

Roman Senator

Noble tribunes,
It is the humane way: the other course

Will prove too bloody, and the end of it
Unknown to the beginning.

SICINIA

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

MENENIUS

I'll bring him to you.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A room in CORIOLANUS'S house.

Enter CORIOLANUS with a Patrician

CORIOLANUS

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

Patrician

You do the nobler.

CORIOLANUS

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

Enter VOLUMNIA

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

VOLUMNIA

O, sir, sir, sir,
I would have had you put your power well on,
Before you had worn it out.
You might have been enough the man you are,

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

Enter MENENIUS and the Senator

MENENIUS

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

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

What must I do?

MENENIUS

Return to the tribunes.
Repent what you have spoke.

CORIOLANUS

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

VOLUMNIA

You are too absolute;
Though therein you can never be too noble,
But when extremities speak. I have heard you say,
Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,
I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,
In peace what each of them by the other lose,
That they combine not there.
If it be honour in your wars to seem
The same you are not, which, for your best ends,
You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse,
That it shall hold companionship in peace
With honour, as in war, since that to both
It stands in like request?

CORIOLANUS

Why force you this?

VOLUMNIA

Because that now it lies you on to speak
To the people; not by your own instruction,
Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
But with such words that are but rooted in
Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables
Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.
Now, this no more dishonours you at all
Than to take in a town with gentle words,
Which else would put you to your fortune and
The hazard of much blood.
I would dissemble with my nature where
My fortunes and my friends at stake required
I should do so in honour: I am in this,

Your wife, your son, this senator, the nobles;
And you will rather show our general louts
How you can frown than spend a fawn upon 'em,
For the inheritance of their loves and safeguard
Of what that want might ruin.

MENENIUS

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

VOLUMNIA

I prithee now, my son,
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
More learned than the ears—waving thy head,
Now humble as the ripest mulberry
That will not hold the handling: or say to them,
Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils
Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,
Were fit for thee to use as they to claim,
In asking their good loves, but thou wilt frame
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far
As thou hast power and person.
Prithee now, go, and be ruled.

Enter COMINIUS

COMINIUS

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

MENENIUS

Only fair speech.

VOLUMNIA

He must, and will

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

CORIOLANUS

Must I go show them my unbarbed sconce?

Must I with base tongue give my noble heart

A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't:

You have put me now to such a part

Which never I shall discharge to the life.

VOLUMNIA

I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hast said

My praises made thee first a soldier, so,

To have my praise for this, perform a part

Thou hast not done before.

CORIOLANUS

Away, my disposition, and possess me

Some harlot's spirit! my throat of war be turn'd,

Which quired with my drum, into a pipe

Small as an eunuch, a beggar's tongue

Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,

Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his

That hath received an alms! I will not do't,

Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth

And by my body's action teach my mind

A most inherent baseness.

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIOLANUS

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:

VOLUMNIA

Do your will.

Exeunt

SCENE III. The same. The Forum.

Enter SICINIA and BRUTUS

BRUTUS

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

Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS, with the Senator and a Patrician

MENENIUS

Calmly, I do beseech you.

SICINIA

Draw near, ye people.

CORIOLANUS

First, hear me speak.

SICINIA

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

CORIOLANUS

I am content.

MENENIUS

Lo, citizens, he says he is content:
The warlike service he has done, consider; think
Upon the wounds his body bears, which show

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

CORIOLANUS

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

SICINIA

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

CORIOLANUS

How! traitor!
The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!
Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!

SICINIA

Mark you this, people?

Citizens

To the rock, to the rock with him!

SICINIA

Peace!

We need not put new matter to his charge:
What you have seen him do and heard him speak,
So criminal and in such capital kind,
Deserves the extremest death.

BRUTUS

But since he hath
Served well for Rome,–

CORIOLANUS

What do you prate of service?

BRUTUS

I talk of that, that know it.

MENENIUS

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

CORIOLANUS

I know no further:
Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, raving, pent to linger
But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word.

