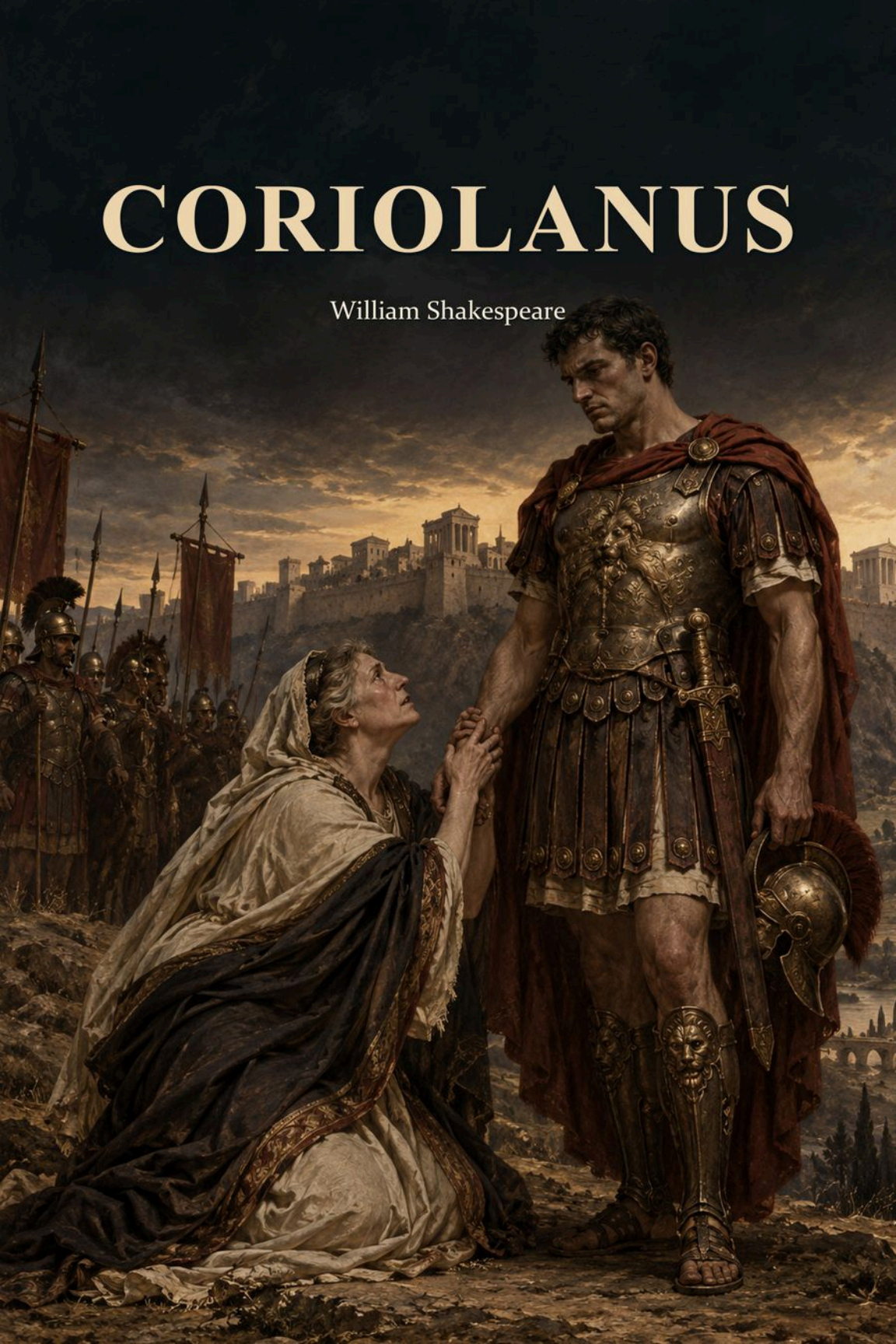
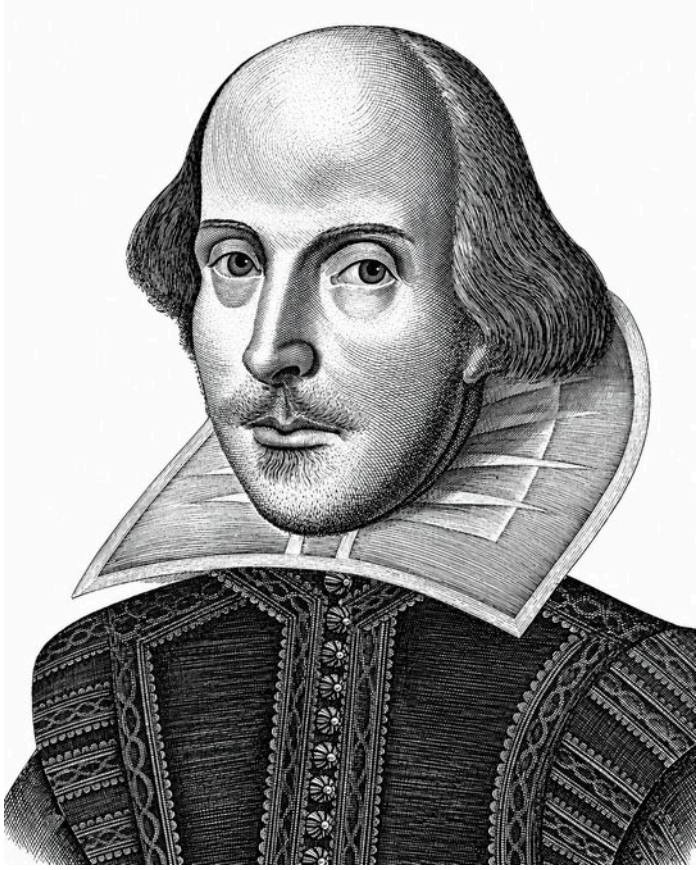
CORIOLANUS

William Shakespeare



Coriolanus

William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare

1564 - 1616

AI-created interpretation after Martin Droeshout engraving, First Folio, 1623.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet and actor from Stratford-upon-Avon. His working life connected the town of his birth with the theatres of London, where he wrote for a company of professional players. His plays were made for performance, and their language remains inseparable from movement, voice and the presence of an audience.

The surviving works range across comedy, history and tragedy. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* suggest the variety of worlds he could create. He also wrote sonnets and narrative poems, exploring love, time, jealousy, memory and the unstable relationship between appearance and truth.

Shakespeare frequently worked with existing stories. His originality lies partly in what happens to those materials: competing motives become audible, minor figures acquire memorable voices, and an apparently simple conflict opens into several different perspectives. Readers encounter both formal poetry and the shifting rhythms of everyday conversation.

The First Folio, published in 1623 after his death, preserved many of the plays. The portrait opposite follows Martin Droeshout's engraving in that volume, a likeness endorsed by Shakespeare's contemporary Ben Jonson. It is presented as an artistic interpretation of that documented image, rather than a reconstruction of an otherwise unknown face.

Biographical and portrait references are retained in the edition archive. Portrait source: Martin Droeshout engraving, First Folio, 1623.

Dramatis Personæ

CAIUS MARTIUS CORIOLANUS, a noble Roman
VOLUMNIA, his mother
VIRGILIA, his wife
YOUNG MARTIUS, their son
VALERIA, friend to Volumnia and Virgilia
A GENTLEWOMAN, Volumnia's attendant

MENENIUS AGRIPPA, Friend to Coriolanus
COMINIUS, General against the Volscians
TITUS LARTIUS, General against the Volscians
SICINIUS VELUTUS, Tribune of the People
JUNIUS BRUTUS, Tribune of the People
A ROMAN HERALD

TULLUS AUFIDIUS, General of the Volscians
LIEUTENANT, to Aufidius
Conspirators with Aufidius
A CITIZEN of Antium
TWO VOLSCIAN GUARDS

Roman and Volscian Senators, Patricians, Aediles, Lictors, Soldiers, Citizens, Messengers, Servants to Aufidius, and other Attendants

SCENE: Partly in Rome, and partly in the territories of the Volscians and Antiates.

ACT I

SCENE I. Rome. A street

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

FIRST CITIZEN.
Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

ALL.
Speak, speak!

FIRST CITIZEN.
You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

ALL.
Resolved, resolved!

FIRST CITIZEN.
First, you know Caius Martius is chief enemy to the people.

ALL.
We know't, we know't!

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

ALL.
No more talking on't; let it be done. Away, away!

SECOND CITIZEN.
One word, good citizens.

FIRST CITIZEN.
We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good. What authority surfeits on would relieve us. If they would yield us but the superfluity while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely. But they think we are too dear. The leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize 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 Martius?

FIRST CITIZEN.
Against him first. He's a very dog to the commonalty.

SECOND CITIZEN.
Consider you what services he has done for his country?

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

SECOND CITIZEN.
Nay, but speak not maliciously.

FIRST CITIZEN.
I say unto you, what he hath done famously he did it to that end. Though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother and to be partly proud, which he is, even to 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' th' city is risen. Why stay we prating here? To th' Capitol!

ALL.
Come, come!

Enter Menenius Agrippa.

FIRST CITIZEN.
Soft, who comes here?

SECOND CITIZEN.
Worthy Menenius Agrippa, one that hath always loved the people.

FIRST CITIZEN.
He's one honest enough. Would all the rest were so!

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

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

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

FIRST CITIZEN.
We cannot, sir; we are undone already.

MENENIUS.
I tell you, friends, most charitable care
Have the patricians of you. For your wants,
Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well
Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them
Against the Roman state, whose course will on
The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs
Of more strong link asunder than can ever
Appear in your impediment. For the dearth,
The gods, not the patricians, make it, and
Your knees to them, not arms, must help. Alack,
You are transported by calamity
Thither where more attends you, and you slander
The helms o' th' 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 storehouses crammed with grain; make edicts for usury to support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us.

MENENIUS.
Either you must confess yourselves wondrous malicious
Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you
A pretty tale. It may be you have heard it,
But since it serves my purpose, I will venture
To stale't a little more.

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

MENENIUS.
There was a time when all the body's members
Rebelled against the belly, thus accused it:
That only like a gulf it did remain
I' th' midst o' th' body, idle and unactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest, where th' 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 answered—

FIRST CITIZEN.
Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MENENIUS.
Sir, I shall tell you. With a kind of smile,
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus—
For, look you, I may make the belly smile
As well as speak—it tauntingly replied
To th' 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
Is 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 restrained,
Who is the sink o' th' body—

MENENIUS.
Well, what then?

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

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

FIRST CITIZEN.
You are long about it.

MENENIUS.
Note me this, good friend;
Your most grave belly was deliberate,
Not rash like his accusers, and thus answered:
"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 storehouse 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 th' seat o' th' 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' th' 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' th' lowest, basest, poorest,
Of this most wise rebellion, thou goest 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 Martius.

Hail, noble Martius.

MARTIUS.
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.

MARTIUS.
He that will give good words to thee will flatter
Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you;
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
Where foxes, geese. You are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,
And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness
Deserves your hate; and your affections are
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
Which would increase his evil. He that depends
Upon your favours swims with fins of lead,
And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! Trust ye?
With every minute you do change a mind
And call him noble that was now your hate,
Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter,
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another?—What's their seeking?

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

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

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

MENENIUS.
What is granted them?

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

MENENIUS.
This is strange.

