

## CORIOLANUS

A line-by-line translation

## Act 1, Scene 1

## Shakespeare

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

**ALL**

Speak, speak.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

**ALL**

Resolved. resolved.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**ALL**

We know't, we know't.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**ALL**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

One word, good citizens.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

15  
20

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

**ALL**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

25 Consider you what services he has done for his country?

## Shakescleare Translation

*A company of mutinous  CITIZENS, with staves, clubs, and other weapons, enter.*

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Before we go on, hear me out.

**ALL**

Go ahead. Talk.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

You are all committed to fight to the death rather than die by starvation?

**ALL**

Yes, we're committed.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

First, you know Caius Marcius is the people's greatest enemy.

**ALL**

We know it!

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Let's kill him and sell corn at a price we can decide. Do we have an agreement?

**ALL**

Enough talk; let it be done: let's go!

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Hold on: listen, good citizens.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

We are thought of as poor and worthless, while the senators are thought of as noble. Their leftovers would be enough for us. If they would only give us the scraps from their table, as long as it isn't spoiled, we'd think of it as generous; but they think that even this is asking too much. Our starvation, which makes us miserable, is the yardstick by which they measure their successes—they celebrate our suffering! Let us take revenge with our pikes, before we become as thin as they are: the gods know I say so out of hunger, not out of thirst for revenge.

**SECOND CITIZEN**


Should we focus our revenge on Caius Marcius?

**ALL**

Yes, him first: he's terrible to the common people.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

What about all he's done for this country?

 In a mutiny, a group of people rebel or revolt against a government or other authority. Here, common citizens are starving during a food shortage and believe the Roman senate is keeping all the resources for themselves.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Nay, but speak not maliciously.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

35 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*

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**ALL**

Come, come.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Soft! who comes here?

*Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA*

**SECOND CITIZEN**

45 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**

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

**MENENIUS**

55 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, 60 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 65 Appear in your impediment. For the dearth,

**FIRST CITIZEN**

It's all well and good, and he ought to be satisfied with our admiration, but instead he rubs it in our faces.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Come on, don't speak rudely of him.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Listen: the things he's done for us, he's done only for the fame. Forgiving men might say he did it for his country, but really he did it only to please his mother and partly to be proud. However brave he is, it's only equal to his arrogance.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

You're condemning him for being who he is. You can't say he's greedy, after all.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

If he's not greedy, he's horrible in a hundred other ways; we'd grow exhausted listing all his faults.

*Shouting is heard offstage.*

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Where is that shouting from? Other parts of the city are in revolt already. Why are we standing here chattering? To the Capitol!

**ALL**

Come, come!

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Wait! Who is that?

*MENENIUS AGRIPPA enters.*

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Honorable Menenius Agrippa; a man who has always had the common people's interests in mind.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

He's an honest politician: if only the others were!

**MENENIUS**

What are you about to do, fellow citizens? Where are you going with these bats and clubs? What's going on? Please, tell me.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

The senate is well aware of our business; they've known for a month what we intend to do, and we'll show them now we meant it. They say the poor people coming to ask for help have only a strong odor to them, but we'll show them we have strong arms too.

**MENENIUS**

Sirs, good friends, honest neighbors, why? Are you trying to get yourselves killed?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

That would be pointless, sir, we're already dying.

**MENENIUS**

I tell you, friends, the senators care deeply about all of you. You may as well attack heaven with your sticks as try to fight Rome; it won't do anything to stop your starvation. Rome will go on as it always does, easily crushing ten thousand times what you can throw against it. As for the lack of food, it's not the senators' fault. Begging them for help will do more good than attacking them. Alas, this tragedy has driven you mad if you think that cursing the

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  
70 The helms o' the state, who care for you like fathers,  
When you curse them as enemies.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Care for us! True, indeed! They ne'er cared for us  
yet: suffer us to famish, and their store-houses  
crammed with grain; make edicts for usury, to  
75 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**

80 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  
85 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  
90 Rebell'd against the belly, thus accused it:  
That only like a gulf it did remain  
I' the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,  
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing  
Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments  
95 Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,  
And, mutually participate, did minister  
Unto the appetite and affection common  
Of the whole body. The belly answer'd—

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

**MENENIUS**

100 Sir, I shall tell you. With a kind of smile,  
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus—  
For, look you, I may make the belly smile  
As well as speak—it tauntingly replied  
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts  
105 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,  
110 The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,  
Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter.  
With other muniments and petty helps  
In this our fabric, if that they—

**MENENIUS**

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

senators, who care for you like your own parents, will make  
them more willing to help you.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Care for us! Yeah, right! They've never cared for us: they will  
let us starve while their warehouses are full of food. They've  
supported laws which cheat us financially; every day they  
do more to protect the rich and hurt the poor. If the wars  
don't kill us, they will. *That's* how they show they love  
us.

**MENENIUS**

Either you have to admit you're awfully cruel, or I must  
simply say you're wrong. Let me tell you a story. Maybe  
you've heard it before, but since it applies to this situation  
so well, allow me to tell it again.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Well, I'll listen, sir: but you can't think to do away with our  
suffering with a story. Still, if you want, go ahead.

**MENENIUS**

Once upon a time, all the body's other parts rebelled  
against the belly and accused it of being just a  
bottomless pit in the middle of the body that hoards all the  
food. It does nothing, while all the other parts of the body  
have a role: they see and hear, think, speak, walk, touch,  
and by working together, these parts contribute to the  
greater good of the whole body. The belly answered—

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Well, sir? What did the belly answer?

**MENENIUS**

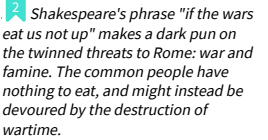
Sir, I shall tell you. With a belly laugh—the kind of laugh  
which never came from the lungs, but like this, see? [*He  
laughs deeply*] For look, I can make the belly laugh as well  
as rumble—it replied sarcastically to the other parts of the  
body, the parts which envied the belly's food—just the way  
you are criticizing our senators for being different from  
you.

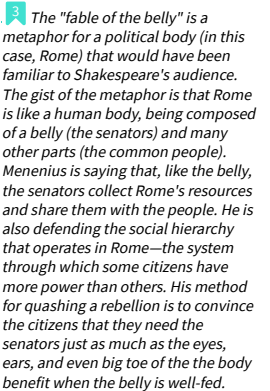
**FIRST CITIZEN**

Well? What did your belly answer? The majestic head, the  
careful eye, the wise heart, the strong arm, the swift leg, the  
tongue which speaks. With other bits and minor assistants  
in this our skin, if they—

**MENENIUS**

What, then? You want to interrupt me and tell your own  
story? What then? What then?

 Shakespeare's phrase "if the wars eat us not up" makes a dark pun on the twinned threats to Rome: war and famine. The common people have nothing to eat, and might instead be devoured by the destruction of wartime.

 The "fable of the belly" is a metaphor for a political body (in this case, Rome) that would have been familiar to Shakespeare's audience. The gist of the metaphor is that Rome is like a human body, being composed of a belly (the senators) and many other parts (the common people). Menenius is saying that, like the belly, the senators collect Rome's resources and share them with the people. He is also defending the social hierarchy that operates in Rome—the system through which some citizens have more power than others. His method for quashing a rebellion is to convince the citizens that they need the senators just as much as the eyes, ears, and even big toe of the the body benefit when the belly is well-fed.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**MENENIUS**

Well, what then?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

You're long about it.

**MENENIUS**

125 Note me this, good friend;  
Your most grave belly was deliberate,  
Not rash like his accusers, and thus answer'd:  
'True is it, my incorporate friends,' quoth he,  
'That I receive the general food at first,  
130 Which you do live upon; and fit it is,  
Because I am the store-house and the shop  
Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,  
I send it through the rivers of your blood,  
Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o' the brain;  
135 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**

140 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,  
145 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  
150 Touching the weal o' the common, you shall find  
No public benefit which you receive  
But it proceeds or comes from them to you  
And no way from yourselves. What do you think,  
You, the great toe of this assembly?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

155 I the great toe! why the great toe?

**MENENIUS**

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

*Enter CAIUS MARCIUS*

**FIRST CITIZEN**

If all those hard-working body parts are dragged down by  
the greedy belly, that garbage-pit of the body—

**MENENIUS**

Well, what then?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

If those other parts did complain, what could the belly  
possibly say in its defense?

**MENENIUS**

I'll tell you, if you can give me just a little bit of  
patience—and I know you don't have much—you'll hear the  
belly's answer.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

You're taking long enough.

**MENENIUS**

Listen to me, my friend. The belly was quite serious,  
and careful in his answer—unlike his rowdy accusers—and  
answered like this: "It's true, friends of my body," he said,  
"That I receive the food we all depend on first, but of course  
I do: I'm the body's storage and its grocery store. But don't  
forget that I distribute nutrients into the rivers of your  
blood, and to the heart, and to the brain; it is I who send  
that energy everywhere, into all the working parts of a man.  
Both the strongest nerves and the tiniest little veins get  
their livelihood from me. And despite all of that, you really  
want to say to me"—the belly says this, just to be clear—

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Sure, sir; go on.

**MENENIUS**


"Though you can't all see that I am giving out to you, I can  
tally it up and show you that you are getting the best, while  
I'm keeping just the leftovers for myself." What do you say  
to all that?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

It was *an* answer, I guess, but what are you trying to say?

**MENENIUS**

The senators of Rome are this good belly, and you are the  
rioting body parts. Just think about what the senators really  
do—think also about what the common people do—and  
you'll find that there's no good thing you receive that  
doesn't come from them. What do you think of that, you,  
[big toe](#) of this group?

 By calling the First Citizen the "great toe" in the original text, Menenius is jokingly tying the long parable to what's really going on. If the senators are the belly, the first among the lowly, common folk is a big toe.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

Why am I the big toe?

**MENENIUS**

Well, because as one of the lowest and poorest of this most  
wise rebellion, you go first. You, wretched man, who are the  
lowest-born of this whole group, are trying to gain  
something by leading them. Well, you'd better get your bats  
and clubs ready: if you rats are really going to fight Rome,  
one side is going to wind up hurt.

*CAIUS MARCIUS enters.*

**MENENIUS**

Hail, noble Marcius!

**MARCIUS**

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

We have ever your good word.

**MARCIUS**

He that will give good words to thee will flatter  
170 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,  
175 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  
180 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?  
185 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,  
190 Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else  
Would feed on one another? What's their seeking?

**MENENIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

220

**MENENIUS**

Welcome, honorable Marcius!

**MARCIUS**

Thanks. What's the matter, you rebellious good-for-nothings, that, on the whim of your opinions, become troublemakers like this?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

You always have the nicest things to say about us.

**MARCIUS**

Anyone who would compliment you would flatter you terribly. What do you want, you dogs, that like neither peace nor war? War scares you, peace makes you too confident in yourselves. Anyone that trusts you finds cowards where they might hope for brave men. They find idiots where they might hope for scholars. You're about as reliable as a snowball on the sun, or a coal of fire on ice. The only thing you're good at is celebrating criminals and then cursing justice. You hate great men because they're great, and you indulge only in vices. Anyone relying on you is trying to swim with lead weights or cut down trees with grass; they only slow themselves down. Go hang yourselves! Trust you? With every minute you change your mind: you suddenly hate someone you loved, or want to honor someone you hated just moments ago. What's your problem now, that you're up in arms against the senate around the city—the very senate whose leadership, with the blessing of the gods, keeps you from killing each other?

[To MENENIUS] What do they want?

**MENENIUS**

They're asking to buy corn at a price they would determine. They say the city has plenty of it.

**MARCIUS**


Oh, let them go hang themselves! *They say?* They'll sit by the fire in their homes, and presume to know what's going on in the Capitol. They think they know who's on the way up, who's succeeding and who's failing; they take sides and announce alliances, making political parties strong and weak at a whim. *They say there's grain enough!* I wish the senate would stop being so compassionate and let me use my sword to resolve this; I'd kill these idiots and make a pile of them as high as my sword.


**MENENIUS**

No, these men are almost completely persuaded to stand down. Although they are terribly rowdy and rude, they're also terribly cowardly. But what about the other rebellious groups?

**MARCIUS**

They've all dispersed: hang 'em! They said they were very hungry, begged using frilly, proverbial language—that hunger broke stone walls, that even dogs must eat, that meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent corn for poor as well as rich—they complained with trash like this. When they were given an option—a strange option, and far too generous—they threw their hats in the air as though they meant to hang them on the horns of the moon, shouting in celebration.

 In the original text, Marcius says that the common people have been "rubbing the poor itch of [their] opinion," making themselves into "scabs." He has taken up the punning on bodies and bodily functions that Menenius began.

 The "horns" of the moon refer to the pointed ends of a crescent moon.

As they would hang them on the horns o' the moon,  
Shouting their emulation.

**MENENIUS**

What is granted them?

**MARCIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

230 This is strange.

**MARCIUS**

Go, get you home, you fragments!

*Enter a Messenger, hastily*

**MESSENGER**

Where's Caius Marcius?

**MARCIUS**

Here: what's the matter?

**MESSENGER**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

You have fought together.

**MARCIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**COMINIUS**

It is your former promise.

**MENENIUS**

What option were they given?

**MARCIUS**

Five representatives of their own choice to defend their  
idiotic ideas. One is Junius Brutus, Sicinius Velutus, and I  
don't know the rest. Forget it! The mob should've destroyed  
the city before they ever got so much from me. It will be a  
disaster, and only make more conflict in the senate.

**MENENIUS**

This is strange.

**MARCIUS**

Go, get out of here, you rabble-rousers!

*MESSENGER enters hastily.*


**MESSENGER**


Where's Caius Marcius?

**MARCIUS**

I'm here, what's the matter?

**MESSENGER**

The news is, sir, that the Volsces  are preparing to attack  
us.

 The Volsces are another Roman city-state. At this period in Roman history, the empire was divided into many competing parts.

**MARCIUS**


Good! It will give us a way to get rid of this moldy excess.  
Here come our best senators.


*COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other SENATORS enter; JUNIUS BRUTUS and SICINIUS VELUTUS enter.*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Marcius, what you warned us about recently has come true:  
it looks like the Volsces are getting ready to attack.

**MARCIUS**

245 They have a leader, Tullus Aufidius, that will really give you  
a hard time. I know I shouldn't, but I admire his strength; if I  
had to be anyone but myself, I would wish to be him .

 This is the first of many references to Marcius and Aufidius's odd obsession with one another.

**COMINIUS**

So you've fought him before?

**MARCIUS**

If the whole world were at war, and he were on my side, I  
would change sides just to fight with him. He is the only  
man worth fighting with.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Then, worthy Marcius, go with Cominius to war.

**COMINIUS**

It is what you promised before.

**MARCIUS**

Sir, it is;

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

**TITUS**

No, Caius Marcius;

260 I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with t'other,  
Ere stay behind this business.

**MENENIUS**

O, true-bred!

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**TITUS**

*[To COMINIUS]* Lead you on.

265 *[To MARCIUS]* Follow Cominius; We must follow you;  
Right worthy you priority.

**COMINIUS**

Noble Marcius!

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

*Citizens steal away. Exeunt all but SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

**SICINIUS**

275 Was ever man so proud as is this Marcius?

**BRUTUS**

He has no equal.

**SICINIUS**

When we were chosen tribunes for the people,—

**BRUTUS**

Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

**SICINIUS**

Nay, but his taunts.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Be-mock the modest moon.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

285 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.

**MARCIUS**

Sir, it is; and I will not break my promise. Titus Lartius, you'll  
see me fight with Tullus once again. What's wrong, are you  
dead? Are you upset?

**TITUS**

No, Caius Marcius; I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with  
the other, rather than stay behind while you are fighting.

**MENENIUS**

Oh, you pure-bred Roman!

**FIRST SENATOR**

Come with me to the Capitol, where, I know, our best  
friends are waiting for us.

**TITUS**

*[To COMINIUS]* Take us there.

*[To MARCIUS]* Follow Cominius, and we must follow you,  
who most deserve to lead us.

**COMINIUS**

Noble Marcius!

**FIRST SENATOR**

*[To the citizens]* Get to your homes; be gone!

**MARCIUS**

No, let them come along! The Volsces have plenty of corn;  
take these rats there to gnaw at it. Show us your bravery,  
you great rebels: pray, follow.

*CITIZENS sneak away. All but SICINIUS and BRUTUS exit.*

**SICINIUS**

Has there ever been anyone as arrogant as Marcius?

**BRUTUS**

No, he has no equal.

**SICINIUS**

When we were chosen as representatives for the people—

**BRUTUS**

Did you see his expressions?

**SICINIUS**

No, but I heard him taunt us.

**BRUTUS**

When he's angry, he would taunt the gods themselves.

**SICINIUS**

He'd mock the moon.

**BRUTUS**

The wars have completely ruined him: he's become too  
proud to be so brave.

**SICINIUS**

That kind of man, who has been flattered with success,  
looks down on everything, even his own shadow. I wonder  
if he can deal with being under Cominius's command.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

310 Let's along.

*Exeunt*

**BRUTUS**

Actually, he's in the best position for acquiring fame—which is all he wants, and all he's ever wanted—because fame is most easily gotten as the second in command. The leader always has to take responsibility for what goes wrong, even if he does his best, and then Marcius will cry out, "If only I had been in charge!"

**SICINIUS**

Right—and then if things go well, Marcius will get all the credit Cominius deserves.

**BRUTUS**

Indeed: half of what Cominius does right will be attributed to Marcius even if he doesn't deserve it, and everything Cominius does wrong will be somehow made Marcius's honors, just the same.

**SICINIUS**

Let's go and hear how things are announced, and how—beyond just his strangeness—he takes action.

**BRUTUS**

Let's go.

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS and certain Senators*

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

*Reads*

**AUFIDIUS**

10 'They have press'd a power, but it is not known  
 Whether for east or west: the dearth is great;  
 The people mutinous; and it is rumour'd,  
 Cominius, Marcius your old enemy,  
 Who is of Rome worse hated than of you,  
 15 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  
 20 We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready  
 To answer us.

### Shakescleare Translation

*TULLUS AUFIDIUS and a few SENATORS enter.*

**FIRST SENATOR**

So, Aufidius—you think that the Romans have spies among us, and know what we're going to do?

**AUFIDIUS**

Don't you? When have we ever even thought of doing something that Rome didn't attempt to counter before we had the chance to even get started? Less than four days ago, I heard from Rome—this is what they said—I have the letter here somewhere . . . yes, here it is.

*AUFIDIUS reads aloud.*

**AUFIDIUS**

"They have sent out a battalion of soldiers, but it is not known whether they went east or west. The city's famine is serious, and the people are mutinous. There are rumours that three men lead the battalion: Cominius, Marcius your rival (whom Rome hates even more than they hate you), and Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman. They are probably bound for you; be careful."

**FIRST SENATOR**

We've never yet sent out an army unless we were ready to have Rome fight with us.



**AUFIDIUS**

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

**SECOND SENATOR**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**ALL**

The gods assist you!

**AUFIDIUS**

And keep your honours safe!

**FIRST SENATOR**

45 Farewell.

**SECOND SENATOR**

Farewell.

**ALL**

Farewell.

*Exeunt*

**AUFIDIUS**

But at the same time, you've never thought it was a mistake  
 to hide your warlike aims until the last possible second.  
 This time, Rome seems to have known from the start, so  
 that our initial plan—to conquer towns secretly, without  
 Rome getting word—has been ruined.

**SECOND SENATOR**

Honorable Aufidius, here are your orders: go out to your  
 soldiers, and leave us to guard the city of Corioli. If they  
 besiege us, come at them from behind. Still, I think you'll  
 find that they underestimate our strength.

**AUFIDIUS**

Oh, don't doubt for a minute that they plan to besiege  
 Corioli. I am certain of it; some of their forces are headed  
 this way already. I will leave you, sirs. If I meet Caius Marcius  
 in battle, we have sworn to fight to the death.

**ALL**

May the gods assist you!

**AUFIDIUS**

May they keep you safe, sirs!

**FIRST SENATOR**

Goodbye.

**SECOND SENATOR**

Goodbye.

**ALL**

Goodbye.

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA. They set them down on two low stools, and sew*

**VOLUMNIA**

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

### Shakescleare Translation

*VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA enter. They sit down on two stools and begin to sew.*

**VOLUMNIA**

Why don't you sing, daughter, or at least speak cheerfully? If  
 my son Caius Marcius were my husband, as he is yours, I  
 would rejoice more when he is gone to win honor in battle  
 than I would in his embrace when he would most show  
 5 love. 🗨️ When he was just a baby, my first son, so young  
 and beautiful that he won everyone's attention and was  
 impossible to give up even for a moment—even then,  
 thinking of his incredible potential, I sent him willingly to a  
 cruel war. When he returned, he had gained resolve, and  
 had already saved the life of another man. I tell you, my  
 daughter, I was not more happy to know that I had born a  
 son than I was in seeing that he had *proven* himself a man.

🗨️ *Note how weird this is on several levels. Marcius's mom (Volumnia) is talking to Marcius's wife (Virgilia). Volumnia says that if Marcius (again, HER SON) were her husband, she'd be happier when he was off winning glory in battle than when they were having sex.*

**VIRGILIA**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

*Enter a Gentlewoman*

**GENTLEWOMAN**

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

**VIRGILIA**

Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**VIRGILIA**

His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

**VOLUMNIA**

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

*Exit Gentlewoman*

**VIRGILIA**

Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

**VOLUMNIA**

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

*Enter VALERIA, with an Usher and Gentlewoman*

**VALERIA**

My ladies both, good day to you.

**VOLUMNIA**

Sweet madam.

**VIRGILIA**

50 I am glad to see your ladyship.

**VALERIA**

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

**VIRGILIA**

I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

**VIRGILIA**

But what if he had died in that war; how would you have  
felt then?

**VOLUMNIA**

Then the news of his bravery would have taken his place.  
Listen; I'm being serious: if I had a dozen sons, each of them  
loved as much as I love our Marcius, I would rather have  
eleven die nobly for their country than one to die lazy and  
indulgent, doing nothing for the good of anyone.

*A GENTLEWOMAN enters.*

**GENTLEWOMAN**

Madam, the Lady Valeria has arrived to visit you.

**VIRGILIA**

Please excuse me; let me go and rest in my room.

**VOLUMNIA**

No, you may not. I can practically hear your husband's  
drum; I can imagine him pulling Aufidius down by his hair  
as a bear would kill children, the Volscies running in fear. I  
can see him striding forward and calling out: "Come on, you  
cowards! You were conceived by weaklings, though you  
were born in Rome!" He wipes his bloody brow with an  
armored hand, and there he goes, like a farmer at harvest  
driven to cut all the grain or lose his job.

**VIRGILIA**

His bloody brow! By the gods, no blood!

**VOLUMNIA**

Get away, you fool! Blood is more appropriate to a brave  
man than gold in his trophy. The breasts of Hecuba, mother  
of Hector [👉](#), were not more beautiful than Hector's  
forehead when it bled from the blow of a Greek sword.

*[To the GENTLEWOMAN]* Tell Valeria we're ready to greet  
her.

*GENTLEWOMAN exits.*

**VIRGILIA**

Heaven protect my husband from the deadly Aufidius!

**VOLUMNIA**

He'll crush Aufidius's head beneath his knee and stomp on  
his neck.

*VALERIA enters with a servant and GENTLEWOMAN.*

**VALERIA**

My ladies, hello to you both.

**VOLUMNIA**

Sweet lady.

**VIRGILIA**

I am glad to see you, ma'am.

**VALERIA**

How are you? You are such perfect house-wives. What are  
you sewing? That's a great pattern, seriously. How is your  
little boy?

**VIRGILIA**

Thank you, ma'am. He's doing well.

[👉](#) Hecuba and Hector are characters from Greek mythology, and appear in Homer's *Iliad*. Hecuba was the queen of Troy during the Trojan war, while Hector is the eldest of her nineteen children and the greatest Trojan warrior. He was killed (in a very detailed scene in the *Iliad*) by Achilles.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**VALERIA**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

One on 's father's moods.

**VALERIA**

Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

**VIRGILIA**

A crack, madam.

**VALERIA**

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

**VIRGILIA**

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

**VALERIA**

Not out of doors!

**VOLUMNIA**

She shall, she shall.

**VIRGILIA**

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

**VALERIA**

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

**VIRGILIA**

80 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**

85 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.

**VOLUMNIA**

He would rather play with swords and hear a war drum than study.

**VALERIA**

Oh, my word , just like his father! I say, he's a very handsome boy. To be honest, I was watching him Wednesday for at least half an hour: he has such a bold look about him. I saw him run after a golden butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again, and then chased it again; over and over he comes, and again, caught it again, and then suddenly, maybe his stumble enraged him, or maybe—I don't know why—he chomped down on the butterfly with his teeth and tore it up; Oh, I do say, how he chewed upon it!

**VOLUMNIA**

He is moody and abrupt, just like his father.

**VALERIA**

Indeed, it's true: he's a magnificent child.

**VIRGILIA**

A good egg , ma'am.

**VALERIA**

Come on, enough sewing; why don't you spend the afternoon with me?

**VIRGILIA**

No, ma'am; I can't go out.

**VALERIA**

You can't go out?

**VOLUMNIA**

Oh, she'll go, she'll go.

**VIRGILIA**

No, if you don't mind. I can't bear to leave the house until my husband gets back from the war.

**VALERIA**

Ugh, you're holding yourself down for no good reason: come on, go spend the afternoon with our pregnant friend.

**VIRGILIA**

I wish her the best, and please send her my prayers, but I simply can't go.


**VOLUMNIA**

Why not? Explain yourself.

**VIRGILIA**


It's not that I'm lazy, nor that I don't love her.


**VALERIA**


You want to be like Penelope ? Think of the good waiting did her; they say all the yarn she spun while Ulysses was away just filled the island of Ithaca with moths. Come on, I wish your sewing linen could feel the pain of your needle, so that you'd leave it alone out of pity and come with us. Come on!

**VIRGILIA**

No, ma'am, pardon me; I truly will not go.

 Valeria wildly overuses these phrases (Oh, my word, I'll swear, etc) even for 1608, in a way which conveys that she is flighty and naive.

 This dialogue is full of playful, contemporary language: "a crack," in the original text, was slang for something skillful. We might still call someone "a crack shot," to convey that they are a really excellent marksman.

 Penelope, a figure from Ancient Greek literature and myth, waited twenty years for her husband Ulysses (or Odysseus) to return from the war with Troy.

**VALERIA**

90 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**

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

**VIRGILIA**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**VALERIA**

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

**VIRGILIA**

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

**VALERIA**

Well, then, farewell.

*Exeunt*

**VALERIA**

Honestly! Come with me, and I'll give you good news of  
your husband.

**VIRGILIA**

O, ma'am, there can't possibly be news yet.

**VALERIA**

Seriously, I'm not kidding; news from him came in just last  
night.

**VIRGILIA**

Really?

**VALERIA**

Yes, it's really true; I heard a senator share the news. It's  
this: the Volsces have sent out their army, and Cominius has  
gone to fight them with a part of our force. Your husband  
and Titus Lartius are encamped in front of Corioli. They are  
sure to win and end this quickly. This is all true, on my  
honor. So, please, don't worry and come along with us!

**VIRGILIA**

Forgive me, ma'am. In anything other than this, I would  
follow your lead, but for now I just can't.

**VOLUMNIA**

Oh, leave her alone. In this mood, she'd just drag down our  
high spirits.

**VALERIA**

Yes, I think she really would. Farewell, then. Come, my good  
friend. Oh, once more, Virgilia, get your sad self out of the  
house and come along with us.

**VIRGILIA**

In a word, no. I just can't. I hope you have a good time,  
though.

**VALERIA**

Well, then, farewell.

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

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

**MARCIUS**

Yonder comes news. A wager they have met.

**LARTIUS**

My horse to yours, no.

**MARCIUS**

'Tis done.

**LARTIUS**

Agreed.

**MARCIUS**

5 Say, has our general met the enemy?

### Shakescleare Translation

*MARCIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, captains, and soldiers with  
drums and flags enter from one door, as though before the  
city of Corioli. From another door, a MESSENGER enters.*

**MARCIUS**

Here comes some news. I bet our other force has begun to  
fight the Volsces.

**LARTIUS**

I bet my horse against yours they haven't.

**MARCIUS**

Done.

**LARTIUS**

Agreed.

**MARCIUS**

*[To the MESSENGER]* Hey, has our general started fighting?

**MESSENGER**

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

**LARTIUS**

So, the good horse is mine.

**MARCIUS**

I'll buy him of you.

**LARTIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

How far off lie these armies?

**MESSENGER**

Within this mile and half.

**MARCIUS**

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

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

**MARCIUS**

Tutus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

*Drums afar off*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Hark! our drums  
Are bringing forth our youth. We'll break our walls,  
Rather than they shall pound us up: our gates,  
25 Which yet seem shut, we, have but pinn'd with rushes;  
They'll open of themselves.

*Alarum afar off*

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MARCIUS**

O, they are at it!

**LARTIUS**

Their noise be our instruction. Ladders, ho!

*Enter the army of the Volsces*

**MARCIUS**

They fear us not, but issue forth their city.  
35 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:  
40 He that retires I'll take him for a Volscie,  
And he shall feel mine edge.

**MESSENGER**

The two forces have seen each other, but haven't begun fighting yet.