SICINIA

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

And in the power of us the tribunes, we,
Even from this instant, banish him our city.

Citizens

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

BRUTUS

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

Citizens

It shall be so, it shall be so.

CORIOLANUS

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air, I banish you;
And here remain with your uncertainty!
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
Fan you into despair! Have the power still
To banish your defenders; till at length
Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,
Making not reservation of yourselves,
Still your own foes, deliver you as most
Abated captives to some nation
That won you without blows! Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
There is a world elsewhere.

Exeunt

ACT IV

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

Enter CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS

CORIOLANUS

Come, leave your tears: a brief farewell: the beast
With many heads butts me away. Nay, mother,
Where is your ancient courage? you were used to load me
With precepts that would make invincible
The heart that conn'd them.

VIRGILIA

O heavens! O heavens!

CORIOLANUS

Nay! prithee, woman,–

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIOLANUS

What, what, what!
I shall be loved when I am lack'd. Nay, mother.
Resume that spirit, when you were wont to say,
If you had been the wife of Hercules,
Six of his labours you'd have done, and saved
Your husband so much sweat. Cominius,
Droop not; adieu. Farewell, my wife, my mother:
I'll do well yet. Thou old and true Menenius,
Thy tears are salter than a younger man's,
And venomous to thine eyes. My sometime general,
I have seen thee stem, and thou hast oft beheld
Heart-hardening spectacles; tell these sad women

'Tis fond to wail inevitable strokes,
As 'tis to laugh at 'em. My mother, you wot well
My hazards still have been your solace: and
Believe't not lightly—though I go alone,
Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen
Makes fear'd and talk'd of more than seen—your son
Will or exceed the common or be caught
With cautelous baits and practise.

VOLUMNIA

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

COMINIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

Thou hast years upon thee; and thou art too full
Of the wars' surfeits, to go rove with one
That's yet unbruised: bring me but out at gate.
Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and
My friends of noble touch, when I am forth,
Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come.

While I remain above the ground, you shall
Hear from me still, and never of me aught
But what is like me formerly.

MENENIUS

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

Exeunt

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

Enter SICINIUA BRUTUS

SICINIA

Bid them all home; he's gone, and we'll no further.

The nobility are vex'd, whom we see have sided In his behalf.

BRUTUS

Now we have shown our power,

Let us seem humbler after it is done

Than when it was a-doing.

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS

VOLUMNIA

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

MENENIUS

Peace, peace; be not so loud.

VOLUMNIA

If that I could for weeping, you should hear,—

Nay, and you shall hear some.

To BRUTUS

Will you be gone?

VIRGILIA

To SICINIA

You shall stay too: I would I had the power

To say so to my husband.

SICINIA

Are you mankind?

VOLUMNIA

Ay, fool; is that a shame? Note but this fool.
Was not a man my father? Hadst thou foxship
To banish him that struck more blows for Rome
Than thou hast spoken words?
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. Bastards and all.
Good man, the wounds that he does bear for Rome!

SICINIA

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

VOLUMNIA

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

BRUTUS

Pray, let us go.

VOLUMNIA

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

SICINIA

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

Exeunt Tribunes

VOLUMNIA

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.

Exeunt

SCENE III. Antium. Before Aufidius's house.

Enter CORIOLANUS in mean apparel, disguised and muffled

CORIOLANUS

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

First Lord

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

CORIOLANUS

Which is his house, beseech you?

First Lord

This, here before you.

CORIOLANUS

Thank you, sir: farewell.

Exit First Lord

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

He does fair justice; if he give me way,
I'll do his country service.

Exit

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

Music within. Enter a Aufidius' Aid

Aufidius' Aid

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

Exit

Enter CORIOLANUS

CORIOLANUS

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

Re-enter the Aid

Aufidius' Aid

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

Exit

CORIOLANUS

I have deserved no better entertainment, In being Coriolanus.