MARTIUS.
Go get you home, you fragments.

Enter a Messenger hastily.

MESSENGER.
Where's Caius Martius?

MARTIUS.
Here. What's the matter?

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

MARTIUS.
I am glad on't. Then we shall ha' means to vent
Our musty superfluity.

Enter Sicinius Velutus, Junius Brutus, two Tribunes; Cominius, Titus Lartius with other Senators.

See, our best elders.

FIRST SENATOR.
Martius, 'tis true that you have lately told us:
The Volsces are in arms.

MARTIUS.
They have a leader,
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to't.
I sin in envying his nobility,

And, were I anything but what I am,
I would wish me only he.

COMINIUS.
You have fought together.

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

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

COMINIUS.
It is your former promise.

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

TITUS LARTIUS.
No, Caius Martius,
I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with th' other
Ere stay behind this business.

MENENIUS.
O, true bred!

FIRST SENATOR.
Your company to th' Capitol, where I know
Our greatest friends attend us.

TITUS LARTIUS.
Lead you on.
Follow Cominius. We must follow you;
Right worthy your priority.

COMINIUS.
Noble Martius.

FIRST SENATOR.
[*To the Citizens*.]
Hence to your homes, begone.

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

[*Exeunt. Sicinius and Brutus remain*.]

SICINIUS.
Was ever man so proud as is this Martius?

BRUTUS.
He has no equal.

SICINIUS.
When we were chosen tribunes for the people—

BRUTUS.
Marked you his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS.
Nay, but his taunts.

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

SICINIUS.
Bemock the modest moon.

BRUTUS.
The present wars devour him! He is grown
Too proud to be so valiant.

SICINIUS.
Such a nature,
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow
Which he treads on at noon. But I do wonder

His insolence can brook to be commanded
Under Cominius.

BRUTUS.
Fame, at the which he aims,
In whom already he's well graced, cannot
Better be held nor more attained than by
A place below the first; for what miscarries
Shall be the General's fault, though he perform
To th' utmost of a man, and giddy censure
Will then cry out of Martius "O, if he
Had borne the business!"

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

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

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

BRUTUS.
Let's along.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE II. Corioles. The Senate House

Enter Tullus Aufidius with Senators of Corioles.

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

AUFIDIUS.
Is it not yours?
What ever have been thought on in this state
That could be brought to bodily act ere Rome
Had circumvention? 'Tis not four days gone
Since I heard thence. These are the words—I think
I have the letter here. Yes, here it is.
[*Reads.*] *They have pressed a power, but it is not known*
Whether for east or west. The dearth is great.
The people mutinous; and, it is rumoured,
Cominius, Martius your old enemy,
Who is of Rome worse hated than of you,—
And Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman,
These three lead on this preparation
Whither 'tis bent. Most likely 'tis for you.
Consider of it.

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

AUFIDIUS.
Nor did you think it folly
To keep your great pretences veiled till when
They needs must show themselves, which, in the hatching,
It seemed, appeared to Rome. By the discovery
We shall be shortened in our aim, which was
To take in many towns ere almost Rome
Should know we were afoot.

SECOND SENATOR.
Noble Aufidius,
Take your commission; hie you to your bands.
Let us alone to guard Corioles.

If they set down before's, for the remove
Bring up 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 Martius chance to meet,
'Tis sworn between us we shall ever strike
Till one can do no more.

ALL.
The gods assist you!

AUFIDIUS.
And keep your Honours safe!

FIRST SENATOR.
Farewell.

SECOND SENATOR.
Farewell.

ALL.
Farewell.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE III. Rome. An apartment in Martius' house

Enter Volumnia and Virgilia, mother and wife to Martius. 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 th' 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 Martius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

Enter a Gentlewoman.

GENTLEWOMAN.
Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIRGILIA.
Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA.
Indeed you shall not.
Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum,
See him pluck Aufidius down by th' 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 mailed hand then wiping, forth he goes
Like to a harvestman that's tasked to mow
Or all or lose his hire.

VIRGILIA.
His bloody brow? O Jupiter, no blood!

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

[*Exit Gentlewoman*.]

VIRGILIA.
Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

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

Enter Valeria with an Usher and a Gentlewoman.

VALERIA.
My ladies both, good day to you.

VOLUMNIA.
Sweet madam.

VIRGILIA.
I am glad to see your Ladyship.

VALERIA.
How do you both? You are manifest housekeepers. 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 schoolmaster.

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. H'as 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 up again, catched it again. Or whether his fall enraged him or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it. O, I warrant how he mammocked it!

VOLUMNIA.
One on's father's moods.

VALERIA.
Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

VIRGILIA.
A crack, madam.

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

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

VALERIA.
Not out of doors?

VOLUMNIA.
She shall, she shall.

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

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

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

VOLUMNIA.
Why, I pray you?

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

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

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

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

VIRGILIA.
O, good madam, there can be none yet.

VALERIA.
Verily, I do not jest with you. There came news from him last night.

VIRGILIA.
Indeed, madam!

VALERIA.
In earnest, it's true. I heard a senator speak it. Thus it is: the Volsces have an army forth, against whom Cominius the General is gone with one part of our Roman power. Your lord and Titus Lartius are set down before their city Corioles. 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 solemness 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 Corioles

Enter Martius, Titus Lartius, with drum and colours, with Captains and Soldiers, as before the city of Corioles. To them a Messenger.

MARTIUS.
Yonder comes news. A wager they have met.

LARTIUS.
My horse to yours, no.

MARTIUS.
'Tis done.

LARTIUS.
Agreed.

MARTIUS.
[*To Messenger*.] Say, has our general met the enemy?

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

LARTIUS.
So the good horse is mine.

MARTIUS.
I'll buy him of you.

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

MARTIUS.
How far off lie these armies?

MESSENGER.
Within this mile and half.

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

[*They sound a parley.*]

Enter two Senators with others on the walls of Corioles.

Tullus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

FIRST SENATOR.
No, nor a man that fears you less than he:
That's lesser than a little.
[*Drum afar off.*]
Hark, our drums
Are bringing forth our youth. We'll break our walls
Rather than they shall pound us up. Our gates,
Which yet seem shut, we have but pinned with rushes.
They'll open of themselves.
[*Alarum far off.*]
Hark you, far off!
There is Aufidius. List what work he makes
Amongst your cloven army.

MARTIUS.
O, they are at it!

LARTIUS.
Their noise be our instruction.—Ladders, ho!

Enter the Army of the Volsces as through the city gates.

MARTIUS.
They fear us not but issue forth their city.—
Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight
With hearts more proof than shields.—Advance, brave Titus.

They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,
Which makes me sweat with wrath.—Come on, my fellows!
He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsce,
And he shall feel mine edge.

[*Alarums. The Romans are beat back to their trenches. They exit, with the Volsces following.*]

Enter Martius cursing, with Roman soldiers.

MARTIUS.
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 abhorred
Farther than seen, and one infect another
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!
All hurt behind. Backs red, and faces pale
With flight and agued fear! Mend, and charge home,
Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe
And make my wars on you. Look to't. Come on!
If you'll stand fast we'll beat them to their wives,
As they us to our trenches. Follow's!

[*Another alarum. The Volsces re-enter and are driven back to the gates of Corioles, which open to admit them.*]

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

[*Martius follows the fleeing Volsces through the gates, and is shut in.*]

FIRST SOLDIER.
Foolhardiness, not I.

SECOND SOLDIER.
Nor I.

FIRST SOLDIER.
See, they have shut him in.

[*Alarum continues.*]

ALL.
To th' pot, I warrant him.

Enter Titus Lartius.

LARTIUS.
What is become of Martius?

ALL.
Slain, sir, doubtless.

FIRST SOLDIER.
Following the fliers at the very heels,
With them he enters, who upon the sudden
Clapped to their gates. He is himself alone,
To answer all the city.

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

Enter Martius, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy.

FIRST SOLDIER.
Look, sir.

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

[*They fight, and all enter the city.*]

SCENE V. Within Corioles. A street

Enter certain Romans, with spoils.

FIRST ROMAN.
This will I carry to Rome.

SECOND ROMAN.
And I this.

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

Enter Martius and Titus Lartius with a Trumpet.

MARTIUS.
See here these movers that do prize their hours
At a cracked drachma. Cushions, leaden spoons,
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would
Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up. Down with them!

[*Exit the Romans with spoils.*]
[*Alarum continues still afar off.*]

And hark, what noise the General makes! To him!
There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius,
Piercing our Romans. Then, valiant Titus, take
Convenient numbers to make good the city,
Whilst I, with those that have the spirit, will haste
To help Cominius.

LARTIUS.
Worthy sir, thou bleed'st.
Thy exercise hath been too violent
For a second course of fight.

MARTIUS.
Sir, praise me not.
My work hath yet not warmed me. Fare you well.

The blood I drop is rather physical
Than dangerous to me. To Aufidius thus
I will appear and fight.

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

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

LARTIUS.
Thou worthiest Martius!

[*Exit Martius.*]

Go sound thy trumpet in the marketplace.
Call thither all the officers o' th' town,
Where they shall know our mind. Away!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI. Near the camp of Cominius

Enter Cominius as it were in retire, with Soldiers.

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

Enter a Messenger.

Thy news?

MESSENGER.
The citizens of Corioles have issued,
And given to Lartius and to Martius battle.
I saw our party to their trenches driven,
And then I came away.

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

MESSENGER.
Above an hour, my lord.

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

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

[*Exit Messenger*.]

Enter Martius, bloody.

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

MARTIUS.
Come I too late?

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

MARTIUS.
Come I too late?

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

MARTIUS.
O, let me clip you
In arms as sound as when I wooed, in heart
As merry as when our nuptial day was done
And tapers burned to bedward!

COMINIUS.
Flower of warriors, how is't with Titus Lartius?

MARTIUS.
As with a man busied about decrees,
Condemning some to death and some to exile;
Ransoming him or pitying, threat'ning the other;
Holding Corioles in the name of Rome
Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,
To let him slip at will.

COMINIUS.
Where is that slave
Which told me they had beat you to your trenches?
Where's he? Call him hither.

MARTIUS.
Let him alone.
He did inform the truth. But for our gentlemen,
The common file—a plague! Tribunes for them!—
The mouse ne'er shunned the cat as they did budge
From rascals worse than they.

COMINIUS.
But how prevailed you?

MARTIUS.
Will the time serve to tell? I do not think.

Where is the enemy? Are you lords o' th' field?
If not, why cease you till you are so?

COMINIUS.
Martius, we have at disadvantage fought,
And did retire to win our purpose.

MARTIUS.
How lies their battle? Know you on which side
They have placed their men of trust?

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

MARTIUS.
I do beseech you,
By all the battles wherein we have fought,
By th' blood we have shed together, by th' 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.

MARTIUS.
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 smeared; if any fear
Lesser his person than an ill report;

If any think brave death outweighs bad life,
And that his country's dearer than himself;
Let him alone, or so many so minded,
Wave thus to express his disposition
And follow Martius.

[*He waves his sword.*]

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

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

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

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. The gates of Corioles

Titus Lartius, having set a guard upon Corioles, going with drum and trumpet toward Cominius and Caius Martius, enters with a Lieutenant, other Soldiers, and a Scout.