**LARTIUS**

So, the good horse is mine.

**MARCIUS**

I'll just buy him back.

**LARTIUS**

No, I won't sell him or give him to you; I'll lend him to you for fifty years, though.

**MARCIUS**

How far away are their armies?

**MESSENGER**

No more than a mile and a half.

**MARCIUS**

Then we'll hear their trumpets, and they'll hear ours. To the god of war, I pray: make our work quick, so that with we may march to help our friends in the field before our swords have even cooled from our own battle! Go ahead, blow the trumpet.

*They blow the trumpets to call a truce. Enter two SENATORS with others on the walls of the city.*

**MARCIUS**

Is Tullus Aufidius in the city?

**FIRST SENATOR**

No, nor anyone less afraid of you than he is, which is very little.

*Drums are heard in the distance.*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Listen! Our drums are calling for our strong young men. We'll break our own walls rather than be locked in by you. The gates of the city, which might seem shut in fear, we've only barricaded with grass; they'll open easily to fight you.

*Trumpets blow in the distance.*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Listen! Hear that? That's Aufidius; listen—he's killing everyone in your divided army.

**MARCIUS**

Oh, they are fighting!

**LARTIUS**

Their trumpets might as well be ours, too! Put ladders to the wall!

*The army of the Volsces enter.*

**MARCIUS**

They aren't afraid of us; instead, they're attacking. Put your shields in front of your hearts, and fight with hearts stronger than those shields. Forward, brave Titus! Their boldness is disdainful, which makes me sweat with wrath. Come on, my soldiers; I'll treat anyone who takes a backward step like the enemy and promptly kill them.

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

**MARCIUS**

All the contagion of the south light on you,  
You shames of Rome! you herd of— Boils and plagues  
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd  
45 Further than seen and one infect another  
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,  
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run  
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!  
All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale  
50 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: I look to't: come on;  
If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,  
As they us to our trenches followed.

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

**MARCIUS**

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

*Enters the gates*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Fool-hardiness; not I.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

60 Nor I.

*MARCIUS is shut in*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

See, they have shut him in.

**ALL**

To the pot, I warrant him.

*Alarum continues*

*Re-enter TITUS LARTIUS*

**LARTIUS**

65 What is become of Marcius?

**ALL**

Slain, sir, doubtless.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

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

**LARTIUS**

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

*Trumpets sound, and over the course of a hard fight, the Romans are beaten back to their trenches. MARCIUS re-enters cursing.*

**MARCIUS**

May all the diseases of the south wind poison you, you shames of Rome! you herd of—sores and plagues cover your whole body, that you'll be hated from even further than you can be seen, and so that you infect each other against the wind even a mile away! You cowards, more likely to fly than fight, you have run from wretches who even apes could defeat! The devil curse you! You've all been injured as you ran away—your backs are red with blood, and your faces white with cowardice and sickly fear! Pull yourselves together and charge back to the fight, or by the fires of heaven, I will stop fighting the Volsces and will turn to fight you! Don't think I'm joking; come on! If you can stand your ground, we'll beat them home to their wives, as they beat us to our trenches.

*Another trumpet sounds. The Volsces retreat, and MARCIUS chases them to the gates of Corioli.*

**MARCIUS**

So, now the gates are open; this looks like a good opportunity. Luck has opened them so that we can follow the Volsces into the city, not so that they can flee. Come with me!

*MARCIUS enters the gates.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

That's foolish; I'm not going in.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Me neither.

*The gates close and MARCIUS is trapped inside Corioli.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

See, they have trapped him inside.

**ALL**

He's doomed, I'm sure.

*Trumpets continue to blow.*

*TITUS LARTIUS re-enters.*

**LARTIUS**

What's happened to Marcius?


**ALL**


He's been killed sir, surely.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

He followed the Volsces right into the city as they retreated, and they suddenly slammed the gates shut behind him. He's alone in Corioli against the entire city.

**LARTIUS**

Oh, that brave man! Who knowingly dares more than even his sword  would, and when it fails, he continues by force of will. You've left us, Marcius. A ruby as big as a man is not worth as much as you. You were a soldier to make our ancestors jealous—not just fierce and powerful in battle, but with your fearsome looks and the thunder-like sounds of your movements, you made your enemies shake in terror, as if the whole world had a fever, and trembled.

 This is the first of many metaphors throughout the play which compare Caius Marcius (later Coriolanus) to strong objects in order to communicate that he is tougher than any man could be. We might say that someone is "as tough as a rock" in this same vein.

*Re-enter MARCIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Look, sir.

**LARTIUS**

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

*They fight, and all enter the city*

*MARCIUS re-enters, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Look, sir.

**LARTIUS**

Oh my god, it's Marcius! Lets rescue him, or we'll find ourselves bleeding like he is.

*They fight, and all enter the city.*

## Act 1, Scene 5

### Shakespeare

*Enter certain Romans, with spoils*

**FIRST ROMAN**

This will I carry to Rome.

**SECOND ROMAN**

And I this.

**THIRD ROMAN**

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

*Alarum continues still afar off*

*Enter MARCIUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet*

**MARCIUS**

- 5 See here these movers that do prize their hours  
At a crack'd drachm! Cushions, leaden spoons,  
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would  
Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,  
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up: down with them!  
10 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  
15 To help Cominius.

**LARTIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**LARTIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**LARTIUS**

- 30 Thou worthiest Marcius!

### Shakescleare Translation

*A few ROMANS enter with loot from the city.*

**FIRST ROMAN**

I'll take this back to Rome.

**SECOND ROMAN**

And I'll take this.

**THIRD ROMAN**

Oh, curse this! I thought this was silver.

*Trumpeting still continues in the distance.*

MARCIUS and TITUS LARTIUS enter to the sound of an especially grand trumpet.

**MARCIUS**

Look at these layabouts, who have no concern for all the time they waste! Cushions, lead spoons, third-rate swords, shirts that no one would ever want—these losers are plundering all of this junk before the fight is even over! To hell with them! But listen, that's Cominius's trumpet! We must go to him! That's where Aufidius, my worst enemy, is fighting against our men. Brave Titus, you stay here with enough men to secure the city, and I'll take whoever is brave enough to hurry to Cominius's aid.

**LARTIUS**

But brave sir, you're bleeding! You've already done far too much fighting to turn around and go to another part of the battle.

**MARCIUS**

Don't call me brave if that's what you'd expect of me. All that fighting has barely warmed me up; goodbye. My bleeding is good for me rather than dangerous. I'll face Aufidius just like this, blood and all.

**LARTIUS**

May Lady Luck go with you, and may she turn away the swords of your enemies! Brave soldier, may prosperity walk beside you!

**MARCIUS**

As much prosperity as anyone has ever won! So, goodbye.

**LARTIUS**

That brave Marcius.

*Exit MARCIUS***LARTIUS**

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

35

*Exeunt**MARCIUS exits.***LARTIUS**

Go, blow your trumpets in the center of the city, and call its  
leaders together so they can hear what we have to say. Go!

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 6

### Shakespeare

*Enter COMINIUS, as it were in retire, with soldiers***COMINIUS**

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

*Enter a Messenger***COMINIUS**

Thy news?

**MESSENGER**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**MESSENGER**

Above an hour, my lord.

**COMINIUS**

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

**MESSENGER**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

*[Within]* Come I too late?

### Shakescleare Translation

*COMINIUS enters, coming from battle with soldiers.***COMINIUS**

Relax for a moment, my friends, you fought well. We've  
lived up to our names as Romans—neither foolish in the  
fight nor cowardly in stepping back from it. Believe me, sirs,  
they'll charge at us again. As we've been fighting, we've  
heard the trumpets of our friends' fight over the wind. Oh,  
Roman gods! Give them success as we hope for our own, so  
that both our forces may willingly give you thankful  
sacrifice.

*A MESSENGER enters.***COMINIUS**

What news do you have?

**MESSENGER**

The citizens of Corioli have attacked the forces of [Titus]  
Lartius and Marcius. I saw our Romans driven back to their  
trenches just before I left.

**COMINIUS**

If you're telling the truth, it's a truth I don't much like. How  
long ago was this?

**MESSENGER**

More than an hour, sir.

**COMINIUS**

They're less than a mile away; we just heard their drums.  
How did it take you an hour to come a mile; why are you so  
late?

**MESSENGER**

Spies of the Volsces chased after me, and I had to run three  
or four miles extra in order to lose them. I'd have been here  
a half hour ago otherwise, sir.

**COMINIUS**

Who's that coming this way, covered in wounds? Oh my  
god, it must be Marcius; I've seen him like this before.

**MARCIUS**

*[From offstage, shouting]* Am I too late?



**COMINIUS**

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

*Enter MARCIUS*

**MARCIUS**

Come I too late?

**COMINIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

45 Flower of warriors,  
How is it with Titus Lartius?

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

But how prevail'd you?

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

As the shepherd can distinguish between a tambourine and  
thunder, I can tell that is the sound of Marcius's voice rather  
than any lesser man.

*MARCIUS enters.*


**MARCIUS**


Am I too late?

**COMINIUS**

Ha! If that's your blood and not the blood of your enemies,  
then yes.

**MARCIUS**

Oh, let me wrap my arms around you like I would around a  
lover; I'm as happy as I was the day I was married, when the  
candles had burned low. 

 Remember when Volunnia said that, if Marcius were her husband, she'd be happier when he was away fighting than when they were in bed together? Marcius feels much the same way. There's a strong sexual, homoerotic overtone to this entire conversation. The implication here is that the candles have burned down during lovemaking after a wedding night.

**COMINIUS**

Greatest of warriors, how's it going with Titus Lartius in the  
other part of the battle?

**MARCIUS**

It's going about as well as with a mayor, busy with running  
a city: condemning some to death, and some to exile;  
taking ransom from some, taking pity on others, and  
threatening still more. He holds Corioli in the name of  
Rome, and the city is his like a greyhound on a leash, ready  
to race at his command.

**COMINIUS**

Where is that lowly messenger who told me that your force  
had been beaten to your trenches? Where is he? Get him  
over here.

**MARCIUS**

Leave him alone. He was just telling the truth. A plague on  
our common soldiers! We'll have them court martialed! No  
mouse has ever fled a cat as they did flee from rascals even  
worse than themselves.

**COMINIUS**

So then how did you win?

**MARCIUS**

Do we have time for an idle story? I don't think so. Where is  
the enemy? Have you won already? If not, why waste time  
until you have?

**COMINIUS**

Marcius, we've been fighting outnumbered, and we're  
regrouping now to make another go of it.

**MARCIUS**

How are they organized? Do you know where they've  
placed their best soldiers?

**COMINIUS**

As far as I can tell, Marcius, the men in the front are the  
Antiates, their best soldiers. Aufidius, the very heart of their  
army, leads them.

**MARCIUS**

I do beseech you,  
 75 By all the battles wherein we have fought,  
 By the blood we have shed together, by the vows  
 We have made to endure friends, that you directly  
 Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates;  
 And that you not delay the present, but,  
 80 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  
 85 Deny your asking: take your choice of those  
 That best can aid your action.

**MARCIUS**

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

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

**MARCIUS**

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  
 100 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,  
 105 As cause will be obey'd. Please you to march;  
 And four shall quickly draw out my command,  
 Which men are best inclined.

**COMINIUS**

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

*Exeunt*


**MARCIUS**


Then I beg you: by all the battles we've fought together, by all the blood we've shed together, by our very friendship itself—send me directly against Aufidius and his Antiates, and lets not waste any time, but fill the air with our swords and arrows this very hour.

**COMINIUS**

Though I wish I could have you taken to recover in a spa and have medicine given to you, I can't deny what you ask. Take whatever soldiers you think will be best suited to help you.


**MARCIUS**


The best soldiers are the boldest. If anyone here—dare I even doubt it—loves the painting in which you see me smeared ; if anyone fears death less than shame; if anyone thinks a brave death is better than a fearful life, and that cares more for his country than his life; let that man, or however many like that are here, raise your arms to show your commitment, and follow me!

 The "painting" in which Marcius is smeared is the blood of his enemies. This metaphor is one of several in the play which equate art and war.

*They all shout and wave their swords, pick him up on their shoulders, and toss up their hats in enthusiasm.*

**MARCIUS**

Oh, just me then! Make you a sword of me?  If your enthusiasm reflects your actual boldness, each of you is worth four of the Volsces! You're all a match for the great Aufidius himself. Thanks to all of you, but I'll have to take only a few of you. The rest of you will hold your own in another fight, as the situation requires. Lets get moving, and you four [indicating four men] quickly pick out the best men among you.

 A dense metaphor, by which Marcius means to capture two opposing ideas. On one hand, he offers himself to his men as a weapon to be used; at the same time, he is suggesting that he will be the chief sword among them—that is, their leader.

**COMINIUS**

Good luck, my friends. Make good on your enthusiasm and we'll all share the rich prizes of war!

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 7

## Shakespeare

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

**LARTIUS**

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

**LIEUTENANT**

Fear not our care, sir.

## Shakescleare Translation

*TITUS LARTIUS, having set men to guard Corioli, goes with drums and trumpets toward COMINIUS and CAIUS MARCIUS. TITUS enters with LIEUTENANT, other soldiers, and a scout.*

**LARTIUS**

So, let the gates be guarded. Attend to the duties I've assigned to you. If I send word, send those soldiers [pointing] to help us. The rest will serve to hold the city while they are away. Anyway, if we lose the battle, we'll certainly lose the town.

**LIEUTENANT**

Don't worry about us, sir.

**LARTIUS**

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

*Exeunt*

**LARTIUS**

All right, lets go; shut the gates behind us. Come on, guide,  
take us to the other camp.

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 8

### Shakespeare

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

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

**AUFIDIUS**


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


*Exeunt*

### Shakescleare Translation

*Trumpeting is heard as in battle. MARCIUS and AUFIDIUS enter from opposite sides.*

**MARCIUS**

I'll fight with no one but you, for I hate you worse than a  
promise-breaker .

 With the implication of "betrayer" or "turncoat." This line foreshadows the very different conditions of their next meeting.

**AUFIDIUS**

I hate you just as much: there's not a snake in all of Africa I  
hate more than you and your fame. Stand and fight!

**MARCIUS**

Let the first man to budge die as the other's slave, and the  
gods doom him!


**AUFIDIUS**


If I run, Marcius, lasso me like a hare.

**MARCIUS**

Not three hours ago, Tullus, I fought alone inside Corioli,  
and did whatever I wanted. The blood you see on me is not  
my own, I'll tell you that—if you want revenge, you'll have  
to fight better than you ever have before.

**AUFIDIUS**

Even if you were Hector , the whip of your ancestors, you  
wouldn't escape me here.

 Romans claimed to be ancestors of the Trojans. Hector, the greatest soldier of the Trojans, was the scourge (the whip) of the Greeks.

*They fight, and just as MARCIUS is about to strike a terrible blow, a few Volsces come to the aid of AUFIDIUS.*

**AUFIDIUS**

[To the Volsces] You groveling, cowardly idiots! You've  
interfered in our fight and brought terrible shame on me.

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 9

### Shakespeare

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

### Shakescleare Translation

*A chorus of trumpets are heard, then alarmed shouts. Trumpets sound a retreat, then another chorus. COMINIUS enters with the Romans from one side; from the other side, MARCIUS enters with his arm in a scarf.*

**COMINIUS**

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

*Enter TITUS LARTIUS, with his power, from the pursuit*

**LARTIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**MARCIUS**


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


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

**MARCIUS**

May these same instruments, which you profane,  
 Never sound more! when drums and trumpets shall  
 I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be  
 50 Made all of false-faced soothing!  
 When steel grows soft as the parasite's silk,


**COMINIUS**


If I told you again about the work you have already done today, you wouldn't believe your own deeds. Instead, I'll tell Rome's senators, who will laugh and cry, and the best among them will listen and shrug, but in the end they'll all admire you. Ladies will be scared and excited and will ask to hear more; the most average and the most senior men in the Senate, even if they're jealous, will say in spite of themselves: "We thank the gods our Rome has such a soldier." Yet all of this was just a snack for you; you ate earlier .

 *Cominius is thanking Marcius for coming to his aid even though he had already won the battle in Corioli. Corioli was the "feast" of the original text, while the second battle was the "morsel" or post-meal snack.*

*Enter TITUS LARTIUS from the fight with his soldiers.*

**LARTIUS**

Oh, general, here is the one who carried the fight; we're just his ornaments. If you'd seen  —

 *Here, Titus Lartius prepares to repeat much of what Cominius has already said, telling Caius Marcius how brave he was. That Marcius stops him is a sign of humility or frustration.*

**MARCIUS**

Please, no more: even my own mother, who has more right to praise me than anyone else, grieves me when she does. I have done as you have done: that is, I've done my best. I have the same reasons as you: that is, I love my country. Any man who has acted as well as he can has done the same as me.

**COMINIUS**

You shall not silence your own praise; Rome needs to know how valuable you are to our republic. Not to praise you would be worse than stealing your praise; it would be nothing less than to lie about your reputation, to hide your actions. Please, let me review your actions before our men, not as a reward, but simply in acknowledgement of who you are.

**MARCIUS**

I have some wounds upon me, and they hurt when I'm reminded of them.

**COMINIUS**

If they didn't, they might as well infect themselves against ingratitude and welcome death. In reward, take a tenth of all the horses, and all the goods plundered from the battle and the city. You and you alone will choose your tenth first, before the rest of us.

**MARCIUS**

I thank you, general, but I couldn't bear to accept payment for this fighting. I must refuse and stand with all the other soldiers who were there to see me fight.

*An elaborate trumpet sounds. The soldiers all cry "Marcius! Marcius!" and throw their hats and weapons in the air. COMINIUS and LARTIUS stand bare-headed to show respect.*

**MARCIUS**

May these very trumpets, which you misuse by praising me, never blow again! When drums and trumpets are used for flattery at war, courts and cities will be home to calm deceit! When our weapons grow soft as spider's silk, may that silk be like a blanket for the wars. No more, I say!

Let him be made a coverture for the wars!  
No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd  
My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch.—  
55 Which, without note, here's many else have done,—  
You shout me forth  
In acclamations hyperbolic;  
As if I loved my little should be dieted  
In praises sauced with lies.

**COMINIUS**

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

*Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums*

**ALL**

Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**LARTIUS**

I shall, my lord.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**LARTIUS**

Marcius, his name?

Merely because I haven't cleaned my bloody nose, or  
because I killed some foolish wretch—which many others  
here have done—you shout these wild praises of me, as if I  
enjoyed having what little praise I am entitled to covered up  
with lies.

**COMINIUS**

You are too modest, and your modesty only tarnishes your  
reputation. Please, if you truly think so little of yourself,  
we'll restrain you like one restrains a man who wants to  
hurt himself—then we can talk reasonably with you.  
Therefore, be it known to all the world as it is clear to us,  
that Caius Marcius wears this war's garland. In token of  
his victory, I give him my noble steed along with his  
luxurious saddle and bridle, known to everyone in the  
camp. From this time forward, for what he did in Corioli, let  
us all call him—with the applause and approval of the  
whole army—[shouting, as though to the whole army] Caius  
Marcius Coriolanus! Bear that name nobly forever!

*A chorus of trumpets and drumming is heard.*

**ALL**

Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

**CORIOLANUS**

I will go wash, and when my face is clean, you will all see  
whether I blush or not. Either way, I thank you. I will try to  
ride your horse, and at all times to live up to the name you  
have given me as much as I can.

**COMINIUS**

So, to our tent, where before we rest, we will write to Rome  
of our success. You, Titus Lartius, must return to Corioli.  
From there, send the best of the Volscians to Rome so that  
we can negotiate the terms of their surrender, for their own  
good and ours.

**LARTIUS**

I will, my lord.

**CORIOLANUS**

The gods begin to mock me. I, who just refused the most  
lavish gifts, now have to beg something of my lord general.

**COMINIUS**

Take it; whatever you want is yours. What is it?

**CORIOLANUS**


During the fight here in Corioli I hid for a bit in a poor man's  
house, and he was kind to me. When I saw Aufidius, wrath  
overwhelmed whatever pity I had, and so although the man  
begged me to be merciful, I made him a prisoner. Please,  
give my poor host his freedom.

**COMINIUS**

O, well begg'd! Were he to murder my own son, he would  
be free as the wind. Free him, Titus.

**LARTIUS**

Marcius, what's his name?

 A garland is a ring of leaves and flowers awarded to the victor in a contest. Cominius is comparing the battle to a competition in which Caius Marcius has been the greatest competitor.

**CORIOLANUS**


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


**COMINIUS**

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

*Exeunt*

**CORIOLANUS**

By god! I've forgotten. I am tired; even my memory is tired.  
Don't we have any wine? 

 Sudden change of topic implies that mercy is not worth Coriolanus' time or attention.

**COMINIUS**

Lets go to our tent. The blood is drying on your face; it's time we dealt with it. Come on.

*All exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 10

### Shakespeare

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

**AUFIDIUS**

The town is ta'en!

**FIRST SOLDIER**

'Twill be deliver'd back on good condition.

**AUFIDIUS**

Condition!

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

**FIRST SOLDIER**

He's the devil.

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Will not you go?

**AUFIDIUS**

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

### Shakescleare Translation

*A chorus of trumpets sounds. TULLUS AUFIDIUS enters, bloody, with two or three soldiers.*

**AUFIDIUS**

The town has been captured!


**FIRST SOLDIER**


They'll let us have it back once we negotiate the terms of our surrender.

**AUFIDIUS**

Surrender! I wish I were a Roman, because I cannot be a Volscian if men like you, talking of surrender, are Volscians. Surrender? What good terms can we get from a treaty when we are the ones who have lost?

*[As though to CORIOLANUS]* Five times, Marcius, I have fought with you, and five times I've lost. You'd defeat me, I think, if we were to fight as often as we eat.

*[To the SOLDIERS]* By earth and sun, if ever again I meet him beard to beard, he will be mine or I will be his.  Our rivalry, which so far has been fought in fair and open terms, will turn dirty: where before I thought to beat him sword to sword, I'll do anything now; I'll thrust at him however I can. If not by wrath, I'll kill him by cleverness.

 This implies a fight to the death, with strong undertones of respect and maybe even desire.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

He's the devil.

**AUFIDIUS**

Bolder than the devil, though not as clever. My honor has been poisoned by all the times he has defeated me. To kill him, I will sacrifice that honor and be devilish. I will kill him anywhere, at any time, honorable or not: if he is sleeping, or naked, or takes refuge in a temple or in Rome; neither the prayers of priests nor their sacrifices will stop my revenge against Marcius. Even if I found him in my home, guarded by my own brother—even there, against all decency and hospitality, I would wash my avenging hand in his heart's blood. Go you to the city; find out how it's holding up, and who is being sent as hostages to Rome.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Won't you go?

**AUFIDIUS**

People are waiting for me at the cypress grove. Please, find me there—it's south of the city mills—and bring me word of how the world goes, so that the news may inspire me on my journey.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

I shall, sir.

*Exeunt***FIRST SOLDIER**

I shall, sir.

*All exit.*

## Act 2, Scene 1

### Shakespeare

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

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

**BRUTUS**

Good or bad?

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

5 Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

**MENENIUS**

Pray you, who does the wolf love?

**SICINIUS**

The lamb.

**MENENIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**BOTH**

Well, sir.

**MENENIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Especially in pride.

**BRUTUS**

And topping all others in boasting.

**MENENIUS**

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

### Shakescleare Translation

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


The prophet tells me we will get news tonight.


**BRUTUS**

Good or bad?

**MENENIUS**

Well, not the good news the people are praying for, since they don't like Marcius.

**SICINIUS**Nature teaches beasts to know their friends. 

 This was a common saying in early modern English. Sicinius is implying that the people of Rome instinctively know what's good for them, and Marcius isn't it.

**MENENIUS**

Tell me then, who does the wolf love?

**SICINIUS**

The lamb.

**MENENIUS**

Right—to devour him: as the hungry people would like to devour noble Marcius.

**BRUTUS**

If he's a lamb, he's one that baas like a bear.

**MENENIUS**

He's a bear that lives like a lamb. You two are old men; answer me one question.

**BOTH**

Go ahead, sir.

**MENENIUS**

What small flaw does Marcius have that you two do not have twice over?

**BRUTUS**

It's not that he has one fault, but all of them.

**SICINIUS**

He has pride, especially.

**BRUTUS**

And his boasting is worse than all his other flaws.

**MENENIUS**

Well that's weird: do you two know how you are thought of in the city, I mean by those of us in the higher class? Do you?

**BOTH**

Why, how are we censured?

**MENENIUS**

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

**BOTH**

Well, well, sir, well.

**MENENIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

We do it not alone, sir.

**MENENIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

What then, sir?

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Menenius, you are known well enough too.

**MENENIUS**

I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that  
45 loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying  
Tiber in't; said to be something imperfect in  
favouring the first complaint; hasty and tinder-like  
upon too trivial motion; one that converses more  
50 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  
55 crooked face at it. I can't say your worships have  
delivered the matter well, when I find the ass in  
compound with the major part of your syllables: and  
though I must be content to bear with those that say  
you are reverend grave men, yet they lie deadly that  
60 tell you you have good faces. If you see this in  
the map of my microcosm, follows it that I am known  
well enough too? what barm can your bisson  
conspicuities glean out of this character, if I be  
known well enough too?

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

65 You know neither me, yourselves nor any thing. You  
are ambitious for poor knaves' caps and legs: you  
wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a  
cause between an orange wife and a fosset-seller;  
and then rejoin the controversy of three pence to a  
70

**BOTH**

Why, what do they say about us?

**MENENIUS**

Because you're talking of pride, now—you won't be angry if  
I tell you, will you?

**BOTH**

Come on, sir, come on.

**MENENIUS**

It's no big deal. A small occasion will rob you of a great deal  
of patience: if you let your emotions lead you, you'll be  
angry at your pleasures if you take pleasure in being angry. 2  
You blame Marcius for being proud?

2 Menenius is being intentionally confusing here in order to demonstrate how emotions can get tied up and contradict themselves.

**BRUTUS**

We're not the only ones who do, sir.

**MENENIUS**

I know you can do very little alone, for you need a lot of  
help, or your actions would be awfully small. Your abilities  
are too much like an infant's for doing much by yourself.  
You talk of pride: if only you could turn your eyes inward  
and see yourselves! If only you could!

**BRUTUS**

What would we see, sir?

**MENENIUS**

Why, you would find a couple of unworthy, proud, violent,  
grumpy middle-managers 3—that is, fools—as bad as  
anyone in Rome.

3 Technically, all three men are Roman tribunes—senators—of equal rank. By calling them magistrates in the original text, Menenius belittles them.

**SICINIUS**

Menenius, there's plenty said about you too.

**MENENIUS**

I am known to be a light-hearted politician—a man who  
loves a mulled wine with not a drop of water in it; said to be  
a bit imperfect in taking the first side I hear presented; I can  
be hasty over small things; I stay up too late and sleep in  
too long; I say what I think and hold back no mean words.  
Meeting two statesmen like you—I cannot call you  
politicians—if you give me a bad drink, I'll scowl at it. I can't  
say you two have done well if you are mixing up your head  
and your ass: and though I have to deal with those who say  
you are serious, great men, they are lying if they say you are  
pleasant to look at. If you see this in my face, don't you  
think I know myself? What can your dim wits see in me, if I  
am known well enough too?

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

You don't know me; you don't know anything! You are in  
politics simply so men will bow to you; you will waste a  
whole morning listening to a dispute between a fruit seller  
and a liquor man, and then call that minor dispute back for  
another wasted day. When you are listening to an argument



second day of audience. When you are hearing a matter between party and party, if you chance to be pinched with the colic, you make faces like mummings; set up the bloody flag against all patience; and, in roaring for a chamber-pot, dismiss the controversy bleeding the more entangled by your hearing: all the peace you make in their cause is, calling both the parties knaves. You are a pair of strange ones.

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

*BRUTUS and SICINIUS go aside*

*Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and VALERIA*

**MENENIUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

100 Ha! Marcius coming home!

**VOLUMNIA**

Ay, worthy Menenius; and with most prosperous approbation.

**MENENIUS**

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

**VIRGILIA**

105 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**

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

**VIRGILIA**

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

between two citizens, if you let loose a fart, you twist your faces ignorantly so everyone knows; you make war on everyone's patience, and in roaring that you need to shit, dismiss disputes unfinished and even worse than when they started. The only thing you accomplish is to call everyone dishonest. You're a pair of strange men.

**BRUTUS**

Come, come, you are well known as a better comedian than a politician.

**MENENIUS**

Our very priests must start to mock, if they encounter men as ridiculous as you. When you finally do address important matters, that conversation is worse than if you'd kept quiet and simply wagged your beards. <sup>4</sup> Your beards don't even deserve to stuff a seamstress's needle-cushion, or to stuff a donkey's saddle-pillow. Yet here are you are saying Marcius is proud; a man who is worth all your ancestors since Deucalion <sup>5</sup>, though probably many of them were just lowly executioners. Good evening to you; to continue talking with you would make me dumber, you shepherds of ignorant plebeians <sup>6</sup>. I will be rude enough to leave you.

<sup>4</sup> To wag one's beard is to nod silently in approval.

<sup>5</sup> Deucalion is the mythical ancestor of all Greeks.