Re-enter Aid

Aufidius' Aid

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!

Aufidius' Aid

Away! get you away.

CORIOLANUS

Now thou'rt troublesome.

Aufidius' Aid

Are you so brave? I'll have you talked with anon. Prithee, call my master to him.

Enter AUFIDIUS

AUFIDIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

If, Tullus,

Unmuffling

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

AUFIDIUS

What is thy name?

CORIOLANUS

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

AUFIDIUS

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

My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done

To thee particularly and to all the Volsces
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,
The extreme dangers and the drops of blood
Shed for my thankless country are requited
But with that surname; only that name remains;
The cruelty and envy of the people,
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who
Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest;
And suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be
Whoop'd out of Rome. Then if thou hast
A heart of wreak in thee, that wilt revenge
Thine own particular wrongs and stop those maims
Of shame seen through thy country, speed thee straight,
And make my misery serve thy turn: so use it
That my revengeful services may prove
As benefits to thee, and present
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice.

AUFIDIUS

O Marcius, Marcius!
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart
A root of ancient envy. Let me twine
Mine arms about that body, where against
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke
And scarr'd the moon with splinters: here I clip
The anvil of my sword, and do contest
As hotly and as nobly with thy love
As ever in ambitious strength I did
Contend against thy valour. 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. O, come, go in,
And take our friendly senator by the hands;
Who now are here, taking their leaves of me,
Who am prepared against your territories,
Though not for Rome itself.

CORIOLANUS

You bless me, gods!

AUFIDIUS

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

Exeunt

SCENE V. Rome. A public place.

Enter SICINIA and BRUTUS

SICINIA

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

Enter MENENIUS

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

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

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!

SICINIA

Godden, our neighbours.

First Citizen

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

BRUTUS

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

Citizens

Now the gods keep you!

Exeunt Citizens

SICINIA

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

BRUTUS

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

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

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

SICINIA

'Tis this slave;—

Go whip him, 'fore the people's eyes:—his raising;

Nothing but his report.

Messenger

Yes, worthy sir,

The slave's report is seconded; and more,

More fearful, is deliver'd.

SICINIA

What more fearful?

Messenger

It is spoke freely out of many mouths—

How probable I do not know—that Marcius,

Join'd with Aufidius, leads a power 'gainst Rome,

And vows revenge as spacious as between

The young'st and oldest thing.

SICINIA

This is most likely!

BRUTUS

Raised only, that the weaker sort may wish

Good Marcius home again.

SICINIA

The very trick on't.

MENENIUS

This is unlikely:

He and Aufidius can no more atone

Than violentest contrariety.

Enter a second Messenger

Second Messenger

You are sent for to the senate:
A fearful army, led by Caius Marcius
Associated with Aufidius, rages
Upon our territories; and have already
O'erborne their way, consumed with fire, and took
What lay before them.

Enter COMINIUS

COMINIUS

O, you have made good work!
You have help to ravish your own daughters and
To melt the city leads upon your pates,
To see your wives dishonour'd to your noses,–

MENENIUS

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

COMINIUS

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

MENENIUS

You have made good work,

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

BRUTUS

But is this true, sir?

COMINIUS

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

MENENIUS

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

COMINIUS

Who shall ask it?
The tribunes cannot do't for shame; the people
Deserve such pity of him as the wolf
Does of the shepherds. You have brought
A trembling upon Rome, such as was never
So incapable of help.

MENENIUS

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

COMINIUS

But I fear
They'll roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius,

The second name of men, obeys his points
As if he were his officer: desperation
Is all the policy, strength and defence,
That Rome can make against them.

Enter a troop of Citizens

MENENIUS

Here come the clusters.
And is Aufidius with him? Now he's coming;
And not a hair upon a soldier's head
Which will not prove a whip: as many coxcombs
As you threw caps up will he tumble down,
And pay you for your voices. We have deserved it.