LARTIUS.
So, let the ports be guarded. Keep your duties
As I have set them down. If I do send, dispatch
Those centuries to our aid; the rest will serve

For a short holding. If we lose the field,
We cannot keep the town.

LIEUTENANT.
Fear not our care, sir.

LARTIUS.
Hence, and shut your gates upon's.
Our guider, come. To th' Roman camp conduct us.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE VIII. A field of battle between the Roman and the Volscian camps

Alarum, as in battle. Enter Martius and Aufidius at several doors.

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

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

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

AUFIDIUS.
If I fly, Martius,
Hollo me like a hare.

MARTIUS.
Within these three hours, Tullus,
Alone I fought in your Corioles' walls,
And made what work I pleased. 'Tis not my blood
Wherein thou seest me masked. For thy revenge
Wrench up thy power to th' highest.

AUFIDIUS.
Wert thou the Hector
That was the whip of your bragged progeny,
Thou shouldst not scape me here.

[*Here they fight, and certain Volsces come to the aid of Aufidius.*]

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

[*Martius fights till they be driven in breathless. Aufidius and Martius exit, separately.*]

SCENE IX. The Roman camp

Alarum. A retreat is sounded. Flourish. Enter, at one door, Cominius with the Romans; at another door, Martius, with his arm in a scarf.

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

Enter Titus Lartius with his power, from the pursuit.

LARTIUS.
O general,
Here is the steed, we the caparison.
Hadst thou beheld—

MARTIUS.
Pray now, no more. My mother,
Who has a charter to extol her blood,

When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
As you have done—that's what I can;
Induced as you have been—that's for my country.
He that has but effected his good will
Hath overta'en mine act.

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

MARTIUS.
I have some wounds upon me, and they smart
To hear themselves remembered.

COMINIUS.
Should they not,
Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude
And tent themselves with death. Of all the horses—
Whereof we have ta'en good and good store—of all
The treasure in this field achieved and city,
We render you the tenth, to be ta'en forth
Before the common distribution
At your only choice.

MARTIUS.
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 "Martius, Martius!" and cast up their caps and lances. Cominius and Lartius stand bare.*]

May these same instruments which, you profane,
Never sound more! When drums and trumpets shall
I' th' field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be
Made all of false-faced soothing! When steel grows soft
Soft as the parasite's silk, let him be made
An ovator for the wars! No more, I say.
For that I have not washed my nose that bled,
Or foiled some debile wretch—which, without note,
Here's many else have done—you shout me forth
In acclamations hyperbolical,
As if I loved my little should be dieted
In praises sauced with lies.

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

[*Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums.*]

ALL.
Caius Martius 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 th' 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 Corioles back. Send us to Rome
The best, with whom we may articulate
For their own good and ours.

LARTIUS.
I shall, my lord.

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

COMINIUS.
Take't, 'tis yours. What is't?

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

COMINIUS.
O, well begged!
Were he the butcher of my son, he should
Be free as is the wind.—Deliver him, Titus.

LARTIUS.
Martius, his name?

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

COMINIUS.
Go we to our tent.
The blood upon your visage dries; 'tis time
It should be looked to. Come.

[*A flourish of cornets. Exeunt.*]

SCENE X. The camp of the Volsces

A flourish. Cornets. Enter Tullus Aufidius, bloody, with two or three soldiers.

AUFIDIUS.
The town is ta'en.

SOLDIER.
'Twill be delivered back on good condition.

AUFIDIUS.
Condition?
I would I were a Roman, for I cannot,
Being a Volsce, be that I am. Condition?
What good condition can a treaty find
I' th' part that is at mercy? Five times, Martius,
I have fought with thee; so often hast thou beat me
And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter
As often as we eat. By th' 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.

SOLDIER.
He's the devil.

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

SOLDIER.
Will not you go?

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

SOLDIER.
I shall, sir.

[*Exeunt*.]

ACT II

SCENE I. Rome. A public place

Enter Menenius with the two Tribunes of the people, Sicinius and Brutus.

MENENIUS.
The augurer tells me we shall have news tonight.

BRUTUS.
Good or bad?

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

SICINIUS.
Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

MENENIUS.
Pray you, who does the wolf love?

SICINIUS.
The lamb.

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

BRUTUS.
He's a lamb indeed, that baas like a bear.

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.
Well, sir.

MENENIUS.
In what enormity is Martius poor in, that you two have not in abundance?

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

SICINIUS.
Especially in pride.

BRUTUS.
And topping all others in boasting.

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.
Why, how are we censured?

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.
Well, well, sir, well?

MENENIUS.
Why, 'tis no great matter; for a very little thief of occasion will rob you of a great deal of patience. Give your dispositions the reins, and be angry at your pleasures, at the least, if you take it as a pleasure to you in being so. You blame Martius 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 infantlike for doing much alone. You talk of pride. O that you could turn your eyes toward the napes of your necks and make but an interior survey of your good selves! O, that you could!

BOTH TRIBUNES.
What then, sir?

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

SICINIUS.
Menenius, you are known well enough, too.

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

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

MENENIUS.
You know neither me, yourselves, nor anything. You are ambitious for poor knaves' caps and legs. You wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a cause between an orange-wife and a faucet-seller, and then rejourn the controversy of threepence to a second day of audience. When you are hearing a matter between party and party, if you chance to be pinched with the colic, you make faces like mummers, set up the bloody flag against all patience, and, in roaring for a chamber pot, dismiss the controversy bleeding, the more entangled by your hearing. All the peace you make in their cause is calling both the parties knaves. You are a pair of strange ones.

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

MENENIUS.
Our very priests must become mockers if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When you speak best unto the purpose, it is not worth the wagging of your beards, and your beards deserve not so honourable a grave as to stuff a botcher's cushion or to be entombed in an ass's packsaddle. Yet you must be saying Martius is proud, who, in a cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors since Deucalion, though peradventure some of the best of 'em were hereditary hangmen. Good e'en 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.

[*He begins to exit. Brutus and Sicinius stand 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 Martius approaches. For the love of Juno, let's go!

MENENIUS.
Ha? Martius coming home?

VOLUMNIA.
Ay, worthy Menenius, and with most prosperous approbation.

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

VALERIA, VIRGILIA.
Nay, 'tis true.

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

MENENIUS.
I will make my very house reel tonight. A letter for me?

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

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

VIRGILIA.
O, no, no, no!

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

MENENIUS.
So do I too, if it be not too much. Brings he victory in his pocket, the wounds become him.

VOLUMNIA.
On's brows, Menenius. He comes the third time home with the oaken garland.

MENENIUS.
Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

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

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

VOLUMNIA.
Good ladies, let's go.—Yes, yes, yes. The Senate has letters from the General, wherein he gives my son the whole name of the war. He hath in this action outdone his former deeds doubly.

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

MENENIUS.
Wondrous? Ay, I warrant you, and not without his true purchasing.

VIRGILIA.
The gods grant them true.

VOLUMNIA.
True? Pow, waw!

MENENIUS.
True? I'll be sworn they are true. Where is he wounded? [*To the Tribunes.*] God save your good Worships! Martius is coming home; he has more cause to be proud.—Where is he wounded?

VOLUMNIA.
I' th' shoulder and i' th' 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' th' body.

MENENIUS.
One i' th' neck and two i' th' thigh—there's nine that I know.

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

MENENIUS.
Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash was an enemy's grave.

[*A shout and flourish.*]

Hark, the trumpets!

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

[*A sennet.*]

Enter Cominius the General and Titus Lartius, between them Coriolanus crowned with an oaken garland, with Captains and Soldiers and a Herald. Trumpets sound.

HERALD.
Know, Rome, that all alone Martius did fight
Within Corioles' gates, where he hath won,
With fame, a name to Caius Martius; these
In honour follows "Coriolanus."
Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus.

[*Sound flourish.*]

ALL.
Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

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

COMINIUS.
Look, sir, your mother.

CORIOLANUS.
O,
You have, I know, petitioned all the gods
For my prosperity.

[*Kneels.*]

VOLUMNIA.
Nay, my good soldier, up.

[*He stands.*]

My gentle Martius, worthy Caius, and
By deed-achieving honour newly named—
What is it? Coriolanus must I call thee?
But, O, thy wife—

CORIOLANUS.
My gracious silence, hail.
Wouldst thou have laughed had I come coffined home,

That weep'st to see me triumph? Ah, my dear,
Such eyes the widows in Corioles wear
And mothers that lack sons.

MENENIUS.
Now the gods crown thee!

CORIOLANUS.
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 you're welcome all.

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

COMINIUS.
Ever right.

CORIOLANUS.
Menenius ever, ever.

HERALD.
Give way there, and go on!

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

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

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

COMINIUS.
On, to the Capitol.

[*Flourish of cornets. Exeunt in state, as before.*]

Brutus and Sicinius come forward.

BRUTUS.
All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights
Are spectacled to see him. Your prattling nurse
Into a rapture lets her baby cry
While she chats him. The kitchen malkin pins
Her richest lockram 'bout her reechy neck,
Clamb'ring the walls to eye him. Stalls, bulks, windows
Are smothered up, leads filled, and ridges horsed
With variable complexions, all agreeing
In earnestness to see him. Seld-shown flamens
Do press among the popular throngs and puff
To win a vulgar station. Our veiled dames
Commit the war of white and damask in
Their nicely-gauded cheeks to th' wanton spoil
Of Phoebus' burning kisses. Such a pother,
As if that whatsoever god who leads him
Were slyly crept into his human powers
And gave him graceful posture.

SICINIUS.
On the sudden
I warrant him consul.

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

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

BRUTUS.
In that there's comfort.

SICINIUS.
Doubt not the commoners, for whom we stand,
But they, upon their ancient malice will forget
With the least cause these his new honours—which
That he will give them make 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' th' marketplace nor on him put
The napless vesture of humility,
Nor showing, as the manner is, his wounds
To th' people, beg their stinking breaths.

SICINIUS.
'Tis right.

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

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

BRUTUS.
'Tis most like he will.

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

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

SICINIUS.
This, as you say, suggested
At some time when his soaring insolence
Shall touch the people—which time shall not want
If it be put upon't, and that's as easy
As to set dogs on sheep—will be his fire
To kindle their dry stubble, and their blaze
Shall darken him for ever.

Enter a Messenger.

BRUTUS.
What's the matter?

MESSENGER.
You are sent for to the Capitol. 'Tis thought
That Martius shall be consul. I have seen
The dumb men throng to see him, and the blind
to hear him speak; matrons flung gloves,
Ladies and maids their scarves and handkerchiefs,
Upon him as he passed; the nobles bended
As to Jove's statue, and the Commons made

A shower and thunder with their caps and shouts.
I never saw the like.

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

SICINIUS.
Have with you.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE II. Rome. The Capitol

Enter two Officers, to lay cushions, as it were in the Capitol.

FIRST OFFICER.
Come, come. They are almost here. How many stand for consulships?

SECOND OFFICER.
Three, they say; but 'tis thought of everyone Coriolanus will carry it.

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

SECOND OFFICER.
'Faith, there have been many great men that have flattered the people who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved they know not wherefore; so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better a ground. Therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition and, out of his noble carelessness, lets them plainly see't.

FIRST OFFICER.
If he did not care whether he had their love or no, he waved indifferently 'twixt doing them neither good nor harm; but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it him and

leaves nothing undone that may fully discover him their opposite. Now, to seem to affect the malice and displeasure of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes, to flatter them for their love.