<sup>6</sup> Plebeians, the lower class, are opposed to patricians, the upper class.

*BRUTUS and SICINIUS step aside.*

*VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and VALERIA enter.*

**MENENIUS**

How are you, my ladies, as beautiful as you are noble—the moon set down on Earth would be no nobler—what are you looking for so urgently?

**VOLUMNIA**

Honorable Menenius, my son Marcius is coming into Rome; for the love of God, let's go meet him!

**MENENIUS**

What? Marcius is coming home?

**VOLUMNIA**

Yes, worthy Menenius; and with most incredible praise!

**MENENIUS**

*[Throws his hat in the air]* Take my cap, great gods, and praise be! Hoo! Marcius coming home!

**VIRGILIA**

It's true.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**VIRGILIA**

Yes, there's certainly a letter for you: I saw it.

**MENENIUS**

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

**VIRGILIA**

O, no, no, no.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**VALERIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**VIRGILIA**

The gods grant them true!

**VOLUMNIA**

True! pow, wow.

**MENENIUS**

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

145 *[To the Tribunes]* God save your good worships! Marcius is coming home: he has more cause to be proud. Where is he wounded?

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

A letter for me! It will give seven years of life, at which point I will stick out my tongue at the physician. The most powerful medicine in Galen <sup>7</sup> is quack medicine, and compared to this, no better than horse pills! Is he not wounded? He always seems to come home wounded.

**VIRGILIA**

*[With fear and anxiety]* Oh, no, no, no.

**VOLUMNIA**

Yes, he is wounded, thank the gods.

**MENENIUS**

So long as he is not *too* wounded; he brings a victory with him? If so, the wounds suit him.

**VOLUMNIA**

He bears a victory on his brows like a wreath; he comes home with the oaken garland <sup>8</sup> for the third time.

**MENENIUS**

Has he beaten Aufidius thoroughly?

**VOLUMNIA**

Titus Lartius writes that they fought together, but Aufidius escaped.

**MENENIUS**

That's just like him, I'll give him that. I'd bet all the treasure in Corioli against Aufidius ever finishing a fight with our man Marcius. Does the senate know yet?

**VOLUMNIA**

Good ladies, let's go. Yes, yes, yes, the senate has letters from the general in which he honors my son with the name of the whole war: my son has outdone himself this time.

**VALERIA**

Honestly; they are saying wonderful things about him that are almost hard to believe.

**MENENIUS**

Hard to believe! Yes, I bet, but not without him really doing these things.

**VIRGILIA**

May the gods make these reports true!

**VOLUMNIA**

True, pfff. <sup>9</sup>

**MENENIUS**

True! I'd bet my life they're true. Where is he wounded?

*[Yelling across the stage to the two senators]* God save both of you! Marcius is coming home with even more reason to be proud!

*[To the women]* Where is he wounded?

**VOLUMNIA**

In the shoulder and in his left arm there will be large scars to show the people when he stands before them. In addition, he has seven other scars from the siege of Tarquin. <sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> An ancient medical authority still standard in 1608. Galen actually lived six centuries after Coriolanus.

<sup>8</sup> As explained in Act 1, Scene 9, the garland is awarded to the greatest fighter of a victorious battle.

<sup>9</sup> Volumnia is expressing her disdain for the idea that the reports might not be true.

<sup>10</sup> Caius Marcius' first military experience was in an early war with the Roman tyrant Tarquin.

**MENENIUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

*A shout and flourish*

**MENENIUS**

Hark! the trumpets.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

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

**HERALD**

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

*Flourish*

**ALL**

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

170 Look, sir, your mother!

**CORIOLANUS**

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

*Kneels*

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

185 Now, the gods crown thee!

**MENENIUS**

Also, he has one in the neck and two in the thigh—there are  
nine scars I know of.

**VOLUMNIA**

He had, before this last battle, twenty-five wounds on him.

**MENENIUS**

Now it's twenty-seven, and every gash was an enemy's  
grave.<sup>11</sup>

*A shout and chorus of trumpets is heard.*

**MENENIUS**

Listen! The trumpets!

**VOLUMNIA**

They must be welcoming Marcius: he carries the sounds of  
trumpets with him and leaves tears behind him. Death, that  
dark spirit, lies deep within his arm: it is raised, then falls,  
and men die.<sup>12</sup>

*A ceremonial chorus of trumpets sounds. COMINIUS the  
general and TITUS LARTIUS enter; between them is  
CORIOLANUS, crowned with an oaken garland, with  
captains and soldiers, and a HERALD.*

**HERALD**

Know, Rome, that Marcius fought alone inside the gates of  
Corioli. There, he has won a new name to go with his fame:  
welcome to Rome, famed Coriolanus!

*A chorus of trumpets sounds.*

**ALL**

Welcome to Rome, famed Coriolanus!

**CORIOLANUS**

No more of this; I am embarrassed by all this. Please, no  
more.

**COMINIUS**

Look, sir, your mother!

**CORIOLANUS**

Oh, you have, I know, prayed to all the gods for my success!

*CORIOLANUS kneels before VOLUMNIA.*

**VOLUMNIA**

No, my good soldier, stand up. My gentle Marcius, worthy  
Caius, and by your deeds newly named—what is it I am  
supposed to call you now? Coriolanus? But oh, your wife!

**CORIOLANUS**

My gracious silence<sup>13</sup>, greetings! You are crying over my  
victory; would you have laughed if I came home in a coffin?  
Oh, my dear, the widows in Corioli have eyes like yours,  
eyes like mothers who lack sons.

**MENENIUS**

Now, the gods crown you!

<sup>11</sup> By this remarkable metaphor Menenius means that for every wound Caius Marcius has received, he has killed the man who wounded him.

<sup>12</sup> One of many metaphors which make Caius Marcius Coriolanus out to be a force of nature or a god.

<sup>13</sup> Coriolanus is actually referring to his wife, Valeria, as "my gracious silence." The metaphor implies that she is polite, perhaps timid, and of course silent. As he immediately notes, she is in fact weeping.

**CORIOLANUS**

And live you yet?

**CORIOLANUS**

O my sweet lady, pardon.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

A hundred thousand welcomes. I could weep  
And I could laugh, I am light and heavy. Welcome.  
A curse begin at very root on's heart,  
195 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:  
200 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**

205 *[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**

210 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**

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

**COMINIUS**

On, to the Capitol!

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

**BRUTUS**

220 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,  
225 Clambering the walls to eye him: stalls, bulks,  
windows,  
Are smother'd up, leads fill'd, and ridges horsed  
With variable complexions, all agreeing  
In earnestness to see him: seld-shown flamens  
230 Do press among the popular throngs and puff  
To win a vulgar station: or veil'd dames  
Commit the war of white and damask in  
Their nicely-gawded cheeks to the wanton spoil  
Of Phoebus' burning kisses: such a pothor

235

**CORIOLANUS**

*[To MENENIUS]* And you're still around?

**CORIOLANUS**

*[To VALERIA]* Oh my sweet lady, forgive me.

**VOLUMNIA**

I don't know where to turn; oh, welcome home, and  
welcome general, welcome all!

**MENENIUS**

A hundred thousand welcomes. I could weep and I could  
laugh, I am light and heavy hearted. Welcome. Curse  
anyone who is not glad to see you! You are three men that  
Rome should honor; yet, by the nature of men, we have  
some old grumps here at home that will not be join in our  
celebration. Nevertheless welcome, warriors. We call thorns  
just thorns, and the mistakes of fools just foolishness.

**COMINIUS**

As we should.

**CORIOLANUS**

As we should, Menenius, as we should.

**HERALD**

*[Yelling as though at a gathering crowd]* Clear a way for  
them!

**CORIOLANUS**

*[To VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA]* Let me take your hand, and  
yours. Before I can return to our home, I must visit the good  
senators from whom I have had not just a letter, but also a  
new set of honors.

**VOLUMNIA**

I have lived to see my dreams made into reality. There's  
only one thing missing, which I have no doubt our Rome  
will honor you with.

**CORIOLANUS**

Know, good mother, I had rather *serve* Rome my way than  
*rule* Rome in theirs.

**COMINIUS**

Let's go, to the Capitol!

*A chorus of trumpets is heard. All exit in a stately  
procession. BRUTUS and SICINIUS come forward.*

**BRUTUS**

Everyone speaks of him, and every eye is turned to see him.  
The gossiping nurse lets her baby cry itself into a fit while  
she talks about him; the kitchen wench pins her finest  
blouse around her filthy neck just to climb a wall and see  
him from afar. Stalls, walls, and windows are covered in  
people, and men of all sorts watch from hilltops to see him.  
Seldom-seen priests press in among the crowds of common  
people and exhaust themselves just to get a glimpse. Veiled  
and perfumed ladies war with their own beauty and throw  
themselves into the burning sun. It's such an insane  
commotion one might think that Coriolanus had become a  
kind of god.

As if that whatsoever god who leads him  
Were slily crept into his human powers  
And gave him graceful posture.

**SICINIUS**

On the sudden,  
I warrant him consul.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

245 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  
250 That he will give them make I as little question  
As he is proud to do't.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

'Tis right.

**BRUTUS**

It was his word: O, he would miss it rather  
260 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**

265 '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,  
270 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,  
275 Of no more soul nor fitness for the world  
Than camels in the war, who have their provand

**SICINIUS**

All of a sudden, I can believe he might become consul <sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> The position of consul doesn't really have an equivalent in modern political systems. Because Rome was a city-state during this period, a consul is both the mayor of the city and the leader of the senate.

**BRUTUS**

If he gains power, we may lose all our authority.

**SICINIUS**

But he cannot possibly maintain his cool throughout the nomination process for consul, and so he will lose whatever praise he's won.

**BRUTUS**

In that there's comfort.

**SICINIUS**

Don't doubt that the commoners we represent still hate him, and that they'll use any excuse to forget these news honors. There's no question he'll crack, and as little question that he'll be proud to crack when he does.

**BRUTUS**

I heard him swear that—were he to be nominated as consul—he would never appear in the market, nor ever lower himself to be humble; nor would he show his wounds to the people <sup>15</sup> to beg for their approval.

<sup>15</sup> Coriolanus must show his wounds to the people to make it clear how virtuous he has been in fighting on behalf of Rome, and as a sign of modesty or vulnerability. He has suffered for the people, and they want to see the proof.

**SICINIUS**

That's right.

**BRUTUS**

That's what he said, anyway—that he would rather not be consul if it required him to do anything but appeal to the gentry and the desires of the nobles.

**SICINIUS**

I want nothing more than for him to remain committed to that.

**BRUTUS**

It's likely that he will.

**SICINIUS**

That impulse will surely destroy him, as will our good wills <sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In speaking of his and Brutus's "good wills" toward Coriolanus, Sicinius is being sarcastic. They strongly dislike Coriolanus and want him to fail.

**BRUTUS**

So he'll be destroyed either by himself or by us. In order to be certain of this, we should tell the people that he still hates them; that if he could've, he'd have made them slaves, silenced their representatives and stolen their freedoms. We will tell them that he holds them, in deed and spirit, to be no better than beasts in war, good only for bearing burdens and being whipped.

Only for bearing burdens, and sore blows  
For sinking under them.

**SICINIUS**

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

*Enter a Messenger*

**BRUTUS**

What's the matter?

**MESSENGER**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Have with you.  
300

*Exeunt*

**SICINIUS**

And we'll suggest all this some time when his high-and-mighty attitude will have an impact on the people—there will be many opportunities if we goad him, and that's as easy as making a dog herd sheep. His reaction will set their beards aflame, and their fury will ruin him forever.

*A MESSENGER enters.*

**BRUTUS**

What's the matter?

**MESSENGER**

Someone in the Capitol has sent for you. There is word that Marcius will be consul; I have seen speechless men crowd around him and blind men beg to hear him speak. Widows threw gloves, ladies and maids threw scarves and handkerchiefs upon him as he passed. Nobles bowed as though to a god's statue, and the commoners thundered with applause and approval. I've never seen anything like it.

**BRUTUS**

Let's go to the Capitol, and though we might act attentive to what's going on, keep our hearts set on our plan to ruin him.

**SICINIUS**

I'm with you.

*All exit.*

## Act 2, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Enter two Officers, to lay cushions*

**FIRST OFFICER**

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

**SECOND OFFICER**

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

**FIRST OFFICER**

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

**SECOND OFFICER**

Faith, there had been many great men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore: so that, if they love they know not why,  
10 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.  
15

### Shakescleare Translation

*Enter two OFFICERS to lay cushions on the floor (on which SENATORS will sit).*

**FIRST OFFICER**

Come, come, they are almost here. How many are up for the consulship?

**SECOND OFFICER**

Three, they say, but everyone thinks Coriolanus will win it.

**FIRST OFFICER**

He's an extraordinary fellow, but he's also so proud, and doesn't love the common people.

**SECOND OFFICER**

Oh come on, there have been many great men who have flattered the people but not loved them, and there have been many people have loved without reason. Whoever they love, they don't know why, and they hate with the same ignorance: therefore, for Coriolanus not to care whether they love or hate him is just an example that he knows the people well, and out of his nobility he lets the people plainly see that.

**FIRST OFFICER**

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

**SECOND OFFICER**

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

**FIRST OFFICER**

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

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

**MENENIUS**

Having determined of the Volsces and  
To send for Titus Lartius, it remains,  
40 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  
45 The present consul, and last general  
In our well-found successes, to report  
A little of that worthy work perform'd  
By Caius Marcius Coriolanus, whom  
We met here both to thank and to remember  
50 With honours like himself.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Speak, good Cominius:  
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think  
Rather our state's defective for requital  
Than we to stretch it out.  
55 *[To the Tribunes]*  
Masters o' the people,  
We do request your kindest ears, and after,  
60 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  
65 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**

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

**FIRST OFFICER**

If he didn't care whether they loved him or not, he'd be  
indifferent to them, but that's not what he does; instead, he  
seems to seek their hate with greater devotion than he can  
possibly win it, and does everything he can to show how he  
is different from them. To attract the hatred of the people is  
just as bad as flattering them, which he says he dislikes.

**SECOND OFFICER**

He has earned much from his country, and his rise to power  
has not been easy, as it is for those who are kind and  
courteous to the people, who tip their hats and then, doing  
nothing else, win the people's favor. But Coriolanus has so  
demonstrated his honor that if they were to be silent it  
would be a kind of betrayal. To say other than that he is  
worthy would be a cruelty, a lie that would call for denial  
from everyone who heard it.

**FIRST OFFICER**

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

*Ceremonial trumpets are heard. COMINIUS the consul,  
MENENIUS, CORIOLANUS, SENATORS, SICINIUS and  
BRUTUS enter with officials before them. The SENATORS  
take their places. CORIOLANUS stands.*

**MENENIUS**

Now that we've decided what to do with the Volsces and  
are sending for Titus Lartius, the remaining point of this  
meeting is to reward the noble service of the man who has  
stood for his country. Therefore, most serious elders, please  
allow Cominius, our current consul and recent general, to  
report a little of that worthy work performed by Caius  
Marcius Coriolanus, whom we met here both to thank and  
to award with honors.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Speak, good Cominius. Leave nothing out; make us feel as  
though we do not have enough reward for him rather than  
that he has not done enough to earn rewards.

*[To the TRIBUNES]* Masters of the people, we do request  
your kindest ears, and after, that you generously report to  
those you represent, the commoners, what happens here.

**SICINIUS**

We are brought together on a happy occasion, and our  
hearts are ready to honor and continue the theme of this  
discussion.

**BRUTUS**

Which we'll be better prepared to do if Coriolanus would  
acknowledge that the common people are better than he's  
been saying they are.

**MENENIUS**

Lay off, lay off; I wish you had kept silent. Please, let's hear  
Cominius speak.

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

*CORIOLANUS offers to go away*

**MENENIUS**

80 Nay, keep your place.

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

No, sir; yet oft,  
90 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**

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

*Exit*

**MENENIUS**

Masters of the people,  
100 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  
105 Should not be utter'd feebly. It is held  
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and  
Most dignifies the haver: if it be,  
The man I speak of cannot in the world  
Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,  
110 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: be bestrid  
115 An o'er-press'd Roman and i' the consul's view  
Slew three opposers: Tarquin's self he met,  
And struck him on his knee: in that day's feats,  
When he might act the woman in the scene,  
He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed  
120 Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age

**BRUTUS**

Of course, but my hesitation is worth more than to be  
brushed away by you.

**MENENIUS**

He loves your people, but don't tie him down to be their  
lover. Worthy Cominius, speak.

*CORIOLANUS stands and starts to leave.*

**MENENIUS**

No, stay where you are.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Sit, Coriolanus, don't be ashamed to hear about your noble  
deeds.

**CORIOLANUS**

Pardon me, your honor. I would rather be wounded all over  
again than hear someone recite how I got them.

**BRUTUS**

Sir, I hope my words didn't upset you.

**CORIOLANUS**

No, sir, although often when I had rather take action, people  
want to talk. You did not belittle me, therefore you haven't  
hurt me. As for your common people, I love them for what  
they're worth.

**MENENIUS**

Please, sit down.

**CORIOLANUS**

I'd rather sit ignorantly in the sun while the city is attacked  
than sit here and hear my minor actions twisted into  
marvelous deeds.

*CORIOLANUS exits.*

**MENENIUS**

Masters of the people, how can he flatter the masses of the  
people—with one good man to a thousand others who  
aren't so good—when you see that he had rather risk his life  
for honor than risk an ear to hear about it? Go ahead,  
Cominius.

**COMINIUS**

I will barely be able to tell what he has done. The deeds  
of Coriolanus should not be uttered weakly. They say that  
bravery is the most important virtue: if so, the man I speak  
of has no equal in the world. When he was sixteen years old  
and Tarquin attempted to conquer Rome, he fought far  
behind enemy lines, beyond the reach of others. [Pointing  
into the senate at an elder statesman] Our leader at the  
time, who with all praise I point at, saw him fight, when  
with his Amazonian chin he drove grown men to flee  
him. He stood over a fallen Roman and in the view of the  
consul, killed three men to defend him. He met Tarquin  
himself, and struck him on the knee. In that battle, he was  
so young he could have acted the woman in the scene,  
instead he proved the best man in the fight, and for his  
bravery was awarded the oaken garland. He advanced from  
boy to man this way, swelling like the sea, and in the midst  
of seventeen battles since he cheated everyone else of the

Coriolanus begins to leave in order not to hear praise, which, as he has demonstrated already, makes him uncomfortable.

Brutus is taunting Coriolanus here. He is, as usual, being sarcastic.

This long narrative speech grows convoluted and rushed in order to reflect the pace of battle. By the end, the actor and audience/readers should feel as though they too have endured a battle.

Like an Amazon—a mythical warrior woman—Coriolanus, at sixteen and so quite young, had no beard.

"When he might act the woman in the scene" in the original text is an allusion to the way boy actors played women's parts in early modern London.



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

**MENENIUS**

145 Worthy man!

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**COMINIUS**

Our spoils he kick'd at,  
 And look'd upon things precious as they were  
 150 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**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

Call Coriolanus.

**OFFICER**

He doth appear.

*Re-enter CORIOLANUS*

**MENENIUS**

160 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**

165 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.

garland. For this last fight, just now in Corioli, let me say there is no praise sufficient. He kept our men from fleeing, and by his incredible example made our cowardly men confident. As weeds bend away from a ship at sail, so men obeyed and fell beneath his force; his sword was death itself: where it struck, it killed; from face to foot he was a thing of blood as in a dance, a man whose every movement was timed to dying cries. Alone, he entered the gates of Corioli and painted it with the blood of his victims like Fate itself; without aid he did this, as though suddenly strengthened, and struck Corioli like a planet. Now everything is his: when sounds of war returned him to awareness as from a trance, he braced himself and by his own power made himself alive again; he came to the battle outside the city and ran like a war machine over the lives of men, as though it were a game, a slaughter, and until we called both the battle and the city ours, he did not stand to take a breath.

**MENENIUS**

Excellent man!

**FIRST SENATOR**

We must measure our honors to fit his deeds.

**COMINIUS**

He kicked at the spoils of war, Corioli's treasure, and looked upon precious things as though they were the common trash of the world. He desires less than misery gives freely, thinks of his deeds as their own reward, and is content to spend the time to end it. <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A very thick metaphor, again marking out how Coriolanus is closer to a god than a man. Like a Greek Stoic philosopher, he seems to want nothing more than to act and exist. He is content to ask nothing even of the passing of time itself—except that time pass.

**MENENIUS**

He is truly noble. Call him in.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Call Coriolanus.

**OFFICER**

He doth appear.

*CORIOLANUS re-enters.*

**MENENIUS**

Coriolanus, the senate is ready to make you consul.

**CORIOLANUS**

Nothing has changed: I owe them, as always, my life and service.

**MENENIUS**

Then the only thing left is that you speak to the people.

**CORIOLANUS**

I ask you, let me skip that custom: I can't put on a beggar's gown, stand naked and plead with them to vote for me based on my scars. Please, let me avoid that.

**SICINIUS**

170 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  
175 Take to you, as your predecessors have,  
Your honour with your form.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

180 Mark you that?

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

185 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!  
190  
*Flourish of cornets. Exeunt all but SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

**BRUTUS**

You see how he intends to use the people.

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

*Exeunt*

**SICINIUS**

Sir, the people must have their say; they will not miss even  
a moment of ceremony.

**MENENIUS**

Don't anger them, Coriolanus. Please, engage in the custom  
and show, as your predecessors have, the honor of your  
body's scars.

**CORIOLANUS**

It is a part that I will blush to act, and I don't really need to  
do it.

**BRUTUS**

*[To SICINIUS]* Hear that?

**CORIOLANUS**

To brag to them, "I did this, and this," showing them old  
scars which I should hide, as though I had received those  
scars only in order to get their votes!

**MENENIUS**

Don't let this one thing bother you. Tribunes of the people,  
present our purpose to them, and to our noble consul, we  
wish you joy and honor.

**SENATORS**

To Coriolanus, all joy and honor!  
*Ceremonial trumpets are heard. All exit but SICINIUS and  
BRUTUS.*

**BRUTUS**

You see how he intends to treat the people.

**SICINIUS**

May they see it too! He will ask for their favor as though  
scornful that they could ever give him anything.

**BRUTUS**

Come, let's tell them of what's happened here. The people  
are waiting in the marketplace for us.

*Both exit.*

## Act 2, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*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**

5 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

### Shakescleare Translation

*Seven or eight CITIZENS enter.*

**FIRST CITIZEN**

*[As though in the middle of a debate]* In short, if he needs  
us to vouch for him, we shouldn't deny him.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

We may, if we want to.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

We have the authority to do it, but it is a power that is not  
ours to wield alone. If he shows us his wounds and tells us

his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put our  
tongues into those wounds and speak for them; so, if  
he tell us his noble deeds, we must also tell him  
our noble acceptance of them. Ingratitude is  
monstrous, and for the multitude to be ingrateful,  
were to make a monster of the multitude: of the  
which we being members, should bring ourselves to be  
monstrous members.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Why that way?

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

**ALL**

Content, content.

*Exeunt Citizens*

**MENENIUS**

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

his deeds, only then are we to let those wounds inspire us  
to speak for him. So, if he tells us his noble deeds, it's our  
position to nobly accept them. Ingratitude is monstrous,  
and if the common people were to be ungrateful it would  
make a monster of our republic—we, being members of  
that republic, would make monsters of ourselves.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

And it won't take much to make us seem monstrous, after  
all. When we protested about the corn, he certainly didn't  
hesitate to call us a "many-headed multitude."

**THIRD CITIZEN**

We've been called that by many, even though we're clearly  
individuals: some of us with brown hair, some with black,  
auburn, or bald, and our minds equally diverse. I truly think  
that even if all our minds were contained in one skull, our  
thoughts would fly east, west, north, south, and any  
consent we would reach would be to all directions at once.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

You think so? Which way do you think my thoughts would  
fly?

**THIRD CITIZEN**

No, your thoughts won't fly out like another man's might,  
because of your thick head! But if your thoughts could fly,  
surely they'd fly south.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Why that way?

**THIRD CITIZEN**

To lose themselves in a fog, where most of them would melt  
away with plague, and only a fourth would return for  
conscience's sake to help you get a wife.

**SECOND CITIZEN**


You're never without these jokes—go on, then.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

Are you all ready to vote on Coriolanus? *[As if to count, then  
deciding not to]* But that's no matter, the majority is  
obvious. As far as I'm concerned, if Coriolanus would simply  
acknowledge the people, there would be no better choice  
for consul.

*CORIOLANUS enters in a beggar's gown, accompanied by  
MENENIUS.*

**THIRD CITIZEN**

Here he comes in the gown of humility ; look at how he  
behaves. In this ceremony, we're supposed to approach  
him where he stands, in groups of two or three. He will  
make his requests individually, so that every one of us has  
the honor of giving him our votes with our own tongues.  
Therefore, follow me and I'll organize this.


**ALL**

We agree.

*All CITIZENS exit.*

**MENENIUS**

*[In the midst of debate]* Oh, sir, you're not right: don't you  
know that the worthiest men have done this?

 Candidates for public office in  
Rome wore plain white togas.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Think upon me! hang 'em!  
 60 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.  
 65

*Exit*

**CORIOLANUS**

Bid them wash their faces  
 And keep their teeth clean.

*Re-enter two of the Citizens*

**CORIOLANUS**

So, here comes a brace.  
 70

*Re-enter a third Citizen*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Mine own desert.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

75 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**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

The price is to ask it kindly.

**CORIOLANUS**

What am I going to say? "I beg you, sir"—to hell with it! I  
 cannot bring myself to say this kind of thing: "Look sir, my  
 wounds! I got them in the service of my country, when  
 people like you cried and ran away from the sound of our  
 own drums."

**MENENIUS**

Oh my god, you can't say that. You need to convince them  
 to consider you.

**CORIOLANUS**

Consider me? Damn them! I wish they would forget me, like  
 they forget every virtue we try to teach them.

**MENENIUS**

You'll ruin everything. I must leave you: please, speak to  
 them, I beg you, in a kind way.

*MENENIUS exits.*

**CORIOLANUS**

*[Grumbling to himself]* I'll tell them to wash their faces and  
 keep their teeth clean.

*Two of the CITIZENS re-enter.*

**CORIOLANUS**

So, here comes a pair.

*A third CITIZEN re-enters.*

**CORIOLANUS**

You know the reason, sir, I am standing here.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

We do, sir, but please tell us yourself what's brought you  
 here.

**CORIOLANUS**

That which I deserve.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

That which you deserve?

**CORIOLANUS**

Yes, but not that which I desire.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

How is it not what you desire?

**CORIOLANUS**

No, sir, I've never wanted to trouble the poor by begging.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

You must know that we will only give you anything if we  
 have something to gain by you.

**CORIOLANUS**

Well then, tell me, what's the price of consulship?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

The price is simply to ask it kindly.

**CORIOLANUS**

85 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**

90 But this is something odd.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

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

*Exeunt the three Citizens*

*Re-enter two other Citizens*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**FOURTH CITIZEN**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Your enigma?

**FOURTH CITIZEN**

100 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**

105 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 counterfeitedly; 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**


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


**BOTH CITIZENS**

The gods give you joy, sir, heartily!

*Exeunt*

**CORIOLANUS**

Kindly! Sir, listen, let me have it. I have wounds to show you, which I will show in private. 

 *Coriolanus displays his wounds mostly naked and so behind a curtain where the audience cannot see him.*

**SECOND CITIZEN**

You shall have it, worthy sir.

**CORIOLANUS**

Fair enough, sir. So that's two worthy voices begged, then. I am in your debt; good-bye.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

This sure is bizarre.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

If I could do it over—but forget it.

*The three CITIZENS all exit.*

*Re-enter two other CITIZENS.*

**CORIOLANUS**

Please, if it is acceptable to you that I be consul, I have the customary gown here.

**FOURTH CITIZEN**

On one hand, you have been noble for you country, but you have also not been noble.


**CORIOLANUS**


What do you mean?

**FOURTH CITIZEN**

You have been a torment to Rome's enemies and made trouble for her friends; but you have not loved the common people.

**CORIOLANUS**

You should think of me as more virtuous for not giving out my love to just anyone. I will, sir, flatter those to whom I am devoted--that is the people--to earn their respect.  They call this being "gentle," and since they had rather have a tip of my hat than the labor of my heart, I will practice the nod and show deference most falsely. That is, sir, I will act star-struck like some normal man and serve up this performance to whoever wants it. Is this good enough for you to make me consul?

 *Throughout this scene, it is hard to tell whether Coriolanus is earnestly trying to win the respect of the citizens or whether he is mocking them. The truth is probably somewhere in between, and different productions of the play have taken it both ways.*

**FIFTH CITIZEN**

We hope you'll be our friend, and give you our votes gladly with that in mind.

**FOURTH CITIZEN**

You have received many wounds for your country.

**CORIOLANUS**

I will not confirm your knowledge by displaying them. I am already making much of your votes, and do not want to trouble you further.

**BOTH CITIZENS**

The gods give you joy, sir, great joy!

*All exit.*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

*Re-enter three Citizens more*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**SIXTH CITIZEN**

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

**SEVENTH CITIZEN**

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

**ALL CITIZENS**

145 Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul!