Citizens

Faith, we hear fearful news.

First Citizen

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

Third Citizen

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

MENENIUS

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

Exeunt COMINIUS and MENENIUS

SICINIA

Go, masters, get you home; be not dismay'd:

These are a side that would be glad to have
This true which they so seem to fear. Go home,
And show no sign of fear.

Exeunt Citizens

BRUTUS

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

Exeunt

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

Enter AUFIDIUS and his Aid

AUFIDIUS

Do they still fly to the Roman?

Aufidius' Aid

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

AUFIDIUS

I cannot help it now,
Unless, by using means, I lame the foot
Of our design. He bears himself more proudlier,
Even to my person, than I thought he would
When first I did embrace him: yet his nature
In that's no changeling; and I must excuse
What cannot be amended.

Aufidius' Aid

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

AUFIDIUS

I understand thee well; and be thou sure,
When he shall come to his account, he knows not
What I can urge against him. Although it seems,

And so he thinks, and is no less apparent
To the vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly.
And shows good husbandry for the Volscian state,
Fights dragon-like, and does achieve as soon
As draw his sword; yet he hath left undone
That which shall break his neck or hazard mine,
Whene'er we come to our account.

Aufidius' Aid

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

AUFIDIUS

All places yield to him ere he sits down;
The senators and patricians love him too:
I think he'll be to Rome
As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it
By sovereignty of nature. First he was
A noble servant to them; but he could not
Carry his honours even: whether 'twas pride,
Which out of daily fortune ever taints
The happy man; but one of these—
As he hath spices of them all, not all,
For I dare so far free him—made him fear'd,
So hated, and so banish'd: but he has a merit,
To choke it in the utterance. So our virtues
Lie in the interpretation of the time:
And power, unto itself most commendable,
Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair
To extol what it hath done.
One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;
Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail.

Come, let's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,
Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.

Exeunt

ACT V

SCENE I. Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIA, and BRUTUS

MENENIUS

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

COMINIUS

He would not seem to know me.
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;
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!

SICINIA

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

Might stop our countryman.

Pray you, go to him.

MENENIUS

What should I do?

BRUTUS

Only make trial what your love can do

For Rome, towards Marcius.

MENENIUS

Well, and say that Marcius

Return me, as Cominius is return'd, Unheard; what then?

But as a discontented friend, grief-shot

With his unkindness? say't be so?

SICINIA

Yet your good will must have that thanks from Rome, after the measure

As you intended well.

MENENIUS

I'll undertake 't:

I think he'll hear me. Yet, to bite his lip

And hum at good Cominius, much unhearts me.

He was not taken well.

BRUTUS

You know the very road into his kindness,

And cannot lose your way.

MENENIUS

Good faith, I'll prove him,

Speed how it will. I shall ere long have knowledge

Of my success.

Exit

COMINIUS

He'll never hear him. I kneel'd before him;
'Twas very faintly he said 'Rise;' dismiss'd me
Thus, with his speechless hand:
Unless his noble mother, and his wife;
Who, as I hear, mean to solicit him
For mercy to his country. Therefore, let's hence,
And with our fair entreaties haste them on.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Entrance of the Volscian camp before Rome. Aufidius' Aid on

guard.

Enter to him, MENENIUS

Aufidius' Aid

Stay: whence are you?

MENENIUS

From Rome.

Aufidius' Aid

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

MENENIUS

I tell thee, fellow,
The general is my lover: I have been
The book of his good acts, whence men have read
His name unparallel'd, haply amplified;
For I have ever verified my friends,
Of whom he's chief, with all the size that verity
Would without lapsing suffer: nay, sometimes,
Like to a bowl upon a subtle ground,
I have tumbled past the throw; and in his praise
Have almost stamp'd the leasing: therefore, fellow,
I must have leave to pass.

Aufidius' Aid

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

MENENIUS

Nay, but, fellow, fellow,—

Enter CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS

CORIOLANUS

What's the matter?