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

FIRST OFFICER.
No more of him; he's a worthy man. Make way. They are coming.

A sennet. Enter the Patricians and the Tribunes of the people, Lictors before them; Coriolanus, Menenius, Cominius the consul. The Patricians sit. Sicinius and Brutus 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 performed
By Martius Caius Coriolanus, whom
We met here both to thank and to remember
With honours like himself.

[*Coriolanus sits.*]

FIRST SENATOR.
Speak, good Cominius.
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think

Rather our state's defective for requital,
Than we to stretch it out. Masters o' th' people,
We do request your kindest ears and, after,
Your loving motion toward the common body
To yield what passes here.

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

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

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

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

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

[*Coriolanus rises, and offers to go away.*]

Nay, keep your place.

FIRST SENATOR.
Sit, Coriolanus. Never shame to hear
What you have nobly done.

CORIOLANUS.
Your Honours, pardon.
I had rather have my wounds to heal again
Than hear say how I got them.

BRUTUS.
Sir, I hope
My words disbenched you not?

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

MENENIUS.
Pray now, sit down.

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

[*Exit*.]

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

COMINIUS.
I shall lack voice. The deeds of Coriolanus
Should not be uttered feebly. It is held
That valour is the chiefest virtue and
Most dignifies the haver; if it be,
The man I speak of cannot in the world
Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,
When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought
Beyond the mark of others. Our then dictator,

Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight
When with his Amazonian chin he drove
The bristled lips before him. He bestrid
An o'erpressed Roman and i' th' Consul's view
Slew three opposers. Tarquin's self he met
And struck him on his knee. In that day's feats,
When he might act the woman in the scene,
He proved best man i' th' field and for his meed
Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
Man-entered thus, he waxed like a sea,
And in the brunt of seventeen battles since
He lurched all swords of the garland. For this last,
Before and in Corioles, let me say,
I cannot speak him home. He stopped the flyers
And by his rare example made the coward
Turn terror into sport. As weeds before
A vessel under sail, so men obeyed
And fell below his stem. His sword, Death's stamp,
Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
Was timed with dying cries. Alone he entered
The mortal gate o' th' city, which he painted
With shunless destiny; aidless came off
And with a sudden reinforcement struck
Corioles like a planet. Now all's his,
When by and by the din of war gan pierce
His ready sense; then straight his doubled spirit
Requickened what in flesh was fatigate,
And to the battle came he, where he did
Run reeking o'er the lives of men as if
'Twere a perpetual spoil; and till we called
Both field and city ours, he never stood
To ease his breast with panting.

MENENIUS.
Worthy man!

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

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

MENENIUS.
He's right noble.
Let him be called for.

FIRST SENATOR.
Call Coriolanus.

OFFICER.
He doth appear.

Enter Coriolanus.

MENENIUS.
The Senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased
To make thee consul.

CORIOLANUS.
I do owe them still
My life and services.

MENENIUS.
It then remains
That you do speak to the people.

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

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
It is a part
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 th' unaching scars which I should hide,
As if I had received them for the hire
Of their breath only!

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

SENATORS.
To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

[*Flourish cornets. Exeunt all but Sicinius and Brutus.*]

BRUTUS.
You see how he intends to use the people.

SICINIUS.
May they perceive's intent! He will require them

As if he did contemn what he requested
Should be in them to give.

BRUTUS.
Come, we'll inform them
Of our proceedings here. On th' marketplace
I know they do attend us.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE III. Rome. The Forum

Enter seven or eight Citizens.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.
We may, sir, if we will.

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

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

THIRD CITIZEN.
We have been called so of many; not that our heads are some brown, some black, some auburn, some bald, but that our wits are so diversely coloured; and truly I think if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their

consent of one direct way should be at once to all the points o' th' compass.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.
Nay, your wit will not so soon out as another man's will; 'tis strongly wedged up in a blockhead. But if it were at liberty, 'twould, sure, southward.

SECOND CITIZEN.
Why that way?

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

SECOND CITIZEN.
You are never without your tricks. You may, you may.

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

Enter Coriolanus in a gown of humility, with Menenius.

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

ALL.
Content, content.

[*Exeunt.*]

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 roared and ran
From th’ noise of our own drums.”

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

CORIOLANUS.
Think upon me! Hang ’em!
I would they would forget me, like the virtues
Which our divines lose by ’em.

MENENIUS.
You’ll mar all.
I’ll leave you. Pray you speak to ’em, I pray you,
In wholesome manner.

[*Exit Menenius.*]

CORIOLANUS.
Bid them wash their faces
And keep their teeth clean.

Enter three of the Citizens.

So, here comes a brace.
You know the cause, sirs, of my standing here.

THIRD CITIZEN.
We do, sir. Tell us what hath brought you to’t.

CORIOLANUS.
Mine own desert.

SECOND CITIZEN.
Your own desert?

CORIOLANUS.
Ay, but not mine own desire.

THIRD CITIZEN.
How, not your own desire?

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
Well then, I pray, your price o' th' consulship?

FIRST CITIZEN.
The price is to ask it kindly.

CORIOLANUS.
Kindly, sir, I pray, let me ha't. I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private.—Your good voice, sir. What say you?

SECOND CITIZEN.
You shall ha' it, worthy sir.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.
But this is something odd.

SECOND CITIZEN.
An 'twere to give again—but 'tis no matter.

[*Exeunt two citizens.*]

Enter two other Citizens.

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
Your enigma?

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

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

FIFTH CITIZEN.
We hope to find you our friend, and therefore give you our voices heartily.

FOURTH CITIZEN.
You have received many wounds for your country.

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

BOTH CITIZENS.
The gods give you joy, sir, heartily.

[*Exeunt citizens*.]

CORIOLANUS.
Most sweet voices!
Better it is to die, better to starve,
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.
Why in this wolvish toge should I stand here

To beg of Hob and Dick that does appear
Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to't.
What custom wills, in all things should we do't?
The dust on antique time would lie unswept
And mountainous error be too highly heaped
For truth to o'erpeer. Rather than fool it so,
Let the high office and the honour go
To one that would do thus. I am half through;
The one part suffered, the other will I do.

Enter three Citizens more.

Here come more voices.
Your voices! For your voices I have fought;
Watched for your voices; for your voices bear
Of wounds two dozen odd. Battles thrice six
I have seen and heard of; for your voices have
Done many things, some less, some more. Your voices!
Indeed, I would be consul.

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

SEVENTH CITIZEN.
Therefore let him be consul. The gods give him joy, and make him good friend to the people!

ALL THREE CITIZENS.
Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul.

[*Exeunt citizens.*]

CORIOLANUS.
Worthy voices!

Enter Menenius with Brutus and Sicinius.

MENENIUS.
You have stood your limitation, and the Tribunes
Endue you with the people's voice. Remains

That in th' official marks invested, you
Anon do meet the Senate.

CORIOLANUS.
Is this done?

SICINIUS.
The custom of request you have discharged.
The people do admit you, and are summoned
To meet anon upon your approbation.

CORIOLANUS.
Where? At the Senate House?

SICINIUS.
There, Coriolanus.

CORIOLANUS.
May I change these garments?

SICINIUS.
You may, sir.

CORIOLANUS.
That I'll straight do and, knowing myself again,
Repair to th' Senate House.

MENENIUS.
I'll keep you company.—Will you along?

BRUTUS.
We stay here for the people.

SICINIUS.
Fare you well.

[*Exeunt Coriolanus and Menenius.*]

He has it now; and by his looks, methinks,
'Tis warm at his heart.

BRUTUS.
With a proud heart he wore
His humble weeds. Will you dismiss the people?

Enter the Pebleians.

SICINIUS.
How now, my masters, have you chose this man?

FIRST CITIZEN.
He has our voices, sir.

BRUTUS.
We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

SECOND CITIZEN.
Amen, sir. To my poor unworthy notice,
He mocked us when he begged our voices.

THIRD CITIZEN.
Certainly, he flouted us downright.

FIRST CITIZEN.
No, 'tis his kind of speech. He did not mock us.

SECOND CITIZEN.
Not one amongst us, save yourself, but says
He used us scornfully. He should have showed us
His marks of merit, wounds received for's country.

SICINIUS.
Why, so he did, I am sure.

ALL.
No, no. No man saw 'em.

THIRD CITIZEN.
He said he had wounds, which he could show in private,
And with his hat, thus waving it in scorn,
"I would be consul," says he; "aged custom,
But by your voices, will not so permit me;
Your voices therefore." When we granted that,
Here was "I thank you for your voices. Thank you.

Your most sweet voices! Now you have left your voices,
I have no further with you." Was not this mockery?

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

BRUTUS.
Could you not have told him
As you were lessoned? 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' th' body of the weal; and, now arriving
A place of potency and sway o' th' state,
If he should still malignantly remain
Fast foe to th' plebeii, your voices might
Be curses to yourselves. You should have said
That as his worthy deeds did claim no less
Than what he stood for, so his gracious nature
Would think upon you for your voices, and
Translate his malice towards you into love,
Standing your friendly lord.

SICINIUS.
Thus to have said,
As you were fore-advised, had touched his spirit
And tried his inclination; from him plucked
Either his gracious promise, which you might,
As cause had called you up, have held him to;
Or else it would have galled his surly nature,
Which easily endures not article
Tying him to aught. So putting him to rage,
You should have ta'en th' advantage of his choler
And passed him unelected.

BRUTUS.
Did you perceive

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

SICINIUS.
Have you ere now denied the asker, and now
Again, of him that did not ask but mock,
Bestow your sued-for tongues?

THIRD CITIZEN.
He's not confirmed.
We may deny him yet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALL.
We will so. Almost all
Repent in their election.

[*Exeunt Plebeians.*]

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

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

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

SCENE I. Rome. A street

Cornets. Enter Coriolanus, Menenius, all the Gentry, Cominius, Titus Lartius and other Senators.

CORIOLANUS.
Tullus Aufidius then had made new head?

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

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
Saw you Aufidius?

LARTIUS.
On safeguard he came to me, and did curse
Against the Volsces, for they had so vilely
Yielded the town. He is retired to Antium.

CORIOLANUS.
Spoke he of me?

LARTIUS.
He did, my lord.

CORIOLANUS.
How? What?

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

CORIOLANUS.
At Antium lives he?

LARTIUS.
At Antium.

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

Enter Sicinius and Brutus.

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

SICINIUS.
Pass no further.

CORIOLANUS.
Ha? What is that?

BRUTUS.
It will be dangerous to go on. No further.

CORIOLANUS.
What makes this change?

MENENIUS.
The matter?

COMINIUS.
Hath he not passed the noble and the common?

BRUTUS.
Cominius, no.

CORIOLANUS.
Have I had children's voices?

FIRST SENATOR.
Tribunes, give way. He shall to the marketplace.

BRUTUS.
The people are incensed against him.

SICINIUS.
Stop,
Or all will fall in broil.

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

MENENIUS.
Be calm, be calm.

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

BRUTUS.
Call't not a plot.
The people cry you mocked them; and, of late,
When corn was given them gratis, you repined,
Scandaled the suppliants for the people, called them
Timepleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

CORIOLANUS.
Why, this was known before.

BRUTUS.
Not to them all.