*Exeunt*

**CORIOLANUS**

Worthy voices!

*Re-enter MENENIUS, with BRUTUS and SICINIUS*

**MENENIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Is this done?

**SICINIUS**

The custom of request you have discharged:  
The people do admit you, and are summon'd  
155 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**

These sweet voices! It is better to die, better to starve, than  
to crave to get what we already deserve. Why must I stand  
here in this woolly, ratty toga, to beg of Hob and Dick, or  
whoever shows up, their meaningless favor? Because of  
custom; if we did everything custom called for, the dust on  
antique time would never be cleaned off, and we would  
make error after error until they piled up like mountains,  
too high for truth to reach. Rather than be so foolish, let the  
public positions and honor go to those who will be  
honorable! I am half finished; now that I have suffered the  
first half, I will suffer the other half as well.

*Three more CITIZENS re-enter.*

**CORIOLANUS**

Here come more voices. Your voices: for your voices I  
have fought; stood guard over Rome for your voices; for  
your voices I've been wounded two dozen times or more;  
three times six battles I have seen and heard; for your  
voices I have done many things—some less, some more.  
Your voices? Indeed I would be consul.

**SIXTH CITIZEN**

He has done nobly, and should not be denied the vote of  
any honest man.

**SEVENTH CITIZEN**

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

**ALL CITIZENS**

Amen, amen. God save you, noble consul!

*All exit.*

**CORIOLANUS**

Worthy voices!

*MENENIUS re-enters with BRUTUS and SICINIUS.*

**MENENIUS**

You have done this as long as you need to, and the tribunes  
approve that you have the voice of the people. The only  
thing left for you to do is to meet with the Senate in your  
official robes.

**CORIOLANUS**

So it's over?

**SICINIUS**

You have done your duty according to the custom. The  
people accept you, and you are summoned to meet later,  
upon your approval.

**CORIOLANUS**

Where? In the senate?

**SICINIUS**

Yes, Coriolanus.

**CORIOLANUS**

May I change these garments?

**SICINIUS**

You may, sir.

**A** Hob and Dick are disparaging peasant names like "Jack and Jill," "Tom, Dick, and Harry," or even "Tweedledee and Tweedledum."

**B** This metaphor about "dust on antique time" is both domestic—like dusting in a home—and historic, in that it alludes to long-standing practices which become outdated over time as societies and cultures change.

**C** This is an example of synecdoche, a poetic technique in which a part of something stands for all of it. "Voices" for whole people, "arms" to describe soldiers, or "a nice set of wheels" to refer to a car.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

I'll keep you company. Will you along?

**BRUTUS**

We stay here for the people.

**SICINIUS**

Fare you well.

165

*Exeunt CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS*

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

*Re-enter Citizens*

**SICINIUS**

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

He has our voices, sir.

**BRUTUS**

We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

Certainly  
He flouted us downright.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

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

**SICINIUS**

Why, so he did, I am sure.

**CITIZENS**

No, no; no man saw 'em.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

185 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;  
190 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?

**CORIOLANUS**

Then I'll do that right away, and once I recognize myself  
again, will head to the senate.

**MENENIUS**

I'll keep you company.

*[To the TRIBUNES] Will you come along?*

**BRUTUS**

We stay here for the people.

**SICINIUS**

Good-bye.

*CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS exit.*

**SICINIUS**

That's that—it looks to me like he found all of this heart-  
warming.

**BRUTUS**

He wore his humble robes with a proud heart. Will you  
dismiss the people?

*CITIZENS re-enter.*

**SICINIUS**

What's the deal, friends? Have you chosen that man?

**FIRST CITIZEN**

He has our voices, sir.

**BRUTUS**

We pray to the gods he may deserve the love you give him.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Amen sir: it seemed to me, though I'm unworthy, that he  
mocked us when he begged for our voices.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

Certainly. He was downright sarcastic.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

No, that's just how he talks; he did not mock us.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

Everyone among us but you says he used us scornfully. He  
should have shown us his marks of merit—the wounds he  
received for his country.


**SICINIUS**


Why, surely he did.

**CITIZENS**

No, no, no one saw them.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

He said he had wounds, which he could show in private.  
*[Waves hat]* And he did this with his hat, waving it  
scornfully. "I would be consul," he said, "but by old custom,  
I cannot be until I have your voices—thus, give me your  
voices." When we granted them, he was like  "I thank you  
for your voices, thank you: your most sweet voices—now  
you have no voices left, I have no need for you." Wasn't he  
mocking us?

 The citizen's impersonation of Coriolanus includes a few colloquialisms and brisk phrases.

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Thus to have said,  
As you were fore-advised, had touch'd his spirit  
215 And tried his inclination; from him pluck'd  
Either his gracious promise, which you might,  
As cause had call'd you up, have held him to  
Or else it would have gall'd his surly nature,  
Which easily endures not article  
220 Tying him to aught; so putting him to rage,  
You should have ta'en the advantage of his cholera  
And pass'd him unelected.

**BRUTUS**

Did you perceive  
He did solicit you in free contempt  
225 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**

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

**THIRD CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

235 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  
240 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  
245 Your ignorant election; enforce his pride,  
And his old hate unto you; besides, forget not  
With what contempt he wore the humble weed,  
How in his suit he scorn'd you; but your loves,  
Thinking upon his services, took from you  
250

**SICINIUS**

You were either ignorant of it or, seeing it, why were you so  
childishly friendly? Why give him your voices?

**BRUTUS**

Could you not have told him as you were taught? When he  
was powerless, just a servant to the state, he was your  
enemy; he always spoke out against your liberties and the  
rights of the people in our republic. And now that he has a  
position of power, what if he remains a foe to the  
people—won't your voices be curses to yourselves? You  
should have said that just as his deeds were worth no less  
than what he stood for, so he ought to think upon your  
voices and change his hate for you into love, and thus be  
friendly to you.

**SICINIUS**

If you'd said that, as you we told you to ahead of time, you  
would have gotten to the core of things and seen what he  
was really like. You'd either have gotten a gracious promise  
from him—which you then could have called up in the  
future—or it would have been easy to see his unfriendly  
nature and made him furious. Seeing his rage, you could  
have taken advantage of his short temper and then let him  
go unelected.

**BRUTUS**

Did you see how he asked for your approval with such  
contempt when he needed your love? Do you really think  
that his contempt will not be far, far worse when he has  
power and no longer needs you? Did not a single one of you  
have an ounce of boldness? Did no tongue cry out to guide  
you with good judgement?

**SICINIUS**

Have you ever before denied someone who asked? And  
now, even of one who mocked instead of asking, you still  
bestow whatever he requests?

**THIRD CITIZEN**

He's not confirmed; we could still deny him.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

And we will deny him. I'll have five hundred voices of *that*.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

I'll have double five hundred, and their friends alongside!

**BRUTUS**

Then leave, instantly, and tell those friends that they have  
approved a consul who will take their freedoms, a man who  
will care less about what they have to say than about dogs  
beaten for barking—dogs kept just to be beaten.

**SICINIUS**

Assemble the people and be more reasonable: revoke this  
ignorant election. Remind the people of his pride and long-  
standing hate for them, and don't forget the contempt with  
which he wore his humble toga—how even as he asked you  
for approval, he scorned you. Your good nature, thinking on  
his service, blinded you to the way he behaved in that



The apprehension of his present portance,  
Which most gibingly, ungravely, he did fashion  
After the inveterate hate he bears you.

**BRUTUS**

Lay  
A fault on us, your tribunes; that we laboured,  
255 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,  
260 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,  
265 How long continued, and what stock he springs of,  
The noble house o' the Marcians, from whence came  
That Ancus Marcius, Numa's daughter's son,  
Who, after great Hostilius, here was king;  
Of the same house Publius and Quintus were,  
270 That our beat water brought by conduits hither;  
And [*Censorinus*,] nobly named so,  
Twice being [*by the people chosen*] censor,  
Was his great ancestor.

**SICINIUS**

One thus descended,  
275 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  
280 Your sudden approbation.

**BRUTUS**

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

**ALL**

285 We will so: almost all  
Repent in their election.

*Exeunt Citizens*

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

*Exeunt*

moment, which so reflected the deep-seated hate he has  
for you.

**BRUTUS**

Blame your choice on us, your representatives. Say that it  
was we who insisted you elect him.

**SICINIUS**

Say you chose him more because we commanded it than  
out of your own true feelings, and that your minds,  
preoccupied with what you *had* to do rather than what you  
*should* do made you go against yourselves to name him  
consul. Blame us.

**BRUTUS**

Right, don't leave us out of it. Say we lectured you. That we  
reminded you how young he was when he began to serve  
his country, how he has done so ever since, that he comes  
from a strong people, the noble family of the Marcians—the  
family of Ancus Marcius, Numa's daughter's son, who was  
king of Rome after the great Hostilius, and of Publius and  
Quintus, who built our aqueducts; even Censorinus, nobly  
named for being twice elected censor, was his great  
ancestor.

**SICINIUS**

We commanded that you remember he was a man from  
that family, with many great qualities which make him  
suited for public service. But you have realized, thinking on  
his behavior just now and in the past, that he is determined  
to be your enemy, and you take back your sudden vote.

**BRUTUS**

Just keep repeating that you would never have supported  
him unless we had demanded it. So, when you have enough  
people, go to the Capitol.

**ALL**

We will do just that. Nearly everyone regrets their vote.

*All exit.*

**BRUTUS**

Let's just let them do it. It will be better for us to take a risk  
and let them mutiny than to try to guarantee it ourselves. If,  
as usual, Coriolanus rages at their refusal, we will be there  
to observe and respond to that situation.

**SICINIUS**

Let's go to the Capitol. We will be there before the crowd of  
the people, so that this uprising which we have shaped will  
seem like their idea, which it partly is.

*Both exit.*

## Act 3, Scene 1

## Shakespeare

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

**CORIO LANUS**

Tullus Aufidius then had made new head?

**LARTIUS**

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

**CORIO LANUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**CORIO LANUS**

10 Saw you Aufidius?

**LARTIUS**

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

**CORIO LANUS**

Spoke he of me?

**LARTIUS**

15 He did, my lord.

**CORIO LANUS**

How? what?

**LARTIUS**

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

**CORIO LANUS**

At Antium lives he?

**LARTIUS**

At Antium.

**CORIO LANUS**

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

*Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

## Shakescleare Translation

*Trumpets sound. CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, all the Roman noblemen, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other SENATORS enter.*

**CORIO LANUS**

*[Already in the midst of debate]* So Tullus Aufidius had assembled a new army?

**LARTIUS**

He had, my lord, which was what urged us to make our peace so quickly.

**CORIO LANUS**

So then the Volsces are back to where they started: ready, whenever the time comes, to attack us again.

**COMINIUS**

They are so worn out, lord consul, that I can't imagine we'll see them wave their banners again in our lifetimes.

**CORIO LANUS**

*[To LARTIUS]* Did you see Aufidius?

**LARTIUS**

He came to me in a truce, and cursed his own Volsces for so easily surrendering Corioli. He has gone back to Antium.

**CORIO LANUS**

Did he speak of me?

**LARTIUS**

He did, my lord.

**CORIO LANUS**

How? What?

**LARTIUS**

How he had often met you in battle, sword to sword; that of all things on earth he hated you most; that he would give anything he owned, hopelessly, to be known as the one who defeated you.


**CORIO LANUS**

And he lives at Antium?

**LARTIUS**


At Antium.

**CORIO LANUS**

I wish I had a reason to seek him out there, and to oppose his hatred fully .

*[Directed toward the TRIBUNES, approaching from a distance, though said to LARTIUS]* Welcome back.

*SICINIUS and BRUTUS enter.*

 Throughout the play, Coriolanus' declarations are often both abstract and full of specific action. His desire to fight Aufidius is clear and simple, but the phrase "oppose his hatred fully" suggests that Coriolanus' enmity extends beyond just the physical realm and also targets the soul of his opponent.

**CORIOLANUS**

Behold, these are the tribunes of the people,  
The tongues o' the common mouth: I do despise them;  
For they do prank them in authority,  
30 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**

35 The matter?

**COMINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

Cominius, no.

**CORIOLANUS**

Have I had children's voices?

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**BRUTUS**

40 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  
45 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**

50 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:  
55 The people cry you mock'd them, and of late,  
When corn was given them gratis, you repined;  
Scandal'd the suppliants for the people, call'd them  
Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

**CORIOLANUS**

Why, this was known before.

**BRUTUS**

60 Not to them all.

**CORIOLANUS**

Look, those are the tribunes of the people, their  
spokespeople. I do despise them, for they take on unearned  
authority beyond anyone's patience.

**SICINIUS**

[To CORIOLANUS] Stop here.

**CORIOLANUS**

What? What is that?

**BRUTUS**

It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

**CORIOLANUS**

Why, what's changed?

**MENENIUS**

What's the matter?

**COMINIUS**

Hasn't Coriolanus won the approval of nobles and  
commoners alike?

**BRUTUS**

No, Cominius.

**CORIOLANUS**

Were the people back there children, then, whose voices  
don't count?

**FIRST SENATOR**

Move, tribunes: Coriolanus *will* go to the marketplace.

**BRUTUS**

The people are furious with him.

**SICINIUS**

Stop here, or everything will go to pieces.

**CORIOLANUS**

These furious people, did you herd them together? Do we  
listen to these voices, which only now are gotten together  
and make declarations on command? What is your role in  
this? If you are their spokesmen, why don't you control  
their impulses? Isn't it *you* who have put them up to this?

**MENENIUS**

Be calm, be calm.

**CORIOLANUS**

This is intentional; it's part of their plot to weaken the  
authority of the senate. If we don't push back, we'll not be  
fit to rule, nor will the people ever let themselves be ruled.

**BRUTUS**

Don't call it a plot. The people say you mocked them, and  
that just recently, when they were given corn, you  
complained it was a scandal for the people to depend on  
the government. You called them lazy, flatterers, the  
enemies of the state.

**CORIOLANUS**

Why, this is old news.

**BRUTUS**

Not to them all.

**CORIOLANUS**

Have you inform'd them sithence?

**BRUTUS**

How! I inform them!

**CORIOLANUS**

You are like to do such business.

**BRUTUS**

Not unlike,

65 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

70 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**

75 Let's be calm.

**COMINIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

80 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**

85 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  
90 The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,  
Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd,  
and scatter'd,  
By mingling them with us, the honour'd number,  
Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that  
95 Which they have given to beggars.

**MENENIUS**

Well, no more.

**FIRST SENATOR**

No more words, we beseech you.

**CORIOLANUS**

How! no more!

100 As for my country I have shed my blood,  
Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs  
Coin words till their decay against those measles,  
Which we disdain should tatter us, yet sought  
The very way to catch them.

**CORIOLANUS**

Oh, so you've informed them then?

**BRUTUS**

Who, me? I inform them?

**CORIOLANUS**

You are the sort of person who would.

**BRUTUS**

I'm not unlike you, but that I'm better in every way.

**CORIOLANUS**

Why then should I be consul? By heaven, let me be as lowly  
as you and just be a tribune instead.

**SICINIUS**

You show too much pride, which the people hate. If you  
want to continue on this path, you will need to ask for the  
people's approval more gently, or you'll never be either  
consul nor tribune.

**MENENIUS**

Let's be calm.

**COMINIUS**

The people are abused; they've been put up to this. This  
backstabbing does not suit Rome, nor has Coriolanus  
deserved this dishonorable treatment, laid against his clear  
merit.

**CORIOLANUS**

Corn again? Tell me about it. Here's what I said, I'll say it  
again—


**MENENIUS**


Not now, not now.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Not in this conflict, sir, not now.

**CORIOLANUS**

Now. As I live, I will speak now. To my noble friends, I beg  
your pardon. As for the disgusting, fickle masses, let them  
see me speak honestly, and in that speech see themselves. I  
say again: in soothing these masses, we are merely stirring  
up the forces of rebellion against the senate which we  
ourselves have ploughed for, seeded, and tended . By  
treating them too well, we nobles are robbed of our virtue  
and power by beggars.

 In this agricultural metaphor of having "plough'd for, sow'd, and scatter'd," Coriolanus says that all the groundwork and preparation of building the government's authority will be for nothing if the people get what they want.

**MENENIUS**

Fine, enough.

**FIRST SENATOR**

No more words, we beg you.

**CORIOLANUS**

Oh! No more? Just as I have shed blood for my country with  
no fear of opposition, I'll speak here until my lungs decay  
from an infection we have brought upon ourselves.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

'Twere well  
We let the people know't.

**MENENIUS**

What, what? his choler?

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

115 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**

120 'Shall'!  
O good but most unwise patricians! why,  
You grave but reckless senators, have you thus  
Given Hydra here to choose an officer,  
That with his peremptory 'shall,' being but  
125 The horn and noise o' the monster's, wants not spirit  
To say he'll turn your current in a ditch,  
And make your channel his? If he have power  
Then vail your ignorance; if none, awake  
Your dangerous lenity. If you are learn'd,  
130 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,  
135 And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'  
His popular 'shall' against a graver bench  
Than ever frown in Greece. By Jove himself!  
It makes the consuls base: and my soul aches  
To know, when two authorities are up,  
140 Neither supreme, how soon confusion  
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take  
The one by the other.

**COMINIUS**

Well, on to the market-place.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

Well, well, no more of that.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

We'd better let the people know.

**MENENIUS**

Know what—his fury?

**CORIOLANUS**

Fury? If I were as patient as a man asleep, by god, it would still be in my mind!

**SICINIUS**

It is a mind that shall remain poisonous, but which we will not allow to poison others.

**CORIOLANUS**

Shall remain! Do you hear this god of the minnows? Did you hear him declare "shall?"

**COMINIUS**

It was out of line.

**CORIOLANUS**

"Shall!" Oh good but unwise senators! Why, you serious but reckless senators, have you allowed monstrous Hydra here to choose a leader, that with his rude "shall," only the monster's voice, already has the boldness to say he'll ruin your power and make your authority his? If he has power, then push down your ignorance; if he does not, awake from your dangerous politeness. If you are educated, don't behave like common fools; if you are not, let them sit beside you in the Senate. You are commoners, if they are senators, and if your voices are heard together, it is they who set the tastes of Rome. They choose their leaders, and and one like this, who puts his "shall," his commoner's "shall," against a more senior group of senators than ever served in Greece. By god himself! This makes the consuls common, and my soul aches to know how soon a system will break down when two groups have equal authority.

**COMINIUS**

Well, let's go to the market then.

**CORIOLANUS**

Whoever gave that advice, to give out the storehouse's corn for free, as they did sometimes in Greece—

**MENENIUS**

Come on, come on, enough of that.

**CORIOLANUS**

There in Greece, where the people had more power, they grew disobedient and brought on the ruin of the state.

*Coriolanus is playing on the grammatical distinction between the subjunctive future and future tenses. "Shall" implies a command, while Sicinius could have just said "will," which merely refers to the future.*

*The Hydra is a mythical beast with eight heads which grew back when cut off. Commonly used as a metaphor for the people of a republic, the "crowd," or the "many-headed multitude."*

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

**MENENIUS**

Come, enough.

**BRUTUS**

175 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  
180 Insult without all reason, where gentry, title, wisdom,  
Cannot conclude but by the yea and no  
Of general ignorance,— it must omit  
Real necessities, and give way the while  
To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd,  
185 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  
190 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  
195 Mangles true judgment and bereaves the state  
Of that integrity which should become't,  
Not having the power to do the good it would,  
For the in which doth control't.

**BRUTUS**

Has said enough.

**SICINIUS**

200 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  
205 To the greater bench: in a rebellion,  
When what's not meet, but what must be, was law,  
Then were they chosen: in a better hour,  
Let what is meet be said it must be meet,  
And throw their power i' the dust.

**BRUTUS**

What, should the people really wish to be ruled by a man  
who thinks of their voices this way?

**CORIOLANUS**

I'll give my reasons, far better than their voices. They know  
the corn was not payment to them; they know every well  
they did nothing to deserve it. At war, even when the enemy  
was at our gates, they would not stand to fight. This kind of  
service does not earn corn out of generosity. And in the war,  
they showed the most bravery in their mutinies and revolts;  
these did not speak well of them. The accusations which  
they constantly make against the Senate, all without  
reason, could never be the reason behind giving them corn.  
So why did we? What do you think the public has learned  
from this? Here's what they are probably saying to  
themselves: "We asked for it, and since there are more of  
us, they gave in to our demands in true fear." By doing this,  
we weaken our own position and make the rabble call our  
generosity fear. In time, this will break the senate open and  
bring in crows to peck the eagles.


**MENENIUS**


Come on, enough.

**BRUTUS**

Enough, and more than enough.

**CORIOLANUS**

No, take more—I'm not done. By everything, both god and  
man, I swear it. This double worship, in which the nobles  
disdain the people with good reason, the people insult the  
nobles without any reason—in which neither rank, title, nor  
wisdom can act without getting a yes or no from general  
ignorance—it must leave out what really matters, and  
instead give way to instability and whims. When good work  
is so restricted, it follows that no good work will be done.  
Therefore, I beg you—whoever would rather be careful than  
fearful, whoever loves the foundations of the state more  
than you doubt it is changing, whoever prefers a noble life  
more than a long, and would revive a dying man with  
dangerous medicine rather than do nothing—rob the public  
rabble of their voices . Do not let them lick the poison  
which they love: to dishonor yourselves mangles good  
judgement and cuts off the state from that integrity it ought  
to have, and those who would most benefit rob the state of  
the power to do good.

 Note that Coriolanus is saying  
that the common people shouldn't  
have a say in how Rome is governed  
by having elected tribunes.

**BRUTUS**

He's said enough.

**SICINIUS**

He has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer as traitors do.

**CORIOLANUS**

You wretch; misery o'erwhelm you! What should the people  
do with these shameless tribunes? The more they depend  
on you, the less they will respect the Senate. These tribunes  
were chosen in the midst of a rebellion, when necessity  
prevailed over decency. Let us now say that time has  
passed, and take away their power.

**BRUTUS**

210 Manifest treason!

**SICINIUS**

This a consul? no.

**BRUTUS**

The aediles, ho!

*Enter an AEdile*

**BRUTUS**

Let him be apprehended.

215

**SICINIUS**

Go, call the people:

*[Exit AEdile]*

220

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Hence, old goat!

225

**COMINIUS**

Aged sir, hands off.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Help, ye citizens!

230

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

**MENENIUS**

On both sides more respect.

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

Seize him, AEdiles!

**CITIZENS**

Down with him! down with him!

235

**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  
240 To the people! Coriolanus, patience!  
Speak, good Sicinius.

**SICINIUS**

Hear me, people; peace!

**BRUTUS**

That, right there—that's treason!

**SICINIUS**

Is this the behavior of a consul? No.

**BRUTUS**

Soldiers, seize him!

*High-ranking city guards enter.*

**BRUTUS**

Let him be taken away.

**SICINIUS**

Go, call the people. *[The guards exit].*

*[To CORIOLANUS]* As for you, I call you a plotting traitor, a  
foe to the public good. Obey, I demand it, and go to your  
own trial.

**CORIOLANUS**

Get out of here, you old fart!

**COMINIUS**

*[To SICINIUS]* Hands off, old man!

**CORIOLANUS**

Get out here, you rotten thing, or I will shake your bones  
out of your clothes.

**SICINIUS**

Citizens, help me!

*Enter a rabble of CITIZENS (plebeians), with the guards.*

**MENENIUS**

All of you, calm down!

**SICINIUS**

*[Pointing at CORIOLANUS]* Here's the man who would take  
all your power!

**BRUTUS**

Seize him, guards!

**CITIZENS**

Down with him, down with him!


**SECOND SENATOR**


Weapons, weapons, weapons!

*[They all move nervously around CORIOLANUS for safety]*

Tribunes, patricians, citizens, what are you doing! Sicinius,  
Brutus, Coriolanus, citizens!

**ALL**

Peace, peace, peace! Stop it! Calm down! 

 This is a scene of utter chaos in which multiple people are shouting at the same time. We can't be sure who is calling for peace and who is angry.

**MENENIUS**

What is going on? I am out of breath, this is near a riot; I am  
not loud enough. You, tribunes to the people! Coriolanus,  
patience! Speak, good Sicinius.

**SICINIUS**

Hear me, people; calm down!

**CITIZENS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

To unbuild the city and to lay all flat.

**SICINIUS**

250 What is the city but the people?

**CITIZENS**

True,  
 The people are the city.

**BRUTUS**

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

**CITIZENS**

255 You so remain.

**MENENIUS**

And so are like to do.

**COMINIUS**

260 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**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

270 AEdiles, seize him!

**CITIZENS**

Yield, Marcius, yield!

**MENENIUS**

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

**AEDILE**

Peace, peace!

**MENENIUS**


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

**CITIZENS**

Let's hear our tribune. Peace. Speak, speak, speak.

**SICINIUS**

You are at risk of losing all your freedom. [Marcius](#) wants  
 everything you have; Marcius, the man you just named  
 consul.

 Note that Sicinius does not use  
 Marcius's new name, Coriolanus.

**MENENIUS**

No, no, no! This the way to start a fire, not to put one out.

**FIRST SENATOR**

The way to unbuild the city and flatten it.

**SICINIUS**

What is the city if not the people?

**CITIZENS**

True, the people *are* the city

**BRUTUS**

By the republic's agreement, we were made the people's  
 representatives.

**CITIZENS**

You still are!

**MENENIUS**

And you will continue to be.

**COMINIUS**

That is the way to flatten the city, to bring the roof crashing  
 down and to bury us all in heaps and piles of ruin.

**SICINIUS**


[Referring to CORIOLANUS] He deserves to be executed.

**BRUTUS**

Either let us stand up with our authority or we'll lose it. We  
 hereby pronounce, by the power of the people by whom we  
 were elected, that Marcius deserves to be executed.

**SICINIUS**

Therefore grab him, and take him to the [Tarpeian rock](#),  
 and there throw him to his death.

 Murders and traitors in ancient  
 Rome were, for a time, executed by  
 being thrown off a cliff.

**BRUTUS**

Guards, seize him!

**CITIZENS**

Give yourself up, Marcius!

**MENENIUS**

Just listen, tribunes, I beg you, listen!

**Guard**

Peace, peace!

**MENENIUS**

[To BRUTUS] Be what you say you are—truly your country's  
 friend—and proceed reasonably with this, rather than  
 violently.



**BRUTUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

No, I'll die here. *[Drawing his sword]* There's some  
among you have beheld me fighting:  
285 Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.

**MENENIUS**

Down with that sword! Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

**BRUTUS**

Lay hands upon him.

**COMINIUS**

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

**CITIZENS**

290 Down with him, down with him!

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SECOND SENATOR**

Get you gone.

**COMINIUS**

295 Stand fast;  
We have as many friends as enemies.

**MENENIUS**

Sham it be put to that?

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

Come, sir, along with us.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

310 On fair ground  
I could beat forty of them.

**BRUTUS**

Sir: that slow actions which might seem reasonable are  
actually poisonous when things are bad enough. Lay hands  
upon him, and take him to the rock.

**CORIOLANUS**

No, I'll die here. *[Drawing his sword]* Some of you have seen  
me fight. Come on, go ahead and subject yourselves to  
what you've seen me do to others.

**MENENIUS**

Put your sword away! Tribunes, just lay off a while.

**BRUTUS**

Capture him.

**COMINIUS**

All of you who are noble, help Marcius! Young and old, help  
him!

**CITIZENS**

Down with him, down with him!

*Amid the chaos, the nobles and their soldiers push the  
TRIBUNES, the guards, and the people offstage into the  
wings.*

**MENENIUS**

Go, go to your house, be gone, go away! We'll lose  
everything if we can't get rid of them.

**SECOND SENATOR**

Get out of here!

**COMINIUS**

Don't run! We have as many friends as enemies.

**MENENIUS**

Is our situation so dire that we should count our friends?

**FIRST SENATOR**

God forbid!

*[To CORIOLANUS]* Please, noble friend, get home to your  
house; leave us to fix this.

**MENENIUS**

This is our problem; you can't cure your own disease. Go,  
please.

**COMINIUS**

Come, sir, come along with us.

**CORIOLANUS**


I wish they were barbarians—I mean, they are barbarians,  
just scattered through Rome—not Romans—no, they're  
not Romans, though born like animals on the steps of the  
capital—

**MENENIUS**

Go, don't talk about how angry you are; we'll deal with this  
on another occasion.

**CORIOLANUS**

I could beat forty of them in a fair fight.

 Coriolanus is overcome with rage, and is having a hard time articulating his hatred for the people.

**COMINIUS**

I could myself

Take up a brace o' the best of them; yea, the  
two tribunes:

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

**MENENIUS**

Pray you, be gone:

I'll try whether my old wit be in request

With those that have but little: this must be patch'd

With cloth of any colour.

**COMINIUS**

325 Nay, come away.

*Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others*

**A PATRICIAN**

This man has marr'd his fortune.

**MENENIUS**

His nature is too noble for the world:

He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,

330 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*

**MENENIUS**

Here's goodly work!

335

**SECOND PATRICIAN**

I would they were abed!

**MENENIUS**

I would they were in Tiber! What the vengeance!

Could he not speak 'em fair?

*Re-enter BRUTUS and SICINIUS, with the rabble*

**SICINIUS**

340 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

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

He shall well know

350 The noble tribunes are the people's mouths,  
And we their hands.

**CITIZENS**

He shall, sure on't.