MENENIUS

Now, you companion, I'll say an errand for you:

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

To CORIOLANUS

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

CORIOLANUS

Away!

MENENIUS

How! away!

CORIOLANUS

Wife, mother, child, I know not. My affairs
Are servanted to others: though I owe
My revenge properly, my remission lies
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,

Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison, rather
Than pity note how much. Therefore, be gone.
Mine ears against your suits are stronger than
Your gates against my force. Yet, for I loved thee,
Take this along; I writ it for thy sake

Gives a letter

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

AUFIDIUS

You keep a constant temper.

Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS

Aufidius' Aid

Now, sir, is your name Menenius? Do you hear how we are shent for keeping your greatness back? What cause, do you think, I have to swoon?

MENENIUS

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. The tent of Coriolanus.

Enter CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS

CORIOLANUS

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

AUFIDIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

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

Shout within

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

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

My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mould
Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
The grandchild to her blood.

VIRGILIA

My lord and husband!

CORIOLANUS

These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

VIRGILIA

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

CORIOLANUS

Like a dull actor now,
I have forgot my part, and I am out,
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,
Forgive my tyranny; O, a kiss
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!
Now, by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss
I carried from thee, dear; and my true lip
Hath virgin'd it e'er since.

Kneels

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

VOLUMNIA

O, stand up blest!
Whilst, with no softer cushion than the flint,
I kneel before thee; and improperly

Show duty, as mistaken all this while
Between the child and parent.

Kneels

CORIO LANUS

What is this?
Your knees to me? to your corrected son?

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIO LANUS

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

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIO LANUS

That's my brave boy!

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIO LANUS

I beseech you, peace:
The thing I have forsworn to grant may never
Be held by you denials. Do not bid me

Dismiss my soldiers, or capitulate
Again with Rome's mechanics: tell me not
Wherein I seem unnatural: desire not
To ally my rages and revenges with Your colder reasons.

VOLUMNIA

You have said you will not grant us anything;
For we have nothing else to ask, but that
Which you deny already: yet we will ask;
That, if you fail in our request, the blame
May hang upon your hardness: therefore hear us.
Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies would bewray what life
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself
How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither: since that thy sight, which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
Making the mother, wife and child to see
The son, the husband and the father tearing
His country's bowels out. And to poor we
Thine enmity's most capital: thou barr'st us
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
That all but we enjoy; for how can we,
Alas, how can we for our country pray.
Whereto we are bound, together with thy victory,
Whereto we are bound? alack, or we must lose
The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
Our comfort in the country. We must find
An evident calamity, though we had
Our wish, which side should win: for either thou
Must, as a foreign recreant, be led

With manacles thorough our streets, or else
Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,
And bear the palm for having bravely shed
Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,
I purpose not to wait on fortune till
These wars determine: if I cannot persuade thee
Rather to show a noble grace to both parts
Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread—
Trust to't, thou shalt not—on thy mother's womb,
That brought thee to this world.

VIRGILIA

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

Young MARCIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

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

Rising

VOLUMNIA

If it were so that our request did tend
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,
As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit

Is that you reconcile them:
Thou know'st, great son,
The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,
Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;
Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble,
But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
Destroy'd his country, and his name remains
To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' Speak to me, son:
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs? Daughter, speak you:
He cares not for your weeping. Speak thou, boy:
Perhaps thy childishness will move him more
Than can our reasons. There's no man in the world
More bound to 's mother; yet here he lets me prate
Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,
Say my request's unjust,
And spurn me back: but if it be not so,
Thou art not honest; and the gods will plague thee,
That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
To a mother's part belongs. He turns away:
Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;
This is the last: so we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold 's:
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have
But kneels and holds up bands for fellowship,

Does reason our petition with more strength
Than thou hast to deny 't. Come, let us go:

He holds her by the hand, silent

CORIOLANUS

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

AUFIDIUS

I was moved withal.