CORIOLANUS.
Have you informed them sithence?

BRUTUS.
How? I inform them?

COMINIUS.
You are like to do such business.

BRUTUS.
Not unlike, each way, to better yours.

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

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

MENENIUS.
Let's be calm.

COMINIUS.
The people are abused, set on. This palt'ring
Becomes not Rome, nor has Coriolanus
Deserved this so dishonoured rub, laid falsely
I' th' plain way of his merit.

CORIOLANUS.
Tell me of corn?
This was my speech, and I will speak't again.

MENENIUS.
Not now, not now.

FIRST SENATOR.
Not in this heat, sir, now.

CORIOLANUS.
Now, as I live, I will.
My nobler friends, I crave their pardons. For
The mutable, rank-scented many, let them
Regard me, as I do not flatter, and
Therein behold themselves. I say again,
In soothing them we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
Which we ourselves have ploughed for, sowed, and scattered
By mingling them with us, the honoured number,
Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that
Which they have given to beggars.

MENENIUS.
Well, no more.

FIRST SENATOR.
No more words, we beseech you.

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

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

SICINIUS.
'Twere well
We let the people know't.

MENENIUS.
What, what? His choler?

CORIOLANUS.
Choler?

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
"Shall remain"?
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? Mark you
His absolute "shall"?

COMINIUS.
'Twas from the canon.

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

May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by th' other.

COMINIUS.
Well, on to th' marketplace.

CORIOLANUS.
Whoever gave that counsel to give forth
The corn o' th' storehouse gratis, as 'twas used
Sometime in Greece—

MENENIUS.
Well, well, no more of that.

CORIOLANUS.
Though there the people had more absolute power,
I say they nourished disobedience, fed
The ruin of the state.

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

CORIOLANUS.
I'll give my reasons,
More worthier than their voices. They know the corn
Was not our recompense, resting well assured
They ne'er did service for't. Being pressed to th' war,
Even when the navel of the state was touched,
They would not thread the gates. This kind of service
Did not deserve corn gratis. Being i' th' war,
Their mutinies and revolts, wherein they showed
Most valour, spoke not for them. Th' accusation
Which they have often made against the Senate,
All cause unborn, could never be the native
Of our so frank donation. Well, what then?
How shall this bosom multitude digest
The senate's courtesy? Let deeds express
What's like to be their words: "We did request it;
We are the greater poll, and in true fear

They gave us our demands.” Thus we debase
The nature of our seats and make the rabble
Call our cares fears, which will in time
Break ope the locks o’ th’ Senate and bring in
The crows to peck the eagles.

MENENIUS.
Come, enough.

BRUTUS.
Enough, with over-measure.

CORIOLANUS.
No, take more!
What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal what I end withal! This double worship—
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
Insult without all reason, where gentry, title, wisdom
Cannot conclude but by the yea and no
Of general ignorance—it must omit
Real necessities and give way the while
To unstable slightness. Purpose so barred, 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 th’ ill which doth control’t.

BRUTUS.
’Has said enough.

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

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

BRUTUS.
Manifest treason.

SICINIUS.
This a consul? No.

BRUTUS.
The aediles, ho! Let him be apprehended.

Enter an Aedile.

SICINIUS.
Go call the people;

[*Exit Aedile*.]

in whose name myself
Attach thee as a traitorous innovator,
A foe to th' public weal. Obey, I charge thee,
And follow to thine answer.

CORIOLANUS.
Hence, old goat.

ALL PATRICIANS.
We'll surety him.

COMINIUS.
[*to Sicinius*.] Aged sir, hands off.

CORIOLANUS.
[*to Sicinius*.] Hence, rotten thing, or I shall shake thy bones
Out of thy garments.

SICINIUS.
Help, ye citizens!

Enter a rabble of Plebeians with the Aediles.

MENENIUS.
On both sides more respect!

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

BRUTUS.
Seize him, aediles.

ALL PLEBEIANS.
Down with him, down with him!

SECOND SENATOR.
Weapons, weapons, weapons!

[*They all bustle about Coriolanus*.]

Tribunes, patricians, citizens, what, ho!
Sicinius, Brutus, Coriolanus, citizens!

ALL.
Peace, peace, peace! Stay, hold, peace!

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

SICINIUS.
Hear me, people! Peace!

ALL PLEBEIANS.
Let's hear our tribune. Peace! Speak, speak, speak.

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

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

FIRST SENATOR.
To unbuild the city and to lay all flat.

SICINIUS.
What is the city but the people?

ALL PLEBEIANS.
True,
The people are the city.

BRUTUS.
By the consent of all, we were established
The people's magistrates.

ALL PLEBEIANS.
You so remain.

MENENIUS.
And so are like to do.

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

SICINIUS.
This deserves death.

BRUTUS.
Or let us stand to our authority
Or let us lose it. We do here pronounce,
Upon the part o' th' people, in whose power

We were elected theirs, Martius is worthy
Of present death.

SICINIUS.
Therefore lay hold of him,
Bear him to th' rock Tarpeian, and from thence
Into destruction cast him.

BRUTUS.
Aediles, seize him!

ALL PLEBEIANS.
Yield, Martius, yield!

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

AEDILES.
Peace, peace!

MENENIUS.
Be that you seem, truly your country's friend,
And temp'rately 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 draws his sword.*]

CORIOLANUS.
No; I'll die here.
There's some among you have beheld me fighting.
Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.

MENENIUS.
Down with that sword!—Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

BRUTUS.
Lay hands upon him!

MENENIUS.
Help Martius, help!
You that be noble, help him, young and old!

ALL PLEBEIANS.
Down with him, down with him!

[*In this mutiny the Tribunes, the Aediles and the People are beat in.*]

MENENIUS.
Go, get you to your house. Begone, away.
All will be naught else.

SECOND SENATOR.
Get you gone.

CORIOLANUS.
Stand fast!
We have as many friends as enemies.

MENENIUS.
Shall it be put to that?

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

MENENIUS.
For 'tis a sore upon us
You cannot tent yourself. Begone, beseech you.

COMINIUS.
Come, sir, along with us.

CORIOLANUS.
I would they were barbarians, as they are,
Though in Rome littered, not Romans, as they are not,
Though calved i' th' porch o' th' Capitol.

MENENIUS.
Begone!
Put not your worthy rage into your tongue.
One time will owe another.

CORIOLANUS.
On fair ground
I could beat forty of them.

MENENIUS.
I could myself
Take up a brace o' th' best of them, yea, the two tribunes.

COMINIUS.
But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic,
And manhood is called foolery when it stands
Against a falling fabric. Will you hence,
Before the tag return, whose rage doth rend
Like interrupted waters, and o'erbear
What they are used to bear?

MENENIUS.
Pray you, begone.
I'll try whether my old wit be in request
With those that have but little. This must be patched
With cloth of any colour.

COMINIUS.
Nay, come away.

[*Exeunt Coriolanus and Cominius.*]

PATRICIAN.
This man has marred his fortune.

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

[*A noise within.*]

Here's goodly work.

PATRICIAN.
I would they were abed!

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

Enter Brutus and Sicinius with the rabble again.

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

MENENIUS.
You worthy tribunes—

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

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

ALL PLEBEIANS.
He shall, sure on't.

MENENIUS.
Sir, sir—

SICINIUS.
Peace!

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

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

MENENIUS.
Hear me speak.
As I do know the Consul's worthiness,
So can I name his faults.

SICINIUS.
Consul? What consul?

MENENIUS.
The consul Coriolanus.

BRUTUS.
He consul?

ALL PLEBEIANS.
No, no, no, no, no!

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

SICINIUS.
Speak briefly then,
For we are peremptory to dispatch
This viperous traitor. To eject him hence
Were but one danger, and to keep him here
Our certain death. Therefore it is decreed
He dies tonight.

MENENIUS.
Now the good gods forbid
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude

Towards her deserved children is enrolled
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam
Should now eat up her own.

SICINIUS.
He's a disease that must be cut away.

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

SICINIUS.
This is clean cam.

BRUTUS.
Merely awry. When he did love his country,
It honoured him.

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

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

MENENIUS.
One word more, one word!
This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find
The harm of unscanned swiftness, will too late,

Tie leaden pounds to's heels. Proceed by process,
Lest parties—as he is beloved—break out
And sack great Rome with Romans.

BRUTUS.
If it were so—

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

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

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

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

BRUTUS.
Go not home.

SICINIUS.
Meet on the marketplace. We'll attend you there,
Where if you bring not Martius, we'll proceed
In our first way.

MENENIUS.
I'll bring him to you.
[*To Senators.*] Let me desire your company. He must come,
Or what is worst will follow.

FIRST SENATOR.
Pray you, let's to him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. Rome. A room in Coriolanus's house

Enter Coriolanus with Nobles.

CORIOLANUS.
Let them pull 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.

FIRST PATRICIAN.
You do the nobler.

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

Enter Volumnia.

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
Let go.

VOLUMNIA.
You might have been enough the man you are
With striving less to be so. Lesser had been
The thwartings of your dispositions if
You had not showed them how ye were disposed
Ere they lacked power to cross you.

CORIOLANUS.
Let them hang!

VOLUMNIA.
Ay, and burn too.

Enter Menenius with the Senators.

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

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

VOLUMNIA.
Pray be counselled.
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 th' herd—but that
The violent fit o' th' 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 th' Tribunes.

CORIOLANUS.
Well, what then? What then?

MENENIUS.
Repent what you have spoke.

CORIOLANUS.
For them? I cannot do it to the gods.
Must I then do't to them?

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

CORIOLANUS.
Tush, tush!

MENENIUS.
A good demand.

VOLUMNIA.
If it be honour in your wars to seem
The same you are not, which for your best ends
You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse
That it shall hold companionship in peace
With honour as in war, since that to both
It stands in like request?

CORIOLANUS.
Why force you this?

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

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

VOLUMNIA.
I prithee now, my son,
Go to them with this bonnet in thy hand,
And thus far having stretched it—here be with them—
Thy knee bussing the stones—for in such busines
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th' ignorant
More learned than the ears—waving thy head,
Which often thus correcting thy stout heart,
Now humble as the ripest mulberry
That will not hold the handling. Or say to them
Thou art their soldier and, being bred in broils,

Hast not the soft way, which thou dost confess
Were fit for thee to use, as they to claim,
In asking their good loves; but thou wilt frame
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far
As thou hast power and person.

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

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

Enter Cominius.

Here is Cominius.

COMINIUS.
I have been i' th' marketplace; and, sir, 'tis fit
You make strong party or defend yourself
By calmness or by absence. All's in anger.

MENENIUS.
Only fair speech.

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
Must I go show them my unbarbed sconce? Must I
With my base tongue give to my noble heart
A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't.

Yet, were there but this single plot to lose,
This mould of Martius, they to dust should grind it
And throw't against the wind. To th' marketplace!
You have put me now to such a part which never
I shall discharge to th' life.

COMINIUS.
Come, come, we'll prompt you.

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

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

VOLUMNIA.
At thy choice, then.
To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin. Let
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.

Thy valiantness was mine; thou suck'dst it from me,
But owe thy pride thyself.

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

VOLUMNIA.
Do your will.

[*Exit Volumnia.*]

COMINIUS.
Away! The Tribunes do attend you. Arm yourself
To answer mildly, for they are prepared
With accusations, as I hear, more strong
Than are upon you yet.