**COMINIUS**

I'd be happy to beat up a bunch of the best of them—those  
two tribunes, particularly. But this is well beyond a matter  
of odds, and boldness is called foolishness when it stands  
against a crumbling city. Will you get out of here, before the  
crowd returns? Their rage is like the deep sea and  
overwhelms them.

**MENENIUS**

I beg you, leave. I'll see if my old humor is still good for  
something with the poor. We must try everything in this  
situation.

**COMINIUS**

*[CORIOLANUS looks after the crowd as though hoping to  
fight them]* No, come on; let's go.

*CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others exit.*

**Senator**

This man has ruined himself.

**MENENIUS**

He is too noble for this world. He would not flatter Neptune <sup>10</sup>  
for his riches, or Jupiter <sup>11</sup> for thunderous power. He  
speaks whatever is in his heart; whatever feelings he has, he  
can't help but declare, and when he is angry, he forgets  
there's such a thing as death.

<sup>10</sup> Neptune is the Roman god of the  
sea (Poseidon in Greek).

<sup>11</sup> Jupiter is the chief god in the  
Roman pantheon; the god of thunder  
and lightning (Zeus in Greek).

*A noise from offstage is heard.*

**MENENIUS**

*[Sarcastically]* That sounds promising!

**SECOND PATRICIAN**

I wish they'd sleep this off!

**MENENIUS**

I wish they were underwater! What a roar from them.

Couldn't Coriolanus just be polite?

*BRUTUS and SICINIUS re-enter with the crowd.*

**SICINIUS**

Where is that viper who wants everyone in the city either  
dead or like himself?

**MENENIUS**

My dear tribunes—

**SICINIUS**

He'll be thrown down the Tarpeian rock yet! He has resisted  
the law, and therefore the law will deny him any more trial  
than the strength of the public itself, of which he thinks so  
little.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

He will know that the tribunes are the people's mouths, and  
we their hands.

**CITIZENS**

He will, that's for sure.

**MENENIUS**

Sir, sir,—

**SICINIUS**

Peace!

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Consul! what consul?

**MENENIUS**

The consul Coriolanus.

**BRUTUS**

He consul!

**CITIZENS**

365 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**

370 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  
375 He dies to-night.

**MENENIUS**

Now the good gods forbid  
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude  
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd  
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam  
380 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?  
385 Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost—  
Which, I dare vouch, is more than that he hath,  
By many an ounce— he dropp'd it for his country;  
And what is left, to lose it by his country,  
Were to us all, that do't and suffer it,  
390 A brand to the end o' the world.

**SICINIUS**

This is clean kam.

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

Sir, sir,—

**SICINIUS**

Silence!

**MENENIUS**

Do not let loose entirely, when you should still restrain  
yourselves.

**SICINIUS**

Sir, how is it that you hope to rescue this situation?

**MENENIUS**

Listen: just as I know the consul's worthiness, I'm well  
aware of his flaws.

**SICINIUS**

Consul! What consul?

**MENENIUS**

The consul Coriolanus.

**BRUTUS**

Him? Consul?

**CITIZENS**

No, no, no, no, no.

**MENENIUS**

If you, tribunes, and you, good people, will simply allow me  
to speak, I only need a moment or two; my words will do far  
less harm to you than that which you already pursue.

**SICINIUS**

Speak briefly then, for we are more than ready to be rid of  
this poisonous traitor. To throw him out of power is just a  
moment of danger, and to keep him here would mean our  
certain death. Therefore, it is decided he should die tonight.

**MENENIUS**

God forbid that Rome, which has famously done so much  
for her people, should now eat up her own child!

**SICINIUS**

He's a diseased limb that must be cut off.

**MENENIUS**

Sure, then: he's Rome's diseased limb. To cut it off will kill  
all of Rome; to cure the disease, though, is easy. What has  
he done to Rome that makes him deserve death? In killing  
our enemies, the blood he has lost—which I bet is more  
than he has left—he shed that blood for his country.  
Whatever's left, if Rome were to take it from him, it would  
be to all of us as though the end of the world.

**SICINIUS**

What twisted logic.

**BRUTUS**

It's simply nonsense. When he did love his country, it  
honored him.

**MENENIUS**

The service of the foot

395 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:

400 Lest his infection, being of catching nature,  
Spread further.

**MENENIUS**

One word more, one word.

This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find

The harm of unscann'd swiftness, will too late

Tie leaden pounds to's heels. Proceed by process;

405 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?

410 Our aediles smote? ourselves resisted? Come.

**MENENIUS**

Consider this: he has been bred i' the wars

Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd

In bolted language; meal and bran together

He throws without distinction. Give me leave,

415 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

420 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**

425 Go not home.

**SICINIUS**

Meet on the market-place. We'll attend you there:

Where, if you bring not Marcius, we'll proceed

In our first way.

**MENENIUS**

I'll bring him to you.

430 *[To the senators]*

Let me desire your company. He must come,  
or what is worst will follow.

**FIRST SENATOR**

435 Pray you, let's to him.

*Exeunt*

**MENENIUS**

The use of a diseased food is not judged equal to what it  
was in the past.

**BRUTUS**

We'll hear no more. Chase him to his house, and pull him  
out of it, or his infection will spread further.

**MENENIUS**

One more word, one word. This wild and hasty rage will  
prove dangerous, and when it does, it will be too late to  
slow down. Slow down while you still can, or an opposing  
side will break out into conflict, and it will be Romans  
pillaging Rome.

**BRUTUS**

So what?—

**SICINIUS**

What are you talking about? Haven't we felt his wrath  
already? Our guards attacked, and us resisting? Come on.

**MENENIUS**

Just consider: he has been a child of war since he was old  
enough to draw a sword, and is poorly schooled in polite  
language. He does not make fine distinctions. Just leave  
him alone; I'll go to him, and do my best to bring him to the  
senate so he can answer all this lawfully and without  
violence.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Noble tribunes, this is the humane way to do it. The other  
course of action would prove too bloody, and who knows  
what would come of it.

**SICINIUS**

Noble Menenius, you will then act as the people's  
representative. Sirs, lay down your weapons.

**BRUTUS**

But don't go home.

**SICINIUS**

Meet in the market. We'll find you there. If you do not bring  
Marcius, we'll go back and try the other way.

**MENENIUS**

I'll bring him to you.

*[To the SENATORS]* Please, come with me. Coriolanus must  
come, or things will only get worse.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Yes, let's go.

*All exit.*

## Act 3, Scene 2

Enter CORIOLANUS with Patricians

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**A PATRICIAN**

You do the nobler.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

Enter VOLUMNIA

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Let go.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Let them hang.

**A PATRICIAN**

30 Ay, and burn too.

Enter MENENIUS and Senators

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

CORIOLANUS enters with SENATORS.

**CORIOLANUS**

Let them say what they will. They can threaten me with  
death on the rack or threaten to drag me behind wild  
horses, or pile ten hills on top of the Tarpeian cliff so that  
the rain stretches down out of sight, but still I will resist  
them.

**SeNator**

In doing so, you are honorable.


**CORIOLANUS**

I wonder why my mother isn't even more proud of me. She  
always called the people dumb servants, machines made to  
buy and sell, just bodies in the room, which yawn and  
silently wonder when someone with my strength stood up  
to speak of peace or war.

VOLUMNIA enters.

**CORIOLANUS**

I'm talking about you: why did you urge me to calm down?  
Would you have me be someone I'm not? Rather say I play  
the man I am.

 "Rather say I play the man I am" is an allusion, of course, to theatrical performance in general, but also foreshadows Coriolanus use of costumed disguise in the next act.

**VOLUMNIA**

Oh, sir, sir, sir, I wish you'd actually *gotten* power before  
you'd used it up.

**CORIOLANUS**

Leave off.

**VOLUMNIA**

You'd be just as much the man you are if you wouldn't try  
so hard to be that man. People wouldn't work so hard  
against you if you hadn't shown them how you felt while  
they still had the power to stop you.

**CORIOLANUS**

To hell with them.

**Senator**

Yeah, and let them burn, too.

MENENIUS enters with SENATORS.

**MENENIUS**

Come on, you have been too rude to them, far too rude; you  
have to go back and apologize.

**FIRST SENATOR**

There's no use; except that if he doesn't, our city will divide  
itself in half and be destroyed.

**VOLUMNIA**

Please, listen: although my heart is not as strong as yours, I  
have a brain to guide my fury into better advantages for us.

**MENENIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

What must I do?

**MENENIUS**

Return to the tribunes.

**CORIOLANUS**

Well, what then? what then?

**MENENIUS**

Repent what you have spoke.

**CORIOLANUS**

50 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,  
 55 Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,  
 I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,  
 In peace what each of them by the other lose,  
 That they combine not there.

**CORIOLANUS**

Tush, tush!

**MENENIUS**

60 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  
 65 With honour, as in war, since that to both  
 It stands in like request?

**CORIOLANUS**

Why force you this?

**VOLUMNIA**

Because that now it lies you on to speak  
 To the people; not by your own instruction,  
 70 Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,  
 But with such words that are but rooted in  
 Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables  
 Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.  
 Now, this no more dishonours you at all  
 75 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  
 80 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  
 85 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

**MENENIUS**

Well said, noble woman. Before Coriolanus should bow to  
 the crowd—which he should never do unless these violent  
 times absolutely required it—I feel as though I should put  
 my armor on, which pains me.

**CORIOLANUS**

What must I do?

**MENENIUS**

Return to the tribunes.

**CORIOLANUS**

Well, what then? What then?

**MENENIUS**

Apologize for what you've said.

**CORIOLANUS**

To them? I cannot apologize to the gods, and you want me  
 to apologize to them?

**VOLUMNIA**

You are too stubborn. In this you are also noble, except in  
 bizarre situations like this. I've heard you say before that  
 honor and judgement become inseparable friends in the  
 course of war. Think of that, and tell me how you have not  
 lost both by failing to combine them here, in peacetime.

**CORIOLANUS**

Nonsense!

**MENENIUS**

She makes a good point.


**VOLUMNIA**

If it's honorable at war to adapt yourself to your conditions,  
 how is it worse that you should do the same—be  
 flexible—in a time of peace?

**CORIOLANUS**


Why are you forcing this point?

**VOLUMNIA**

Because the pressure is now on you to speak to the people,  
 and to do so not the way you normally might, nor just  
 however your heart tells you to, but to speak useful words,  
 even if you don't truly believe them. This is no more  
 dishonor to you than to use gentle words to capture a town  
 which would otherwise risk the lives of many men to  
 capture. If I had to be someone I wasn't when my friends  
 and fortunes were at stake, it would be honorable for me to  
 do so. In this case, I am your wife, your son, these senators,  
 the nobles ; would you rather show the common people  
 that you can frown than just once compliment them for  
 Rome's sake?

**MENENIUS**

Noble lady! Come along with us. Talk to him: if you can  
 calm him so, we might avoid not only the dangerous  
 present but also deal with our past conflict.

 *Volumnia uses a poetic technique called metonymy to capture two ideas at once. She "is," or stands in for, Coriolanus's wife/son/senators/etc., but there is a quiet implication that she actually "is" all those figures in that she is the only thing Coriolanus appears to care about.*

Of what is past.

**VOLUMNIA**

90 I prithee now, my son,  
Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand;  
And thus far having stretch'd it—here be with them—  
Thy knee bussing the stones— for in such business  
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant  
95 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  
100 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**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

*Enter COMINIUS*

**COMINIUS**

I have been i' the market-place; and, sir, 'tis fit  
You make strong party, or defend yourself  
115 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  
120 Prithee now, say you will, and go about it.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

Come, come, we'll prompt you.


**VOLUMNIA**


130 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:  
135 Away, my disposition, and possess me  
Some harlot's spirit! my throat of war be turn'd,  
Which quired with my drum, into a pipe

**VOLUMNIA**

I beg you, my son, *[She mimics the action of humbly fidgeting with a peasant's cap]* go along with this hat in your hand, and having stretched it—do it like this—with your knees on the ground—for in this kind of thing, your behavior is everything, and idiots care more about what they see than what they hear—shaking your head like this a few times, as humble as the ripest mulberry  from a tree ready to be picked. Then say to them that you are a soldier in their service, and that since you grew up in the war, you're not very polite, which you confess is really better for this situation. In asking for their approval, just wilt your body like this—seriously—and say that you'll be their servant forever as long as you live.

 *Metaphor for the motion she's describing; she wants him to hang his head low and wobble it like a fruit on a mulberry tree.*

**MENENIUS**

If you can do this, as she says, they will accept you. They will freely pardon you, if you ask.

**VOLUMNIA**

Please now, go and be humble, although I know you'd rather follow an enemy into hell than flatter him in a garden. Here comes Cominius.

*COMINIUS enters.*

**COMINIUS**

I've been in the market, sir, and you'd better go either with a strong guard or defend yourself by calmness or by not going at all: they're pretty angry.

**MENENIUS**

Just be polite.

**COMINIUS**

I think that would work, if he could actually do it.

**VOLUMNIA**

He must, and will. Listen: say you'll do it, and do it.

**CORIOLANUS**

I have to go bare my uncovered head to them? I have to put a lie upon my conscience? Well, I'll do it. Yet if this were the only land for which I ever fought, let them take my body, grind it to dust, and throw it to the wind. To the market! You're insisting now I play a part which I don't know how I'll ever make believable.

**COMINIUS**

Come, come, we'll help you.

**VOLUMNIA**

Please, sweet son, as you have said my praise was what made you a soldier, have my praise for this too and perform a part you've not played before.

**CORIOLANUS**

Well, I guess I have to do it. Farewell, my self, and let me take on prostitute-like spirit! I'll turn my voice of war, like a drum, into a tiny pipe like the virgin voice that would lull babies to sleep. I'll smile fake smiles, and I'll cry

Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice  
That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves  
140 Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up  
The glasses of my sight! a beggar's tongue  
Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,  
Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his  
That hath received an alms! I will not do't,  
145 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  
150 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,  
155 But owe thy pride thyself.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

Do your will.

165 *Exit*

**COMINIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

170 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**

175 Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

*Exeunt*

schoolboy's tears. I'll speak like a beggar, and my knees,  
which until now have only bent in my stirrups, will bend like  
a man asking for money in the street! [*Having briefly  
considered this, he wavers*] I can't do this, or I'll have to  
betray my own truth and my body will teach my mind to be  
evil.

**VOLUMNIA**

It's up to you, then. It's more dishonorable for me to beg  
you than for you to beg them. Let the world burn; let your  
mother be the heart of your pride rather than the victim of  
your foolish stubbornness, for I am as invincible as you. But  
do whatever you want. Your bravery was mine—you sucked  
it from me—but your pride is your own.

**CORIOLANUS**

Enough. Mother, I am going to the market, stop scolding  
me. I'll lie for their love, cheat their hearts from them, and  
come home loved by people of every profession in Rome.  
Look, I'm going; give my best to my wife. I'll return consul if  
my tongue has any power at all to flatter.

**VOLUMNIA**

Go ahead.

*VOLUMNIA exits.*

**COMINIUS**

Go! The tribunes are waiting for you. Prepare to answer  
gently, for they are ready with accusations, I think, even  
stronger than you've heard so far.

**CORIOLANUS**

Like you said, "gently." Please, let's go. Let them make up  
whatever they want, I'll answer honorably.

**MENENIUS**

Sure, but gently.

**CORIOLANUS**

Whatever, gently then. Gently!

*Both exit.*

## Act 3, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

**BRUTUS**


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

*Enter an AEdile*


### Shakescleare Translation

*SICINIUS and BRUTUS enter.*

**BRUTUS**

Let's drive this point home: he wants to be a tyrant. If he  
manages to evade that, let's accuse him of being greedy,  
and say that he never distributed the spoils of war from the  
Antiates. 

*A GUARD enters.*

 The battle against the Antiates was a major earlier battle in the war between the Romans and the Volscians.



**BRUTUS**

What, will he come?

**AEDILE**

He's coming.

**BRUTUS**

How accompanied?

**AEDILE**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**AEDILE**

15 I have; 'tis ready.

**SICINIUS**

Have you collected them by tribes?

**AEDILE**

I have.

**SICINIUS**

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

**AEDILE**

25 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**

30 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*

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Well, here he comes.

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

**BRUTUS**

Well, is he coming?

**guard**

He's coming.

**BRUTUS**

Who accompanies him?

**Guard**

Just old Menenius, and the senators who've always been on his side.

**SICINIUS**

Do you have a list of all the votes we've gotten?

**Guard**

I do, it's ready.

**SICINIUS**

And you've organized them by group?

**Guard**

I have.

**SICINIUS**

Assemble everyone here. And when they hear me say "This is how it will be in the name and the strength of our people," whether I say either for death, fine, or banishment, have them yell accordingly: "Fine," if it's a fine; "Death," if it's for death. We'll insist on the old reasons and the power of truth.

**Guard**

I'll inform them.

**BRUTUS**

And when they've begun to shout, make sure they don't stop; instead, make sure they wildly cheer whatever we happen to decide on.

**Guard**

Very well.

**SICINIUS**

Make sure they're really ready when we give them the sign.

**BRUTUS**

Go to it.

*GUARD exits.*

**BRUTUS**

Lets get him angry right away. He's so used to conquering, and to seeing value only in contradiction. Once we irritate him, he'll never calm down, and he'll speak what's in his heart. What's in there will be what we need to break his neck.

**SICINIUS**

All right; here he comes.

*CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS enter with SENATORS.*

**MENENIUS**

Calmly, I do beseech you.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

50 Amen, amen.

**MENENIUS**

A noble wish.

*Re-enter AEdile, with Citizens*

**SICINIUS**

Draw near, ye people.

**AEDILE**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

55 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,  
60 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**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

70 Scratches with briers,  
Scars to move laughter only.

**MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

Well, well, no more.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

*[To CORIOLANUS]* Calmly, please.

**CORIOLANUS**

Sure, like a stableboy, who will take any amount of abuse  
for a penny. May the honored gods keep Rome safe, and  
positions of justice be held by worthy men! May we all love  
one another! Fill our temples with peaceful demonstrations  
and our streets with war!

**FIRST SENATOR**

Indeed, indeed.

**MENENIUS**

A noble wish.

*GUARD re-enters with CITIZENS.*

**SICINIUS**

Come here, people.

**Guard**

Listen to your tribunes. Attention: silence, I say!

**CORIOLANUS**

First, hear me speak.

**BOTH TRIBUNES**

Sure, go ahead. Silence, everyone.

**CORIOLANUS**

Will this be my last trial? Will everything come down to this?

**SICINIUS**

I insist upon it, so long as you will submit to the people's  
vote, abide by their representatives, and are willing to deal  
with lawful condemnation for the verdict which is reached?

**CORIOLANUS**

I am content with these terms.

**MENENIUS**

Hear that, citizens, he says he is content! Consider the  
military service he has done; think about all the wounds on  
his body, huge scars which look like graves in a churchyard.

**CORIOLANUS**

Just scratches. Laughable scars, really.

**MENENIUS**

Take into account that when he speaks, he is speaking as a  
soldier. Don't take his roughness the wrong way; he's not  
being cruel, but like I said, he's just being soldier rather  
than trying to pretend to be like you.

**COMINIUS**

Good, good, enough.

**CORIOLANUS**

*[To the CITIZENS]* How can it be that after I was voted in as  
consul with your full approval, I've fallen so far within an  
hour that you revoke your vote?

**SICINIUS**

Answer to us.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

How! traitor!

**MENENIUS**

Nay, temperately; your promise.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Mark you this, people?

**CITIZENS**

To the rock, to the rock with him!

**SICINIUS**

Peace!

100 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,  
105 So criminal and in such capital kind,  
Deserves the extremest death.

**BRUTUS**

But since he hath  
Served well for Rome,—

**CORIOLANUS**

What do you prate of service?

**BRUTUS**

110 I talk of that, that know it.

**CORIOLANUS**

You?

**MENENIUS**

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

**COMINIUS**

Know, I pray you,—

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Answer to us.

**CORIOLANUS**

Go on, then: it's true, I ought to answer to you.

**SICINIUS**

We charge you with attempted tyranny, with the plan to  
take over all of Rome's offices, for which you are a traitor to  
the people.

**CORIOLANUS**

What? A traitor?

**MENENIUS**

No, gently; you promised to respond gently.


**CORIOLANUS**


The lowest circles of hell take in these people! You're calling  
me their traitor? You ruinous tribune! If you could deal me  
twenty thousand deaths, held twenty million deaths in your  
hand, and with your tongue could deal as many over again,  
I would say "you lie" to you with a voice as free as the one I  
use to pray to the gods.

**SICINIUS**

Do you hear this, people?

**CITIZENS**

To the rock , to the rock with him!

 "The rock" is the Tarpeian rock, or  
execution cliff.

**SICINIUS**

Silence! We do not need to go through this again. What you  
have seen him do and heard him say—beating your officers,  
cursing you, opposing laws with grand gestures and here  
defying even to be tried—even this, so criminal and so  
serious—deserves the most extreme death.

**BRUTUS**

But since he has served Rome well—

**CORIOLANUS**

What would you know of service?

**BRUTUS**

I only speak of what I know.

**CORIOLANUS**

You?

**MENENIUS**

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

**COMINIUS**

Listen, I beg you—

**CORIOLANUS**

I know only this: let them condemn me to a steep Tarpeian  
death. As a vagabond exile, made to beg for grains, I would  
not buy a word of their mercy, nor stop by boldness for  
anything they could give me to be had with saying "Good  
day."

**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  
 125 Given hostile strokes, and that not in the presence  
 Of dreaded justice, but on the ministers  
 That do distribute it; in the name o' the people  
 And in the power of us the tribunes, we,  
 Even from this instant, banish him our city,  
 130 In peril of precipitation  
 From off the rock Tarpeian never more  
 To enter our Rome gates: i' the people's name,  
 I say it shall be so.

**CITIZENS**

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

**COMINIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

He's sentenced; no more hearing.

**COMINIUS**

Let me speak:  
 I have been consul, and can show for Rome  
 140 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  
 145 Speak that,—

**SICINIUS**

We know your drift: speak what?

**BRUTUS**

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

**CITIZENS**

150 It shall be so, it shall be so.

**CORIOLANUS**

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate  
 As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize  
 As the dead carcasses of unburied men  
 That do corrupt my air, I banish you;  
 155 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  
 160 Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,  
 Making not reservation of yourselves,  
 Still your own foes, deliver you as most  
 Abated captives to some nation  
 That won you without blows! Despising,  
 165 For you, the city, thus I turn my back:  
 There is a world elsewhere.

*Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, Senators, and Patricians*

**AEDILE**

The people's enemy is gone, is gone!

**CITIZENS**

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

**SICINIUS**

For crimes against the people—seeking to pluck away their  
 power, and now at the end for his hostile blows in the  
 presence not only of the judges but of the people  
 themselves—in the name of the people and by the power  
 vested in us as tribunes we, from this instant onward,  
 banish him from our city, Rome. If he ever again enters our  
 gates, he will be thrown off the Tarpeian rock. In the  
 people's name, I say it shall be so.

**CITIZENS**

It shall be so, it shall be so; let him go. He's banished, and it  
 shall be so.

**COMINIUS**

Hear me, sirs, and my friends, the people—

**SICINIUS**

His sentence has been passed; there will be no more  
 "hearing."

**COMINIUS**

Let me speak. I have been consul, and can show for Rome  
 her enemies' scars upon me. I love my country tenderly,  
 more profoundly than my own life, my own dear wife, or the  
 fruits of her very womb, my own treasured children; if I  
 would say that—

**SICINIUS**

We get it; if you would say what?

**BRUTUS**

There's no more to be said except that he is banished. He's  
 an enemy to the people and his country; that's it.

**CITIZENS**

It shall be so, it shall be so.

**CORIOLANUS**

You common junkyard dogs, whose breath I hate like the  
 reeking of a rotten swamp, whose love I hold equal to the  
 bloated carcasses of unburied dead men, the stink of which  
 corrupts my air, I banish you. Remain here with your  
 uncertainty! Let every feeble rumor shake your hearts! May  
 your enemies' smallest motions drive you into despair! May  
 you keep this power to banish your defenders, until your  
 ignorance, with no sense of your own self-preservation,  
 delivers you as slaves to some nation who will conquer you  
 without a single blow. I despise Rome, for you're in it, and  
 turn my back. There is a world elsewhere.

*CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS and SENATORS exit all  
 at once.*

**GUARD**

The people's enemy is gone; he's gone!

**CITIZENS**

Our enemy is banished; he is gone, hooray!

*Shouting, and throwing up their caps*

**SICINIUS**

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

**CITIZENS**

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

*Exeunt*

*CITIZENS shout and throw their hats in the air.*

**SICINIUS**

Go, follow him out to the gates, and follow him, as he has followed you, with all your bitterness. Give him the torment he deserves. We will have a guard take us through the city.

**CITIZENS**

Come, let's follow him to the gates. The gods preserve our noble tribunes! Come.

*All exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 1

### Shakespeare

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VIRGILIA**

O heavens! O heavens!

**CORIOLANUS**

Nay! prithee, woman,—

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

What, what, what!  
I shall be loved when I am lack'd. Nay, mother.  
Resume that spirit, when you were wont to say,  
If you had been the wife of Hercules,  
20 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 saltier than a younger man's,  
25 And venomous to thine eyes. My sometime general,  
I have seen thee stem, and thou hast oft beheld  
Heart-hardening spectacles; tell these sad women  
'Tis fond to wail inevitable strokes,  
As 'tis to laugh at 'em. My mother, you wot well  
30 My hazards still have been your solace: and  
Believe't not lightly— though I go alone,  
Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen  
Makes fear'd and talk'd of more than seen— your son  
Will or exceed the common or be caught  
35 With cautelous baits and practise.

**VOLUMNIA**

My first son.  
Whither wilt thou go? Take good Cominius  
With thee awhile: determine on some course,

### Shakescleare Translation

*CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS enter with the young nobility of Rome.*

**CORIOLANUS**

Come on, stop crying. A brief farewell is enough; the beast with many heads butts me away. Mother, no—where is your courage? You used to say that challenge was the spirit's forge, that average men could bear average events, that when the sea was calm all boats were good at floating. The true blows of bad luck, when they really hit home, call for more than average men. You gave me all these sayings that, to believe them, would make a man invincible.

**VIRGILIA**

Oh, heavens! Oh, heavens!

**CORIOLANUS**

Stop it, please woman—

**VOLUMNIA**


May the plague strike everyone in Rome, and all the workers perish!


**CORIOLANUS**

Hear, hear, hear! They'll miss me once I'm gone. Mother, come back to that spirit when you used to say that if you'd been the wife of Hercules, you'd have done six of his labors and saved your husband the trouble. Cominius, don't look so sad; good-bye. Farewell, my wife, my mother: I'll be fine. Old and true Menenius, your tears are saltier than a younger man's would be, and poisonous to your eyes. Cominius, my old general, you've often seen spectacles that would harden the heart; tell these sad women it's as good to laugh at fate as to cry. Mother, you know well that my risks have always been your comfort, and believe me, although I go alone like a lonely dragon—whose terrifying surroundings make him more feared and talked about than seen—your son will as always be better than average; never caught by baits or cleverness.

**VOLUMNIA**

My first son. Where will you go? Take good Cominius with you for a while, and choose some course. Don't just go wildly toward whatever chance waits for you daily.

 "The beast with many heads" is the people of the republic. As noted earlier, "the crowd" was often regarded, metaphorically, as monstrous: a hydra, a "many-headed-multitude," or here, more simply, a beast.

 Hercules, a half-son of Zeus, was famously given twelve labors by the King of Mycenae.

More than a wild exposture to each chance  
40 That starts i' the way before thee.

**CORIOLANUS**

O the gods!

**COMINIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Fare ye well:

50 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,  
55 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

60 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.

65

*Exeunt*

**CORIOLANUS**

Oh, gods!

**COMINIUS**

I'll travel behind you for a month and help you figure out  
where you can stay, so that you can hear of us and vice  
versa, so if by any chance this vote is reversed, we will not  
have to seek everywhere for a single man, and lose  
whatever advantage we would've had to find you when we  
most need you.

**CORIOLANUS**

Good-bye, no. You are old, and are too beaten up by the  
harshness of war to go wander with someone still  
unbruised; just walk me about of the gate. Come, my sweet  
wife, my dearest mother, and my noble friends: when I go,  
just bid me farewell and smile. Please, come. While I live,  
you'll hear from me, and I will always be what I have always  
been.

**MENENIUS**

That's as good as we could ever ask. Come on, let's not  
weep. If were just seven years younger, by the good gods,  
I'd accompany you every step of the way.

**CORIOLANUS**

Give me your hand; come.

*All exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Enter SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and an AEdile*

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

10 Dismiss them home.

*Exit AEdile*

**BRUTUS**

Here comes his mother.

### Shakescleare Translation

*SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and a GUARD enter.*

**SICINIUS**

Tell them all to head home. He's gone, and we're done here.  
The nobility, who we see have taken his side, are very  
upset.

**BRUTUS**

Now that we've shown them how powerful we are, let's act  
humbler now that it's done than while we were doing it.

**SICINIUS**

Tell them to go home. Say their great enemy is gone, and  
they stand as strong as ever.