CORIOLANUS

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

AUFIDIUS

Aside

I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honour

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

The Ladies make signs to CORIOLANUS

CORIOLANUS

Ay, by and by;

To VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, & c

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

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS and SICINIA

SICINIA

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

MENENIUS

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

SICINIA

He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS

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

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

Friend, if you'd save your life, fly to your house:

The plebeians have got your fellow-tribune

And hale him up and down, all swearing, if

The Roman ladies bring not comfort home,

They'll give him death by inches.

Enter a second Messenger

SICINIA

What's the news?

Second Messenger

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

SICINIA

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

Second Messenger

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

Trumpets; hautboys; drums beat; all together

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

A shout within

MENENIUS

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

Music still, with shouts

SICINIA

We will meet them, and help the joy.

Exeunt

SCENE V. Antium. A public place.

Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, with his Aid

AUFIDIUS

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

Exeunt Aid

Enter two Conspirators of AUFIDIUS' faction

First Conspirator

How is it with our general?

AUFIDIUS

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

Second Conspirator

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

First Conspirator

The people will remain uncertain whilst

'Twixt you there's difference; but the fall of either
Makes the survivor heir of all.

AUFIDIUS

I know it;
And my pretext to strike at him admits
A good construction. I raised him, and I pawn'd
Mine honour for his truth: who being so heighten'd,
He water'd his new plants with dews of flattery,
Seducing so my friends; and, to this end,
He bow'd his nature, never known before
But to be rough, unswayable and free.
Being banish'd for't, he came unto my hearth;
Presented to my knife his throat: I took him;
Made him joint-servant with me; gave him way
In all his own desires; nay, let him choose
Out of my files, his projects to accomplish,
My best and freshest men; till, at the last,
I seem'd his follower, not partner, and
He waged me with his countenance, as if
I had been mercen'ry.

First Conspirator

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

AUFIDIUS

There was it:
For which my sinews shall be stretch'd upon him.
At a few drops of women's rheum, which are

As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labour
Of our great action: therefore shall he die,
And I'll renew me in his fall. But, hark!

Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the People

First Conspirator

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

Second Conspirator

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

First Conspirator

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

AUFIDIUS

Say no more:
Here come the lords.

Enter the Lords of the city

All The Lords

You are most welcome home.

AUFIDIUS

I have not deserved it.

But, worthy lords, have you with heed perused
What I have written to you?

Lords

We have.

AUFIDIUS

He approaches: you shall hear him.

Enter CORIOLANUS, marching with drum and colors

CORIOLANUS

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

AUFIDIUS

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

CORIOLANUS

Traitor! how now!

AUFIDIUS

Ay, Marcius, Caius Marcius: dost thou think

I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name
Coriolanus in Corioli?

You lords and heads o' the state, perfidiously
He has betray'd your business, and given up,
I say 'your city,' to his wife and mother;
Breaking his oath and resolution like
A twist of rotten silk, never admitting
Counsel o' the war, but at his nurse's tears
He whined and roar'd away your victory,
That pages blush'd at him and men of heart
Look'd wondering each at other.

CORIOLANUS

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

First Lord

Peace, both, and hear me speak.

AUFIDIUS

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

All Conspirators

Let him die for't.

All The People

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

'He killed my cousin

Marcus.' 'He killed my father.'

Second Lord

Peace, ho! no outrage: peace!

The man is noble and his fame folds-in

This orb o' the earth. His last offences to us

Shall have judicious hearing. Stand, Aufidius,

And trouble not the peace.

CORIOLANUS

O that I had him,

With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,

To use my lawful sword!

AUFIDIUS

Insolent villain!

All Conspirators

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

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

Lords

Hold, hold, hold, hold!

Second Lord

Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep.

First Lord

Tread not upon him. Masters all, be quiet;

Put up your swords.

AUFIDIUS

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

First Lord

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

Second Lord

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

AUFIDIUS

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

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