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

MENENIUS.
Ay, but mildly.

CORIOLANUS.
Well, mildly be it, then. Mildly.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. Rome. The Forum

Enter Sicinius and Brutus.

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

Enter an Aedile.

What, will he come?

AEDILE.
He's coming.

BRUTUS.
How accompanied?

AEDILE.
With old Menenius, and those senators
That always favoured him.

SICINIUS.
Have you a catalogue
Of all the voices that we have procured,
Set down by th' poll?

AEDILE.
I have. 'Tis ready.

SICINIUS.
Have you collected them by tribes?

AEDILE.
I have.

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

AEDILE.
I shall inform them.

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

AEDILE.
Very well.

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

BRUTUS.
Go about it.

[*Exit Aedile.*]

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

Enter Coriolanus, Menenius and Cominius with other Senators.

SICINIUS.
Well, here he comes.

MENENIUS.
Calmly, I do beseech you.

CORIOLANUS.
Ay, as an ostler, that for th' poorest piece
Will bear the knave by th' volume.—Th' honoured gods
Keep Rome in safety and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men! Plant love among's!
Throng our large temples with the shows of peace
And not our streets with war!

FIRST SENATOR.
Amen, amen.

MENENIUS.
A noble wish.

Enter the Aedile with the Plebeians.

SICINIUS.
Draw near, ye people.

AEDILE.
List to your tribunes. Audience! Peace, I say!

CORIOLANUS.
First, hear me speak.

BOTH TRIBUNES.
Well, say.—Peace, ho!

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
I am content.

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

CORIOLANUS.
Scratches with briars,
Scars to move laughter only.

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

COMINIUS.
Well, well, no more.

CORIOLANUS.
What is the matter,
That, being passed for consul with full voice,
I am so dishonoured that the very hour
You take it off again?

SICINIUS.
Answer to us.

CORIOLANUS.
Say then. 'Tis true, I ought so.

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

CORIOLANUS.
How? Traitor?

MENENIUS.
Nay, temperately! Your promise.

CORIOLANUS.
The fires i' th' lowest hell fold in the people!
Call me their traitor? Thou injurious tribune!
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
In thy hands clutched as many millions, in
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say

“Thou liest” unto thee with a voice as free
As I do pray the gods.

SICINIUS.
Mark you this, people?

ALL PLEBEIANS.
To th’ rock, to th’ rock with him!

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

BRUTUS.
But since he hath
Served well for Rome—

CORIOLANUS.
What do you prate of service?

BRUTUS.
I talk of that that know it.

CORIOLANUS.
You?

MENENIUS.
Is this the promise that you made your mother?

COMINIUS.
Know, I pray you—

CORIOLANUS.
I’ll know no further.
Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger

But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word,
Nor check my courage for what they can give,
To have't with saying "Good morrow."

SICINIUS.
For that he has,
As much as in him lies, from time to time
Envied against the people, seeking means
To pluck away their power, as now at last
Given hostile strokes, and that not in the presence
Of dreaded justice, but on the ministers
That do distribute it, in the name o' th' people
And in the power of us the Tribunes, we,
Even from this instant, banish him our city
In peril of precipitation
From off the rock Tarpeian, never more
To enter our Rome gates. I' th' people's name,
I say it shall be so.

ALL PLEBEIANS.
It shall be so, it shall be so! Let him away!
He's banished, and it shall be so.

COMINIUS.
Hear me, my masters and my common friends—

SICINIUS.
He's sentenced. No more hearing.

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

SICINIUS.
We know your drift. Speak what?

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

ALL PLEBEIANS.
It shall be so, it shall be so!

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

[*Exeunt Coriolanus, Cominius, with other Senators.*]

AEDILE.
The people's enemy is gone, is gone.

ALL PLEBEIANS.
Our enemy is banished; he is gone. Hoo, hoo!

[*They all shout and throw up their caps.*]

SICINIUS.
Go see him out at gates, and follow him,
As he hath followed you, with all despite.

Give him deserved vexation. Let a guard
Attend us through the city.

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

[*Exeunt*.]

ACT IV

SCENE I. Rome. Before a gate of the city

Enter Coriolanus, Volumnia, Virgilia, Menenius, Cominius with the young nobility of Rome.

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

VIRGILIA.
O heavens! O heavens!

CORIOLANUS.
Nay, I 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 lacked. 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 stern, and thou hast oft beheld
Heart-hard'ning 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 feared and talked of more than seen, your son
Will or exceed the common or be caught
With cautelous baits and practice.

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' th' way before thee.

VIRGILIA.
O the gods!

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

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

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

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

CORIOLANUS.
Give me thy hand.
Come.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE II. Rome. A street near the gate

Enter two Tribunes, Sicinius, Brutus with the Aedile.

SICINIUS.
Bid them all home. He's gone, and we'll no further.
The nobility are vexed, whom we see have sided
In his behalf.

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

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

BRUTUS.
Dismiss them home.

[*Exit Aedile*.]

Here comes his mother.

Enter Volumnia, Virgilia and Menenius.

SICINIUS.
Let's not meet her.

BRUTUS.
Why?

SICINIUS.
They say she's mad.

BRUTUS.
They have ta'en note of us. Keep on your way.

VOLUMNIA.
O, you're well met. The hoarded plague o' th' 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 Sicinius.*] Will you be gone?

VIRGILIA.
[*To Brutus.*] You shall stay too. I would I had the power
To say so to my husband.

SICINIUS.
Are you mankind?

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

SICINIUS.
O blessed heavens!

VOLUMNIA.
More noble blows than ever thou wise words,
And for Rome's good. I'll tell thee what—yet go.

Nay, but thou shalt stay too. I would my son
Were in Arabia and thy tribe before him,
His good sword in his hand.

SICINIUS.
What then?

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

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

MENENIUS.
Come, come, peace.

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

BRUTUS.
I would he had.

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

BRUTUS.
Pray, let's 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 banished, does exceed you all.

BRUTUS.
Well, well, we'll leave you.

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

[*Exeunt Tribunes.*]

VOLUMNIA.
Take my prayers with you.
I would the gods had nothing else to do
But to confirm my curses. Could I meet 'em
But once a day, it would unclog my heart
Of what lies heavy to't.

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

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

[*Exeunt.*]

MENENIUS.
Fie, fie, fie!

[*Exit Menenius.*]

SCENE III. A highway between Rome and Antium

Enter a Roman and a Volsce.

ROMAN.
I know you well, sir, and you know me. Your name I think is Adrian.

VOLSCE.
It is so, sir. Truly, I have forgot you.

ROMAN.
I am a Roman, and my services are, as you are, against 'em. Know you me yet?

VOLSCE.
Nicanor, no?

ROMAN.
The same, sir.

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

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

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

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

VOLSCE.
Coriolanus banished?

ROMAN.
Banished, sir.

VOLSCE.
You will be welcome with this intelligence, Nicanor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROMAN.
Well, let us go together.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. Antium. Before Aufidius's house

Enter Coriolanus in mean apparel, disguised and muffled.

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

Enter a Citizen.

Save you, sir.

CITIZEN.
And you.

CORIOLANUS.
Direct me, if it be your will,
Where great Aufidius lies. Is he in Antium?

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

CORIOLANUS.
Which is his house, beseech you?

CITIZEN.
This here before you.

CORIOLANUS.
Thank you, sir. Farewell.

[*Exit Citizen.*]

O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,
Whose double bosoms seems to wear one heart,
Whose hours, 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 birthplace hate I, and my love's upon
This enemy town. I'll enter. If he slay me,
He does fair justice; if he give me way,
I'll do his country service.

[*Exit*.]

SCENE V. Antium. A hall in Aufidius's house

Music plays. Enter a Servingman.

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

[*Exit*.]

Enter another Servingman.

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
Where's Cotus? My master calls for him. Cotus!

[*Exit*.]

Enter Coriolanus.

CORIOLANUS.
A goodly house. The feast smells well, but I
Appear not like a guest.

Enter the First Servingman.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
What would you have, friend? Whence are you? Here's no place for you. Pray go to the door.

[*Exit*.]

CORIOLANUS.
I have deserved no better entertainment
In being Coriolanus.

Enter Second Servingman.

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

CORIOLANUS.
Away!

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
Away? Get you away.

CORIOLANUS.
Now th' art troublesome.

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

Enter Third Servingman; the First, entering, meets him.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
What fellow's this?

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
A strange one as ever I looked on. I cannot get him out o' th' house. Prithee call my master to him.

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

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

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
What are you?

CORIOLANUS.
A gentleman.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
A marv'llous poor one.

CORIOLANUS.
True, so I am.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
Pray you, poor gentleman, take up some other station. Here's no place for you. Pray you, avoid. Come.

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

[*Pushes him away from him*.]

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

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
And I shall.

[*Exit*.]

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
Where dwell'st thou?

CORIOLANUS.
Under the canopy.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
Under the canopy?

CORIOLANUS.
Ay.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
Where's that?

CORIOLANUS.
I' th' city of kites and crows.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
I' th' city of kites and crows? What an ass it is! Then thou dwell'st with daws too?

CORIOLANUS.
No, I serve not thy master.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
How, sir? Do you meddle with my master?

CORIOLANUS.
Ay, 'tis an honester service than to meddle with thy mistress. Thou prat'st and prat'st. Serve with thy trencher, hence!

[*Beats him away.*]

[*Exit Third Servingman.*]

Enter Aufidius with the Second Servingman.

AUFIDIUS.
Where is this fellow?

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

AUFIDIUS.
Whence com'st thou? What wouldst thou?
Thy name? Why speak'st not? Speak, man. What's thy name?

CORIOLANUS.
[*Removing his muffler.*] If, Tullus,
Not yet thou know'st me, and, seeing me, dost not
Think me for the man I am, necessity
Commands me name myself.

AUFIDIUS.
What is thy name?

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

AUFIDIUS.
Say, what's thy name?
Thou has a grim appearance, and thy face
Bears a command in't. Though thy tackle's torn,
Thou show'st a noble vessel. What's thy name?

CORIOLANUS.
Prepare thy brow to frown. Know'st thou me yet?

AUFIDIUS.
I know thee not. Thy name?

CORIOLANUS.
My name is Caius Martius, who hath done
To thee particularly and to all the Volsces
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname Coriolanus. The painful service,
The extreme dangers, and the drops of blood
Shed for my thankless country are requited
But with that surname, a good memory
And witness of the malice and displeasure
Which thou shouldst bear me. Only that name remains.
The cruelty and envy of the people,
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who
Have all forsook me, hath devoured the rest,
And suffered me by th' voice of slaves to be
Whooped out of Rome. Now this extremity
Hath brought me to thy hearth, not out of hope—
Mistake me not—to save my life; for if
I had feared death, of all the men i' th' world
I would have 'voided thee, but in mere spite,
To be full quit of those my banishers,
Stand I before thee here. Then if thou hast
A heart of wreak in thee, that wilt revenge
Thine own particular wrongs and stop those maims
Of shame seen through thy country, speed thee straight
And make my misery serve thy turn. So use it
That my revengeful services may prove
As benefits to thee, for I will fight
Against my cankered country with the spleen
Of all the under fiends. But if so be
Thou dar'st not this, and that to prove more fortunes
Thou 'rt tired, then, in a word, I also am
Longer to live most weary, and present
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice,

Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,
Since I have ever followed thee with hate,
Drawn tuns of blood out of thy country's breast,
And cannot live but to thy shame, unless
It be to do thee service.