**BRUTUS**

Dismiss them to their homes.

*GUARD exits.*

**BRUTUS**

Here comes his mother.

**SICINIUS**

Let's not meet her.

**BRUTUS**

15 Why?

**SICINIUS**

They say she's mad.

**BRUTUS**

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

*Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS*

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**MENENIUS**

Peace, peace; be not so loud.

**VOLUMNIA**

If that I could for weeping, you should hear,—  
Nay, and you shall hear some.  
25 *[To BRUTUS]*  
Will you be gone?

**VIRGILIA**

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

**SICINIUS**

30 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**

35 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,  
40 His good sword in his hand.

**SICINIUS**

What then?

**VIRGILIA**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

Bastards and all.  
45 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

**SICINIUS**

Let's avoid her.

**BRUTUS**

Why?

**SICINIUS**

They say she's a madwoman.

**BRUTUS**

They've seen us! Just stay calm.

*VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS enter.*

**VOLUMNIA**

Oh, am I glad to see you: may the great plagues of the gods  
return your love!

**MENENIUS**

Quiet, quiet, don't be so loud.

**VOLUMNIA**


If I just went and wept, you would still hear me—and  
indeed, you will hear some weeping.

*[To BRUTUS]* Will you get out of here?

**VIRGILIA**

*[To SICINIUS]* You shall stay—I wish I had the power to say  
so to my husband.

**SICINIUS**

Are you women or animals? 


**VOLUMNIA**

Ugh, you fool—is that a problem? Look at this fool. Wasn't  
my father a man? By what clever betrayal have you  
banished a man from Rome who struck more blows in our  
city's service than you have spoken words?

**SICINIUS**

Oh, dear god!

**VOLUMNIA**

More noble blows than you've said wise words—and for  
Rome's good. I'll tell you what: go, go on. No, but you'll stay,  
won't you? I wish my son were in Arabia , and your whole  
tribe before him with one good sword in his hand.

**SICINIUS**

What then?

**VIRGILIA**

What then! He'd kill you and all your family.

**VOLUMNIA**


Bastards, all of them. Good man, the wounds that he bears  
for Rome's sake!


**MENENIUS**

Come on, come on, calm down.

**SICINIUS**

I wish Coriolanus had continued to serve his country the  
way he started, and not ruined himself.

 Throughout this scene, Volumnia and Virgilia are nearly mad with grief. Their dialogue jumps from one thing to another, often in contradiction, in order to express how they are feeling emotionally.

 "In Arabia" means, in other words, "I wish you were in a desert with nowhere to hide."

The noble knot he made.

**BRUTUS**

50 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**

55 Pray, let us go.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**BRUTUS**

Well, well, we'll leave you.

**SICINIUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

65 Take my prayers with you.

*Exeunt Tribunes*

**VOLUMNIA**

I would the gods had nothing else to do  
But to confirm my curses! Could I meet 'em  
But once a-day, it would unclog my heart  
70 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:  
75 Leave this faint puling and lament as I do,  
In anger, Juno-like. Come, come, come.

**MENENIUS**

Fie, fie, fie!

*Exeunt*

**BRUTUS**

I wish he had.

**VOLUMNIA**

"I wish he had!" It was *you* who started the riot! You are  
cats, as fit to be the judge of Coriolanus as I am to know the  
mysteries of heaven which are forbidden to those on earth.

**BRUTUS**

Please, lets go.

**VOLUMNIA**

Now, please sir, get out of here. What you've done is brave  
indeed. Before you go, listen to me. As much as the Capitol  
is better than the lowliest house in Rome—that's how much  
my son, this lady's husband here, *here*, do you see  
her?—whom you have banished, is better than all of you.

**BRUTUS**

Sure, sure; we'll leave.

**SICINIUS**


Why should we stand here to be yelled at by a madwoman?


**VOLUMNIA**

*[Sarcastically]* My prayers go with you.

*TRIBUNES exit.*

**VOLUMNIA**


I wish the gods had nothing else to do but curse them! If I  
could meet them  just once a day, it would clear my heart  
of all its baggage.


 To "meet" with someone is often  
to do them violence; Coriolanus uses  
this phrase often when describing  
fighting.

**MENENIUS**

You've driven them home. And my god, do you have a good  
reason to. Will you get dinner with me?

**VOLUMNIA**

Anger's my meat; I feed upon myself, and so will starve.   
Come, lets go. Leave this quiet weeping and grieve the way I  
do, deep in fury like a god. Come, come, come.

 Volumnia, in an unresolvable but  
immediately identifiable metaphor, is  
declaring that she feeds on her own  
fury and so does not need to eat or  
cry. She needs nothing but her anger.

**MENENIUS**

Damn, damn, damn!

*All exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 3


### Shakespeare


*Enter a Roman and a Volsce, meeting*

**ROMAN**

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

### Shakesclare Translation

A ROMAN  and a VOLSCE enter from different sides of the  
stage.

 This Roman, Nicanor, is a double  
agent—a spy for the Volsces based in  
Rome.

**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,  
5 as you are, against 'em: know you me yet?

**VOLSCE**

Nicanor? no.

**ROMAN**

The same, sir.

**VOLSCE**

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

**ROMAN**

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

**VOLSCE**

Hath been! is it ended, then? Our state thinks not  
so: they are in a most warlike preparation, and  
15 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  
20 so to heart the banishment of that worthy  
Coriolanus, that they are in a ripe aptness to take  
all power from the people and to pluck from them  
their tribunes for ever. This lies glowing, I can  
tell you, and is almost mature for the violent  
25 breaking out.

**VOLSCE**

Coriolanus banished!

**ROMAN**

Banished, sir.

**VOLSCE**

You will be welcome with this intelligence, Nicanor.

**ROMAN**

The day serves well for them now. I have heard it  
said, the fittest time to corrupt a man's wife is  
30 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  
40 their adversaries. Have you an army ready, say you?

**VOLSCE**

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

**VOLSCE**

It is, sir. To be honest, though, I have forgotten your name.

**ROMAN**

I am a Roman, but I work—as you do—against Rome. Do  
you still not know me?

**VOLSCE**

Nicanor? No, it can't be you!

**ROMAN**

It is, sir.

**VOLSCE**

You had more beard when I last saw you, but your voice  
does sound like Nicanor's. What's the news in Rome? I have  
a note for you from the Volscians; it's saved me a day's  
journey to meet you here.

**ROMAN**

There has been a strange insurrection in Rome: the people  
have risen up against the senators, patricians, and nobles.

**VOLSCE**

Has been! Is it over, then? The Volscians wouldn't say so:  
they're preparing for war, and are hoping to catch Rome in  
the midst of this turmoil.

**ROMAN**

The main conflict is over, but almost anything would make  
it start again. The nobles have really taken the banishment  
of worthy Coriolanus to heart, and they are on the verge of  
taking power from the people and robbing them of their  
representatives forever. Their action lies glowing like an  
ember, believe me, and is ready to burst into flame.

**VOLSCE**

Coriolanus has been banished?!

**ROMAN**

Banished, sir.

**VOLSCE**

The Volscians will welcome you with this news, Nicanor.

**ROMAN**

Things are good for them for now. I've heard it said that the  
best time to seduce a man's wife is when she and the  
husband are fighting. Your noble Tullus Aufidius will do well  
in these wars now that Coriolanus, the only man strong  
enough to oppose him, can't be called upon by Rome.


**VOLSCE**


He has no choice. It is really lucky that I've encountered you  
like this; my business is over now, and I'll merrily  
accompany you home.

**ROMAN**

Between now and supper, I'll tell you some very strange  
things from Rome, all of which will be good for their  
enemies. You have an army ready, you say?

**VOLSCE**

A very powerful one. The centurions  and their  
battalions, stationed all about, are ready to be on the march  
within an hour.

 Centurions were military officers  
who commanded large groups of  
soldiers, on the order of a 21st century  
army's captain or major.

**ROMAN**

45 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**

50 Well, let us go together.

*Exeunt*

**ROMAN**

I'm glad to hear they're ready, and I think my news will send them into action. So, sir, it's great to meet you here, and I'm glad to have your company.

**VOLSCE**

You've taken the words right out of my mouth, sir; I am the one who is glad of *your* company.

**ROMAN**

Well, let us go together.

*Both exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

*Enter CORIOLANUS in mean apparel, disguised and muffled*

**CORIANUS**

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

*Enter a Citizen*

**CORIANUS**

Save you, sir.

**CITIZEN**

And you.

**CORIANUS**

10 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.

**CORIANUS**

Which is his house, beseech you?

**CITIZEN**

15 This, here before you.

**CORIANUS**

Thank you, sir: farewell.

*Exit Citizen*

**CORIANUS**

O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,  
Whose double bosoms seem to wear one heart,  
20 Whose house, whose bed, whose meal, and exercise,  
Are still together, who twin, as 'twere, in love  
Unseparable, shall within this hour,  
On a dissension of a doit, break out  
To bitterest enmity: so, fellest foes,  
25 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

### Shakescleare Translation

*CORIANUS enters in commoner's clothes, disguised and in a hood.*

**CORIANUS**

This Antium place is not so bad. *[As though speaking to the city]* City, I was the one who widowed your women; I killed many of the men who lived in your fair buildings. Do not know me, or your wives will spit on me and your boys will attack me with stones.

*A CITIZEN enters.*

**CORIANUS**

God save you, sir.

**CITIZEN**

And you.

**CORIANUS**

Could you please direct me to where the great Aufidius stays? Is he in Antium?

**CITIZEN**

He is, indeed, and is having a feast for nobles at his house tonight.

**CORIANUS**

Please tell me, which is his house?

**CITIZEN**

This one, right here.

**CORIANUS**

Thank you, sir, good-bye.

*CITIZEN exits.*

**CORIANUS**

Oh, world, your unexpected twists and turns! Even now there are best friends—friends so close they seem to have the same heart; friends whose house, whose bed, whose meal, whose hobbies are always the same, like inseparable twins—who within this very hour, over a tiny argument, will become the most bitter enemies. In the same way, the most dire foes, men who have lost sleep planning plots to take one another by some chance, some trick worth almost nothing, will become dear friends and work together. So it is with me. I hate my birthplace, and I love this enemy town.

And interjoin their issues. So with me:  
My birth-place hate I, and my love's upon  
30 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*

I'll enter Aufidius's house; if he slays me, that's fair; if he lets  
me stay, I'll fight on the Volscian side.

*CORIOLANUS exits.*

## Act 4, Scene 5

### Shakespeare

*Music within. Enter a Servingman*

#### FIRST SERVINGMAN

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

*Exit*

*Enter a second Servingman*

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

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

*Exit*

*Enter CORIOLANUS*

#### CORIOLANUS

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

*Re-enter the first Servingman*

#### FIRST SERVINGMAN

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

*Exit*

#### CORIOLANUS

15 I have deserved no better entertainment,  
In being Coriolanus.

*Re-enter second Servingman*

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

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

#### CORIOLANUS

Away!

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

20 Away! get you away.

#### CORIOLANUS

Now thou'rt troublesome.

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

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

*Enter a third Servingman. The first meets him*

### Shakescleare Translation

*Music is heard from offstage. A SERVINGMAN enters into the  
kitchen or pantry of a large house.*

#### FIRST SERVINGMAN

Wine, wine, wine! They want so much! It's like the other  
servants are asleep.

*FIRST SERVINGMAN exits.*

*SECOND SERVINGMAN enters.*

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

Where's Cotus? My master is calling for him. Cotus!

*SECOND SERVINGMAN exits.*

*CORIOLANUS enters.*

#### CORIOLANUS

This place is great: the feast smells wonderful, but I'm not  
dressed to be a noble guest.

*FIRST SERVINGMAN re-enters.*

#### FIRST SERVINGMAN

What do you need, friend? Where did you come from? You  
don't belong here; please leave.

*FIRST SERVINGMAN exits.*

#### CORIOLANUS

I deserve no better welcome, being who I am.

*SECOND SERVINGMAN re-enters.*

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

Where did you come from, sir? Does the doorman even  
have eyes in his head, if he's letting people like you in?  
Please, get out.

#### CORIOLANUS

You get out!

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

Away, get away!

#### CORIOLANUS

Now you're being troublesome.

#### SECOND SERVINGMAN

Are you really this bold? I'll get someone to take care of you  
in a minute.

*A THIRD SERVINGMAN enters, who speaks with the second.*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

What fellow's this?

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

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

*Retires*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

What are you?

**CORIOLANUS**

A gentleman.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

A marvellous poor one.

**CORIOLANUS**

True, so I am.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

*Pushes him away*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

And I shall.

*Exit*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Where dwellest thou?

**CORIOLANUS**

- 45 Under the canopy.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Under the canopy!

**CORIOLANUS**

Ay.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Where's that?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

*[Referring to CORIOLANUS]* Who's this guy?

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

As strange a person as I've ever seen. I can't get him out of the house. Please, call my master in to take care of him.

*FIRST SERVINGMAN moves to the back of the stage, or exits.*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

What are you doing here? Please, get out of this house.

**CORIOLANUS**

Just let me stand here; I won't get in your way.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

What's your deal?

**CORIOLANUS**

I am a gentleman.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

An awfully poor one, then.

**CORIOLANUS**

That's true enough, so I am.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Then please, poor gentleman, go interfere with some other house; this is no place for you. *[Pulling CORIOLANUS toward the door]* Please, leave, come on.

**CORIOLANUS**

Go do your thing, and batten on cold bits. 📖

📖 "Batten on cold bits" is a marvelous insult—on the order of the slightly more modern "go suck an egg"—and means literally "go stuff yourself with cold leftovers," with the implication that the servingman isn't good enough to have hot food to himself.

*CORIOLANUS pushes him away.*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

What, will you really not leave?

*[To the other SERVINGMAN]* Go tell my master what a strange guest we have here.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

And I shall.

*SECOND SERVINGMAN exits.*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Where do you live?

**CORIOLANUS**

Under the stars.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Under the stars!

**CORIOLANUS**

Yeah.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Where's that?

**CORIOLANUS**

I' the city of kites and crows.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

50 I' the city of kites and crows! What an ass it is!  
Then thou dwellest with daws too?

**CORIOLANUS**

No, I serve not thy master.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

How, sir! do you meddle with my master?

**CORIOLANUS**

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

*Beats him away. Exit third Servingman*

*Enter AUFIDIUS with the second Servingman*

**AUFIDIUS**

Where is this fellow?

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

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

*Retires*

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

65 If, Tullus,

**AUFIDIUS**

What is thy name?

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

75 I know thee not: thy name?

**CORIOLANUS**

80 My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done  
To thee particularly and to all the Volsces  
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may  
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,  
The extreme dangers and the drops of blood  
Shed for my thankless country are required

**CORIOLANUS**

In the city of kites <sup>2</sup> and crows.

<sup>2</sup> *Kites are a type of small hawk common to England.*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

In the city of kites and crows! What an ass you are! So you  
live with daws <sup>3</sup>, too?

<sup>3</sup> *Daws, or jackdaws, are a small gray crow infamous for their silly inquisitiveness. The term is an insult to someone's intelligence.*

**CORIOLANUS**

No, I don't serve your master.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

What?! Are you messing with my master?

**CORIOLANUS**

Sure; it's more honest than screwing with your mistress.  
You talk and talk; go do your job, go!

*Beats him away. Exit THIRD SERVINGMAN.*

*Enter AUFIDIUS with SECOND SERVINGMAN.*

**AUFIDIUS**

Where is this guy?

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Here he is, sir. I would've beaten him like a dog, but I didn't  
want to disturb the lords feasting.

*SECOND SERVINGMAN steps to the back of the stage or exits.*

**AUFIDIUS**

Where have you come from? What do you want? What's  
your name? Why don't you speak? Speak, man: what's your  
name?

**CORIOLANUS**

*[Pulling back his hood]* If, Tullus, you do not know me yet,  
and seeing me, don't recognize me for who I am, then I  
suppose I will have to tell you.

**AUFIDIUS**

What is your name?

**CORIOLANUS**

A name unmusical to the Volscian's ears, and even worse to  
yours.

**AUFIDIUS**

Tell me, what's your name? You have a grim look, and a  
commanding face, though your clothes are torn. You have  
the stature of a nobleman. What's your name?

**CORIOLANUS**

Prepare to frown—you still don't recognize me?

**AUFIDIUS**

I do not know you. What's your name?

**CORIOLANUS**

My name is Caius Marcius, the man who has done great  
damage to you and to all the Volsces. From that damage  
comes my surname, Coriolanus. That surname is the only  
thing left of the painful service, extreme dangers, and all  
the blood I shed for my thankless country. It is a memorial  
to the hatred you should have for me—only that name

But with that surname; a good memory,  
 And witness of the malice and displeasure  
 Which thou shouldst bear me: only that name remains;  
 85 The cruelty and envy of the people,  
 Permitted by our dastard nobles, who  
 Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest;  
 And suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be  
 Whoop'd out of Rome. Now this extremity  
 90 Hath brought me to thy hearth; not out of hope—  
 Mistake me not—to save my life, for if  
 I had fear'd death, of all the men i' the world  
 I would have 'voided thee, but in mere spite,  
 To be full quit of those my banishers,  
 95 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,  
 100 And make my misery serve thy turn: so use it  
 That my revengeful services may prove  
 As benefits to thee, for I will fight  
 Against my canker'd country with the spleen  
 Of all the under fiends. But if so be  
 105 Thou darest not this and that to prove more fortunes  
 Thou'rt tired, then, in a word, I also am  
 Longer to live most weary, and present  
 My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;  
 Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,  
 110 Since I have ever follow'd thee with hate,  
 Drawn tuns of blood out of thy country's breast,  
 And cannot live but to thy shame, unless  
 It be to do thee service.

**AUFIDIUS**

O Marcius, Marcius!  
 115 Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart  
 A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter  
 Should from yond cloud speak divine things,  
 And say 'Tis true,' I'd not believe them more  
 Than thee, all noble Marcius. Let me twine  
 120 Mine arms about that body, where against  
 My grained ash an hundred times hath broke  
 And scarr'd the moon with splinters: here I clip  
 The anvil of my sword, and do contest  
 As hotly and as nobly with thy love  
 125 As ever in ambitious strength I did  
 Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,  
 I loved the maid I married; never man  
 Sigh'd truer breath; but that I see thee here,  
 Thou noble thing! more dances my rapt heart  
 130 Than when I first my wedded mistress saw  
 Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars! I tell thee,  
 We have a power on foot; and I had purpose  
 Once more to hew thy target from thy brawn,  
 Or lose mine arm fort: thou hast beat me out  
 135 Twelve several times, and I have nightly since  
 Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;  
 We have been down together in my sleep,  
 Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat,  
 And waked half dead with nothing. Worthy Marcius,  
 140 Had we no quarrel else to Rome, but that  
 Thou art thence banish'd, we would muster all  
 From twelve to seventy, and pouring war  
 Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome,  
 Like a bold flood o'er-bear. O, come, go in,  
 145 And take our friendly senators by the hands;  
 Who now are here, taking their leaves of me,  
 Who am prepared against your territories,  
 Though not for Rome itself.

**CORIOLANUS**

You bless me, gods!

remains. The cruelty and envy of the common people, which our idiot nobles allowed, has devoured all of Rome. The people yelled me out of Rome. This difficult situation has brought me to your home, not out of hope to save my life—don't get me wrong; if I feared death I would have avoided you more than anyone else—but out of spite, to fully condemn those who banished me. That's why I'm here. If you have a heart filled with rage, and you would like to avenge the wrongs which Rome has done to your country, Volscian, take advantage of my misery: use me, in my spirit of revenge, for your own war; I will fight against my poisoned country with the rage of every devil in hell. But if you don't dare to do this, and are tired of fighting, then I must admit to you that I am also just as tired of living; here is my throat, the object of your hatred, which you would be a fool not to cut—since we have always been enemies and I have spilled tons of blood from your country, to leave me living would only bring you shame—unless you take me into your service.

**AUFIDIUS**

Oh Marcius, Marcius! Every word you've spoken has pulled from my heart a root of ancient hatred. If god himself were to speak from behind a cloud, and say "It's true!" I wouldn't believe him any more than you, noble Marcius. Let me throw my arms around that body [4](#), against which I have broke my weapon a hundred times, and scarred the moon with splinters. [*Forcefully hugs Marcius*] [5](#) I embrace the anvil of my sword [6](#), and would fight as hard for your love as I have fought against you in the past for valor. You must know that I loved the woman I married—no one has said a truer thing—but now that I see you here—you noble thing!—my heart dances, entranced, more than when I first saw my bride in her dress. Why, you are Mars himself [7](#)! I tell you, I have an army in the field, and if I had good reason to fight with you once more I'd give my right arm to do it. You've beaten me a dozen times, and I have dreamed every night since of encounters between us: we've been wrestling together in my sleep, unbuckling our helmets, grasping at each other's throat. Every time, I wake with nothing. Worthy Marcius, if we had no other bone to pick with Rome except that you were banished, we would muster every man between the ages of twelve and seventy, and we would pour war like boiling oil into the stomach of ungrateful Rome—like a flood we would drown her. Oh, come, go in, and shake hands with the friendly senators who are here bidding me good luck to move against your territories, though not until now Rome itself.

**CORIOLANUS**

You bless me, gods!

[4](#) As when Coriolanus spoke of Aufidius, this speech is filled with words and phrases that could describe love as well as war. Indeed, both men say explicitly that they feel more strongly about their would-be enemy than they do about their wives.

[5](#) In many modern performances, the relationship between Marcius and Aufidius is played as homoerotic.

[6](#) Aufidius calls Coriolanus "the anvil of my sword" because Aufidius has struck Coriolanus's armor many times, just as a hammer strikes an anvil (a steel or iron block on which metal is struck, hammered, and shaped). One implication is that Coriolanus and Aufidius shape and affect each other, and are strongly connected.

[7](#) Yet another instance in which Coriolanus is described as a god, this time the Roman god of war, "Mars" (to the Greeks, Ares).

**AUFIDIUS**

150 Therefore, most absolute sir, if thou wilt have  
The leading of thine own revenges, take  
The one half of my commission; and set down—  
As best thou art experienced, since thou know'st  
Thy country's strength and weakness,— thine own ways;  
155 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!  
160 And more a friend than e'er an enemy;  
Yet, Marcius, that was much. Your hand: most welcome!

*Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS. The two Servingmen come forward*

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Here's a strange alteration!

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

By my hand, I had thought to have stricken him with  
a cudgel; and yet my mind gave me his clothes made a  
165 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  
170 cannot tell how to term it.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

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

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Who, my master?

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Nay, it's no matter for that.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Worth six on him.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

180 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.

**AUFIDIUS**

Therefore, most respected sir, if you would like to lead your  
own revenge, take half of the leadership with me. We can  
chart out—since you're the best experienced—the country's  
strengths and weaknesses, your own strategies: whether to  
knock directly on the gates of Rome, or to strike remote  
towns, to frighten them before we destroy them. But come  
in, let me introduce you first to the men who will approve  
all of this. A thousand welcomes! More a friend now than  
you ever were an enemy, and believe me, Marcius, you were  
quite an enemy. Your hand—most welcome!

*CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS exit toward the banquet. The two SERVINGMEN come forward from the back of the room, or just offstage.*

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Well, that's quite a change!

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**


And to think I would've hit him with a club; but it was  
because his clothes made him seem different than he is.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

What an arm he has! He turned me around with his finger  
and his thumb, like one would spin a top.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

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

 This conversation might confirm that there really is something extraordinary about Coriolanus that they could see even when he was disguised; it might also illustrate the opposite—that the servingmen didn't see anything special about him initially, and they are now foolishly attempting to explain to themselves that he did not look like a normal man when, in fact, he did.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

*[Making expressions]* He had this sort of—looking like  
this—kill me, but I thought there was something more to  
him than met the eye.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

So did I, I swear! He's the most marvelous man in the world.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

I think he is, but we know of a greater soldier than him.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Who, my master Tullus Aufidius?

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Definitely, there's no doubt about that.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

He's worth six Coriolanus.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Well, I wouldn't say that, but I do think he's the better  
soldier.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Listen, there's no real basis for saying that; for the defense  
of a town, our general is excellent.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Ay, and for an assault too.

185

*Re-enter third Servingman*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

What, what, what? let's partake.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

190 Wherefore? wherefore?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Why do you say 'thwack our general'?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

195 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**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

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

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

But, more of thy news?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

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

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Yeah, and for an assault too.

*THIRD SERVINGMAN re-enters.*

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Guys, I have news for you—news, you rascals!

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

What, what, what? Tell us.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

I would rather be of any nation rather than of Rome right now; to be Roman is to be a man condemned to death.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Why? Why?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Why, here's the man that's been beating our general around, Caius Marcius.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Why do you say "beating our general around?"

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Well, not "beating him," but he was always a good match for Aufidius.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Come, we are friends here—Coriolanus was always too hard for Aufidius; I have heard Aufidius say so himself.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Coriolanus was too hard for him, to be brutally honest. In the field at Corioli, Marcius scotched him and notched him like a piece of meat.

<sup>9</sup> "Scotched him and notched him" refers to a way of preparing meat to be broiled or grilled. One often cuts grooves so the oil and fat and come out.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

And had Coriolanus been into cannibalism, he might have cooked and eaten him, too.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

But, what other news?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Well, he's been welcomed as though he were the son and heir to Mars. He sits at the head of the table, and the senators question him with their caps in their hands, respectfully; our general himself acts like his mistress. He treats the touch of his hand as holy, and devotedly listens to his every word. But the big news is that our general has been cut into half of what he was yesterday, for Coriolanus has taken half the army, at the request and approval of the whole table. He'll go, he says, and drag the guards of Rome's gate out by the ears. He'll mow down everything in his way, and leave wreckage in his path.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

And he's as able to do that as any man I can imagine.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Do that! <sup>10</sup> He will do it. Look you, sir, he has as many friends as enemies. Those friends, sir, as it were, dare not—look you sir—show themselves, as we call it, "his friends," while he's in directitude.

<sup>10</sup> These lines are deliberately convoluted; the servingmen have worked themselves into a cheerful mood and are acting a bit bizarre.



**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Directitude! what's that?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

But when goes this forward?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

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

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

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

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

240 '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**

245 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*

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Directitude! What's that? <sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Directitude means "disgrace."

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

But when they see, sir, his flag up again, and the man  
covered in blood, they will flee out of their burrows like  
rabbits after rain, and celebrate with him <sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> This metaphor about "conies" or rabbits leaving their homes means that Coriolanus's Roman friends will rush to his side when he returns triumphantly.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

But when will they move out?

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

Tomorrow, today even, this very moment! You'll hear the  
drums this afternoon. It's practically a part of their dinner,  
and will be done before they wipe their lips and finish.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

Why, then we'll have an exciting world again. This peace is  
good for nothing but to rust iron, to make tailors rich, and  
encourage artists.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Let me have war, I say. War's as much better than peace as  
day is better than night; it's energetic, awake, loud, full of  
energy. Peace is like a coma: speechless, deaf, sleepy; more  
bastard children are born in peacetime than men die in war.

**SECOND SERVINGMAN**

It's true: and as war might be said to be a rapist, peace must  
be said to make men cuckolds <sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> A "cuckold" is a man whose wife is cheating on him.

**FIRST SERVINGMAN**

Yeah, and it makes men hate one another.

**THIRD SERVINGMAN**

The reason is that, in peace, they need one another less. I'll  
put my money on the wars! I hope to see Romans brought  
down to our level. *[Looking toward the banquet]* They are  
rising, they are rising!

**ALL**

In, in, in, in!

*All exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 6

### Shakespeare

*Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

**SICINIUS**

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

**BRUTUS**

10 We stood to't in good time.

### Shakescleare Translation

*SICINIUS and BRUTUS enter.*

**SICINIUS**

We hear no news of him, and we shouldn't fear him. He  
can't do anything while the people are peaceful and quiet,  
when before they were rioting. We make his friends blush  
that everything is going so well; they would rather have  
crowds of dissenting people in the streets, even if it caused  
them problems, than they would see our tradesmen in their  
shops doing their jobs happily.

**BRUTUS**

We did the right thing at the right time.

*Enter MENENIUS***BRUTUS**

Is this Menenius?

**SICINIUS**

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

**BOTH TRIBUNES**

15 Hail sir!

**MENENIUS**

Hail to you both!

**SICINIUS**

Your Coriolanus

Is not much miss'd, but with his friends:

The commonwealth doth stand, and so would do,

20 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

25 Hear nothing from him.

*Enter three or four Citizens***CITIZENS**

The gods preserve you both!

**SICINIUS**

God-den, our neighbours.

**BRUTUS**

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**30 Ourselves, our wives, and children, on our knees,  
Are bound to pray for you both.**SICINIUS**

Live, and thrive!

**BRUTUS**Farewell, kind neighbours: we wish'd Coriolanus  
Had loved you as we did!**CITIZENS**

35 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,

40 Crying confusion.

*MENENIUS enters.***BRUTUS**

Is this Menenius?

**SICINIUS**

It's him, it's him. Oh, he's grown very kind lately.


**BOTH TRIBUNES**

Hello there!

**MENENIUS**

Hello to you both!

**SICINIUS**No one but his friends seem to miss your Coriolanus. The  
commonwealth stands, and would even were he more  
angry at it.

 Although this is the first appearance of the word "commonwealth", this play has been constantly questioning the nature of "the commonwealth," a near-synonym of "country," that also carries implications of the people's interest. Calling Rome a commonwealth makes it sound like England of 1608, and packages the people in with the statesmen.

**MENENIUS**All is well. It might have been much better, though, if he  
could have been calmed.**SICINIUS**

Where is he, have you heard?

**MENENIUS**No, I have heard nothing. His mother and his wife hear  
nothing from him.*Three or four CITIZENS enter.***CITIZENS**

The gods save you both!

**SICINIUS**

Good evening, neighbours.

**BRUTUS**

Good evening, good evening to you all.

**FIRST CITIZEN**We, and our wives and children, pray for you both on our  
knees.**SICINIUS**

Live, and thrive!

**BRUTUS**Farewell, kind neighbors. We wish Coriolanus had loved you  
as we did!**CITIZENS**

Gods bless you!

**BOTH TRIBUNES**

Good-bye, good-bye.

*All CITIZENS exit.***SICINIUS**People are happier and more prosperous now than when  
these sort of people ran around in the street, rioting.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

45 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**

50 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,  
55 Reports, the Volsces with two several powers  
Are enter'd in the Roman territories,  
And with the deepest malice of the war  
Destroy what lies before 'em.

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

65 Come, what talk you  
Of Marcius?

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Tell not me:  
I know this cannot be.

**BRUTUS**

Not possible.

*Enter a Messenger*

**MESSENGER**

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

**BRUTUS**

Caius Marcius was a worthy officer in the war, but he was  
also insolent, overcome with pride, ambitious beyond  
imagination, self-absorbed—

**SICINIUS**

And he desired complete power.

**MENENIUS**

I do not think so.

**SICINIUS**

Well, had he become consul, we would have found that he  
*did* want complete power, and then much to our dismay.

**BRUTUS**

The gods have done well to prevent that, and Rome sits  
safe and sound without him.

*A GUARD enters.*

**Guard**

Worthy tribunes: there is a slave in prison reporting that the  
Volsces have entered Roman territories with several  
battalions, and with the deep hatred of war, destroy  
everything that lies before them.

**MENENIUS**

It must be Aufidius. He's heard of Marcius' banishment, and  
now he flexes his muscles; when Marcius stood to protect  
Rome, he wouldn't have dared to peep out of his hole.

**SICINIUS**

What? Why are you talking about Marcius?

**BRUTUS**

Go make sure this gossiping prisoner gets whipped. There's  
no way the Volsces would dare to fight with us.

**MENENIUS**

No way! We have every reason to believe there is a way, and  
there are three examples of it within my lifetime. Just talk  
to the prisoner before you punish him. Find out where he  
heard this, or you will risk losing information and beating a  
messenger who warns us for good reason.

**SICINIUS**

Don't talk to me; I know this can't be true.

**BRUTUS**

It's not possible.

*A MESSENGER enters.*

**MESSENGER**

The nobles are all going to the senate with great urgency.  
Some news has come which made them all frown.

**SICINIUS**

'Tis this slave;—

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

85 Nothing but his report.

**MESSENGER**

Yes, worthy sir,

The slave's report is seconded; and more,

More fearful, is deliver'd.

**SICINIUS**

What more fearful?

**MESSENGER**

90 It is spoke freely out of many mouths—

How probable I do not know— that Marcius,

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

And vows revenge as spacious as between

The young'st and oldest thing.

**SICINIUS**

95 This is most likely!

**BRUTUS**

Raised only, that the weaker sort may wish

Good Marcius home again.

**SICINIUS**

The very trick on't.

**MENENIUS**

This is unlikely:

100 He and Aufidius can no more atone

Than violentest contrariety.

*Enter a second Messenger*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

You are sent for to the senate:

A fearful army, led by Caius Marcius

105 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**

110 What news? what news?

**COMINIUS**

You have help to ravish your own daughters and

To melt the city leads upon your pates,

To see your wives dishonour'd to your noses,—

**MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

115 Your temples burned in their cement, and

Your franchises, whereon you stood, confined

Into an auger's bore.

**SICINIUS**

It's this prisoner! Go whip him before their very eyes. He

has nothing but this report.

**MESSENGER**

Yes, worthy sir, the slave's report has been backed up by

another, and others, even more fearful, have been

delivered.

**SICINIUS**

What do you mean, more fearful?


**MESSENGER**

All the people are saying—I don't know if it's true—that

Marcius has joined forces with Aufidius to lead an army

against Rome, vowing revenge as spacious as between the

youngest and oldest things.

 "Revenge as spacious between the young'st and oldest thing" means a revenge as ancient as the world, and as huge.

**SICINIUS**

Yeah, right!

**BRUTUS**

This rumor has been spread only so that weak people will

wish to have good Marcius home again.

**SICINIUS**

That's the trick of it.

**MENENIUS**

This news is unlikely. He and Aufidius could never work

together, no more than the most violent opposites.

*A SECOND MESSENGER enters.*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

The senate sends for you. A fearful army, led by Caius

Marcius, who is allied with Aufidius, rages upon our

territories. They have already crushed everyone in their

path, burned towns and villages, and took everything that

lay before them.

*COMINIUS enters.*

**COMINIUS**

*[To the TRIBUNES]* Oh, look what you have done!

**MENENIUS**


What's the news?

**COMINIUS**

*[To the TRIBUNES]* You have helped to rape your own

daughters, to melt the city's lead roofs

down onto your heads, and to see your wives raped while you watch.

 The "city leads," in the original text, refers to the fact that European cities around 1600 often used lead tiles for the roofs of major buildings.

**MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

*[Ignoring MENENIUS, still directed at the TRIBUNES]* Your

temples will burn on their foundations, and your freedoms,

on which you so insisted, made into machinery of your own

misery.

**MENENIUS**

Pray now, your news?

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

**COMINIUS**

If!

He is their god: he leads them like a thing

Made by some other deity than nature,

That shapes man better; and they follow him,

125 Against us brats, with no less confidence

Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,

Or butchers killing flies.

**MENENIUS**

You have made good work,

130 You and your apron-men; you that stood so up much  
on the voice of occupation and

The breath of garlic-eaters!

**COMINIUS**

He will shake

Your Rome about your ears.

**MENENIUS**

As Hercules

135 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

140 Do smilingly revolt; and who resist

Are mock'd for valiant ignorance,

And perish constant fools. Who is't can blame him?

Your enemies and his find something in him.

**MENENIUS**

We are all undone, unless

145 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

150 Should say 'Be good to Rome,' they charged him even

As those should do that had deserved his hate,

And therein show'd like enemies.

**MENENIUS**

'Tis true:

If he were putting to my house the brand

155 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

160 So incapable of help.

**BOTH TRIBUNES**

Say not we brought it.

**MENENIUS**

[To COMINIUS] Pray now, what news? [To the TRIBUNES]

You have done something terrible, I'm afraid. Please, your  
news? If Marcius has joined with the Volscians—

**COMINIUS**

If! He is their god. He leads them like a thing made by some  
other deity than nature, that shapes man better. <sup>4</sup> And

they follow him against us, children that we are, with all the  
confidence of boys pursuing summer butterflies <sup>5</sup>, or  
butchers killing flies.

**MENENIUS**

You've done it now, you and your lowly laborers, you

tribunes that carried on about the votes of the working,  
garlic-eating <sup>6</sup> common man!

**COMINIUS**

He will, like an earthquake, shake your Rome around your  
ears.

**MENENIUS**

As Hercules did shake down ripened fruit <sup>7</sup>. You've done it  
now!

**BRUTUS**

But is this true, sir?

**COMINIUS**

Yes, and you'll look pale <sup>8</sup> before you find it false. All our  
territories willingly revolt against Rome, and the ones that  
resist are mocked for their brave stupidity and then perish  
like fools. And who can blame him, Coriolanus? Even your  
enemies find something worthy in him.

**MENENIUS**

We're all doomed, unless that noble Coriolanus will be  
merciful.

**COMINIUS**

Who can ask mercy of him? The disgraced tribunes cannot  
do it; the people deserve his pity no more than shepherds  
deserve the pity of a wolf. As for his best friends, if they tell  
him "be good to Rome," they're asking of him the same  
thing his enemies would ask, and so they too would show  
themselves to be enemies.

**MENENIUS**

It's true. If he were burning my own house, I don't have the  
right to say "Please, stop." You tribunes have made  
something extraordinary, you and your cleverness—you've  
made a clever thing indeed!

**COMINIUS**

You have brought a trembling upon Rome, a terror which  
nothing can stop.

**BOTH TRIBUNES**

Don't say we brought it.

<sup>4</sup> A "thing made by some other deity than nature" means that Coriolanus is something more than a man—a god himself, perhaps, or a machine; not a "natural" creation.

<sup>5</sup> When reading this description of "summer butterflies," recall the description of Coriolanus' son "mamlocking"—chewing on—a butterfly in Act 1, Scene 3.

<sup>6</sup> The commoners are referred to insultingly as "garlic-eaters." Garlic was associated with the lower class in the early modern period, who used it both for flavor and as a sort of medicine.

<sup>7</sup> Hercules shaking down "mellow fruit" refers to the eleventh labor of the mythical hero, which involved defeating a guardian dragon and bringing back golden apples.

<sup>8</sup> "Pale," here, means white with fear, and also as pale as a corpse—bloodless and dead.

**MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

165 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,  
170 That Rome can make against them.

*Enter a troop of Citizens*

**MENENIUS**

Here come the clusters.  
And is Aufidius with him? You are they  
That made the air unwholesome, when you cast  
Your stinking greasy caps in hooting at  
175 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;  
180 if he could burn us all into one coal,  
We have deserved it.

**CITIZENS**

Faith, we hear fearful news.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

185 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**

190 Ye re goodly things, you voices!

**MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

O, ay, what else?

*Exeunt COMINIUS and MENENIUS*

**SICINIUS**

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

**FIRST CITIZEN**

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

**SECOND CITIZEN**

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

*Exeunt Citizens*

**MENENIUS**

What?! Did we bring on this terror, then? We loved him, but  
like dumb animals and cowardly nobles, we let you and  
your crowds throw him out of the city.

**COMINIUS**

I'm afraid they'll drag him in again. Tullus Aufidius, the  
second strongest man, obeys Coriolanus as though he were  
the leader. Desperation is the only plan, the only strength,  
and the only defense that Rome has left.

*A large group of CITIZENS enter.*

**MENENIUS**

Here come the crowds. So is Aufidius with Coriolanus?

*[To the CITIZENS]* You are to blame for poisoning the air  
when you threw your stinking greasy hats up, hooting and  
celebrating Coriolanus's exile. Now he's coming back, and  
there's not a hair on his head which will not be like a whip  
for your backs. He'll pay you for your voices now: as many  
caps as you threw up, that many heads will he cut off. But  
no matter. If he could burn us all into ashes and shape us  
into a coal, we would deserve it.

**CITIZENS**

Oh, that's fearful news.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

As far as I'm concerned, when I said he had to be banished, I  
thought it was a shame.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

And so did I.

**THIRD CITIZEN**

And so did I; to tell the truth, so did many of us. We did it  
because we thought it was for the best, and though we  
willingly agreed to his banishment, it was not what we  
really wanted.

**COMINIUS**

*[Sarcastically]* You're wonderful people, you voices!

**MENENIUS**

You've gone and done it now, you and your crying! Shall we  
go to the Capitol?

**COMINIUS**

Oh, yes, what else can we do?

*COMINIUS and MENENIUS exit.*

**SICINIUS**

Go, sirs, go home. Don't worry. Those two are actually  
hoping for what they seem to be afraid of. Go home, and  
show no sign of fear.

**FIRST CITIZEN**

May the gods be good to us! Come, friends, let's go home.  
I've always said we were making a mistake to banish him.

**SECOND CITIZEN**

We all did. But come on, let's go home.

*CITIZENS all exit.*

**BRUTUS**

I do not like this news.

**SICINIUS**

205 Nor I.

**BRUTUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Pray, let us go.

*Exeunt*

**BRUTUS**

I do not like this news.

**SICINIUS**

Neither do I.

**BRUTUS**

Let's get to the Capitol. I'd give half of what I own <sup>9</sup> for him to be a lie!

**SICINIUS**

Yeah, let's go.

*All exit.*

<sup>9</sup> The irony in Brutus saying he'd give "half his wealth" is that he stands to lose everything, including his life, if the Volsces and Coriolanus attack.

## Act 4, Scene 7

### Shakespeare

*Enter AUFIDIUS and his Lieutenant*

**AUFIDIUS**

Do they still fly to the Roman?

**LIEUTENANT**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**LIEUTENANT**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**LIEUTENANT**

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

### Shakescleare Translation

*Enter AUFIDIUS and his LIEUTENANT.*

**AUFIDIUS**

Are our men still flocking to Coriolanus?

**LIEUTENANT**

I don't know what magic he has, but your soldiers treat him like the prayer before a meal, their conversation over dinner, and their thanks at the meal's end. <sup>9</sup> You are made to look weaker by all this sir, even in the eyes of your own men.

**AUFIDIUS**

I can't help it now without shooting myself in the foot and ruining our plans. He carries himself more proudly, even to me, than I thought he would when I first welcomed him. But, to be fair, it's not as though he's acting any differently now than he did then, and I must excuse what can't be changed.

**LIEUTENANT**

Yet I wish, sir—I mean, for your sake—that you hadn't given him half your authority, but either kept control to entirely yourself or given it entirely to him.

**AUFIDIUS**

I understand what you mean, and believe me, when push comes to shove, he doesn't know what I can bring to bear against him, even though it seems—and so he and others think—that everything is going well for him. But he is taking good care of the Volscian nation, fights dragon-like, and wins battles just by drawing his sword. He hasn't done anything which would break his neck or cause me to risk mine, whenever we are put to the test.

**LIEUTENANT**



Sir, tell me, do you think he'll conquer Rome?

<sup>9</sup> This description of Coriolanus as "the grace 'fore meat, their talk at table" means that he has become everything to them. Coriolanus has replaced and become greater than Aufidius in the Volsces' eyes.

**AUFIDIUS**


30 All places yield to him ere he sits down;  
 And the nobility of Rome are his:  
 The senators and patricians love him too:  
 The tribunes are no soldiers; and their people  
 Will be as rash in the repeal, as hasty  
 35 To expel him thence. I think he'll be to Rome  
 As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it  
 By sovereignty of nature. First he was  
 A noble servant to them; but he could not  
 Carry his honours even: whether 'twas pride,  
 40 Which out of daily fortune ever taints  
 The happy man; whether defect of judgment,  
 To fail in the disposing of those chances  
 Which he was lord of; or whether nature,  
 Not to be other than one thing, not moving  
 45 From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace  
 Even with the same austerity and garb  
 As he controll'd the war; but one of these—  
 As he hath spices of them all, not all,  
 For I dare so far free him— made him fear'd,  
 50 So hated, and so banish'd: but he has a merit,  
 To choke it in the utterance. So our virtues  
 Lie in the interpretation of the time:  
 And power, unto itself most commendable,  
 Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair  
 55 To extol what it hath done.  
 One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;  
 Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do  
 fail.  
 Come, let's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,  
 60 Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.


*Exeunt***AUFIDIUS**

All places surrender to him before he's done. The nobility of Rome support him; the senators and patricians love him too. The tribunes aren't soldiers, and their people will be as quick in welcoming him back as they were hasty to get rid of him in the first place. I think he'll be to Rome like an osprey  to a fish—he'll conquer it by his very nature. First he was a noble servant to them, but even then they wouldn't give him honor. It's hard to say why they rejected him—whether it was his pride, which taints otherwise good men; whether it was his poor judgement in not seizing the opportunities he was given; or whether it was his nature, which is to be one thing only, unable to take of a soldier's helmet and sit on a statesman's cushion, attempting to command a city at peace the way he would have commanded an army at war. Somehow, one of these—and he has bits of all of them, though he doesn't embody any one fully—made him so feared and so hated that they banished him. But he has other merits so great a man will choke  attempting to utter them. Our virtues are subject to interpretation, and power, which in itself seems good, is doomed to fall into a tomb as much as to be talked about. [Reciting a common axiom] "One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail; rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail." Let's go.

[As though to Coriolanus,] When Rome falls, Caius, you'll be the poorest of them all. Shortly after, you'll be mine.

*All exit.*

 An "osprey" is a bird of prey which eats fish common to North America and England.

 "To choke it in the utterance" means that it won't fit through one's throat to say the words.

## Act 5, Scene 1

**Shakespeare***Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and others***MENENIUS**

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

**COMINIUS**

He would not seem to know me.

**MENENIUS**

Do you hear?

**COMINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**Shakesclore Translation***MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and others enter.***MENENIUS**

No, I will not go. You've heard what he said to someone who was once his general, someone who dearly loved him. He called me "father," but so what? You, who banished him, should go; fall to your knees a mile from his tent, and crawl into his mercy. No, if he wouldn't hear Cominius speak, there's no use in me going.

**COMINIUS**

He acted as though he did not know me.

**MENENIUS**

Hear that?

**COMINIUS**

Just once, he called me by my name. I reminded him of our old friendship, and the blood that we've spilled together. He refused to answer to the name "Coriolanus"—in fact, he wouldn't answer to anything. He was a kind of nothing, as though nameless until he'd make himself a name in the fires of burning Rome.

**MENENIUS**

Why, there it is!

[To the TRIBUNES] You've done it now! A pair of tribunes



**COMINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

Very well:  
25 Could he say less?

**COMINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

No, I'll not meddle.

**SICINIUS**

Pray you, go to him.

**MENENIUS**

45 What should I do?

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

I'll undertake 't:  
I think he'll hear me. Yet, to bite his lip  
And hum at good Cominius, much unhearts me.  
He was not taken well; he had not dined:  
60 The veins unfill'd, our blood is cold, and then  
We pout upon the morning, are unapt  
To give or to forgive; but when we have stuff'd  
These and these conveyances of our blood

that have destroyed Rome, and for what?—what a nice  
memorial you leave behind!


**COMINIUS**


I reminded him how it is noble to be merciful when mercy is  
least expected. He replied that this was a pathetic request  
from a country to a man it had punished.

**MENENIUS**

Fair enough; what else could he say?

**COMINIUS**

I tried to remind him of his respect for his personal friends,  
and his answer to me was that he could not be bothered to  
pick them out of a pile of stinking, rotting wheat. He said it  
would be a mistake to leave the grain unburnt for the sake  
of one poor grain or two , and thus to have to bear the  
stink of the rest.

 In this agricultural metaphor of separating the wheat from the "chaff" or worthless bits of a plant, Coriolanus says that he can't be bothered to spare Rome just for a few good men and women. The rest of the populace is worthless to him, so he will treat the entire city as trash to be burned.

**MENENIUS**

For one poor grain or two! I am one of those; his mother, his  
wife, his child, and Cominius here too. We are the grains,  
[To the TRIBUNES] you are the rotting waste, and you stink  
to high heaven. We will be burned because of you.

**SICINIUS**

No, please, be calm. If you refuse to help now, when we  
need help more than ever, you have no right to yell at us.  
But if you would go plead to Coriolanus on behalf of your  
country, your good voice will be worth more than whatever  
army we can call to arms.

**MENENIUS**

No, I won't interfere.

**SICINIUS**

Please, go to him.

**MENENIUS**

And what should I say?

**BRUTUS**

Only ask what your love toward Marcius can do for Rome.



**MENENIUS**


Sure, and what if Marcius sends me back without  
listening—what then? I'll just be crushed, a friend shot  
through with grief by his unkindness; is that what you  
want?


**SICINIUS**

But your efforts will win great thanks from Rome, simply  
because we know you have tried.

**MENENIUS**

I'll do it. I think he'll listen to me. Yet, to bite his lip and hum   at good Cominius—this disheartens me. Maybe he was  
just feeling ill, or he hadn't eaten. When we are ill or unfed,  
our blood is cold and then we are grumpy—then we are  
unlikely to be kind and forgive. But perhaps when we are  
full of food and wine, and our blood runs more easily, we  
are more easily convinced of mercy than in our priest-like

 "To bite his lip and hum" means that Coriolanus had to keep from speaking in fury, and also to avoid hearing anything Cominius had to say.

 In the original text a "priest-like fast" refers to how priests would often refrain from eating as a means of demonstrating devotion and separation from material needs.

65 With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls  
Than in our priest-like fasts: therefore I'll watch him  
Till he be dieted to my request,  
And then I'll set upon him.

**BRUTUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

70 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**

75 Not?

**COMINIUS**

I tell you, he does sit in gold, his eye  
Red as 'twould burn Rome; and his injury  
The gaoler to his pity. I kneel'd before him;  
'Twas very faintly he said 'Rise;' dismiss'd me  
80 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;  
85 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*

fasts . Therefore, I'll wait until he's eaten to make my  
request, and then I'll go to ask him.

**BRUTUS**

You know the way to his heart, and cannot fail.

**MENENIUS**

With luck, I'll get him to agree, however it goes. I guess we'll  
know whether I succeed very soon.

*MENENIUS exits.*

**COMINIUS**

Coriolanus will never listen to him.

**SICINIUS**

No?

**COMINIUS**

I'm telling you, he sits like a king, his eye red as though he  
meant to burn Rome with it, and absolutely without pity. I  
kneeled before him, and all he said, very faintly, was "Rise."  
Then he dismissed me with his hand. He sent a letter after  
me describing his intentions and containing his conditions  
for surrender. I think all hope is lost, although his noble  
mother and his wife will go, I hear, to ask for mercy.  
Therefore, let's go and wish them luck.

*All exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Two Sentinels on guard. Enter to them, MENENIUS.*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Stay: whence are you?

**SECOND SENATOR**

Stand, and go back.

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

From whence?

**MENENIUS**

From Rome.

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

### Shakescleare Translation

*Two SENTINELS stand guard. MENENIUS enters and speaks  
to them.*

**FIRST Sentinel**

Stop. Where are you from?

**SECOND SENTINEL**

Stop where you are and go back.

**MENENIUS**

You are bold guards, as you should be. But please, hear me  
out—I am a statesman, and come to speak with Coriolanus.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

From where?

**MENENIUS**

From Rome.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

You may not pass, and you must return. Our general will not  
hear anything more from Rome.

**SECOND SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SECOND SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

40 You are a Roman, are you?

**MENENIUS**

I am, as thy general is.

**FIRST SENATOR**

Then you should hate Rome, as he does. Can you,  
when you have pushed out your gates the very  
defender of them, and, in a violent popular  
45 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  
50 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**

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

**SECOND SENTINEL**

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

**MENENIUS**

Good friends, if you have heard your general talk about  
Rome, and of his friends there, by all odds you'll have heard  
him mention my name—it is Menenius.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

Even so, go back. The virtue of your name does not win you  
passage here.

**MENENIUS**

Sir, listen—the general loves me. I have often talked of him  
publicly as a man without equal; I've sung his praises  
loudly. I have always spoken well of my friends—and he's  
my best friend—with all the generosity that truth would  
allow. Even, sometimes, like a bowler carried along with the  
ball, I have praised him so much it's almost gone too far.  
Therefore, please, men, you must let me pass.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

Honestly, sir, if you had lied as many times for him as you  
have uttered words for yourself—even then, you couldn't  
pass here; no, even if lying were as virtuous as to live  
peacefully. Therefore, go back.

**MENENIUS**

Please, my good man, remember my name is Menenius; I  
have always been on Coriolanus's side.

**SECOND SENTINEL**

Even if you've lied on his behalf—as you say you have—I am  
one that, telling the truth on his behalf, must say you  
cannot pass. Therefore, go back.

**MENENIUS**

Has he dined, do you know? I'd rather not speak with him  
until after dinner.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

You are a Roman, right?


**MENENIUS**


I am, as your general is.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

Then you should hate Rome, as he does. When you have  
banished your defender and in a violent foolishness given  
your enemy your shield, do you really think you can stop his  
revenge with the groans of old women, the pleas of your  
daughters, or with whatever kind of old requests from a  
decaying corpse as you seem to be? Do you think you can  
blow out the impending fire your city is ready to flame in  
with breath this weak? No, you're lying to yourself.  
Therefore, back to Rome, and prepare for your execution.  
You are condemned. Our general has sworn that you cannot  
be pardoned.

**MENENIUS**

You fool , if your captain knew I were here, he would be  
more respectful.

 "Sirrah" in the original text,  
although it looks like "sir," is in fact  
used to distinguish someone as of low  
rank, insultingly.

**SECOND SENATOR**

Come, my captain knows you not.

**MENENIUS**

I mean, thy general.

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

Nay, but, fellow, fellow,—

*Enter CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS*

**CORIOLANUS**

What's the matter?

**MENENIUS**

Now, you companion, I'll say an errand for you:  
65 You shall know now that I am in estimation; you shall  
perceive that a Jack guardant cannot office me from  
my son Coriolanus: guess, but by my entertainment  
with him, if thou standest not i' the state of  
70 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]*  
75 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,  
80 being assured none but myself could move thee, I have  
been blown out of gates with sighs and conjure  
thee to pardon Rome and they petitionary countrymen.  
The good gods assuage thy wrath and turn the dregs  
of it upon this varlet here—  
85 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  
90 Are servanted to others: though I owe  
My revenge properly, my remission lies  
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,  
Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison, rather  
Than pity note how much. Therefore, be gone.  
95 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  
And would have rent it. Another word, Menenius,  
I will not hear thee speak. This man, Aufidius,  
100 Was my beloved in Rome: yet thou behold'st!

**AUFIDIUS**

You keep a constant temper.

*Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

**SECOND SENATOR**

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

**SECOND SENTINEL**

*[Mockingly]* Come on, my captain doesn't know you.

**MENENIUS**

Your general, I mean.

**FIRST SENTINEL**

My general doesn't care about you. Back, I say, go, before I  
let out a half-pint of your blood. Back; that's all you're going  
to get from me: back!

**MENENIUS**

No, but—

*CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS enter.*

**CORIOLANUS**

What is all this?

**MENENIUS**

Now, buddy, I'll give you a chore: now you'll know that I'm  
respected. You'll see that some Jack guard can't send me  
away from my son Coriolanus. Just guess, by the way he  
treats me, if you're not going to be hanged for this, or  
maybe something even worse and more cruel. Watch,  
watch this, and try not to faint in fear about what will  
happen to you.

*[To CORIOLANUS]* The glorious gods are even now talking  
about your extraordinary prosperity, and love you just as  
your old father Menenius does! Oh, my son, my son! You're  
preparing fire for us. But look, I offer you water to quench it.  
I almost didn't come to you, but since I was told no one but  
me could convince you, I have come out of Rome's gates  
sighing sadly to beg you to pardon Rome, and your  
countrymen. May the good gods calm your wrath, and turn  
what's left of it upon this evil man here—*[pointing to the*  
*GUARD]* who, like a stone, denied my access to you.

**CORIOLANUS**

Go away!

**MENENIUS**

Wait, what? Away?

**CORIOLANUS**

I do not know wife, mother, or child. I am the servant of  
others, and though I too am owed revenge, my debt is with  
the Volscians. Cruel forgetfulness shall poison any memory  
that you and I were once friends, rather than pity remember  
that friendship. Therefore, be gone. I will resist anything  
you have to say more strongly than Rome's gates will resist  
my force. Yet, as I did love you once, take this along. I wrote  
it for you *[hands MENENIUS a letter]* and otherwise would  
have torn it up. Menenius, do not speak another word.

*[To AUFIDIUS]* This man was my beloved in Rome—but you  
see how I treat him!

**AUFIDIUS**

You maintain your temper.

*CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS exit.*

**FIRST SENTINEL**

*[Mockingly]* Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

**SECOND SENTINEL**

You see Coriolanus is greatly committed to our cause. You  
know the way home again.

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**SECOND SENATOR**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

*Exit*

**FIRST SENATOR**

A noble fellow, I warrant him.

**SECOND SENATOR**

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

*Exeunt*

**FIRST SENTINEL**

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

**SECOND SENTINEL**

Why, exactly, do you think I will faint?

**MENENIUS**

I care neither for the world nor your general—as for you, I can barely even think of you, you matter so little. A man who wants to die fears nothing from other men. Let your general do his worst. For you, stay your miserable selves, and may your misery increase with age! I say to you, as it was said to me, go away!

*MENENIUS exits.*

**FIRST SENTINEL**

He seems like a noble man, honestly.

**SECOND SENTINEL**

The worthy man is our general. He's like a rock, an oak unshaken by the wind.

*Both exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter CORIOLANUS, AUFIDIUS, and others*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

### Shakesclare Translation

*CORIOLANUS, AUFIDIUS, and others enter.*

**CORIOLANUS**

Tomorrow, we'll camp our army in front of the walls of Rome. Aufidius, my partner in this war, you must report to the Volscian lords how straightforwardly I've acted.

**AUFIDIUS**


You've respected only the goals of the Volscians. You plugged your ears against the general pleas of Rome, listened not even to a whisper, no, not even with friends who were certain that you would.


**CORIOLANUS**

This last old man, whom with a broken heart I have sent back to Rome, loved me more than a father; no, he loved me as a god, even. It was Rome's last hope to send him, and because I have such deep love for him—even though I conveyed that poorly to him—I've again offered the original conditions of surrender, which they had refused before and can't accept now. Out of respect for Menenius, who thought he could do more, I have yielded very little. No new negotiators or beggars, neither from the state nor private friends, will I listen to from now on. Huh? What are these shouts about? *[Shouting from offstage]* Will I be tempted to take back my vow the moment it's made? I will not.