AUFIDIUS.
O Martius, Martius,
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart
A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter
Should from yond cloud speak divine things
And say 'tis true, I'd not believe them more
Than thee, all-noble Martius. Let me twine
Mine arms about that body, whereagainst
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke
And scarred the moon with splinters. Here I clip
The anvil of my sword and do contest
As hotly and as nobly with thy love
As ever in ambitious strength I did
Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,
I loved the maid I married; never man
Sighed truer breath. But that I see thee here,
Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars, I tell thee
We have a power on foot, and I had purpose
Once more to hew thy target from thy brawn
Or lose mine arm for't. Thou hast beat me out
Twelve several times, and I have nightly since
Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;
We have been down together in my sleep,
Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat,
And waked half dead with nothing. Worthy Martius,
Had we no other quarrel else to Rome but that
Thou art thence banished, we would muster all
From twelve to seventy and, pouring war
Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome,
Like a bold flood o'erbear 't. O, come, go in,

And take our friendly senators by th' 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
Th' 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, Martius, that was much. Your hand. Most welcome!

[*Exeunt Coriolanus and Aufidius.*]

Two of the Servingmen come forward.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Here's a strange alteration!

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

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

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
Nay, I knew by his face that there was something in him. He had, sir, a kind of face, methought—I cannot tell how to term it.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
He had so, looking as it were—Would I were hanged, but I thought there was more in him than I could think.

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
So did I, I'll be sworn. He is simply the rarest man i' th' world.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
I think he is. But a greater soldier than he you wot one.

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
Who, my master?

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Nay, it's no matter for that.

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
Worth six on him.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Nay, not so neither. But I take him to be the greater soldier.

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Ay, and for an assault too.

Enter the Third Servingman.

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
O slaves, I can tell you news, news, you rascals!

FIRST and SECOND SERVINGMAN.
What, what, what? Let's partake.

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

FIRST and SECOND SERVINGMAN.
Wherefore? Wherefore?

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Why do you say, "thwack our general"?

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
I do not say "thwack our general," but he was always good enough for him.

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
He was too hard for him directly, to say the troth on't, before Corioles; he scotched him and notched him like a carbonado.

SECOND SERVINGMAN.
An he had been cannibally given, he might have boiled and eaten him too.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
But, more of thy news?

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

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

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
Do't? He will do't! For look you, sir, he has as many friends as

enemies, which friends, sir, as it were, durst not, look you, sir, show themselves, as we term it, his friends whilest he's in directitude.

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Directitude? What's that?

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
But when goes this forward?

THIRD SERVINGMAN.
Tomorrow, today, presently. You shall have the drum struck up this afternoon. 'Tis as it were parcel of their feast, and to be executed ere they wipe their lips.

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

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

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

FIRST SERVINGMAN.
Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

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

ALL.
In, in, in, in!

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE VI. Rome. A public place

Enter the two Tribunes. Sicinius and Brutus.

SICINIUS.
We hear not of him, neither need we fear him.
His remedies are tame—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 pest'ring streets than see
Our tradesmen singing in their shops and going
About their functions friendly.

BRUTUS.
We stood to't in good time.

Enter Menenius.

Is this Menenius?

SICINIUS.
'Tis he, 'tis he. O, he is grown most kind
Of late.—Hail, sir!

MENENIUS.
Hail to you both.

SICINIUS.
Your Coriolanus is not much missed
But with his friends. The commonwealth doth stand,
And so would do were he more angry at it.

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

SICINIUS.
Where is he, hear you?

MENENIUS.
Nay, I hear nothing;
His mother and his wife hear nothing from him.

Enter three or four Citizens.

ALL CITIZENS.
The gods preserve you both!

SICINIUS.
Good e'en, our neighbours.

BRUTUS.
Good e'en to you all, good e'en to you all.

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

SICINIUS.
Live and thrive!

BRUTUS.
Farewell, kind neighbours. We wished Coriolanus
Had loved you as we did.

CITIZENS.
Now the gods keep you!

BOTH TRIBUNES.
Farewell, farewell.

[*Exeunt Citizens.*]

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

BRUTUS.
Caius Martius was
A worthy officer i' th' war, but insolent,
O'ercome with pride, ambitious, past all thinking
Self-loving.

SICINIUS.
And affecting one sole throne, without assistance.

MENENIUS.
I think not so.

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

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

Enter an Aedile.

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

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

SICINIUS.
Come, what talk you of Martius?

BRUTUS.
Go see this rumourer whipped. It cannot be
The Volsces dare break with us.

MENENIUS.
Cannot be?
We have record that very well it can,
And three examples of the like hath been

Within my age. But reason with the fellow
Before you punish him, where he heard this,
Lest you shall chance to whip your information
And beat the messenger who bids beware
Of what is to be dreaded.

SICINIUS.
Tell not me.
I know this cannot be.

BRUTUS.
Not possible.

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER.
The nobles in great earnestness are going
All to the Senate House. Some news is coming
That turns their countenances.

SICINIUS.
'Tis this slave—
Go whip him 'fore the people's eyes—his raising,
Nothing but his report.

MESSENGER.
Yes, worthy sir,
The slave's report is seconded, and more,
More fearful, is delivered.

SICINIUS.
What more fearful?

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

SICINIUS.
This is most likely!

BRUTUS.
Raised only that the weaker sort may wish
Good Martius home again.

SICINIUS.
The very trick on ’t.

MENENIUS.
This is unlikely;
He and Aufidius can no more atone
Than violent’st contrariety.

Enter a Second Messenger.

SECOND MESSENGER.
You are sent for to the Senate.
A fearful army, led by Caius Martius
Associated with Aufidius, rages
Upon our territories, and have already
O’erborne their way, consumed with fire and took
What lay before them.

Enter Cominius.

COMINIUS.
O, you have made good work!

MENENIUS.
What news? What news?

COMINIUS.
You have holp to ravish your own daughters and
To melt the city leads upon your pates,
To see your wives dishonoured to your noses—

MENENIUS.
What’s the news? What’s the news?

COMINIUS.
Your temples burned in their cement, and

Your franchises, whereon you stood, confined
Into an auger's bore.

MENENIUS.
Pray now, your news?—
You have made fair work, I fear me.—Pray, your news?
If Martius should be joined 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 much
Upon the voice of occupation and
The breath of garlic eaters!

COMINIUS.
He'll shake your Rome about your ears.

MENENIUS.
As Hercules did shake down mellow fruit.
You have made fair work.

BRUTUS.
But is this true, sir?

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

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

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

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

COMINIUS.
You have brought
A trembling upon Rome such as was never
S' incapable of help.

TRIBUNES.
Say not we brought it.

MENENIUS.
How? Was it we? We loved him, but like beasts
And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters,
Who did hoot him out o' th' 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 comes the clusters.—
And is Aufidius with him? You are they
That made the air unwholesome when you cast
Your stinking, greasy caps in hooting at
Coriolanus' exile. Now he's coming,
And not a hair upon a soldier's head
Which will not prove a whip. As many coxcombs
As you threw caps up will he tumble down
And pay you for your voices. 'Tis no matter.
If he could burn us all into one coal
We have deserved it.

ALL CITIZENS.
Faith, we hear fearful news.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.
And so did I.

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

COMINIUS.
You are goodly things, you voices!

MENENIUS.
You have made good work, you and your cry!—
Shall's to the Capitol?

COMINIUS.
O, ay, what else?

[*Exeunt Cominius and Menenius.*]

SICINIUS.
Go, masters, get you home. Be not dismayed.
These are a side that would be glad to have
This true which they so seem to fear. Go home,
And show no sign of fear.

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

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

[*Exeunt Citizens.*]

BRUTUS.
I do not like this news.

SICINIUS.
Nor I.

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

SICINIUS.
Pray let's go.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. A camp at a short distance from Rome

Enter Aufidius with his Lieutenant.

AUFIDIUS.
Do they still fly to th' Roman?

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

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

LIEUTENANT.
Yet I wish, sir—
I mean for your particular—you had not
Joined 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 th' vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly,
And shows good husbandry for the Volscian state,
Fights dragonlike, and does achieve as soon
As draw his sword; yet he hath left undone
That which shall break his neck or hazard mine
Whene'er we come to our account.

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

AUFIDIUS.
All places yield to him ere he sits down,
And the nobility of Rome are his;
The Senators and Patricians love him too.
The Tribunes are no soldiers, and their people
Will be as rash in the repeal as hasty
To expel him thence. I think he'll be to Rome
As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it
By sovereignty of nature. First, he was

A noble servant to them, but he could not
Carry his honours even. Whether 'twas pride,
Which out of daily fortune ever taints
The happy man; whether defect of judgment,
To fail in the disposing of those chances
Which he was lord of; or whether nature,
Not to be other than one thing, not moving
From th' casque to th' cushion, but commanding peace
Even with the same austerity and garb
As he controlled the war; but one of these—
As he hath spices of them all—not all,
For I dare so far free him—made him feared,
So hated, and so banished. But he has a merit
To choke it in the utt'rance. So our virtues
Lie in th' interpretation of the time,
And power, unto itself most commendable,
Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair
T' extol what it hath done.
One fire drives out one fire, one nail one nail;
Rights by rights falter; strengths by strengths do fail.
Come, let's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,
Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.

[*Exeunt*.]

ACT V

SCENE I. Rome. A public place

Enter Menenius, Cominius, Sicinius, Brutus (the two Tribunes), with others.

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

COMINIUS.
He would not seem to know me.

MENENIUS.
Do you hear?

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

MENENIUS.
Why, so; you have made good work!
A pair of tribunes that have wracked Rome
To make coals cheap! A noble memory!

COMINIUS.
I minded him how royal 'twas to pardon
When it was less expected. He replied

It was a bare petition of a state
To one whom they had punished.

MENENIUS.
Very well.
Could he say less?

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

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

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

MENENIUS.
No, I'll not meddle.

SICINIUS.
Pray you, go to him.

MENENIUS.
What should I do?

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

MENENIUS.
Well, and say that Martius
Return me, as Cominius is returned, unheard,
What then? But as a discontented friend,
Grief-shot with his unkindness? Say't be so?

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

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

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

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

[*Exit*.]

COMINIUS.
He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS.
Not?

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

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. An Advanced post of the Volscian camp before Rome.

Enter Menenius to the Watch, or Guard.

FIRST WATCH.
Stay! Whence are you?

SECOND WATCH.
Stand, and go back.

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

FIRST WATCH.
From whence?

MENENIUS.
From Rome.

FIRST WATCH.
You may not pass; you must return. Our general
Will no more hear from thence.

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

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

FIRST WATCH.
Be it so; go back. The virtue of your name
Is not here passable.

MENENIUS.
I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my lover. I have been
The book of his good acts, whence men have read
His fame unparalleled happily 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 stamped the leasing. Therefore, fellow,
I must have leave to pass.

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

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

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

MENENIUS.
Has he dined, can'st thou tell? For I would not speak with him till after dinner.

FIRST WATCH.
You are a Roman, are you?

MENENIUS.
I am, as thy general is.

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

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

SECOND WATCH.
Come, my captain knows you not.

MENENIUS.
I mean thy general.

FIRST WATCH.
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 with 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 stand'st not i' th' 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 begone.
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,

[*He gives Menenius a paper*.]

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

AUFIDIUS.
You keep a constant temper.

[*They exit*.]
[*The Guard and Menenius remain*.]

FIRST WATCH.
Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

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

FIRST WATCH.
Do you hear how we are shent for keeping your Greatness back?

SECOND WATCH.
What cause do you think I have to swoon?

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

[*Exit*.]

FIRST WATCH.
A noble fellow, I warrant him.

SECOND WATCH.
The worthy fellow is our general. He is the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken.

[*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 th' Volscian lords how plainly
I have borne this business.

AUFIDIUS.
Only their ends
You have respected, stopped 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 cracked 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 showed sourly to him—once more offered
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.

[*Shout within.*]

Ha? What shout is this?
Shall I be tempted to infringe my vow
In the same time 'tis made? I will not.

Enter Virgilia, Volumnia, Valeria, young Martius with attendants.

My wife comes foremost, then the honoured mold
Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
The grandchild to her blood. But out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature, break!
Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
What is that curtsy worth? Or those doves' eyes,
Which can make gods forsworn? I melt and am not
Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows,
As if Olympus to a molehill should
In supplication nod; and my young boy
Hath an aspect of intercession which
Great Nature cries "Deny not!" Let the Volsces
Plough Rome and harrow Italy, I'll never
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand
As if a man were author of himself,
And knew no other kin.

VIRGILIA.
My lord and husband.

CORIOLANUS.
These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

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

CORIOLANUS.
Like a dull actor now,
I have forgot my part, and I am out,
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,
Forgive my tyranny, but do not say
For that, "Forgive our Romans."

[*They kiss.*]

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 virgined it e'er since. You gods! I prate
And the most noble mother of the world
Leave unsaluted. Sink, my knee, i' th' earth;

[*Kneels.*]

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

VOLUMNIA.
O, stand up blest,

[*He rises.*]

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

[*She kneels.*]

CORIOLANUS.
What is this?
Your knees to me? To your corrected son?

[*He raises her up.*]

Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach
Fillip the stars! Then let the mutinous winds
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun,
Murdering impossibility to make
What cannot be slight work.

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

CORIOLANUS.
The noble sister of Publicola,

The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle
That's curdied by the frost from purest snow
And hangs on Dian's temple!—Dear Valeria.

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

CORIOLANUS.
The god of soldiers,
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform
Thy thoughts with nobleness, that thou mayst prove
To shame unvulnerable, and stick i' th' wars
Like a great seamark standing every flaw
And saving those that eye thee.

VOLUMNIA.
[*To young Martius.*] Your knee, sirrah.

[*He kneels.*]

CORIOLANUS.
That's my brave boy!

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

[*Young Martius rises.*]

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

VOLUMNIA.
O, no more, no more!
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.

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

VOLUMNIA.
Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies would bewray what life
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself
How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither; since that thy sight, which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
Constrains them weep and shake with fear and sorrow,
Making the mother, wife, and child to see
The son, the husband, and the father tearing
His country's bowels out. And to poor we
Thine enmity's most capital. Thou barr'st us
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
That all but we enjoy. For how can we—
Alas, how can we—for our country pray,
Whereto we are bound, together with thy victory,
Whereto we are bound? Alack, or we must lose
The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
Our comfort in the country. We must find
An evident calamity, though we had
Our wish, which side should win, for either thou
Must as a foreign recreant be led
With manacles through 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 MARTIUS.
He 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.

[*He rises.*]

VOLUMNIA.
Nay, go not from us thus.
If it were so, that our request did tend
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us
As poisonous of your honour. No, our suit
Is that you reconcile them, while the Volsces
May say "This mercy we have showed," the Romans
"This we received," and each in either side
Give the all-hail to thee and cry, "Be blessed
For making up this peace!" Thou know'st, great son,
The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name
Whose repetition will be dogged with curses,
Whose chronicle thus writ: "The man was noble,

But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
Destroyed his country, and his name remains
To th' ensuing age abhorred." Speak to me, son.
Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour
To imitate the graces of the gods,
To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' th' air
And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt
That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs?—Daughter, speak you.
He cares not for your weeping.—Speak thou, boy.
Perhaps thy childishness will move him more
Than can our reasons.—There's no man in the world
More bound to's mother, yet here he lets me prate
Like one i' th' stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
Showed thy dear mother any courtesy
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
Has clucked thee to the wars and safely home,
Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust
And spurn me back; but if it be not so,
Thou art not honest, and the gods will plague thee
That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
To a mother's part belongs.—He turns away.—
Down, ladies! Let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down! An end.

[*They kneel.*]

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

[*They rise.*]

This fellow had a Volscian to his mother,
His wife is in Corioles, and his child
Like him by chance.—Yet give us our dispatch.
I am hushed until our city be afire,
And then I'll speak a little.

[*He holds her by the hand, silent*.]

CORIOLANUS.
O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O my mother, mother, O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome,
But, for your son—believe it, O, believe it!—
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,
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!

[*He speaks with them aside*.]

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.

CORIOLANUS.
[*To the Women*.] Ay, by and by;
But we'll drink together, and you shall bear
A better witness back than words, which we,
On like conditions, will have countersealed.
Come, enter with us. Ladies, you deserve
To have a temple built you. All the swords
In Italy, and her confederate arms,
Could not have made this peace.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE IV. Rome. A public place

Enter Menenius and Sicinius.

MENENIUS.
See you yond coign o' the Capitol, yond cornerstone?

SICINIUS.
Why, what of that?

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

SICINIUS.
Is't possible that so short a time can alter the condition of a man?

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

SICINIUS.
He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS.
So did he me; and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year-old horse. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes.

When he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He is able to pierce a corslet with his eye, talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery. He sits in his state as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in.

SICINIUS.
Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

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

SICINIUS.
The gods be good unto us.

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

Enter a Messenger.

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

Enter another Messenger.

SICINIUS.
What's the news?

SECOND MESSENGER.
Good news, good news! The ladies have prevailed.
The Volscians are dislodged and Martius gone.
A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,
No, not th' expulsion of the Tarquins.

SICINIUS.
Friend,
Art thou certain this is true? Is't most certain?

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

[*Trumpets, hautboys, drums beat, all together.*]

The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries, and fifes,
Tabors 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 prayed well today.
This morning for ten thousand of your throats
I'd not have given a doit. Hark, how they joy!

[*Sound still with the shouts.*]

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

SECOND MESSENGER.
Sir, we have all great cause to give great thanks.

SICINIUS.
They are near the city?

MESSENGER.
Almost at point to enter.

SICINIUS.
We'll meet them, and help the joy.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE V. Rome. A street near the gate

Enter two Senators, with Ladies (Volumnia, Virgilia, Valeria) passing over the stage, with other Lords.

SENATOR.
Behold our patroness, the life of Rome!
Call all your tribes together, praise the gods,
And make triumphant fires. Strew flowers before them,
Unshout the noise that banished Martius,
Repeal him with the welcome of his mother.
Cry "Welcome, ladies, welcome!"

ALL.
Welcome, ladies, welcome!

[*A flourish with drums and trumpets*.]
[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE VI. Antium. A public place

Enter Tullus Aufidius with Attendants.

AUFIDIUS.
Go tell the lords o' th' city I am here.
Deliver them this paper.

[*He gives them a paper*.]

Having read it,
Bid them repair to th' marketplace, 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 entered and
Intends t' appear before the people, hoping
To purge himself with words. Dispatch.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

Enter three or four Conspirators of Aufidius's faction.

Most welcome!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.
How is it with our general?

AUFIDIUS.
Even so
As with a man by his own alms empoisoned
And with his charity slain.

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

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

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

AUFIDIUS.
I know it,
And my pretext to strike at him admits
A good construction. I raised him, and I pawned
Mine honour for his truth, who being so heightened,
He watered his new plants with dews of flattery,
Seducing so my friends; and to this end,
He bowed his nature, never known before
But to be rough, unswayable, and free.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.
Sir, his stoutness
When he did stand for consul, which he lost
By lack of stooping—

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

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.
So he did, my lord.
The army marvelled at it, and, in the last,
When he had carried Rome and that we looked
For no less spoil than glory—

AUFIDIUS.
There was it
For which my sinews shall be stretched 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 entered like a post
And had no welcomes home, but he returns
Splitting the air with noise.

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

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

AUFIDIUS.
Say no more.
Here come the lords.

Enter the Lords of the city.

ALL 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?

ALL LORDS.
We have.

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

Enter Coriolanus marching with Drum and Colours, the Commoners being with him.

AUFIDIUS.
He approaches. You shall hear him.

CORIOLANUS.
Hail, lords! I am returned your soldier,

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

[*He offers the lords a paper*.]

AUFIDIUS.
Read it not, noble lords,
But tell the traitor in the highest degree
He hath abused your powers.

CORIOLANUS.
"Traitor?" How now?

AUFIDIUS.
Ay, traitor, Martius.

CORIOLANUS.
Martius?

AUFIDIUS.
Ay, Martius, Caius Martius. Dost thou think
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name
Coriolanus, in Corioles?
You lords and heads o' th' state, perfidiously
He has betrayed your business and given up
For certain drops of salt your city Rome—
I say your city—to his wife and mother,
Breaking his oath and resolution like
A twist of rotten silk, never admitting

Counsel o' th' war, but at his nurse's tears
He whined and roared away your victory,
That pages blushed at him and men of heart
Looked wond'ring each at other.

CORIOLANUS.
Hear'st thou, Mars?

AUFIDIUS.
Name not the god, thou boy of tears.

CORIOLANUS.
Ha?

AUFIDIUS.
No more.

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

FIRST LORD.
Peace, both, and hear me speak.

CORIOLANUS.
Cut me to pieces, Volsces. Men and lads,
Stain all your edges on me. "Boy"? False hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That like an eagle in a dovecote, I
Fluttered your Volscians in Corioles,
Alone I did it. "Boy"!

AUFIDIUS.
Why, noble lords,
Will you be put in mind of his blind fortune,

Which was your shame, by this unholy braggart,
'Fore your own eyes and ears?

ALL CONSPIRATORS.
Let him die for't.

ALL PEOPLE
Tear him to pieces! Do it presently! He killed 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' th' 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!

[*Draw the Conspirators, and kills Martius, who falls. Aufidius stands on him.*]

LORDS.
Hold, hold, hold, hold!

AUFIDIUS.
My noble masters, hear me speak.

FIRST LORD.
O Tullus!

SECOND LORD.
Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep.

THIRD LORD.
Tread not upon him.—Masters, all be quiet.—
Put up your swords.

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

FIRST LORD.
Bear from hence his body,
And mourn you for him. Let him be regarded
As the most noble corse that ever herald
Did follow to his urn.

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

AUFIDIUS.
My rage is gone,
And I am struck with sorrow.—Take him up.
Help, three o' th' chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.—
Beat thou the drum that it speak mournfully.—
Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he
Hath widowed 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 Martius. A dead march sounded.*]

THE END

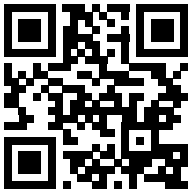
Coriolanus

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