*VIRGILIA and VOLUMNIA enter, leading young MARCIUS, VALERIA, and attendants. All wear mourning clothes.*

**CORIOLANUS**

My wife comes at the head of the group, and after her the honored mold in which my body was created , and holding her hand, her grandchild. But I will not feel

 This "honour'd mould" refers to Coriolanus's mother.

All bond and privilege of nature, break!  
Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.  
What is that curt'sy worth? or those doves' eyes,  
30 Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not  
Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows;  
As if Olympus to a molehill should  
In supplication nod: and my young boy  
Hath an aspect of intercession, which  
35 Great nature cries 'Deny not!' let the Volsces  
Plough Rome and harrow Italy: I'll never  
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand,  
As if a man were author of himself  
And knew no other kin.

**VIRGILIA**

40 My lord and husband!

**CORIOLANUS**

These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

**VIRGILIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

*Kneels*

**CORIOLANUS**

60 What is this?  
Your knees to me? to your corrected son?  
Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach  
Fillip the stars; then let the mutinous winds  
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun;  
65 Murdering impossibility, to make  
What cannot be, slight work.

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

affection! I must break every familial bond and instinct! Let it be virtuous to be coldhearted. What is that curtsy worth, or those dove's eyes, which would make a god break his promise? I melt, and am not made of stronger earth than other men. My mother bows. As if Mount Olympus <sup>2</sup> should bow to a molehill! My young boy has a face which seems to cry out "Don't send us away." And yet let the Volsces plow Rome to the ground and destroy all of Italy. I will not be such a child to bend to instinct, but will stand strong, as if a man created himself wholly and had no family.

**VIRGILIA**

My lord and husband!

**CORIOLANUS**

These eyes are not the same I had when I was in Rome.

**VIRGILIA**

It is the tragedy that brings us here which makes you think so.

**CORIOLANUS**

*[Breaking down]* Like a bad actor, I have forgotten my part, and I am out of character, to my complete disgrace. Beloved, please forgive my tyranny, but do not ask me to "Forgive our Romans." You kissed me as I was exiled, and by the jealous queen of heaven, I have carried it with me ever since and touched my lips to no one else. You gods! I'm rambling, and leave the most noble mother of the world ungreeted. My knees sink into the earth. *[He kneels]*

**VOLUMNIA**

Oh, stand up you foolish man, while I, with no cushion but the stony ground, kneel before you, and improperly show deference, as though you were the parent and I the child.

*Volumnia kneels.*

**CORIOLANUS**

What is this? You would kneel to me, to your son? Then let the world reverse itself—let pebbles on the beach fill up the stars, and let the mutinous winds blow trees into the the fiery sun, doing the impossible and making what cannot be suddenly easy.

**VOLUMNIA**

You are my warrior. I helped to create you. *[Referring to Valeria]* Do you know this lady?

**CORIOLANUS**

The noble sister of Publicola, the pride of Roma, chaste as the icicle that's formed by frost from purest snow and hangs on the temple of Diana <sup>3</sup>: dear Valeria!

**VOLUMNIA**

*[Pointing to young Marcius, Coriolanus's son]* This is a weaker version of you, which, in time, may come to be much like you.

<sup>2</sup> Olympus was often imagined, in Greek and Roman mythology, to be the tallest mountain in the world, and the home of the gods. It is, at least, the tallest mountain in Greece, at around 10,000 ft.

<sup>3</sup> Diana is the Roman goddess of the hunt, associated with nature and chastity.

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

Your knee, sirrah.

**CORIOLANUS**

That's my brave boy!

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**VOLUMNIA**

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment  
 And state of bodies would bewray what life  
 105 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  
 110 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  
 115 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.  
 Where to we are bound, together with thy victory,  
 120 Where to 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  
 125 Must, as a foreign recreant, be led  
 With manacles thorough our streets, or else  
 triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,  
 And bear the palm for having bravely shed  
 Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,  
 130 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

**CORIOLANUS**

The god of soldiers, with the consent of the supreme God,  
 keep my thoughts noble, so that I may be invulnerable to  
 shame. Gods, keep my resolve in this war like a great sea-  
 mark, standing strong against every flaw and saving  
 those who can see you!

**VOLUMNIA**

*[To young Marcius]* Kneel, boy.

**CORIOLANUS**

That's my brave boy!

**VOLUMNIA**

Even he, your wife, this lady, and myself, have come to beg  
 your mercy.

**CORIOLANUS**

Please, no more; don't ask. Or, if you ask, remember this: I  
 have sworn not to do anything but deny you. Do not ask me  
 to dismiss my soldiers, or to submit again to Rome's laws.  
 Do not tell me that I have gone mad; do not ask me to  
 exchange my rage and revenge with your cold reason.

**VOLUMNIA**

Oh, no more, no more! You have said you will not grant us  
 anything, for we have nothing else to ask other than what  
 you have already denied. Yet we will ask anyway, so that if  
 you do not say yes, the blame may be solely on you.  
 Therefore, hear us.


**CORIOLANUS**

Aufidius, and you Volsces, listen, because I don't want to be  
 accused of hearing anything from Rome in private.

*[To VOLUMNIA]* Your request?

**VOLUMNIA**

If we stayed silent and did not speak, our clothes and  
 bodies alone should tell you how we've lived since your  
 exile. Just consider: we are the most miserable women  
 alive, since now that we have finally seen you again, that  
 sight—which should make our eyes flow with joy and our  
 hearts dance—instead makes us weep and shake with fear  
 and sorrow. We, the mother, wife, and child are forced to  
 see the son, husband, and the father tearing the guts out of  
 his country. And to us, your hatred is even worse. You  
 prevent us even from praying to the gods, something which  
 even the most wretched can do—for how could we pray for  
 our country, if it is to pray against you, or for you, if against  
 our country? We see a disaster in either case: either you  
 must, as a foreign monster, be led in chains through our  
 streets, or else you will triumphantly walk through the ruins  
 of Rome, and wear garlands for having bravely killed your  
 wife and child. As for me, son, I cannot wait to see what  
 happens. If I cannot persuade you to be merciful to both  
 yourself and Rome rather than seek to destroy one, you will  
 no sooner march to attack your country than you will walk  
 over my dead body, the very womb that brought you into  
 this world.

 Like a landmark, a "sea-mark" is that which is visible from far away, in this case at sea. Sea-marks helped sailors on storm-tossed seas find their way.

Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner  
March to assault thy country than to tread—  
135 Trust to't, thou shalt not— on thy mother's womb,  
That brought thee to this world.

**VIRGILIA**

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

**YOUNG MARCIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

*Rising*

**VOLUMNIA**

Nay, go not from us thus.  
If it were so that our request did tend  
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy  
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,  
150 As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit  
Is that you reconcile them: while the Volsces  
May say 'This mercy we have show'd;' the Romans,  
'This we received;' and each in either side  
Give the all-hail to thee and cry 'Be blest  
155 For making up this peace!' Thou know'st, great son,  
The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,  
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit  
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,  
Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;  
160 Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble,  
But with his last attempt he wiped it out;  
Destroy'd his country, and his name remains  
To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' Speak to me, son:  
Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,  
165 To imitate the graces of the gods;  
To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' the air,  
And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt  
That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?  
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man  
170 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  
175 Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life  
Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,  
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,  
Has cluck'd thee to the wars and safely home,  
Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,  
180 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.  
185 To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride  
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;  
This is the last: so we will home to Rome,  
And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold 's:  
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have  
190 But kneels and holds up bands for fellowship,  
Does reason our petition with more strength  
Than thou hast to deny 't. Come, let us go:  
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;  
His wife is in Corioli and his child  
195 Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch:  
I am hush'd until our city be a-fire,  
And then I'll speak a little.

**VIRGILIA**

Indeed, and mine too, the body that brought you this boy,  
your son, who bears your name.

**YOUNG MARCIUS**

You will not tread on me. I'll run away till I am bigger, but  
then I'll fight you.

**CORIOLANUS**

If I want to avoid being tender, I cannot see the face of a  
child or a woman. I have sat and listened too long.

*CORIOLANUS rises from his chair.*

**VOLUMNIA**

No, don't go leave us like that. Were it true that we were  
asking you to save the Romans by destroying the Volsces,  
then you might rightly condemn us for poisoning your  
honor, but that's not what we're asking. No, we're asking  
that you make a peace between them. Then, the Volsces  
may say "we've shown this mercy," and the Romans may  
say "this mercy we have received," and both sides will cry  
out praise to you and say: "Bless you for bringing us peace!"  
You know, great son, that war's outcome is uncertain, but  
we know this much—if you conquer Rome, all you'll get out  
of it will be a name so cursed that in the history books  
they'll write: "The man was noble, but with his last acts  
undid all his nobility; he destroyed his own country, and his  
name will be hated forever." Speak to me, son. You have  
been at other times so honorable you seemed to imitate the  
gods, to tear open the air with thunder, and to work  
yourself up like lightning that would split an oak tree. Why  
won't you speak? Do you think it's honorable for a noble  
man to hold grudges?

[To VIRGILIA] Daughter, you speak—he doesn't care about  
your weeping.

[To young MARCIUS] You speak, boy. Perhaps your youthful  
voice will move him more than our reasoning. There's no  
man in the world more bound to his mother, but here he  
lets me ramble on like a man in the stocks. You have  
never in your life shown your dear mother any courtesy,  
when she, poor hen, fond of no second brood, has  
clucked you to the wars and safely home, covered in  
medals. Say that what I'm asking is unjust, and throw me  
out. But if it is not unjust, than you're not being fair, and  
the gods will plague you for preventing me from doing the duty  
which a mother should. He turns away. Down, ladies, let us  
shame him on our knees. He has more pride in that name,  
Coriolanus, than he has pity for our prayers. Down, and  
that's it. [All kneel] This is all we can do. Lets go home to  
Rome and die among our neighbors. No, look at this: this  
boy who barely knows what we are doing, kneeling and  
holds up his hands for friendship, makes our case with  
more strength than you can have to deny it. Come, let us  
go. This fellow had a Volscian as his mother, his wife is in  
Corioli and this child just looks like him by chance. We'll go  
like this—I will not speak until our city is burning, and then  
I'll speak a little.

Chronicles are the models for our textbooks of history, and they were very important sources for Shakespeare in this and other plays. In this moment, Shakespeare is recognizing how historical record has informed his play (which follows closely the accounts from historians like Livy and Plutarch).

To be put in the "stocks" was a common punishment in 1608. A man's head and arms were locked outstretched by a wooden device, and he was made to stand in a public place to be heckled and often abused by passers-by.

Hens usually have multiple sets of eggs in their lifetime, known as broods. Volumnia, saying she has "no second brood" is thus expressing her unwavering loyalty to Coriolanus alone.



*He holds her by the hand, silent*

**CORIOLANUS**

O mother, mother!  
 What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,  
 200 The gods look down, and this unnatural scene  
 They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!  
 You have won a happy victory to Rome;  
 But, for your son,— believe it, O, believe it,  
 Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,  
 205 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**

210 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,  
 215 I'll not to Rome, I'll back with you; and pray you,  
 Stand to me in this cause. O mother! wife!

**AUFIDIUS**

*[Aside]* I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and  
 thy honour  
 At difference in thee: out of that I'll work  
 220 Myself a former fortune.

*The Ladies make signs to CORIOLANUS*

**CORIOLANUS**

Ay, by and by;  
 But we will drink together; and you shall bear  
 A better witness back than words, which we,  
 On like conditions, will have counter-seal'd.  
 225 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*

*CORIOLANUS takes her by the hand silently.*


**CORIOLANUS**


Oh, mother, mother! What have you done? Behold, the  
 heavens open up, the gods look down and laugh at this  
 mad scene. Oh my mother, mother! Oh! You have won a  
 fortunate victory for Rome, but for your son—believe me,  
 Oh, believe me—you have very dangerously convinced him,  
 if not sentenced him to death. But, let death come. Aufidius,  
 though I cannot make an all out war, I'll bring us a  
 convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius, if you were in my  
 place, would you have listened to your mother less? Or  
 given less, Aufidius?

**AUFIDIUS**

I was also moved by it.

**CORIOLANUS**

I'd risk swearing that you were. And sir, it is no little thing to  
 make my eyes sweat with compassion.  But, good sir, tell  
 me what peace terms you'll agree to. As for me, I'll not  
 return to Rome, but will go back with you, so please,  
 support me in making peace. Oh, mother! Wife!


 To make "eyes to sweat  
 compassion" is to cry.


**AUFIDIUS**

*[To himself]* I am glad your mercy and honor are working  
 against each other; I'll make a fortune out of this situation.

*The ladies weep and reach out toward CORIOLANUS.*

**CORIOLANUS**

Yes, this is what must be. But we'll drink together first, and  
 you'll take back a treaty to Rome, which we will agree to.  
 Come along with us. Ladies, you deserve to have a temple  
 built to you.  All the swords in Italy, and all the other  
 weapons too, could not have brought this peace.

 According to the Roman historian  
 Livy, this is exactly what happens.  
 Rome builds a temple to Fortuna, a  
 goddess of mercy and luck, around  
 488 BC.

*All exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

*Enter MENENIUS and SICINIUS*

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Why, what of that?

**MENENIUS**

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

### Shakesclore Translation

*MENENIUS and SICINIUS enter.*

**MENENIUS**

Do you see that corner of the Capitol, that cornerstone?

**SICINIUS**

Why, what about it?

**MENENIUS**

If you can move that with your little finger, there is some  
 hope the ladies of Rome, especially his mother, will  
 convince Coriolanus not to attack. But I say there's really no  
 hope; we have been sentenced to death and are just  
 waiting for the execution.

**SICINIUS**

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

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

15 He loved his mother dearly.

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

**MENENIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

The gods be good unto us!

**MENENIUS**

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

*Enter a Messenger*

**MESSENGER**

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

*Enter a second Messenger*

**SICINIUS**

What's the news?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

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


**SICINIUS**

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

**SICINIUS**

Is it possible that a man can change so much in so little time?


**MENENIUS**

There is a difference between a caterpillar and a butterfly, but butterflies do start out as caterpillars. Marcius has grown from man to dragon: he has wings, he is more than a  
creeping thing. 

**SICINIUS**

He loved his mother dearly.

**MENENIUS**

He loved me dearly, too. He no more remembers his mother now than an old horse does. The fury of his face turns grapes sour. When he walks, he moves like a great machine, and the ground cowers before him. He is able to pierce armor with his eyes; his voice is like a funeral bell and his very hum is an assault. He sits on his throne like a statue of Alexander.  What he orders to be done is done by very order itself. He is a god, except that he lacks eternity and a heaven in which to rule.

**SICINIUS**

Yes, god have mercy if you are describing him truthfully.

**MENENIUS**

I paint him just as he is. Watch what mercy his mother will bring from him. There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger. That's what our poor city will learn. And all of this is your fault.

**SICINIUS**

The gods be good to us!

**MENENIUS**

No, in this case the gods will not be good to us. When we banished him, we did not respect the gods, and when he returns to break our necks, the gods will not respect us.

*A MESSENGER enters.*

**MESSENGER**


[*To SICINIUS*] Sir, if you value your life, flee to your house. The commoners have got the other tribune and are running him through the streets, all swearing that if the Roman ladies do not bring good news back, they will torture him to death.

*SECOND MESSENGER enters.*

**SICINIUS**


What's the news?


**SECOND MESSENGER**


Good news, good news! The ladies have succeeded! The Volscians are packing up their camp, and Marcius has gone. No happier day has ever dawned on Rome, no, not even the retreat of the Tarquins. 

**SICINIUS**

Friend, are you certain this is true? Are you *absolutely* certain?

 If Marcius is "more than a creeping thing," he is more than something which creeps and crawls along the ground.

 Alexander the Great was a king of Macedonia who conquered much of Asia and north Africa around 330 BC.

 Tarquin was the previous king of Rome, a tyrant who Coriolanus helped defeat, ushering in the the establishment of the Roman Republic.

**SECOND MESSENGER**

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

*Trumpets; hautboys; drums beat; all together*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

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

*A shout within*

**MENENIUS**

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

*Music still, with shouts*

**SICINIUS**

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

**SECOND MESSENGER**

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

**SICINIUS**

They are near the city?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

70 Almost at point to enter.

**SICINIUS**

We will meet them,  
And help the joy.

*Exeunt*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

As certain as I know the sun is fire. Where have you been,  
that you doubt it? News has never flown so quickly through  
the city as this, straight through the front gates. Why, listen!

*From offstage, trumpets are heard, and drums beat, rising  
to a celebratory pitch.*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

The trumpets and bugles, organs and flutes, tambourines  
and cymbals and the shouting Romans make the very sun  
dance. Listen!

*Celebratory shouting is heard from offstage.*

**MENENIUS**

This is good news indeed. I'll go meet the ladies. Volumnia  
is worth a city full of consuls, senators, and nobles. She's  
worth an ocean and a continent of tribunes such as you.  
You have prayed well today. This morning I would not have  
given a cent to save ten thousand of your throats. Listen to  
how joyful they are!

*Trumpets and music continues, with shouting.*

**SICINIUS**

First, may the gods bless you for this news. Next, allow me  
to thank you.

**SECOND MESSENGER**

Sir, we all have great reason to give great thanks.

**SICINIUS**

The women are near the city?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

They are about to enter it.

**SICINIUS**

We will meet them, and contribute to this joy.

*All exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 5

### Shakespeare

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

**FIRST SENATOR**

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

**ALL**

Welcome, ladies, Welcome!

*A flourish with drums and trumpets. Exeunt*

### Shakescleare Translation

*Two SENATORS enter with VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, VALERIA  
and young MARCIUS, all in a procession followed by nobles  
and, even further behind, some commoners crying out their  
gratitude and celebrating.*

**FIRST SENATOR**

Behold our savior, the lifeblood of Rome! Call all the people  
together, praise the gods, and light all the city's ceremonial  
flames. Throw flowers in the streets, choke down the words  
that banished Marcius and replace them with the welcome  
of his mother. Cry, "Welcome, ladies, welcome!"

**ALL**

Welcome, ladies, welcome!

*A huge burst of drums and trumpets is heard. All exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 6

## Shakespeare

*Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, with Attendants*

**AUFIDIUS**

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

*Exeunt Attendants*

*Enter three or four Conspirators of AUFIDIUS' faction*

**AUFIDIUS**

Most welcome!

**FIRST CONSPIRATOR**

How is it with our general?

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**SECOND CONSPIRATOR**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

Sir, I cannot tell:  
20 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;  
25 And my pretext to strike at him admits  
A good construction. I raised him, and I pawn'd  
Mine honour for his truth: who being so heighten'd,  
He water'd his new plants with dews of flattery,  
Seducing so my friends; and, to this end,  
30 He bow'd his nature, never known before  
But to be rough, unswayable and free.

**THIRD CONSPIRATOR**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

35 That I would have spoke of:  
Being banish'd for't, he came unto my hearth;  
Presented to my knife his throat: I took him;  
Made him joint-servant with me; gave him way  
In all his own desires; nay, let him choose  
40 Out of my files, his projects to accomplish,  
My best and freshest men; served his designments

## Shakescleare Translation


*TULLUS AUFIDIUS enters with servants.*

**AUFIDIUS**

Go tell the lords of the city that I am here. Deliver them this letter. Once they have read it, tell them to come to the market, where I will declare the truth of what it says to the ears of the public. Coriolanus, who I accuse in the letter, has entered the city and intends to appear before the people to pardon himself with words.

*All servants exit.*

*Enter three or four CONSPIRATORS of AUFIDIUS.*

 A conspirator is a person who plots or joins in a secret mission.

**AUFIDIUS**

You're very welcome here!

**FIRST CONSPIRATOR**

How's it going with our general?

**AUFIDIUS**

He has poisoned himself with his own forgiveness, killed himself with his own charity.

**SECOND CONSPIRATOR**

Most noble sir, if you still want us to be your allies, we'll help save you from great danger.

**AUFIDIUS**

Sir, I don't know whether there will be danger. We will have to take things as they come and see how the people feel.

**THIRD CONSPIRATOR**

The people will be uncertain how to feel while you and Coriolanus are opposed. But if either one of you falls, the survivor will win everything.

**AUFIDIUS**

I know, and I have a good reason to strike at him. I raised him up among the Volscians, and gave up my honor for his sake. Once he had power, he used flattery to win all my former friends to his side, and in this way, he made himself—always known to be rough—even more stubbornly powerful.

**THIRD CONSPIRATOR**

Sir, his stubbornness was what cost him the Roman consulship, which he lost because he could not bow—

**AUFIDIUS**

I would bring that up. He was banished for stubbornness, came to my home, and put my knife at his throat. I took him in, made him equal to me, let him do whatever he desired—nay, let him choose from my own plans which projects to work on with my best and freshest men. I worked for him myself, and helped him to earn the fame which in the end all came to him, and even was proud of

In mine own person; help to reap the fame  
Which he did end all his; and took some pride  
To do myself this wrong: till, at the last,  
45 I seem'd his follower, not partner, and  
He waged me with his countenance, as if  
I had been mercenary.

**FIRST CONSPIRATOR**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

*Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the People*

**FIRST CONSPIRATOR**

Your native town you enter'd like a post,  
And had no welcomes home: but he returns,  
60 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,  
65 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**

70 Say no more:  
Here come the lords.

*Enter the Lords of the city*

**ALL THE LORDS**

You are most welcome home.

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**LORDS**

We have.

**FIRST LORD**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

85 He approaches: you shall hear him.

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

that, until, in the end, I was his follower and not his partner.  
He looked at me and treated me like I was just a soldier for hire.

**FIRST CONSPIRATOR**

Indeed, my lord. The army could barely believe it, and in  
the end, when he had conquered everything but Rome, and  
we were looking forward to treasures and glory—

**AUFIDIUS**

That was it! For giving it up, all my muscles will strain upon  
him. For the price of a few women's tears, which are as  
cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labor of our great war.  
Therefore, he shall die, and I'll rise as he falls. But listen!

*Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts from the  
people.*

**FIRST CONSPIRATOR**

You came back to your hometown like a lowly messenger,  
and had no welcomes home. But he returns, and the air  
splits with noise.

**SECOND CONSPIRATOR**

And these fools, whose children he has killed, will tear their  
throats apart cheering at his glory.

**THIRD CONSPIRATOR**

Therefore, when you are ready, before he has a chance to  
speak or bring the people to his side, let him feel your  
sword, and we will help. When he lies dead, you can tell the  
story and his reasons will be buried with his body.

**AUFIDIUS**

Say no more: here come the lords.

*The LORDS of the city enter.*

**ALL THE LORDS**

Welcome home!

**AUFIDIUS**

I have not deserved it. But, worthy lords, have you looked  
at what I have written to you?

**LORDS**

We have.

**FIRST LORD**

And we grieve to hear it. Were it not for his final mistake, I  
think his other errors would have been forgivable. But to  
end where he began, and to turn our terms of peace around  
and force us into our own treaty, where it is as though he  
surrendered—there can be no excuse for this.

**AUFIDIUS**

He's coming. You'll hear what he has to say.

*Enter CORIOLANUS, marching with drum and colours;  
commoners following him.*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

Traitor! how now!

**AUFIDIUS**

105 Ay, traitor, Marcius!

**CORIOLANUS**

Marcius!

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

120 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  
 125 Too great for what contains it. Boy! O slave!  
 Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time that ever  
 I was forced to scold. Your judgments, my grave lords,  
 Must give this cur the lie: and his own notion—  
 Who wears my stripes impress'd upon him; that  
 130 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!  
 135

**CORIOLANUS**

Honorable lords! I have returned again as your soldier, no  
 more infected with my country's love than when I left, but  
 still under your great command. You must know that I  
 successfully led the army in your wars to the very gates of  
 Rome. The spoils we brought home will pay for more than a  
 third of the entire war. We have made peace with great  
 honor to this city and great shame for the Romans. *[Holding*  
*a paper]* Here I deliver the treaty, agreed to by the consuls  
 and the nobles and signed by the senate.

**AUFIDIUS**

Do not read it, noble lords, but tell the traitor how he has  
 committed high treason and abused your powers.

**CORIOLANUS**

Traitor? What's going on?


**AUFIDIUS**


Yes, traitor, Marcius!

**CORIOLANUS**

Marcius?

**AUFIDIUS**

Yes, Marcius! Caius Marcius. Do you think I'll honor you with  
 that robbery, that name you stole from Corioli—Coriolanus?  
 You lords and heads of state, how disloyally he has betrayed  
 us all, and given up your city Rome—I say "your city"—for a  
 few drops of salt  from wife and mother. He has broken  
 his oath like he would tear a piece of rotten silk; at his  
 nurse's tears he, like a complaining child, begged and  
 sobbed away your victory. Servants blushed to see it, and  
 brave men looked at each other in shock.

 These "drops of salt" are tears.

**CORIOLANUS**

*[As though to the gods]* Do you hear this, Mars?

**AUFIDIUS**

Don't name the god of war, you tearful boy!

**CORIOLANUS**

Ha!

**AUFIDIUS**

That's enough.


**CORIOLANUS**


You impossible liar, you have made my heart break even as  
 it swells in fury. Boy! Oh, you slave. Pardon me, lords, this is  
 the first time I was ever forced to scold a man. Grave lords,  
 you must use your judgements and see that this dog is  
 lying. He wears honors that I have earned for him, and must  
 remember to his grave all the times I beat him; these show  
 he is lying.

**FIRST LORD**

Peace, both of you, and listen to me.

**CORIOLANUS**

Cut me to pieces Volsces, men and lads, stain all your edges  
 on me . Boy! You false hound! If you have written your

 A thick metaphor. Literally, "stain all your edges on me" means "wet the

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,  
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I  
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:  
Alone I did it. Boy!

**AUFIDIUS**

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

**ALL CONSPIRATORS**

Let him die for't.

**ALL THE PEOPLE**

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

**SECOND LORD**

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

**CORIOLANUS**

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

**AUFIDIUS**

155 Insolent villain!

**ALL CONSPIRATORS**

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

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

**LORDS**

Hold, hold, hold, hold!

**AUFIDIUS**

My noble masters, hear me speak.

**FIRST LORD**

160 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**

165 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

170

histories truthfully, you'll find there, that like an eagle in a  
dove's nest, I fluttered  your Volscians in Corioli. Alone! I  
did it! Boy!

*edges of your swords with my blood, which will stain them," but Coriolanus also speaks here of his influence over the Volsces. Over the course of the play, Coriolanus has driven the entire Volscian nation to either hate him or love him, and in "staining" their "edges," on him, they will absorb a part of him, like a tough stain on metal, which will never come off.*

 "Flutter'd" here means "killed all of"; a very strange metaphor in that it is both unmistakable and almost impossible to explain.

**AUFIDIUS**

Why, noble lords, will you be brought to shame by this  
damned bragger who has won fortune by killing our  
people?

**ALL CONSPIRATORS**

Let him die for it.

**ALL THE PEOPLE**

*[Shouting individually, all at once]* Tear him to pieces! Do it  
now! He killed my son! He killed my daughter! He killed my  
cousin Marcus! He killed my father!

**SECOND LORD**

Peace, everyone! No outrage, peace! This man is noble and  
he is famous around the world. His crimes against us will be  
heard in a military trial. Stand aside, Aufidius, and don't  
trouble the peace.

**CORIOLANUS**

Oh that I had him, and six Aufidiuses more, on which to use  
my sword!

**AUFIDIUS**

You disrespectful villain!

**ALL CONSPIRATORS**

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

*The CONSPIRATORS draw their weapons, and kill CORIOLANUS. AUFIDIUS stands over his dying body.*

**LORDS**

Stop, stop, stop, stop!

**AUFIDIUS**

My noble masters, hear me speak.

**FIRST LORD**

Oh, Tullus—

**SECOND LORD**

You have done a deed at which all bravery weeps.

**THIRD LORD**

Do not stand over him. Sirs, be quiet. Sheath your swords.

**AUFIDIUS**

My lords, when you are more aware of the great danger this  
man's life posed to you, you'll be glad he's dead. If you want  
to call me to the senate, I'll go as your loyal servant, and  
there take your most serious condemnations.

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**

175 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.  
180 Help, three o' the chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.  
Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully:  
Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he  
Hath widow'd and unchilded many a one,  
Which to this hour bewail the injury,  
185 Yet he shall have a noble memory. Assist.

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

**FIRST LORD**

Carry his body out of here, and mourn for him. Let him be regarded as the most noble corpse that bards will ever sing about.

**SECOND LORD**

Coriolanus did provoke Aufidius, and so takes a great part of the blame. Let's make the best of it.

**AUFIDIUS**

*[Suddenly shocked by what he has done, and crying]* My rage is gone, and I am struck with sorrow. Pick him up. Help, three of the strongest soldiers; I'll be one of the men who carries him. Beat the drum in a mournful way. Drag your pikes in the ground. Though he has made many widows in this city, and though many mothers still wait at their children which he killed, he will be noble in our memories. Assist me.

*All exit, bearing the body of CORIOLANUS. A funeral march is sounded.*

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